Family Worship: The Necessity of Church Discipline and the Purity of the Body

Scripture Reading

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1–8 together as a family.

Devotional Teaching and Application

According to the Reformers, there are three things that constitute a true church: the faithful preaching of the Word of God, the faithful administration of the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Table, and the faithful administration of church discipline. What do we mean by this? We mean that Christ calls His believers to live in obedience to His Word, and the local church is the institution that provides accountability. In God's order, in God's way, those who belong to the covenant community are not a law unto themselves. We are accountable to the Lord, and we are accountable to one another.

When we look at the church in Corinth, we see a congregation that was puffed up with spiritual pride. They had a member living in blatant, unrepentant sexual sin, and instead of mourning over this reality, they ignored it. Some in the church today think that by tolerating sin within the assembly, they are somehow more merciful or gracious than God. But that is not the opinion of Christ. Discipline is the proof of love. In Hebrews, we are reminded that the Lord disciplines the one He loves. It is designed to promote the offender's best interests and to protect the body of believers.

Paul uses the illustration of baking bread to explain why this is so critical. He asks if they know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. A tiny pinch of starter yeast will spread through an entire batch of dough. Sin functions the exact same way within the covenant community. If unrepentant sin is left unchecked, it corrupts the public testimony of the church, and it removes the restraint for others. When the church refuses to deal with sin, accountability vanishes.

This is the center of the gospel message: Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us so that we might be a holy people. He delivered us from the bondage of sin, and because of our new position in Christ, we have a new responsibility to live without the leaven of malice and wickedness. When the church gathers to exercise discipline, it is not an act of vengeance. The goal is the destruction of the fleshly rebellion so that the spirit may be saved. We do this praying that the discipline will drive the wandering brother or sister to repentance, bringing them back into fellowship with their Redeemer and their Provider.

Questions for Children

As you lead your children in understanding God's design for the local church, use these simple questions to help them grasp the concept of accountability. It is important for them to see that God's rules are given for our protection and our purity.

1. Why does a little bit of yeast (leaven) change a whole lump of dough, and how is that like allowing sin to stay in our lives?
2. When a mommy or daddy disciplines a child, it is because they love them. How does the church show love when it disciplines a member who is refusing to obey God?

Discussing these things helps children see that loving discipline is a normal and necessary part of belonging to God's family. If they grasp this now, they will be the next generation of faithful church members who understand how God protects His flock.

Theological Reflection for Parents and Adults

For the adults and older youth, take some time to reflect deeply on your own covenant faithfulness and your role within the local body. We are called to keep short accounts of sin in our own lives, lest we leaven the assembly with our own hypocrisy.

1. How does spiritual pride blind us to our own sin and prevent us from seeking the help of our brethren when we are struggling?
2. In what ways does faithful church discipline actually strengthen the public testimony of the church rather than harm it?

These reflections should drive us to a greater appreciation for the accountability we have in our local church. We must mourn over sin, maintain our own purity, and seek the rapid restoration of anyone caught in its snare.

Scripture Memory Verse

To remind us of the high cost of our purity and the reason we flee from the sins that plagued Corinth, work on committing this passage to memory this week.

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NKJV): Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NKJV): For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God’s.

Recite these verses daily as a family to remember that our lives belong entirely to the God who redeemed us.

Family Prayer Prompt

O Lord, our Redeemer and our Provider, we thank You that You love us enough to not leave us in our sin. Thank You for the local church and for the accountability it brings into our lives. Keep us from spiritual pride. Grant us the humility to confess our sins quickly and to mourn over the sins that corrupt Your church. Give our elders wisdom, and give our congregation the courage to uphold Your holy standard. We pray for anyone who has been put out of fellowship, that You would use that severe mercy to break their pride and bring them to deep repentance. Help us to live as a new, unleavened lump, washed and sanctified by the blood of Christ, our Passover. In Jesus' name, Amen.