

Fellowship With Someone Who Claims Christ But Is Living in Immorality

Tim Conway | illbehonest.com

Question: This is from Haley. "I'm 16 and have been saved for about two years. I live with my dad who is also saved. My mom is a professing Christian, but has made it very obvious she is not. She lives with her boyfriend, uses the Lord's name in vain frequently... I've written her and witnessed to her countless times. My question is, in the Bible, the Lord says, 'do not even eat' with someone who claims Christ but is immoral. Does this mean I cannot have a relationship with my mom? Thank you for your time, Haley."

Question:

Tim: I'll tell you what. Do you know where she gets that from? 1 Corinthians? Somebody know where that is? Where it says not to associate with anybody that calls himself a brother, anybody who's a professing Christian? 1 Corinthians 5. Let's read it. Turn there if you have your Bible. 1 Corinthians 5:9-11. I just want you to see the flavor of this. Now let me tell you something.

Young people, pay attention to this, even though Haley is dealing with this with regards to her mom, this is something especially you guys that are coming out of other churches and still have friends in other churches and you have family members that claim to be Christians and all sorts of things like this. There's a lot of application here. In fact, more so than I think sometimes we acknowledge in our day. 1 Corinthians 5:9, "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. Not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world." Do you see? Paul wants us to be evangelistic. Does he want us rubbing shoulders with red-blooded sinners? You better believe he does. He's not saying, "come away from all the sexually immoral people in the world." "Or the greedy or the swindlers or the idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world." And that's not what he wants. Christ said you're the salt, you're the light. We need to be in the world; we need to be out there in the world. We need to be salt and light in this world. We need to shine in the darkness. We need to be salt in a decaying and a foul and a corrupt generation in which we live.

Verse 11, "But now I'm writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother, if he's guilty of sexual immorality or greed or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, swindler - not even to eat with such a one." Let me tell you something, Haley's question deserves a lot of attention in our day and age - you know why? Now you guys know 1 Corinthians 5, if you know your Bibles very well, this is coming after Paul has described a situation about a man who was sleeping with his father's wife. You guys remember the account? Paul says you guys have been arrogant, you need to put this guy out to the devil, get rid of him! A little leaven leavens the whole lump. You've got a problem there, you've got sin, this guy calls himself a brother. Get him out. And there is evidence, is there not? We're not told exactly, but there is some evidence that

in 2 Corinthians that this guy was restored. But here's the thing. I think we might have a tendency to do something as Christians.

Let me just give you an example: We had this guy Bruce... come into our church claiming to be a Christian. If you don't come to our church, I'll fill you in. This guy started coming to our church, and he'd come in drunk. I mean, he was a homeless guy, living on the street, and he was a drunk. And he'd come in and say he was a Christian. And he'd interrupt things and do bizarre things. He threatened one of the guys in the church busting his teeth out when he confronted him about whether he was a true Christian or not. Which kind of gives away where he's at. But here's the thing, I think we live in a country where there are multitudes of false professors. Because we've got such a cheap gospel out there today, which is no gospel - not a true one. We've got people being pipelined into the Kingdom through short little sinner's prayers. Repentant-less messages like I told you about earlier. It's mass producing false converts.

But see, I think sometimes we think, well, the guy in 1 Corinthians 5, sometimes it goes into our mind, he really was a true Christian, and when he was put out, he repented and he came back. And so I think sometimes what happens is we have people who profess to be Christians, and we tend to categorize them in our mind. We tend to categorize them either as somebody who we genuinely think is a Christian and probably needs to be disciplined because they've fallen into some sin, and we're hoping they'll come to repentance. Versus somebody that we look at and we say, "Ah, they're lost." And so what we can tend to do is say, well, the guy who we think is a Christian who has fallen into this sin, we ought to discipline him. We ought to put him out to Satan, like it said there, but this guy over here like Bruce, we look at him and we say, yeah, but he's lost; he's deceived. So we don't deal with them the same way.

But listen to me, Paul doesn't say that. Paul doesn't say evaluate whether you think he is a Christian or not. Paul says if a guy says he's a brother, and he's involved in some habitual sin, just like we were talking about, put him out. In fact, it doesn't just say put him out, it says not to even associate with him, not to even eat with him. Folks, let me tell you something. We've lost this. We don't do this. And I'm not just speaking to you - I'm speaking to myself. Are we as a pattern coming across people that say they're Christians and they're living in sin and we just kind of write them off as lost people, and kind of approach them evangelistically. But that's not what it says to do here. It says, don't associate with them. Are we doing that? Now, of course, her question is she's got a mother that way. Now I would say this, Paul says in 1 Corinthians 5, when the church comes together. This is a church discipline situation. This isn't something that the government's told to do. It's not something the family is told to do. It's not something the employer is told to do. It's something the church has been told to do. It's a spiritual thing. I would say this, look, if somebody's husband gets disciplined, the woman is still bound by her marriage vows to be his wife. This girl, what should her relationship be?

Let me tell you this: It's something the church does - it's not something that specifically the family's told to do. And all I can tell you is this: We have no specific biblical example where discipline takes place and there is a family member there and how they are to relate. But I would

tell you this, because the principal behind non-association is that leaven leavens the whole lump. What's that mean? What does a little leaven leavens the whole lump mean? What's the leaven? Sin. Where there's sin, it has a tendency to do what? To spread. Just like yeast, or leaven in bread, it spreads through the whole. If you allow sin in the church to go unchecked, what Paul's saying is, what happens is it infects.

And the fact is, I'll guarantee you this, what happens is we get in a world of people that profess Christianity that are living in all sorts of sin. You just immerse yourself in that long enough and there is an infection that comes from it. There is a yeast there. There's a spreading that tends to dull down what true Christianity is. It has an effect. We're told not to associate. But I'll tell you when it comes to a child, when it comes to a parent, when it comes to a spouse, are they to sever those family relationships? We're not told specifically, but I'll tell you this, that wife, that husband, that child, that parent, needs to be aware of what the spiritual reality behind church discipline is all about. It's meant to prevent sin from spreading.

And so I would say, if a family member is ever put in that situation, though I would not say that they are to cast honoring the parent out the window, or the wife loving the husband out the window, when it comes to a church disciplinary situation, they need to be very aware of the fact that whatever leaven existed that caused the discipline to take place, they need to pray for special grace not to be infected by; and they need to pray for the grace to abide in the midst of that and not be tainted by it. And let me just tell you this too, it's 2 Thessalonians 3, where it says, "if anyone does not obey what we say in this letter take note of that person, and have nothing to do with them, that they may be ashamed." That's 2 Thessalonians 3:14 following. But it says this, "Do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother." You know, in all the non-association that we have with disciplined people, it doesn't rule out - it says don't eat with them, I'll tell you what, if there was a disciplined brother that I was going to have over to my house to eat with, and all I was going to do is use it as an occasion to warn him and admonish him, I would feel liberty to do that. Warning.

And if this young lady, she has been doing the right thing. She has been confronting her mother with that sin. And that's a loving thing; that's an honorable thing. She's desiring the best for her mother. That's reverencing her mother. And it would be the same situation if it was a woman to her husband, a husband to his wife. If they want the best, they want them to come to repentance over the matter. They either want them to come to repentance or give up their profession. Right? Come clean that you're lost. Or repent. And so to press people and admonish them and warn them is what we're told to do in 2 Thessalonians 3:14. And so I would just say that, that family member needs to keep that in mind. And obviously, if the wife's living with the husband, she's not going to spend 24/7 admonishing the husband. She's going to know when to do it; seek God for proper opportunity to do it. And maybe in many ways, she's going to seek to be that 1 Peter 3 woman, who without a word is just seeking to win her husband. Whether it's to repentance or to the faith. Whichever it might be. But taking that approach, and that might be a good approach for a child to take too. Like I say, we don't have a specific example of this in Scripture. And I know out at Community Baptist Church, not the same church that I was talking

about up on 1604, not the same one, this is a different one - this is down 1604 on the South side. But we had situations where members were disciplined who had spouses or parents or children who were members of the church as well, so this came up. And obviously, the family relationship was never severed because of that, but there is a way to walk in the midst of it in wisdom.