When disciples walk Disorderly
Lesson 1 The first principles of our duties when disciples walk disorderly

1. Be holy, as I am holy 1 Pet. 1:15
   God’s teachings make us holy, partakers of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4). God makes us holy when we learn from Him how to respond to those who refuse His standard of holiness. We can imitate God in everything we do toward the disorderly, privately or as a church.
   Some people will criticize us for identifying the sin of others and acting to bring them back to the Lord, but when they reject God’s plan, they reject God, not us (1 Sam. 8:5-7).
   Can you think of someone in Scripture who was, or would have been, considered unholy by God for simply doing nothing about the disorderly conduct of someone else?

Question or comment ____________________________________________________________________________

2. Distinguishing what is right, wrong, and permitted (Rom. 13:12b; 14:14a)
   Identifying a brother as “disorderly” (2 Thess. 3:6) or a sinner (Js. 5:20) is not gossip or slander as long as it is accurate and spoken in love. It is not something to be taken lightly. Before we conclude that someone is spiritually separated from God, we must be certain that they have put on some work of darkness, setting aside the armor of light in some way. Some things are not unclean but, like circumcision or dietary choices, make us neither better nor worse (1 Cor. 8:8). In these things we must receive each other and not consider each other disorderly (Rom. 14:1).
   Obviously, God has not made a list of every specific action that is expected, forbidden, or permitted. Can you name something that God expects, forbids, or permits even though it is not specifically named in Scripture? How do you know? (For example, the words “abortion” and “pornography” are not in the Bible but are also clearly forbidden)

Question or comment ____________________________________________________________________________

3. The mutual commitment of Christians working together as a church
   When disciples join each other to work as a church, they accept some responsibilities toward each other that did not exist before that mutual agreement. They now must consider and assemble with one another on the Lord’s Day (Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 20:7). They do not share that same responsibility with all other saints. Among the commitments they are making to God and each other is to watch for, warn, and note each other, according to each one’s deeds (1 Thess. 5:6, 11, 14; 2 Thess. 3:14-15). No church that truly is “of Christ” can ignore this duty, for this duty is from Christ (1 Cor. 5:5).
   Have you ever known of a church that went years without publicly identifying the sin of someone among them who left the Lord?

Question or comment ____________________________________________________________________________
4. Our duties, individually, to each other

When we become part of a group, it is easy to shift our personal responsibility to the group and ignore our individual duties. Jesus does not join Christians, making them a church, to lessen their individual duties. By adding the responsibilities that come with joining other disciples, Jesus both challenges and strengthens our individual faith. So, even if the church is fulfilling its duties toward the disorderly, I still must ask myself “Have I done my part, for the sake of their soul?” (Eph. 4:16).

We must love all men but brotherly kindness applies uniquely to saints (Rom. 12:10; 1 Thess. 4:9; Heb. 13:1; 1 Pet. 1:22; 2 Pet. 1:7, 9). This involves a personal relationship with each member of my spiritual family (brothers and sisters), most easily developed by frequent hospitality (Acts 2:46b; 1 Pet. 4:9). When a church is composed of several dozen people, this is challenging because everyone cannot spend an equal amount of time with everyone else, meaning some relationships will naturally be closer than others. But each of us has some responsibility to each of us. How often are you with other Christians, outside of our assemblies? How often do you offer invitations for this? How often do you accept, or decline, invitations for this? What do your answers say about your brotherly kindness? We all benefit by giving and receiving this individual attention, but when a saint begins walking disorderly this relationship becomes important in other ways.

When saints are unruly, they must be warned (1 Thess. 5:14). When these warnings come from someone who consistently showed brotherly kindness, their motives for giving this warning cannot be questioned. Warnings offered from someone who never previously showed much interest in the one walking disorderly are not wrong but are often heard with suspicion by the unruly one. Also, when brotherly kindness has produced deep, personal ties, the duty to “not keep company with him” reinforces the seriousness of sin (2 Thess. 3:14). Sadly, when faithful disciples “keep no company” with each other (too busy, no interest, etc), then unfaithful disciples do not feel the intended impact of the instruction to “keep no company” with them.

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5. Our duty to the lost  Acts 5:11b

When Ananias and Sapphira were punished by God, fear came on all who heard these things, not just the church (Acts 5:11). It is obvious that those who are outside of the church will learn about the church in various ways (family members, public deeds, etc.). Sometimes, they are even with us when we assemble. Because the lost community knows about us, it is our duty to let our light shine consistent with The Son. Pleasing them is not our goal, but the lost will often notice if we ignore the disorderly among us. The reputation we have among those who are outside Christ will either aid or hinder us in carrying the gospel to them.

How would you respond to this: “We should not make a public announcement, identifying someone in sin during an assembly because we might have visitors and it might make a bad impression.”?

Question or comment  ___________________________________________________________
1. God is holy (1 Pet. 1:15), just (Isa 45:21; Ac 22:14), love (1 Jn. 4:8, 16), and merciful (Ex 34:6; Lk. 6:36; Jas 5:11). Nothing God does or teaches man to do is unholy, unjust, unloving, or without mercy. His instructions gradually make us more like Him (Eph. 4:23-24).

   - For class discussion: What physical, literal things does God use to help us to understand sin and view it as He does?

   - For personal thought: Can you think back and review how your ideas of sin have changed over time? Have your thoughts become increasingly like His thoughts (Isa. 55:8-9)?

   Question or comment __________________________________________________________

2. God has always responded to sin. When angels “did not keep their proper domain, but left their own abode,” God put them in chains until the day of judgment (Jude 6). God has not told us all the details of what happened, but it is consistent with everything we know about God. God does not give instructions, offer reward, or warn of punishment and then react with indifference to how angels or humans respond to His words. He may respond in a time or way that we do not perceive or understand, but God always responds to sin (and righteousness).

   At various times, Israel became so ignorant, rebellious, and/or complacent that they had a variety of false ideas about God’s response to sin. Summarize their ideas, as revealed by the prophets (and ask yourself—have you ever sinned because you thought in similar ways?).

   Micah 3:11 (reign of Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah in Judah) _____________________________
   Zephaniah 1:12 (reign of Josiah in Judah) _____________________________
   Jeremiah 5:12 (during reign of Josiah in Judah) ________________________________

   Question or comment __________________________________________________________

3. God handled each situation differently. When Eve sinned, it was in part because she was deceived, but Adam was not deceived (1 Tim. 2:14). Though they disobeyed for different reasons, they were punished in some different ways and in some identical ways (Gen. 3:16-19, 24). When Cain offered will-worship and was jealous of his brother, God offered warnings (Gen. 4:1-7). When Cain killed Abel, God punished Cain but did not execute him, though God later instructed man to kill anyone who committed murder (Gen. 4:8-12; 9:6-7). God even taught Israel to respond in different ways to different sins (Ex. 21:18-27; Deut. 22:22-29). An interesting part of that law was the difference between intentional and unintentional sin (Num. 15:22-31). Can we fully explain God’s responses in each case? God has understanding and wisdom beyond ours, but God’s example reminds us to thoroughly examine each individual and sin. This does not mean ignoring any sin, but using wisdom in our response to sin (Jude 22-23).
- What difference(s) do you see in how Paul responds to the sexual immorality mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5 and those mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:21?

Question or comment ____________________________________________________________

4. In the New Covenant, God responds to each sin

The wages of sin is death (Rom. 6:23). God does not have a new view of sin in the New Covenant—death and sin have always been partners (Gen. 2:17; Ezek. 18:20). From my first sin, I am separated from God and need to be cleansed from sin by the death of Christ (Mt. 26:26-28). This remains true when I become a Christian—my old sins are forgiven but any new sin brings death as it did before I was a Christian, and I again need to be cleansed (Acts 8:20-23; 1 Jn. 1:9). Adam, Eve, and Simon (from Samaria) show us the consequences of a single sin.

The words Jesus sent to His churches, recorded in Revelation 2-3, provide us another example of how God responds to those who walk disorderly. Of those seven churches, five of them were warned that their lampstand might be removed, meaning Jesus would no longer claim them as His churches. Jesus knew each church intimately—nothing of their past or present was hidden or ignored. Jesus did not immediately cut them off but was patient and longsuffering—He warned them and gave them time to respond to what the Spirit said to the churches. No church received a “free pass” simply because they were “of Christ.” Although no one could observe the precise moment that Jesus removed their lampstand, their fruits would be known by the members of each church and possibly even by some of the other churches. These seven churches in Asia were 25-100 miles from each other—no doubt they knew of, and to varying degrees influenced, each other for better or worse.

Sometimes, Christians are tempted to become lax in their view of sin (just as the Israelites did). Choose at least two of the passages below and summarize the false view of sin that were troubling some saints:

Rom. 6:1
1 Cor. 15:33-34
Gal. 5:4
1 Jn. 1:8, 10

Question or comment ____________________________________________________________
When disciples walk Disorderly  
Lesson 3  How God tells us to respond to the disorderly

1 Thess. 5:14  Warn, comfort, or uphold?  
1. Are they unruly, fainthearted, or weak? People might sin because they are fainthearted or weak, but helping them return to the truth may involve something other than a warning. A warning might later be needed but may not be the first effort. Or, it is possible that someone who is fainthearted or weak is not sinning but needs help so they are not led to sin.

2. Different people need different kinds of warnings. The warning God gave Nathan and David was different than the warning to Jeroboam in (1 Chron. 17; 1 Kg. 13).

3. Who should patiently offer the warning, offer comfort, or seek to uphold? In some sense, everyone has a duty to do something, but not everyone can, or should, do the same things in the same ways. In a church of several dozen people, every individual member cannot have a personal Bible study or discussion with every disorderly member. 
   
   What things need to be done for the disorderly, beside Bible study?

   How do I learn what I personally should do for a brother/sister who strays from the Lord?

   What do these verses teach about trying to bring someone back to the Lord?
   Eph. 4:16
   Gal. 6:1
   Prov. 25:11-12
   Prov. 27:5-6, 9, 17, 21

4. Patience with the unruly allows time to communicate, teach, and assess their response. The needs of each individual and circumstance are different. Thus, in God’s wisdom, He did not set a time limit. Both rash and unnecessarily delayed warnings can do harm. Learn from God, what longsuffering and patience means (lesson 2).

   Question or comment  __________________________________________________________

Matt. 18:15-17  A sin “against you”  
When someone sins against you (something directed at you in some specific way), Jesus has a plan. The simple wisdom of this plan is undeniable. Jesus teaches us to go talk to them about it, instead of waiting for them to come apologize to us. By this, the problem may be privately resolved and the complications of sin minimized (v15). When sin is confronted but the response is more sin (cover-up, denial, pride), Jesus provides another way to quietly resolve it (v16). But, sin is never stagnant and without repentance, Jesus wants all the church informed and united in their effort to convict, rebuke, and exhort the one in sin. But if he refuses even to hear the church, there must then be a separation.

   Other verses in this study will deal what I must do when a brother’s sin is not specifically against me.

   Question or comment  ________________________________________________________
1 Cor. 5  Purge the old leaven
1. This chapter specifies what the church must do when someone among them sins and refuses to repent. It does not deal with the warnings that precede the actions described in this chapter.
2. What is being done? deliver such a one to Satan (v5; 1 Tim. 1:20), take/put away from among you (v2, 13), purge the leaven (v7)
3. What are the goals? destroy the flesh to save the spirit (v5), stop the influence (v6)
4. When must this be done? when you come together (v4)
5. How must each of us respond? mourn (v2), do not keep company. . . (v11)

Question or comment  __________________________________________________________

2 Cor. 2:6  Punishment, not revenge
This text refers back to 1 Corinthians 5 and by using the word “punishment” makes Hebrews 12:5-11 a relevant passage as it discusses the nature and purpose of every form of chastisement.
Heb. 12:6  May the punishment of 1 Cor. 5 rightly be called a form of God’s chastening?
If this is an expression of God’s love, what does this say of a church who refuses to do it?
Heb. 12:11  All the passages on this subject have unpleasant statements (like deliver such a one to Satan), but what is the result when people are trained by being warned, noted, and avoided?

Compare this verse with 1 Cor. 5:5 and comment on the similarities.

When some refuse to be trained by chastening, does that mean it is ineffective and useless?

Question or comment  __________________________________________________________

2 Thess. 3:6-15  When some among you walk disorderly
v6  I believe this is the origin of the common saying “The church must withdraw from __,” meaning to no longer recognize that person as a member.
Where the NKJ says “you withdraw from. . .”, the NIV, NASB, and ESV all say “keep away from. . .”
In defining this word, Strong’s Greek Dictionary adds, “...abstain from associating with):--avoid, withdraw self.” Is this instruction directing the action of the church as a whole, or each individual?

Question or comment  __________________________________________________________

v10-13  When Paul was in Thessalonica, he taught the necessity of work. In 1 Thessalonians, he taught about it again (1 Thess. 4:11). In the meantime, teachers in Thessalonica must have reminded the church of these things. Now Paul again commands and exhorts them to work. This is what it means to be patient with the unruly---to make every reasonable effort to teach them.
v14  Whatever the transgression is, if it is known then there must be a response---
1. The church must note that person when they assemble (1 Cor. 5:4).
2. Each member must avoid keeping company with him.
3. One goal of these actions is that he may be ashamed. Other verses show other goals.
v15 While the instructions of verse 14 are sometimes viewed as “the final steps,” God’s plan is that these brethren not be forgotten or ignored. Of course, God knows that opportunities to admonish will be limited because we have publicly identified their sin and will not “keep company” with them. They may even view us as the enemy, but we must view them as brethren who need someone to love them enough to warn them.

*NOTE:* The word “admonish” [NJKV] is the same word as “warn” in 1 Thess. 5:14. The admonishment needed by the brother in 2 Thess. 3:15 is a well-worded warning—speaking the truth in love.

Question or comment __________________________________________________________

*Romans 16:17*  *Note and avoid*

Paul exhorts them to “note” and “avoid” false teachers. Whether they arise from the outside or among you, the church needs to note such people who could disrupt the unity of the Spirit, and every member must avoid sharing in their evil deeds (2 Jn. 9-11). Here is a case where the church may need to “note” someone who has not been, and is not currently, a member of that congregation but who is a threat to God’s people.

Question or comment __________________________________________________________

*1 Tim. 5:20*  *Rebuke in the presence of all*

Though this is specifically talking about the sin of an elder, the solution Paul gives is the same as he gives with the sin of any Christian who persists in sin (1 Cor. 5:4).

- What is the result when a saint leaves the Lord and the church but nothing is publicly said?

Question or comment __________________________________________________________

*1 Tim. 6:3-5; Ti. 3:9-10*  *Withdraw, reject*

The instruction to “withdraw yourself” is the response Paul expects of Timothy. The instruction to Titus to “reject” could also apply to a church.

Question or comment __________________________________________________________

From these verses, when a Christian persists in sin, what are the duties of individual Christians?

From these verses, when a Christian persists in sin, what are the duties of the church?

From these verses, what are the goals of responding in these ways to disorderly brethren?