

An Exercise To Discern Both Good and Evil (Hebrews 5:14)

Let Us Preemptively Withdraw From This Brother

Scenario:

A brother in Christ comes to the brethren and confesses that he has been habitually involved in an adulterous relationship. He says that his wife has caught him in the act. He confesses that he has very little self-control. He confesses that he wants to do what is right, but fears he cannot control his carnal desires. He says that adultery is not his only transgression, but he also has lied on numerous occasions to brethren seeking to help him. He says he has confessed this to God and has begged forgiveness. He then asks the brethren to forgive him and aid him to remain faithful.

Statement That Arises From Our Scenario:

A brother in the congregation stands up and says: "We have seen situations similar to this in the past. We have seen someone confess little self-control, lying, and other sins of lacking control twice in recent years. Both of those brethren fell away. We cannot allow this brother to be among us. We need to act now so that he cannot cause any damage to the congregation. Remember, what a little leaven does. Brethren, go read I Corinthians 5. We have to withdraw now, because we know he is not going to truly change."

A Later Statement Is Made:

This same brother, after discussions about forgiveness, states: "I just know a person like this cannot really change. I have had to repent of sin. I don't see him doing what I did. He only told us about his sins because he has been caught."

For Discussion: What do you see in those statements?

- There are times wherein saints should come to the brethren and confess their faults (**James 5:16**). In response, the brethren should work to restore such a person (**James 5:19-20**).
- Situations of saints being involved in such sins is not unheard of and this person even references such (**I Corinthians 5:1-13**).
- What is difficult is that once a person confesses in such cases, it will take time to reveal that their sorrow is not in getting caught. That is where fruit meet for repentance comes in (**Matthew 3:8** and **Acts 26:18-20**). We rightfully want to see a godly sorrow in the repentance process (**II Corinthians 7:9-10**).
- This confession is one wherein the sinner states the root of the problem is a lack of self-control. Temperance [self-control] is required of faithful saints (**Proverbs 16:32**, **I Corinthians 9:27**, **Galatians 5:22-23**, and **II Peter 1:3-11**).
- Of course, a person with a lack of self-control very often has other sins. Here it is stated in also being a liar. We know lying, like all sin (**Romans 6:23** and **James 2:10-12**), is soul damning (**Proverbs 6:16-19**, **Proverbs 12:22**, **Proverbs 13:5**,

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Proverbs 19:5, Proverbs 19:9, John 8:44, Acts 5:1-10, Romans 12:17, I John 2:3-6, Revelation 21:8, and Revelation 22:14-15).

- It is good that he has sought forgiveness from God and from the saints. Our place is to forgive (**Luke 17:3-4** and **Ephesians 4:32**). Trust will come with that fruit if such is possible to be visible. That, in itself, is an entirely different subject matter. In this case, it could be very difficult to see. Trust may be long away. Be careful though, with what judgment you judge... (**Matthew 7:2, Matthew 18:15-35, and James 2:12-13**). There will be a time when this man will have to put this behind him (https://www.wordsoftruth.net/youhavetoputitbehindyou_bay2018.html; <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol13/wotbulletin05122013.html>). We cannot stand in the way of that when it is fitting.
- Some have erred in being unwilling to let things go thinking that they will be accountable of this person is not truly repenting. As long as we are not ignoring sin, we do not have to fear if someone among us is hiding who they really are (**I Timothy 5:24-25**). That doesn't mean we don't look for evidence of change though: <https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol15/wotbulletin02152015.html>
- As noted earlier, we need to help. He is asking. We need to help him be restored to faithfulness (**Galatians 6:1-2**).
- Since the scenario doesn't mention his wife's status, there is not much to say there. This would be an entirely different side of this. Is she a Christian? Would she seek to put him away for fornication (**Matthew 19:3-12**)? There could be a lot to deal with on that side too. However, the goal if this study is about to begin.
- As we enter into this next section wherein this statement arises, consider that we don't want to be jaded by things we've experienced (<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol14/wotbulletin12222013.html>).
- We can learn from things in the past (**Romans 15:4** and **I Corinthians 10:1-12**). We can even learn how to handle things better after we have gained experience (**Hebrews 5:13-14**). However...
- ...Regardless of situations we have seen in the past, there is the need to evaluate each person separately rather than measuring others by them (**II Corinthians 10:12**).
- In this case, whether we know for sure or not there is true repentance, we are commanded to forgive (**Luke 17:3-4**) and we are shown what will happen to that person if we don't (**II Corinthians 2:6-11**). Now, that does NOT mean we don't look for fruit meet for repentance. You can know a person by his or her fruit (**Matthew 7:15-20**). At the same time, we have to accept the fact that we may or may not know if a person is really changing. At the same time, you never want to become a stumbling block to someone (**Romans 14:13**). Again, judge not according to appearance (**John 7:24**).
- We certainly can never knowingly allow leaven to enter in among us (**Galatians 5:7-9**). Yet, we cannot ASSUME that a brother confessing sin is lying either.
- Consider this... There was once a man named Judas that was AMONG Jesus and the disciples. He was a liar, thief, and betrayer amongst the disciples (**Matthew 26:1-5, Matthew 26:47-56, and John 12:1-6**). Judas hung himself (**Matthew 27:1-10**). Does that mean every disciple that erred will ultimately hang themselves? No, Peter failed multiple times (**Matthew 14:22-23, Matthew**

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16:13-23, Galatians 2:11-17, etc.). Yet, he later proved himself enough to be appointed as an elder (**I Peter 5:1-4**). That is saying a lot (**I Timothy 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:5-9**). What would have happened if Peter had been cut off because of what Judas did? What would have happened if Peter would have been withdrawn from after his first, or second, or third failure? Remember this: *“Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful”* (**Luke 6:36**).

- How do any of us “KNOW” that someone is not going to change (**I Corinthians 2:11**)? That is an extreme statement and one that implies many potential problems. Even if you did know, for sure, that someone was going to err in the future you could NOT act before they erred. We know that because of how Jesus dealt with Judas and others (**John 6:60-71**).
- Then, in the later statement, you again have the problem of measuring someone by someone else (again; **II Corinthians 10:12**).
- https://www.wordsoftruth.net/judgingbrethrenbyownstandards_bay_2017.html
- Now, in this scenario, this person who has made these statements is the one that needs addressed. He must be stopped (**Titus 1:10-14**). If he does not repent, He must be exposed and avoided (**Romans 16:17-18** and **Titus 3:9-11**).
- With all of these situations, we want to exhaust forbearance (**Ephesians 4:1-6**) without compromising the truth (**Galatians 2:1-5**).
- Though it is likely he is arrogant and will not see it, it is he whom is the largest problem in this scenario (**Micah 6:6-8**, **Matthew 9:9-13**, and **James 4:11-12**).
- He is not God and does not know the future. To say you know the future puts you in the language God used to establish Himself as deity (**Isaiah 46:9-10**).
- Even if a person only confesses sin because he or she has been caught, that does not mean they cannot repent (**John 8:1-11**). If you read that reference, and yet say someone in such sins cannot change, consider that you are making a charge that would convict our sinless Lord (**I Peter 2:21-25**) as a sinner.
- Now, before anyone runs from one extreme to another, this does not mean we unconditionally forgive sin. Sin must be repented of (**Luke 13:1-5**).
- Lastly, if this man were to convince the congregation to act in a way to withdraw from this brother who is confessing sin because he “knows” he will not repent; what standard is being set? What example is in place? As we should desire to see restoration (**Luke 15:1-32**), this precedent would be the opposite. The false standard being set in this case would, and consistency demands such, allow for future cases of assuming a person is going to fall away and thus preemptively withdrawing from that person. The act of withdrawing from someone, Scripturally, is a reaction after a sin is not repented of (**II Thessalonians 3:6**). If the congregation rejects this person’s confession and withdraws they’d have to, or be accused of being respecters of persons (**Proverbs 24:23** and **James 2:9**), do such in future cases. This puts man in the place of God and it is WRONG!

For balance, understanding their is not a blanket statement equally covering all matters of repentance, consider these additional studies:

<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol17/wotbulletin04022017.html>

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<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/april192020article.html>

https://www.wordsoftruth.net/truerepentance_byeager2009.html

https://www.wordsoftruth.net/Sermon_DoYouWantToBeJudgedWithoutMercy2018.pdf

<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/january122020article.html>

<https://www.wordsoftruth.net/wotvol11/wotbulletin01302011.html>