

**I. Read II Corinthians 5:11**

- A. In verse 11, Paul speaks of “the terror of the Lord” (NKJ). Another translation uses the phrase “the fear of the Lord” (NAS). Is this a warning to unbelievers of the potential for eternal destruction and judgment or to believers as an exhortation toward greater faithfulness?  
**In the context of the passage, Paul is speaking to believers at Corinth. The New Geneva Study Bible explains Paul is not pointing to “a terror of eternal condemnation, but a healthy, reverent fear of Christ’s displeasure at the choices we have made.”**

Read II Corinthians 2:1,5, 10 and discuss the circumstance Paul faced earlier in Corinth that would provide the context for understanding his wording in 5:11.

**Paul had evidently made a brief return trip to Corinth after hearing of problems there. Though he is not specific in his references to this trip, it appears that he was attacked and offended by someone or some faction in Corinth. The context of 5:11 is that those opposing Paul’s work and ministry ought to be very careful that they not displease Christ.**

- B. (Read Ephesians 5:22-23). In Ephesus, the special relationship Christ has with the church is explained. What analogy is used to help us understand Christ’s love for the church?  
**The love of a husband for his bride. It is important to note that the intent of the passage is to help husbands understand how they ought to love their wives through comparing marriage to Christ’s relationship with the church. If Paul uses this as the standard, it is clear that he expected the reader to understand that Christ’s sacrificial death for the elect was irrefutable evidence that Christ loved His Bride (the Church).**

Would you normally expect that a husband would be willing to do whatever was necessary to protect his bride?

**Of course, if he truly loved her.**

Given the passage in Ephesians 5, how would you expect Christ to deal with those who attack and divide the Church?

**Christ will discipline, correct, or remove anyone who threatens His Bride, the Church. This is the basis for Paul’s warning in II Corinthians 5:11 and his specific reference to “the fear of the Lord.” (NAS)**

- C. (Read Jeremiah 17:9-10.) What does Jeremiah explain regarding the heart?  
**That men have a great capacity for self-deception.**

Discuss how God reveals to us or others the true condition of our heart. (See Jer. 17:7-8; Matthew 7:15-20; Matthew 12:33-35)

**The *fruit* evident in our lives, our *actions*, *attitudes*, and *words*, even the consequences of our actions, attitudes and words on others, reveals the condition of our heart. It is important to note in keeping with the illustrations of a fruit bearing tree, that fruit does not appear instantaneously, nor is it present year round. Therefore, we should take time in judging the character and motives of others, being careful not to form our opinions too soon.**

- D. Does the evil one put those in the church that he intends to use as a means of attacking the work of the church? (See Acts 20:29-31.)  
**Yes.**

Will they be immediately recognizable?

**No. They will be known by their fruit.**

Is Satan always the cause of divisions in the Church? (See James 1:13-15).

**No. Satan is not omnipresent. The old sinful nature, even in regenerate man, can lead us toward temptation and wickedness. The passage in Jeremiah 17:9-10 should also serve as a warning in this regard. Further, sometimes the difficulties of living in a fallen world with the challenge of good communication, etc. result in problems, conflict, and misunderstandings.**

- E. How can a church learn to recognize the sorts of attacks against leaders which Paul alludes to in II Corinthians 5:11? (See Revelation 12:10; 1 Timothy 5:19.)

**There is no infallible rule, yet when vague and hateful accusations and unsubstantiated rumors are heard, the source is most likely the pit. The circumstances surrounding a leader's ministry and work can be helpful as well. For example, if *strongholds* are coming down, people are being saved, the truth and the gospel are being proclaimed, you should expect demonic attacks against the church, especially against the leadership. None of this means that the fact that one is a leader in the church means that he can do no wrong. *All* believers are prone to stumble and should be held accountable. The spirit and attitude evident in those making accusations can also be helpful.**

- F. Read Hebrews 12:3-11 and discuss how the principle pertaining to the discipline of the Lord might support the need to grow with respect to a healthy "fear of the Lord."

**Recognizing the authority of the Lord over all areas of life is foreign to many. We know God is love, but as is common to children, we forget that love is often framed in discipline and truth. We are rebels by nature, and our culture feeds this anti-authoritarianism to the extent that we recoil at the mention of the "fear of the Lord" or the chastisement of the Lord. Finally, and this is the main point, Christ is the *Lord of our sanctification*. Implicit in the authority of He who sanctifies us is the need to fear His discipline or the consequences of our sin.**

- G. Returning to II Corinthians 5:11, the main thrust is on the believer living in a *healthy* "fear of the Lord." This means each one of us should seek to live under and within a biblical concern and desire to please Christ in our thoughts, words, and actions. This is particularly true in regard to how we interact with others in the church and how we guard our testimony before a watching world. Suggest some ways that we can avoid stumbling into sin or causing others to stumble, or find correction when we have sinned.

- 1. Matthew 6:33: Always put the kingdom and the Church before yourself.**
- 2. Galatians 6:1-4: Approach and view others in the church with a genuine sense of humility and compassion. Be in relationships with other believers in which you hold one another accountable.**
- 3. Matthew 7:15-20: Look at the fruit in your own life. Has the church benefited or suffered from your participation? When was the last time God used your testimony and life as a witness in order to convert another? How often do you go out of your way to help or serve others? What sort of relationship do you have with your husband? Wife? Family?**
- 4. Hebrews 5:11-13: Are you constantly in the Word so that God's *plumb line* of truth holds you accountable.**
- 5. Matthew 25:20-23: Do you look forward one day to Christ saying, "Well done..." because you have done all you could with what He has entrusted to you?**

**Note to teachers: Be sure the Scriptures above are read out loud and commented upon.**