HOW THEN SHALL WE LIVE?

Who Is the Standard For?

Christians, unbelievers, and the problem of judgment



LESSON GOAL

Two audiences, two responsibilities

God's standard of holiness applies to **His people.**

Our approach to unbelievers is shaped by truth, love, humility, witness, and the invitation to follow Jesus.

Five marks of our approach to the world



Truth



Love



Humility



Witness



Invitation

Who are we responsible for?

“If we believe the Bible establishes God’s standard for how people should live, what responsibility do we have toward people who do not believe in God or follow Jesus?”



The neighbor

Your neighbor openly lives in a way that contradicts biblical teaching, yet is friendly, generous, respectful, and occasionally asks about your faith.

Confront, befriend, share the Gospel — or all three?

Discuss

- What moral standard should we expect unbelievers to live by?
- How should we respond when someone who doesn’t believe does what the Bible calls sinful

1 Corinthians 5:9–13: holiness begins at home

The Corinthian church tolerated a serious case of sexual immorality among its members — and even boasted about it. Paul confronts the church.



VERSES 9–10

Not everyone

Paul was not telling Christians to avoid every immoral person in the world — that would mean leaving the world. We live among people who don’t follow God’s standards.



VERSE 11

Someone inside

Paul addresses a person who claims to be a brother or sister in Christ yet continues in behavior that openly contradicts the faith.



VERSES 12–13

Inside vs. outside

Church accountability is distinct from judging outsiders. Paul isn’t saying we can’t recognize sin in society.

The church’s responsibility toward its members

1
Teach
biblical truth

2
Encourage
spiritual growth

3
Correct
members living contrary to God’s Word

4
Call
people to repentance

5
Seek
restoration

Key takeaway: the church should take holiness seriously, beginning with itself.

Discuss: What happens when a church is more concerned about unbelievers’ behavior than its own members’ spiritual health? How do we balance accountability with grace and restoration?

Remove the log before the speck

Matthew 7:1–5

- Jesus isn't teaching that we never make moral distinctions — He confronts the hypocrisy of judging others while ignoring our own failures.
- The speck matters, but we address the log in our own eye first.
- Verse 5: after removing the log, we can see clearly enough to help remove the speck.

Romans 2:1–4

- Paul addresses people who condemn others while practicing similar things.
- Knowing God's standard does not automatically make someone righteous.
- Verse 4: God's kindness, forbearance, and patience lead people to repentance. Condemnation alone does not lead people to Christ.

Principle: never approach another person's sin as though we have no need of God's grace.

How Jesus treated unbelievers

Matthew 9:10–13 and Luke 15:1–2 — Jesus ate with tax collectors and sinners. The Pharisees criticized Him; He answered that the well do not need a physician, but the sick.



He recognized sin

He didn’t consider their behavior acceptable. He knew they needed what they could not provide for themselves.



He entered their world

He didn’t isolate Himself from the spiritually lost. He spent time with them, spoke with them, and created opportunities for them to hear His message.



He came to call sinners

Matthew 9:13. Not simply to make sinners behave better, but to call them into relationship with God.

If not enforcing the standard, then what?



Share the truth

We don’t hide what God teaches. We share the Gospel, including its call to repentance.

Matt. 28:18–20 · 2 Tim. 4:2 · Rom. 10:14–15



Demonstrate love

Our treatment of people shouldn’t depend on whether they agree with us.

Matt. 5:43–48 · Rom. 12:17–21 · Gal. 6:10



Live as an example

People should be able to see something different in the way Christians live.

Matt. 5:13–16 · 1 Pet. 2:11–12 · Col. 4:5–6



Invite people to follow Jesus

The goal isn’t better citizens or more moral individuals. It is to introduce them to Jesus.

Acts 2:38–40 · Acts 17:30–31 · John 3:16–17

6 · PRACTICAL CASE STUDIES

What would you do?



The unbelieving neighbor

Kind and generous, but openly rejects Christianity and lives contrary to Scripture.

Should you bring up their lifestyle, or wait for opportunities to discuss faith? What would it look like to demonstrate Christ?



The workplace

A coworker openly talks about their lifestyle and sometimes asks what you think about moral issues.

How do you share truth without being needlessly confrontational? Answering a question vs. constantly correcting?



The person who claims to be Christian

Openly participates in behavior contrary to Scripture and doesn't seem interested in changing.

How is this different? How should the church respond? What separates correction from condemnation?



The community debate

Some Christians want to oppose a practice politically and legally; others focus on preaching the Gospel.

Are these in conflict? Which principles guide us? How do cultural battles avoid eclipsing our mission?

KEY EMPHASIS

Don’t confuse the standard with the mission



God’s moral standard

Tells us how His people are to live.



The Gospel

Tells us how people separated from God can be reconciled to Him.

When someone becomes a follower of Jesus, they enter a life of discipleship, transformation, and holiness.

Anchor passages: 1 Corinthians 5:12–13 for the lesson, and Matthew 28:18–20 for our mission. Sin outside the church isn’t unimportant — the church must understand the difference between discipling its members and evangelizing the world.

CLOSING CHALLENGE

Our responsibility is not to make unbelievers behave like Christians.

It is to live like Christians, share the Gospel with unbelievers, and invite them to become followers of Jesus.

This doesn’t mean abandoning moral convictions, ceasing to speak against sin, or ignoring society — it means understanding the mission God has given us.

Are we more concerned with making people conform to Christian morality, or with making disciples of Jesus?

