

*In search of...*



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# How Much Leaven?

Like so many other questions, this one has two answers. The short answer is what Paul observed in 1 Corinthians 5:6: just “a little” lit. The long answer really deals with answering the more complex question: how “much” is “a little”?

The context of Paul's answer was the sin of fornication (1 Cor. 5:1) that was being sanctioned by the Corinthians—a young man was living as husband-and-wife with his step-mother! That fornication is a sin is obvious

from such Scriptures as Romans 1:29, 1 Corinthians 6:18, 2 Corinthians 12:21, Galatians 5:9, and 1 Thessalonians 4:3. Under no circumstances can fornication ever merit God's approval. It is always wrong.

People fail to hit the mark by one of three ways: by failing to do those things which they should do (some folks call this a sin of omission, like not visiting the widows and orphans of James 1:26), by doing those

things they shouldn't do (some folks call this a sin of commission; the New Testament term for this is *paraptoma*, which is translated "trespass" and means "a deviation from uprightness and truth" (Vine, 1166), or by going "beyond that which is written" (I Cor. 4:6), which can also be termed a sin of commission. The New Testament term for this last way is *parabaino*, which is translated "transgress" and means to go beyond (Vine, 1161). "Lawlessness" (*anomia* or "disregard for the law" (Vine, 647) is similar to trespass, but both indicate rejection of God's will and substituting one's own will for God's.

Before making the spiritual application, let's notice briefly what has happened to those who are a part of the Restoration Movement that was stated in the late 1700s and early 1800s in America — a movement that sought to restore the church of Christ to its New Testament purity.

Just prior to the American Civil War, two things happened to influence Christians: the melodeon (or organ) was introduced into the worship service of the church in Midway, Kentucky, and the American Christian Missionary Society was founded (in Cincinnati, Ohio). These two digressions began a division of believers into two groups known as "progressives" and "conservatives." This division became permanent when the

1906 United States census recognized the former group as the Disciples of Christ (Christian Church) and the churches of Christ (which was composed of the "conservative" element of the American Restoration Movement).

While the churches of Christ continued striving to be the church of the New Testament, the Disciples grew into a full-fledged denomination. During the period immediately following World War II through the late 1950s and middle 1960s, faithful "conservatives" resisted the "liberal" digressions of institutionalism and the sponsoring church arrangement.

In a book compiled by Mac Lynn, *Churches of Christ in the United States* (Brentwood, TN: Morrison and Phillips Associates, 1994), conservative congregations are identified as being "Non-institutional: oppose church support of institutions and the sponsoring church concept of benevolence and missions" (93). Lynn does not identify "liberal" congregations, but he provides several identifying marks of an "anti."

Liberal brethren saw (and continue to see) nothing wrong with human institutions doing the work that God gave his church (in such areas as caring for widows and orphans).

Most of those who earlier supported institutionalism also embraced the sponsoring church arrangement, which man feasts itself in the areas of benevolence

and evangelism. A for the “antis,” they see nothing right with having separate Bible classes, using multiple containers for the Lord’s supper, or using a located preacher. Both of these digression have one thing in common — they “go beyond that which is written” (2 Cor. 4:6) and thus “abideth not in the doctrine of Christ” (2 John 9).

Now for the spiritual application. Just as much as the congregation at Corinth was sanctioning fornication, brethren who today sanction the practices of liberalism c anti-ism endanger their eternal souls, for what they teach and practice is not the “doctrine of Christ” and, thus, the have not God (2 John 9). In addition to jeopardizing their souls, they threaten the collective influence of their congregation (Rev. 2:1-5).

In Paul’s day, it was quite common for the heathen I practice fornication as a form of religious observance. Eve though the fornication at Corinth was identified by Paul a being a ‘little’ thing, since its continued practice would potentially destroy the souls of the Corinthian brethren Paul directed he Corinthians to “purge out therefore the old leaven” (I Cor. 5:6a) before others became influence by the behavior of the fornicators.

Today, some brethren sanction a “little” liberalism (in the form of the sponsoring church arrangement, which is

often used as a euphemism for a mini-missionary society) or institutionalism of any sort). Worse yet, when brethren sanction error, they become “partakers” in the “evil deeds (2 John 11) of those practicing error, and, thus, share in the guilt of their sin. Whenever faithful brethren learn of such digression, our duty is two-fold: warn those practicing error (for they “cause divisions. . . . contrary to the doctrine ye have learned”) and after identifying them, we are to ‘avoid them’ (Rom. 15:17).

The Holy Spirit, through the inspired apostle Paul, commanded that Christians have Bible authority for the thing they do: “Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord” (Col. 3:17).

So long as we do Bible things in Bible ways, and cal L3ible things by Bible names, we will have God’s approval 2 John 9b).

How “much” is “a little”? The answer remains the same is it was nearly 2,000 years ago: just a “little.”

Hal Snyder

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# Victories by God

W N D E A T H H W C P R Y J Z B I U K H  
V H H Q U J U A M T Q G J K P L W D H O  
A I C V L W L U X G L G P G J C Z K D Y  
W P J S S Y F P Z O O Q V Y P X T T R Q  
C D L U H S Z E D L H J L Q G Y T B V G  
W R E K D T D V V I N K S Q Q K U W F Q  
N W D L J N I D H A G K V R D O D C M R  
R X Z N X T U U A T A R C V E W Z B N C  
X D S K M L L P B H Q S W G D E Z X A L  
P Q A V U G A M A N R H D X S U D I X Y  
Q F O U E I I J B Q V A I Z I R L V Q S  
R L C T N F C F Y N D M A H K V I D J Y  
P W L U Y T N C L H A M Y E F N Q N L R  
H D Y T Y A J D O G O A M N Y Q N R V I  
D C Q X A W N L N S I H O N R E T B K A  
X H U L B E D O M I T E S G V M G V R R  
Z V Q A R E R Q R P M O S E S U R J E V  
D L N X A T J F Y R U G D F G I D E O N  
L O S W M S F N I E Y L Q F Y O P S P S  
S F C V D N L I A D G M J J E C P U P H  
G G S U O I N F X J F W T B U G T S E D

- David was given victory over G\_\_\_\_\_ (1 Sam. 17:48-50)
- Amalek was defeated when M\_\_\_\_\_’ hands were up (Ex. 17:11-13)
- God gives us victory through our Lord J\_\_\_\_\_ (1 Cor. 15:57)
- The E\_\_\_\_\_ were subdued by David (1 Chron. 18:12-13)
- For the Christian, D\_\_\_\_\_ is swallowed up in victory (1 Cor. 15:54)
- An arrow was a sign of victory over S\_\_\_\_\_ (2 Kings 13:17)
- Coming into the promised land, S\_\_\_\_\_ was defeated (Deut. 2:31-34)
- God gave G\_\_\_\_\_ victory with 300 men (Judges 7:7-8)
- Judah was defeated by B\_\_\_\_\_ for idolatry (2 Kings 25)
- Lot was rescued by A\_\_\_\_\_ with God’s deliverance (Gen. 14:14-20)
- One of David’s mighty men, S\_\_\_\_\_ (2 Sam. 23:11-12)