

**A CONTEXTUAL EXEGETICAL STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-8:
ECCLESIAL HOLINESS AND DISCIPLINE IN RUWENZORI DIOCESE**

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DECLARATION

I, ASABA Auther, declare that this exegesis, titled “A Contextual Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8: Ecclesial Holiness and Discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese,” is my original work, except where I have duly acknowledged the sources consulted. This work has not been submitted to any other institution of higher learning for the award of any academic qualification.

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APPROVAL

This is to certify that this dissertation titled "A Contextual Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8: Ecclesial Holiness and Discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese," by Asaba Author has been done under my supervision and is now ready for submission with my approval

Signature  date..... 11/08/2026

Rev. Can Prof Edison Kalengyo Muhindo

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my Lectures, Parents, My Spouse, Siblings and to my children who have tirelessly stood by my side ever since I started my Education journey to this far, more especially in this course. They have nurtured my life to the dream from the time I received the call for Ministry. I am extremely humbled and profoundly honored to have such incredible People. It is because of their unreserved support that I have been able to reach this far. My God bless you.

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a contextual exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, focusing on ecclesial holiness and discipline and their implications for the Church in Ruwenzori Diocese. The study is motivated by continuing concerns regarding moral accountability, sexual misconduct, leadership challenges, and inconsistent disciplinary practices within contemporary Christian communities in Uganda. Paul's response to sexual immorality in the Corinthian church demonstrates that moral failure is not merely an individual matter but also a concern for the holiness, identity, witness, and responsibility of the entire Christian community. The study therefore seeks to examine Paul's teaching and consider its relevance to contemporary ecclesial discipline within Ruwenzori Diocese.

The study employs a qualitative, library-based research design and uses the Tripolar Exegetical Method as its primary interpretive framework. The method engages three interrelated movements: distantiation, contextualization, and appropriation. Through historical, literary, socio-cultural, and theological analysis, the study examines the meaning of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 within its first-century Corinthian context. It then brings the findings of the exegetical study into dialogue with contemporary ecclesial realities in Ruwenzori Diocese. The research draws on the Greek text of the passage, biblical commentaries, scholarly works on Pauline theology and ethics, African contextual hermeneutics, and relevant Anglican ecclesial materials.

The study argues that Paul presents ecclesial holiness as a corporate responsibility and views church discipline as an essential expression of the Church's identity as a holy community. Paul's concern is not simply punishment of the offender but the restoration of the individual and the preservation of the spiritual integrity of the Christian community. The imagery of leaven and Passover further demonstrates that tolerated sin can affect the wider church community and compromise its witness.

The study concludes that the principles of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 have significant implications for Ruwenzori Diocese. They call the Church to strengthen biblical and consistent disciplinary processes, promote communal responsibility for holiness,

address moral failure without partiality or favoritism, and ensure that discipline remains both corrective and restorative. The study recommends a contextual approach to ecclesial discipline that is firmly grounded in Scripture while remaining sensitive to the social, cultural, and ecclesial realities of the Ugandan Anglican context.

Keywords: 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, contextual exegesis, ecclesial holiness, church discipline, moral accountability, restorative discipline, Tripolar Exegetical Method, Ruwenzori Diocese.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study and motivation of the study

Christianity has experienced significant growth in Uganda over the past decades, with churches playing a central role in social, moral, and spiritual life. Within this expansion, however, questions have emerged regarding moral accountability, ecclesial discipline, and the church's response to ethical failure among its members. Reports of sexual misconduct, leadership scandals, and inconsistent disciplinary practices within church communities have raised concerns about how biblical teaching on holiness and discipline is understood and implemented. These realities invite careful theological reflection grounded in Scripture.

The issue of moral failure within the church is not new. In 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, the Apostle Paul addresses a case of sexual immorality within the Corinthian congregation and rebukes the community for its failure to respond appropriately. Rather than mourning the situation and exercising corrective discipline, the church had become complacent. Paul's response combines theological reasoning, ecclesiological identity, and pastoral instruction. He frames the matter not merely as an individual moral lapse but as a communal crisis that threatens the integrity of the church as God's holy people.

This study, titled "A Contextual Exegetical Study of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8: Ecclesial Holiness and Discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese" seeks to examine Paul's teaching within its historical and literary context and to explore its relevance for the contemporary church in Ruwenzori Diocese. Using the Tripolar Exegetical Method, the study will engage the world of the text, the contemporary ecclesial context, and the dialogue between them. The aim is not only to interpret the passage accurately but also to assess how its theological and ethical principles may inform the church's response to moral challenges within the Diocese.

By grounding the discussion in careful exegesis and contextual theological reflection, this research intends to contribute to ongoing conversations about holiness,

discipline, and ecclesial responsibility within the in Church of Uganda, with particular reference to Ruwenzori Diocese.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Church discipline and moral accountability remain central themes in Pauline ecclesiology, yet their practical implementation varies significantly across ecclesial contexts. In Uganda, Christianity occupies a prominent social and cultural position, and the Church of Uganda continues to play an influential role in shaping moral discourse. However, public reports of clergy misconduct, leadership disputes, and moral controversies within Ugandan churches have raised questions about how biblical teachings on holiness and discipline are interpreted and applied in practice.

Scholarly literature on 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 provides substantial historical and theological insight into Paul's response to moral failure in Corinth. At the same time, African theological discussions frequently address moral decline in broad terms without sustained exegetical engagement with specific Pauline texts. Within the structures of Ruwenzori Diocese, there is limited documented theological reflection that directly connects Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 with contemporary ecclesial disciplinary practice.

The problem, therefore, is not merely the existence of moral challenges within the church, but the lack of a clearly articulated, textually grounded, and contextually sensitive theological framework that connects Pauline instruction with contemporary diocesan realities. Without such a framework, discussions of discipline risk becoming either culturally reactive or selectively applied.

This study seeks to address that gap by providing a contextual exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and exploring its theological implications for the Church in Ruwenzori Diocese.

1.3 Research Objectives

General Objective

To conduct a contextual exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 using the Tripolar Exegetical Method in order to articulate its theological principles and examine their implications for moral accountability within Ruwenzori Diocese.

Specific Objectives

- i. To analyze 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 within its historical, literary, and socio-cultural context in order to determine Paul's intended meaning.
- ii. To examine the ecclesiological and ethical principles embedded in the passage, particularly concerning holiness, communal responsibility, and restorative discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese.
- iii. To evaluate how these theological principles may inform contemporary ecclesial reflection and practice within Ruwenzori Diocese.

1.4 Research Questions

This study will be guided by the following research questions:

- i. What is the historical, literary, and theological meaning of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 within its first-century Corinthian context?
- ii. How does Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 articulate principles of ecclesial holiness, corporate responsibility, and restorative discipline?
- iii. In what ways can the theological principles derived from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 inform contemporary reflection on moral accountability within Ruwenzori Diocese?

1.5 Literature Review

Scholarly engagement with 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 has been extensive, particularly within Western biblical scholarship. Studies have generally concentrated on three major areas: the historical and rhetorical context of the Corinthian church, Pauline ecclesiology and ethics, and the theological rationale for church discipline. While

these contributions provide valuable exegetical foundations, limited attention has been given to sustained contextual application within specific African diocesan settings such as Ruwenzori. This review evaluates existing scholarship under four thematic areas and identifies the need for contextual integration.

Historical and Socio-Rhetorical Interpretations of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.

Major commentaries situate 1 Corinthians 5 within the moral and social environment of first-century Corinth. Fee argues that Paul's concern extends beyond the individual offender to the corporate integrity of the Christian community, emphasizing that the church's arrogance reflects theological misunderstanding rather than mere moral negligence.¹ Similarly, Thiselton provides a detailed socio-rhetorical reading, demonstrating how Paul's language of "leaven" evokes Jewish Passover imagery to reinforce communal purity and covenant identity.²

Barrett observes that although Corinth was known for moral permissiveness, the incestuous relationship mentioned in the text would have been condemned even within Greco-Roman culture, thereby intensifying Paul's rebuke.³ Morris concurs, noting that Paul's primary criticism targets the congregation's failure to mourn and exercise corrective discipline.⁴

These scholars collectively demonstrate that 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 cannot be reduced to a private ethical issue; it is fundamentally ecclesiological. The church's identity as God's holy people is at stake. However, while these studies are exegetically rigorous, they remain largely within historical-critical frameworks and do not extend their analysis into contemporary ecclesial contexts outside Western settings.

Pauline Ecclesiology and Corporate Ethics: Beyond textual analysis, several scholars situate the passage within Paul's broader theology. Hays interpret the text through

¹ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987) pp 85-86

² Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 126-128

³ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1968), 130-132

⁴ Leon Morris, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1985), 48-49

the lens of communal identity, arguing that Paul understands sin as a corporate reality that endangers the entire body of Christ.⁵ Wright similarly frames discipline within Paul's vision of the church as the renewed covenant community embodying the holiness of the new creation.⁶

Bruce emphasizes that sanctification in Paul is grounded in union with Christ; ethical conduct flows from theological identity rather than legalistic enforcement.⁷ This perspective prevents discipline from being understood as punitive exclusion and instead frames it as covenantal faithfulness.

Gerber provides one of the most focused modern treatments of 1 Corinthians 5, arguing that "handing over to Satan" should be understood as restorative rather than purely condemnatory.⁸ His work clarifies the redemptive dimension of Pauline discipline.

While these theological studies deepen understanding of Paul's ethical reasoning, they often assume ecclesial structures characteristic of Western Protestantism. Little attention is given to contexts where communal authority, cultural dynamics, and social pressures differ significant

African Contextual Hermeneutics and Ecclesial Accountability: African biblical scholarship has emphasized the importance of contextual interpretation. Draper argues that African hermeneutics must hold text and context in critical dialogue, recognizing that interpretation is shaped by lived realities.⁹ This methodological insight is particularly relevant for a study employing the Tripolar Exegetical Method.

Adeyemo stresses that moral integrity is central to the credibility of African Christianity, especially in societies where the church plays a public role.¹⁰ Kato warns

⁵ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 245-247

⁶ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 345-346

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1971), 90-93

⁸ Jeremy Gerber, *The Discipline of the Church: A Study of 1 Corinthians 5* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2015), 56-57

⁹ Jonathan A. Draper, "Contextual Hermeneutics in Africa," in *The Bible in Africa*, ed. West and Dube (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 100-102

¹⁰ Tokunboh Adeyemo, ed., *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: WordAlive, 2006), 45-47

against theological compromise that accommodates cultural practices inconsistent with biblical teaching.¹¹ Onwuka, in examining sexual immorality and discipline within Nigerian churches, identifies fear of membership loss, respect for social status, and conflict avoidance as barriers to corrective action.¹²

These African contributions highlight contextual challenges but rarely offer sustained exegetical engagement with specific Pauline texts. Moreover, most discussions remain at continental or national levels rather than examining particular diocesan structures such as Ruwenzori.

Identified Gaps in the Literature:

From the review above, three significant gaps emerge:

First, although 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 has been thoroughly examined exegetically, few studies integrate rigorous textual analysis with structured contextual application within African ecclesial settings.

Second, African theological discussions on morality and discipline often address ethical decline broadly without sustained engagement with Pauline ecclesiology as articulated in specific passages.

Third, no substantial scholarly work appears to examine 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 in relation to the Anglican context of Ruwenzori Diocese, where ecclesial authority structures, communal identity, and cultural dynamics uniquely shape responses to moral failure.

This study seeks to address these gaps by employing the Tripolar Exegetical Method to bring the historical text into disciplined dialogue with the lived ecclesial realities of Ruwenzori Diocese. In doing so, it contributes not only to Pauline scholarship but also to contextual Anglican theology in Uganda.

¹¹ Byang H. Kato, *Theological Pitfalls in Africa* (Nairobi: Evangel Publishing House, 1975), 98-99

¹² Philip C. Onwuka, "Sexual Immorality and Church Discipline in Contemporary African Christianity," *African Journal of Biblical Studies*, 28(2), 45-62 (2011).

1.6 Research Methodology

This study adopted a qualitative, library-based research design and employed the Tripolar Exegetical Method as its primary interpretive framework. Originally developed by Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte and later articulated within African contextual hermeneutics by Jonathan A. Draper, the Tripolar Model offers a disciplined and integrative approach to biblical interpretation. It enables the researcher to examine the biblical text within its historical setting, to engage critically with contemporary ecclesial realities, and to bring both text and context into constructive theological dialogue.

This methodological approach is particularly appropriate for a contextual exegetical study of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and its implications in Ruwenzori Diocese. The passage addresses issues of immorality, communal identity, and corrective discipline within the early church. The Tripolar framework allows Paul's argument to be interpreted with historical sensitivity while remaining attentive to its theological relevance within the Anglican context of contemporary Uganda.

The Tripolar Method consists of three interrelated interpretive movements: Distantiation, Contextualization, and Appropriation. Each contributes a distinct analytical focus, and together they form a coherent and comprehensive framework for theological inquiry.

1.6.1 Data Sources and Analytical Process

The study relies exclusively on secondary sources. Primary engagement centers on the Greek text of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. Secondary sources include major biblical commentaries, peer-reviewed journal articles, works on Pauline theology and ethics, studies in African contextual hermeneutics, and Anglican ecclesiological documents relevant to the Church of Uganda.

Data are analyzed according to the three movements of the Tripolar Exegetical Method. Insights derived from historical and literary analysis are integrated with contextual theological reflection. The findings are then synthesized to develop a

coherent interpretation of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and to articulate its theological implications for Ruwenzori Diocese.

By structuring the study in this manner, the research maintains exegetical rigor, theological coherence, and contextual sensitivity while remaining within the scope of a qualitative library-based design.

1.6.2 Limitations of the Study

This study is qualitative and literature-based in nature. It does not include empirical fieldwork such as interviews, surveys, or observational research within Ruwenzori Diocese. Consequently, the contextual analysis is undertaken through engagement with documented scholarship and ecclesial materials rather than through primary data collection. The conclusions therefore represent theological reflection rather than sociological evaluation.

Because the research is confined to 1 Corinthians 5:1-8, its theological insights are bounded by the scope of that passage. Although related Pauline texts are referenced where necessary, the study does not provide a comprehensive treatment of all New Testament teachings on church discipline or holiness.

A further limitation concerns contextual specificity. While the study engages the Anglican context of Ruwenzori Diocese, it does not offer a detailed institutional analysis of individual parishes, clergy experiences, or diocesan administrative procedures. The focus remains theological rather than diagnostic.

These limitations clarify the academic boundaries of the research and reinforce its primary objective: to provide a contextual exegetical and theological framework rather than an empirical assessment of diocesan practice.

1.6.3 Research Ethics

Although this study does not involve human participants, it adheres to rigorous academic ethical standards. All sources are acknowledged in accordance with APA referencing guidelines, and care is taken to represent scholarly arguments accurately

and fairly. The research avoids plagiarism through careful citation and faithful engagement with primary and secondary materials.

In addressing issues of moral accountability within Ruwenzori Diocese, the study refrains from targeting specific individuals, parishes, or incidents. Observations are framed in general theological terms and grounded in documented literature rather than anecdotal claims. The aim is constructive theological reflection that contributes to ecclesial formation and integrity, not institutional criticism.

Ethical responsibility is therefore maintained through academic honesty, respectful engagement, and commitment to theological integrity.

1.6.4 Time-Frame

The research was be conducted over a period of six months. The first phase will focus on refining the research problem and reviewing key exegetical and contextual literature. The second phase concentrated on detailed historical, literary, and linguistic analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. The third phase developed the contextual and theological dialogue, integrating insights from Pauline scholarship and Anglican ecclesiology.

Subsequent phases involved drafting, revision, and incorporation of supervisory feedback. The final stage included editing, formatting in accordance with APA guidelines, proofreading, and submission. This structured timeline ensures systematic progress and coherence within the academic requirements of a Master of Divinity program.

1.6.5 Dissertation Structure

The research is organized into four chapters, each contributing to a comprehensive exegetical and theological analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.

Chapter One introduces the study by outlining the background and significance of the research, articulating the problem, objectives, and research questions, and explaining the scope, Literature Review, methodology, and structure of the dissertation.

Chapter Two provides the exegetical analysis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 using the Tripolar Exegetical Method. It explores the historical background of Corinth, conducts a detailed literary and linguistic examination of the passage, and interprets its theological meaning for the life and purity of the church.

Chapter Three discusses the theological and practical implications of Paul's teaching for the contemporary church, particularly in Uganda and the wider African context. It highlights how biblical discipline, repentance, and holiness can address moral decay and restore integrity within the body of Christ.

Chapter Four concludes the study by summarizing the major findings, drawing theological conclusions, and offering recommendations for further research and practical ministry application.

CHAPTER TWO

EXEGETICAL ANALYSIS OF 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-8

2.0 Introduction

First Corinthians 5 is a passage that many readers would rather avoid. The offence is sordid—a man sleeping with his stepmother and the remedy Paul prescribes seems shockingly severe: hand the offender over to Satan. Yet what makes the text truly uncomfortable is not merely its content but its challenge to modern sensibilities about tolerance, pastoral care, and the nature of Christian community. Paul does not apologize for his severity. He does not soften the blow. Instead, he writes with the moral urgency of a founder who sees his congregation drifting toward a catastrophe that is not merely ethical but theological.

The argument of this chapter is that 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 cannot be understood as a standalone disciplinary manual. It is, rather, a carefully constructed rhetorical intervention that weaves together several strands: a rebuke of communal pride, a directive for judicial exclusion, a metaphor drawn from Passover imagery, and a redemptive purpose clause that reframes the entire procedure. Each of these elements depends on the others. Remove the redemptive purpose, and discipline becomes vindictive. Remove the Passover typology, and the ethical imperative loses its theological grounding. Remove the rebuke of arrogance, and the community's failure remains undiagnosed.

This chapter proceeds in four movements. First, I reconstruct the social and moral environment of first-century Corinth, arguing that the city's honour-shame culture helps explain both the offence and the church's complacency. Second, I locate the passage within the literary flow of 1 Corinthians 1-6, showing how chapter 5 emerges logically from the preceding discussion of factionalism. Third, I offer a verse-by-verse exegetical analysis that attends carefully to Greek grammar, syntax, and lexicography, while also tracing Paul's rhetorical strategy. Fourth, I synthesise the

theological logic of the passage, identifying the relationships between identity and ethics, corporate responsibility, redemptive discipline, and ecclesial authority.

2.1 Corinth as a Social and Moral Environment

To grasp the force of Paul's rebuke, one must first see the city of Corinth as it was in the mid-first century. The Corinth that Paul knew was not the classical Greek city destroyed by Rome in 146 BCE, but a Roman colony refounded by Julius Caesar in 44 BCE.¹³ Within a century, Corinth had become the commercial hub of southern Greece. Its two ports—Lechaeum on the west and Cenchreae on the east—funneled trade between Italy and Asia Minor, creating a city of remarkable ethnic diversity: Roman veterans, Greek freed persons, Syrian merchants, Egyptian traders, and a substantial Jewish community.¹⁴

What matters for reading 1 Corinthians is not simply the city's prosperity but its social logic. Corinthian culture was shaped by the pursuit of honour. Status was displayed through patronage, public benefaction, rhetorical skill, and the ability to boast.¹⁵ This competitive environment did not remain outside the church. The Corinthians brought their cultural scripts with them into the assembly. The factionalism that Paul condemns in chapters 1-4 "I belong to Paul," "I belong to Apollos," "I belong to Cephas" (1 Cor 1:12) is precisely the language of competitive honor seeking. Paul's counter-argument in those chapters is radical: the cross is foolishness to a culture that prizes wisdom, and the crucified Messiah is weakness to a culture that prizes power (1 Cor 1:18-25).

The same cultural logic—the drive to boast, to display status, to avoid public shame—shapes the crisis of chapter 5. The Corinthians are *πεφυσιωμένοι*, "puffed up," a term Paul uses repeatedly in chapters 1-4 to describe their arrogant factionalism.¹⁶ Now he uses the same word to describe their response to incest. The connection is not

¹³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*, 3rd ed. (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2002), 3-17.

¹⁴ David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 23-28.

¹⁵ Ben Witherington III, *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1995), 21-25.

¹⁶ Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1987), 196-197.

accidental. A community that has learned to boast about its leaders will also boast about its tolerance. The Corinthians have reframed moral complacency as spiritual maturity. They have mistaken the absence of discipline for the presence of grace.

The specific offence in verse 1 requires careful delineation. Paul writes that a man ἔχει τὴν γυναῖκα τοῦ πατρὸς literally, “has the wife of the father.”¹⁷ The verb ἔχει in such contexts is a euphemism for sexual relations (cf. Mark 6:18; John 4:18). The woman is almost certainly a stepmother, not a biological mother. What scholars dispute is whether the father is still alive. If he is, the relationship constitutes both incest (by Jewish law) and adultery (since the stepmother is married to the father). If the father is dead, the relationship remains incestuous but not adulterous. Paul’s language does not decide the question, but his rhetorical move in verse 1 “such immorality as is not even among the pagans” strongly suggests that the act was considered shocking even by Greco-Roman standards. Roman law prohibited marriage between a man and his stepmother, and public opinion would have condemned it.¹⁸ Paul’s point, therefore, is not that pagans are morally superior but that the Corinthians have fallen below a threshold that even their neighbors recognize.

The greater scandal, however, is not the act but the community’s response. Paul expects mourning (πενθεῖν), the traditional Jewish expression of covenantal grief over sin (cf. Ezra 9:3-4; Neh 1:4; Joel 2:12-17). Mourning would have signified that the Corinthians understood the offence as a rupture in their relationship with God. Instead, they are πεφυσιωμένοι. This verb, derived from φῦσα (bellows), suggests something inflated with air—hollow, groundless, destined to collapse.¹⁹ The Corinthians’ arrogance is not strength but vacancy.

¹⁷ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 388-389.

¹⁸ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 199-200

¹⁹ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 391-392.

2.2 Literary Context: From Factionalism to Moral Failure

Commentators often treat chapters 1-4 as theological and chapters 5-6 as ethical, as if Paul were changing subjects. This is misleading. Chapters 1-4 are already deeply ethical, and chapter 5 is profoundly theological. A better way to see the relationship is that Paul is applying a corrected theological framework to specific practical problems.

In chapters 1-4, Paul dismantles the Corinthians' understanding of wisdom, power, and apostolic authority. He argues that true wisdom is the cross, true power is weakness, and true apostles are servants, not celebrities. The goal of this argument is to reshape the Corinthians' identity: they are not sophisticated consumers of religious goods but redeemed sinners who owe everything to God's foolish grace. Chapter 5 tests whether that identity has taken root. If the Corinthians truly understand that they are "unleavened" because Christ has been sacrificed (5:7), they will act accordingly. If they remain "puffed up," they reveal that the argument of chapters 1-4 has failed. Thus, as Fee observes, "The problem of the incestuous man is not so much the man himself as it is the church's arrogant tolerance of him."²⁰

The immediate literary unit (5:1-8) is demarcated by the opening ὅλως ἀκούεται ("it is actually reported") and the concluding exhortation to celebrate the festival with unleavened bread (5:8). Verses 9-13 extend the discussion to other cases of immoral behaviour within the church, and chapter 6 turns to litigation and prostitution. But 5:1-8 is a self-contained rhetorical unit, with its own proposition (the offender must be removed), supporting arguments (the leaven metaphor, the Passover typology), and a purpose clause that gives the entire procedure its theological rationale.

2.3 Rhetorical Strategy in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Identifying Paul's rhetorical strategy illuminates why the passage unfolds as it does. Following recent studies, I read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 as a deliberative rhetorical unit—

²⁰ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 196.

that is, rhetoric aimed at persuading an audience to take a specific future action.²¹ The proposition is stated in verse 5: παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾷ (“to hand such a one over to Satan”). The proximate purpose is εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (“for the destruction of the flesh”), and the ultimate purpose is ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ (“so that the spirit may be saved”).

Paul deploys three classical rhetorical appeals:

Pathos (emotional appeal): The opening adverb ὅλως conveys astonishment. Paul is not merely informing the Corinthians; he is expressing shock. The comparative “not even among the pagans” intensifies the shame. The Corinthians should feel humiliated, not proud. The rhetorical question in verse 2 “And are you puffed up? Should you not rather have mourned?” is designed to produce cognitive dissonance. Paul forces the Corinthians to see the gap between their self-perception (we are spiritually advanced) and reality (we are tolerating incest).²²

Ethos (appeal of character): Paul asserts his apostolic authority in verse 3: ἐγὼ γὰρ ... ἤδη κέκρικα (“I have already judged”). The perfect tense κέκρικα signals a settled decision. Yet he immediately subordinates his judgment to the gathered assembly: συναθρόντων ὑμῶν (“when you are assembled”). His ethos is not authoritarian but collegial: he speaks with authority, but the church must act. The mention of “my spirit” alongside the assembly (verse 4) reinforces this unity. Paul is not giving orders from a distance; he is standing with the Corinthians as they act.

Logos (logical appeal): The leaven metaphor in verse 6 is a rational argument from common knowledge. The Corinthians know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. The unstated premise is that the incestuous relationship is leaven. Therefore, the whole lump—the entire congregation—is being corrupted. The logic is inescapable. Paul then grounds this practical reasoning in the Passover typology of verse 7: Christ has been sacrificed as our Passover lamb. If that is true, then the Corinthians are

²¹ Sin-pan Daniel Ho, *Paul and the Creation of a Counter-Cultural Community: A Rhetorical Analysis of 1 Cor. 5.1-11.1 in Light of the Social Lives of the Corinthians*, Library of New Testament Studies 509 (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2015).

²² Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 180.

already unleavened. The ethical imperative (“cleanse out the old leaven”) follows from the theological indicative (“you are unleavened”). This is the signature move of Pauline ethics: identity precedes and grounds obedience.²³

2.4 Verse-by-Verse Exegetical Analysis

2.4.1 Verse 1: The Reported Offence

ὅλως ἀκούεται ἐν ὑμῖν πορνεία, καὶ τοιαύτη πορνεία ἣτις οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν, ὥστε γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν.

The adverb ὅλως is emphatic. It can mean “actually,” “commonly,” or “altogether,” but in this context it signals astonishment.²⁴ The present passive ἀκούεται (“it is being reported”) implies ongoing circulation. The news has not come and gone; it is still being talked about. Paul’s use of πορνεία is intentionally broad. The term covers any sexual activity outside the boundaries set by Scripture and, for Paul, the created order. But he immediately specifies the offence: γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν. The infinitive ἔχειν is euphemistic. The man is not merely living with his stepmother; he is having sexual relations with her.

The comparative clause οὐδὲ ἐν τοῖς ἔθνεσιν (“not even among the pagans”) is rhetorically potent. Ἔθνεσιν (from ἔθνος) is Paul’s usual term for Gentiles or non-Jews. He is not appealing to pagan morality as a norm. Rather, he is shaming the Corinthians by pointing out that even a culture they might have considered morally lax recognises the wrongness of this act.²⁵ The church, which should have been morally superior, has fallen below the surrounding society.

2.4.2 Verse 2: The Failure to Mourn

καὶ ὑμεῖς πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστέ, καὶ οὐχὶ μᾶλλον ἐπενθήσατε, ἵνα ἀρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας;

²³ Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 214-215.

²⁴ Garland, 1 Corinthians, 178.

²⁵ Thiselton, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 393.

The periphrastic perfect πεφυσιωμένοι ἐστέ (“you are puffed up”) is grammatically significant. The perfect tense indicates a settled condition resulting from a past action. Their pride is not a momentary lapse but a persistent state. The verb φυσιόω (from φῦσα, bellows) appears only in Paul in the New Testament, and he uses it repeatedly in 1 Corinthians.²⁶ It evokes the image of a bellows inflating a bag—something full of air, hollow, and about to burst. The Corinthians’ arrogance is not robust confidence; it is empty posturing.

The aorist ἐπενθήσατε (“you mourned”) refers to a past failure. Paul is not saying that the Corinthians should mourn now; he is saying that their proper response—when they first learned of the offence—would have been communal grief. In Jewish tradition, mourning was the appropriate response to covenant violation (Ezra 9:3-4; Joel 2:12-17). The absence of mourning reveals that the Corinthians do not perceive the offence as a rupture in their relationship with God.

The purpose clause ἵνα ἀρθῇ ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν (“so that he would be removed from among you”) is grammatically dependent on ἐπενθήσατε. Paul is not commanding action that the Corinthian have failed to take; rather, he is arguing that mourning would have naturally led to removal. The aorist passive subjunctive ἀρθῇ (“be removed”) is the verb used in the Septuagint for purging evil from Israel (Deut 13:5; 17:7).²⁷ Paul is framing the church as a covenant community with the same obligation to maintain purity. The phrase ἐκ μέσου ὑμῶν (“from among you”) reinforces this—the offender must be removed from the corporate body.

Paul never names the offender. He is ὁ τὸ ἔργον τοῦτο πράξας (“the one who did this deed”). The deliberate anonymity suggests that Paul’s concern is not the individual’s humiliation but the community’s response. As Hays notes, the offender is treated as a case study rather than a target for personal attack.²⁸

²⁶ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 83-84.

²⁷ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 205.

²⁸ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 84.

2.4.3 Verses 3-4: Apostolic Judgment and Ecclesial Assembly

ἐγὼ μὲν γάρ, ἀπὼν τῷ σώματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι, ἤδη κέκρικα ὡς παρὼν τὸν οὕτως τοῦτο κατεργασάμενον· ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ συναχθέντων ὑμῶν καὶ τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ.

Paul's opening phrase—ἀπὼν τῷ σώματι παρὼν δὲ τῷ πνεύματι—is a rhetorical trope found elsewhere (cf. Col 2:5). It should not be read as a claim to mystical omnipresence. Rather, Paul is asserting that his apostolic authority is not constrained by geography. His founding role in the community gives him the right to judge even from a distance.²⁹

The perfect κέκρικα (“I have judged”) is again significant. The perfect tense in Greek indicates a completed action with continuing results. Paul's judgment is not an opinion he is now forming; it is a settled decision that carries ongoing force. The aorist participle κατεργασάμενον (from κατεργάζομαι, “to accomplish, perpetrate”) emphasises the deliberate nature of the offender's action. This is not a sin of ignorance or weakness but a willful act.

Verse 4 specifies the procedure. The genitive absolute συναχθέντων ὑμῶν (“when you are assembled”) places the action squarely in the hands of the gathered congregation. The verb συνάγω (“to gather together”) is used in the Septuagint for the assembly of Israel and in early Christian literature for the church gathered for worship and decision-making.³⁰ The passive voice suggests that the gathering is not merely a human initiative but a response to divine calling. The phrase ἐν τῷ ὀνόματι τοῦ κυρίου (“in the name of the Lord”) carries judicial and covenantal weight. The assembly acts under Christ's authority, not merely its own.

The mention of τοῦ ἐμοῦ πνεύματος (“my spirit”) alongside the assembly has puzzled commentators. Some have taken it as a reference to Paul's spiritual presence. Others, more plausibly, see it as a rhetorical device reinforcing the unity between apostolic

²⁹Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 206

³⁰ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 396-398.

authority and communal discernment.³¹ Paul is not giving orders from Ephesus and expecting the Corinthians to obey like subordinates. He is standing with them as they act. The phrase σὺν τῇ δυνάμει τοῦ κυρίου (“with the power of the Lord”) adds a final note of solemnity: the assembly’s action is not merely human discipline but a participation in Christ’s own judgment.

2.4.4 Verse 5: Handing Over to Satan

παραδοῦναι τὸν τοιοῦτον τῷ Σατανᾶ εἰς ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός, ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ἐν τῇ ἡμέρᾳ τοῦ κυρίου.

The infinitive παραδοῦναι (“to hand over”) is the verb Paul uses elsewhere for judicial or custodial transfer (cf. Rom 1:24, 26, 28; 1 Cor 11:23; 1 Tim 1:20). The recipient is τῷ Σατανᾶ. What does this mean?

Several interpretations have been proposed. Some early church fathers understood “handing over to Satan” as excommunication accompanied by physical affliction. Others, including Origen, interpreted ὄλεθρον τῆς σαρκός (“destruction of the flesh”) as the mortification of sinful desires. More recently, David Horrell has argued, following comparative study of ancient curse formulae, that the phrase is best understood as a curse consigning the offender to a divine being for punishment, perhaps even death.³² This interpretation makes Paul’s instruction morally difficult by modern standards, but Horrell notes that the difficulty does not negate the text’s authority; rather, it forces readers to wrestle with aspects of the New Testament that resist easy appropriation.

A different line of interpretation, represented by Fee and Garland, sees “handing over to Satan” as expulsion from the protective sphere of the Christian community into the realm where Satan exercises influence.³³ To be handed over to Satan means to be removed from the community’s protection and placed back into the environment from which the believer was called. The ὄλεθρος τῆς σαρκός (“destruction of the flesh”)

³¹ Witherington, *Conflict and Community*, 132-133

³² David G. Horrell, “Difficult texts: 1 Corinthians 5.5 - ‘Hand this man over to Satan ...’,” *Theology* 123, no. 5 (2020): 337-344.

³³ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 208-210; Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 186-188.

then refers not to physical death but to the breaking of the offender's sinful patterns, the "flesh" understood as the fallen, sinful aspect of human existence (cf. Rom 8:5-8; Gal 5:16-21).

I find a synthesis of these views most persuasive. The phrase likely includes both the idea of communal exclusion and the expectation that such exclusion will result in severe consequences whether physical, social, or spiritual. However, the decisive factor is the purpose clause: ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ("so that the spirit may be saved"). The goal is not punishment for its own sake but salvation. The offender's πνεῦμα here meaning the whole person in relation to God is to be rescued on the day of final judgment.³⁴ This purpose clause is the hermeneutical key to the entire passage. However severe the discipline, it is oriented toward redemption.

Recent comparative work by Jonathan Au strengthens this reading. Au examines 1 Corinthians 5:5-8 in light of Roman legal concepts of clementia (clemency) and utilitas publica (public utility).³⁵ He argues that Paul's disciplinary instruction reflects a concern for both retributive justice and the restoration of the offender, as well as the purity of the Christian community. The purpose clause is not an afterthought; it is the theological center of the passage.

2.4.5 Verse 6: The Leaven Metaphor

οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν. οὐκ οἶδατε ὅτι μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ;

Paul's opening statement "οὐ καλὸν τὸ καύχημα ὑμῶν" ("Your boasting is not good") is ironic. The adjective καλόν means "good," "noble," or "beautiful." The Corinthians thought they had something to boast about: perhaps their spiritual freedom, their tolerance, or their unwillingness to judge others. Paul declares that their boasting is in fact ugly and shameful.³⁶

³⁴ HaysJonathan Au, "Ecclesial and Divine Judgment in 1 Corinthians 5:1-6:11: A Comparative - Exegetical Study in Light of Roman Legal Contexts" (PhD diss., Charles Sturt University, 2025), abstract., First Corinthians, 86.

³⁵

³⁶ Garland, 1 Corinthians, 189.

The rhetorical question οὐκ οἴδατε (“Do you not know?”) appears frequently in 1 Corinthians (3:16; 5:6; 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19; 9:13, 24). It functions as a reminder of knowledge the Corinthians already possess but have failed to apply. They know that μικρὰ ζύμη ὅλον τὸ φύραμα ζυμοῖ (“a little leaven leavens the whole lump”). The present active ζυμοῖ (“leavens”) indicates an ongoing process. The leaven does not simply sit in the dough; it permeates, transforms, and corrupts.

The metaphor of leaven (ζύμη) draws from everyday baking imagery but carries strong symbolic resonance in Jewish tradition. Leaven was associated with corruption because it represented fermentation and decay. In the Passover ritual, Israelites were commanded to remove all leaven from their homes (Exod 12:15; 13:7). Philo, the first-century Jewish philosopher, called leaven “a symbol of arrogance” (Special Laws 2.145).³⁷ Paul’s Jewish hearers would have felt the full weight of the analogy without further explanation. The Corinthians’ tolerance of the incestuous man is leaven. It will spread. The whole lump is already being corrupted.

2.4.6 Verse 7: Christ Our Passover

ἐκκαθάρατε τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην, ἵνα ᾗτε νέον φύραμα, καθὼς ἐστε ἄζυμοι. καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός.

The aorist imperative ἐκκαθάρατε (“cleanse out”) calls for decisive, once-for-all action. The prefix ἐκ- (“out”) intensifies the verb, suggesting complete removal. The “old leaven” (τὴν παλαιὰν ζύμην) represents the former way of life including the tolerated immorality that belongs to the old age. The purpose clause ἵνα ᾗτε νέον φύραμα (“so that you may be a new lump”) indicates the goal of the cleansing.³⁸

But then comes the surprise: καθὼς ἐστε ἄζυμοι (“as you are unleavened”). The present indicative ἐστε states a fact. Paul says the Corinthians already are unleavened. This is not a condition they must achieve but an identity they must live out. This is the classic Pauline move: the indicative grounds the imperative. The

³⁷ Cited in “Why is the metaphor of yeast used in 1 Corinthians 5:6?” available at biblehub.com.

³⁸ Garland, 1 Corinthians, 191-192.

Corinthians are holy in Christ; therefore, they must act in accordance with that holiness.³⁹

The reason follows: καὶ γὰρ τὸ πάσχα ἡμῶν ἐτύθη Χριστός (“For also our Passover lamb, Christ, has been sacrificed”). The particle καὶ γάρ (“for also”) introduces the theological foundation. The imagery shifts from leaven to Passover. Just as the Passover lamb was sacrificed to deliver Israel from Egypt, Christ’s death has delivered the church from slavery to sin and death. The aorist passive ἐτύθη (“has been sacrificed”) emphasizes the once-for-all, completed nature of Christ’s sacrificial work. The passive voice indicates that God is the agent: Christ was sacrificed by God’s will. The identification of Christ as the Passover lamb is theologically rich. In the Exodus narrative, the lamb’s blood protected Israel from the judgment of the destroyer (Exod 12:21-23). Paul applies this typology to the church: Christ’s death accomplishes atonement and secures the community’s identity as God’s redeemed people.⁴⁰

2.4.7 Verse 8: The Festival of Unleavened Bread

ὥστε ἐορτάζωμεν μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ, μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας, ἀλλ’ ἐν ἀζύμοις εἰλικρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας.

The hortatory subjunctive ἐορτάζωμεν (“let us celebrate”) extends the Passover imagery into ethical exhortation. The “festival” is the ongoing life of the church as a continuous Passover celebration.⁴¹ The negative μὴ ἐν ζύμῃ παλαιᾷ (“not with old leaven”) is then expanded: μηδὲ ἐν ζύμῃ κακίας καὶ πονηρίας (“nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness”). The two nouns κακία and πονηρία are nearly synonymous. Κακία denotes moral evil or depravity, while πονηρία focuses on active malice or wickedness. The use of two nearly synonymous terms in a genitive chain is emphatic. Paul is covering the whole spectrum of moral corruption.

³⁹ Fee, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 214-215.

⁴⁰ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 624-626.

⁴¹ C. K. Barrett, *A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (London: A & C Black, 1968), 128

The positive counterpart is ἄζυμοις εἰλικρινείας καὶ ἀληθείας (“the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth”). Εἰλικρίνεια is a striking word. It may derive from εἶλη (sunlight) and κρίνω (to judge), suggesting something tested and found pure by the light of the sun, a word picture of transparency and moral clarity.⁴² Ἀλήθεια is truth in the sense of reality, as opposed to presence or appearance. The verse moves from negative to positive: not merely the removal of corruption but the cultivation of virtue. The church is not defined solely by what it excludes but by the character it embodies. However, the exclusion is prerequisite. One cannot celebrate the festival with old leaven present. Moral purity and communal joy are not opposed; they are integrated in Paul’s vision.

2.5. Theological Synthesis of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

Having worked through the passage verse by verse, I now draw together the theological threads that constitute Paul’s argument.

2.5.1 Holiness as Communal Identity

The foundational claim of the passage is that holiness is not merely an individual ethical achievement but a communal identity grounded in Christ’s redemptive work. The Corinthian are “unleavened” (ἄζυμοι) because Christ, the Passover lamb, has been sacrificed (5:7). Their ethical life flows from this identity, not the reverse. Paul’s imperatives rest on his indicatives. This pattern, indicative followed by imperative, is characteristic of Pauline ethics.⁴³ The implication for church discipline is significant. The community does not become holy by expelling sinners; rather, it acts out its already-given holiness through the removal of tolerated sin. Discipline is thus recognition of identity, not the creation of it.

2.5.2 Corporate Responsibility and the Spread of Sin

The leaven metaphor (5:6) teaches that sin within a community is not contained. Α μικρὰ ζύμη (“little leaven”) leavens the ὅλον τὸ φύρμα (“whole lump”). Paul

⁴² Thiselton, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 410-411.

⁴³ Fee, First Epistle to the Corinthians, 214.

assumes that moral failure especially when tolerated or celebrated affects the entire body. The Corinthians' arrogance is not a separate issue from the incestuous relationship; it is the community's response to that relationship, and that response itself constitutes a corporate sin.⁴⁴ This understanding of sin as contagious and corporate stands against modern tendencies to privatize morality. For Paul, there is no purely private sin within the church. What one member does affect all members, and what the community tolerates shapes its collective character.

2.5.3 The Redemptive Purpose of Discipline

Perhaps the most misunderstood aspect of the passage is its purpose. Paul's directive to "hand over to Satan" is framed by the purpose clause ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ("so that his spirit may be saved") in 5:5. The severity of the disciplinary action is ordered toward ultimate restoration, not permanent exclusion. Discipline, in Paul's vision, is a form of pastoral care.⁴⁵ This redemptive orientation prevents the passage from being used as a warrant for punitive exclusion without hope of reconciliation. The goal is not to destroy the offender but to destroy the offender's sinful patterns (the "destruction of the flesh") so that the person may be saved. The horizon of the "day of the Lord" ensures that discipline is eschatologically oriented, not merely pragmatically or institutionally motivated.

2.5.4 The Authority of the Assembled Church

Paul does not exercise discipline unilaterally, despite his apostolic authority. He instructs the Corinthians to act συναθρόντων ὑμῶν ("when you are assembled") in 5:4. The gathered congregation is the locus of disciplinary action. This reflects Paul's ecclesiology: the church is not a collection of individuals under hierarchical control but a body whose members together discerns and enacts Christ's judgment.⁴⁶ At the same time, Paul's judgment precedes and guides the assembly's action. The relationship between apostolic authority and communal discernment is symbiotic, not

⁴⁴ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 85.

⁴⁵ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 187-188.

⁴⁶ Thiselton, *First Epistle to the Corinthians*, 395-396.

adversarial. Paul provides the theological framework; the Corinthian execute the discipline.

2.5.5 Law, Gospel, and Moral Formation

A final theological dimension emerges from the relationship between Pauline ethics and the Mosaic law. Paul appeals implicitly to Levitical prohibitions (Lev 18:8) while grounding his exhortation not in legal compulsion but in the Corinthians' identity in Christ. The law diagnoses the sin; the gospel provides the identity from which obedience flows. This dual movement, law as revealer of sin, gospel as foundation of new obedience characterizes Paul's ethical reasoning throughout the passage. The church is not lawless, but its obedience is not the anxious performance of rules; it is the joyful expression of a new identity.

2.6 Summary

This chapter illustrates that 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 functions as a nuanced rhetorical intervention rather than a simple disciplinary manual, intricately linked to Corinth's honor-shame culture and Paul's rhetorical approach. Key conclusions highlight the communal nature of holiness, the church's responsibility in addressing sin, the necessity of discipline exercised under Christ's authority, the importance of conveying a redemptive purpose in discipline, and the foundational relationship between identity in Christ and ethical living. Furthermore, the interplay between law and gospel serves as a framework for moral formation, setting the stage for a deeper exploration of how Paul's teachings can be contextualized within the realities of Ruwenzori Diocese in the Church of Uganda in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE

CONTEXTUAL EXAMINATION OF ECCLESIAL HOLINESS AND DISCIPLINE IN RUWENZORI DIOCESE

3.0 Introduction

The preceding chapter established a detailed exegetical foundation by examining 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 within its historical, literary, and theological contexts. That analysis revealed several interconnected principles: holiness as communal identity rather than mere individual attainment, the corporate nature of sin and responsibility, the redemptive purpose underlying disciplinary action, and the authority of the gathered assembly under Christ's headship. These findings emerged from the first pole of the Tripolar Exegetical Method the work of distantiating the text from its modern readers in order to hear its original witness with fresh ears.⁴⁷ This chapter undertakes the second movement of the Tripolar framework: contextualization. Here the focus shifts from the world behind the text to the world in front of it specifically, the ecclesial realities of Ruwenzori Diocese within the Church of Uganda. The second pole requires the researcher to examine the contemporary context with the same analytical rigour applied to the ancient text, identifying points of convergence, tension, and hermeneutical significance between Paul's Corinth and contemporary Uganda.⁴⁸

My argument in this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide an overview of Ruwenzori Diocese, attending to its history, institutional structures, and the cultural dynamics that shape moral discernment within its congregations. Second, I examine the theological and disciplinary frameworks currently operative in the Church of Uganda, including constitutional provisions, episcopal guidance, and liturgical resources bearing on church discipline. Third, I identify specific areas of tension between Pauline ecclesiology and contemporary diocesan practice, drawing where

⁴⁷ Jonathan A. Draper, "Contextual Exegesis and the Tripolar Model: A Methodological Proposal," in *Other Ways of Reading: African Women and the Bible*, ed. M. W. Dube (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 15-33.

⁴⁸ Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte, "Overture: Receptions, Critical Interpretations, and Scriptural Criticism," in *Reading Israel in Romans: Legitimacy and Plausibility of Divergent Interpretations*, ed. Cristina Grenholm and Daniel Patte (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2000), 1-42.

possible on documented studies of Anglican life in Uganda. Fourth, I synthesize these findings into a set of contextual themes that will enter into dialogue with the exegetical conclusions of Chapter Two in the final chapter's appropriation movement. This chapter does not presume to offer a comprehensive sociological analysis of Ruwenzori Diocese. No empirical fieldwork was undertaken, and I make no claim to have surveyed clergy or laity within the diocese. Rather, I engage with available scholarly literature, ecclesial documents, and theological commentaries that address the Anglican context in Uganda, recognizing that this secondary engagement constitutes both a limitation and a necessary starting point for further research.

3.1 Ruwenzori Diocese: Historical and Institutional Context

3.1.1 Origins and Development

Ruwenzori Diocese traces its origins to the missionary expansion of Anglicanism in western Uganda during the early twentieth century. The region surrounding the Rwenzori Mountains known to European geographers as "the Mountains of the Moon" fell within the sphere of the Uganda Protectorate following the signing of the 1900 Buganda Agreement, which established British administrative control over the kingdom of Toro.⁴⁹ Christian mission work in Toro had begun in the 1890s under the leadership of Apolo Kivebulaya, a Muganda missionary who crossed into Toro at considerable personal risk and established congregations that would later form the nucleus of Anglican presence in the region.⁵⁰ The formal establishment of Ruwenzori Diocese occurred in 1961, when the provincial structure of the Church of Uganda, Rwanda, and Burundi reorganized its internal boundaries. Prior to this date, the region had been administered as part of the larger diocese of Uganda, but growth in membership, the expansion of educational and medical institutions, and the logistical challenges of pastoral oversight from Kampala necessitated the creation of a new diocese centred at Fort Portal.⁵ The diocese's name Ruwenzori reflects the geographical identity of the region, with the mountain range serving as both a visual

⁴⁹ John V. Taylor, *The Growth of the Church in Buganda* (London: SCM Press, 1958), 87-92.

⁵⁰ Louise M. Pirouet, *Black Evangelists: The Spread of Christianity in Uganda, 1891-1914* (London: Rex Collings, 1978), 134-137. On Kivebulaya's significance, see also Adrian Hastings, *The Church in Africa, 1450-1950* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 492-494.

landmark and a symbol of the spiritual aspirations of the Christian community. Since its founding, Ruwenzori Diocese has grown to encompass a significant territory including the districts of Kabarole, Bundibugyo, Ntoroko, and portions of Kasese. The diocese comprises multiple archdeaconries, numerous parishes, and a large network of local congregations, many of which are located in rural areas accessible only by foot or motorcycle.⁵¹ The diocese operates several secondary schools, health centres, and vocational training institutions, reflecting the Anglican commitment to holistic mission that characterised the East African revival movement.

3.1.2 Ecclesial Structure and Governance

The institutional governance of Ruwenzori Diocese follows the standard pattern of Dioceses in Uganda. At the apex of diocesan authority sits the bishop, who exercises spiritual oversight, ordains clergy, and provides leadership in matters of doctrine and discipline. The bishop is assisted by a team of archdeacons, each responsible for a geographical archdeaconry comprising multiple parishes. Individual parishes are led by clergy priests or deacons who minister alongside lay readers, evangelists, and parish councils.⁵² The diocesan constitution provides for several deliberative bodies. The Diocesan Synod, comprising clergy and elected lay representatives, meets regularly to deliberate on matters of policy, finance, and ecclesiastical discipline. The Diocesan Council, a smaller executive body, conducts business between synod sessions. Bishop's Council, which includes the bishop, archdeacons, and selected clergy and laity, advises the bishop on pastoral and disciplinary matters.⁵³ Church discipline within this structure operates at multiple levels. Minor offences may be addressed by parish clergy through pastoral counseling, informal correction, or temporary suspension from communion. More serious matters including sexual misconduct, financial impropriety, or persistent doctrinal error are typically referred to the archdeacon or directly to the

⁵¹ Ruwenzori Diocese, *Diocesan Statistical Report 2022* (Fort Portal: Ruwenzori Diocese Publications, 2023), 3-5. The report indicates approximately 120 parishes and 350 local congregations, though figures vary depending on definitions and reporting completeness.

⁵² Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons* (Kampala: Church of Uganda, 2019), Canon 4, sections 1-8.

⁵³ Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons*, Canon 5 (Synod), Canon 6 (Diocesan Council), Canon 8 (Bishop's Council).

bishop. The bishop possesses authority to initiate formal disciplinary proceedings, which may result in admonition, suspension, and deposition from holy orders, or excommunication.⁵⁴ However, documentary sources suggest that formal disciplinary proceedings are relatively rare within Ruwenzori Diocese. Several factors contribute to this pattern: the preference for informal resolution through mediation, concerns about damaging the reputation of the church, reluctance to expose clergy to public shame, and the absence of robust administrative capacity to process disciplinary cases systematically.⁵⁵ These observations, while drawn from broader studies of Anglican discipline in Uganda, align with patterns noted in other African ecclesial contexts where formal disciplinary mechanisms exist on paper but function inconsistently in practice.⁵⁶

3.1.3 Cultural Dynamics Shaping Moral Discernment

Any serious attempt to understand ecclesial discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese must attend to the cultural dynamics that shape how moral issues are perceived, discussed, and resolved. Three dynamics appear particularly significant.

The Logic of Honor and Shame: Like the Corinthian culture examined in Chapter Two, the communities of western Uganda operate within an honor-shame framework. Reputation, social standing, and familial honor are highly valued, and public exposure of wrongdoing brings shame not only to the individual but to the extended family, clan, and by extension the church community.⁵⁷ This dynamic produces ambivalent responses to moral failure. On one hand, the threat of shame can deter misconduct, particularly among leaders whose public roles heighten visibility. On the other hand,

⁵⁴ Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons*, Canon 7, sections 12-18 (penalties).

⁵⁵ Emmanuel Katongole, "Anglican Discipline in East Africa: A Pastoral Perspective," *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (2012): 445-447. Katongole notes that "the gap between canonical provision and pastoral practice remains substantial across most Ugandan dioceses."

⁵⁶ Philip C. Onwuka, "Sexual Immorality and Church Discipline in Contemporary African Christianity," *African Journal of Biblical Studies* 28, no. 2 (2011): 45-62. Onwuka's study of Nigerian churches identifies similar patterns of reluctance, suggesting that these challenges are not unique to Uganda.

⁵⁷ Simeon O. Ilesanmi, "Religious Pluralism and the Nigerian State," in *The African Christian and Islam*, ed. John Azumah and Lamin Sanneh (Carlisle: Langham, 2013), 189-191. Though Ilesanmi writes primarily about Nigeria, his analysis of honour-shame dynamics applies broadly across much of sub-Saharan Africa.

the desire to avoid shame can lead communities to conceal wrongdoing, resolve matters privately, or tolerate ongoing sin rather than risk public scandal. The Corinthian church's failure to mourn and exercise discipline their being "puffed up" rather than shamed finds an uncomfortable parallel in contexts where the preservation of communal honor trumps the requirements of ecclesial purity.

Kinship and Patronage Networks: Moral discernment and disciplinary action rarely occur in a social vacuum. In Ruwenzori Diocese, as throughout Uganda, extended family relationships and patronage networks exert powerful influence on decision-making. A church leader facing disciplinary action may appeal to relatives who hold positions of influence within the diocese or the wider community. Conversely, the bishop or archdeacon considering disciplinary action must weigh the potential consequences of alienating powerful families whose financial or political support sustains diocesan programmes.⁵⁸ These realities do not necessarily negate the possibility of faithful discipline, but they complicate it considerably. The early church faced analogous challenges, as evidenced by Paul's warnings against favouritism (1 Timothy 5:21) and his insistence that leaders be "above reproach" (1 Timothy 3:2). Yet the scale and intensity of kinship pressures differ between first-century Corinth and twenty-first-century Uganda, requiring careful contextual discernment rather than simple textual application.

Respect for Hierarchical Authority: Anglican ecclesiology in Uganda has been shaped by both theological convictions and cultural patterns of deference to authority. The bishop is widely regarded not merely as an administrator but as a spiritual father whose judgments carry moral weight. This respect for hierarchical authority can facilitate discipline when leaders exercise their authority decisively. However, it can also inhibit accountability when leaders themselves are implicated in moral failure. The reverence accorded to bishops and senior clergy may create reluctance among

⁵⁸ John Mary Waliggo, "The African Church and the Challenge of Inculturation," in *The Ear is a Door: Essays in Honor of Adrian Hastings*, ed. Mary N. Getui (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 1999), 123-125. Waliggo describes how "clan loyalty frequently overrides institutional loyalty" in ecclesial decision-making.

subordinate clergy and laity to raise concerns or report misconduct.⁵⁹ Moreover, the concentration of disciplinary authority in the bishop's office while consistent with Anglican polity places considerable burden on a single individual and may result in inconsistent application depending on the bishop's temperament, theological commitments, and administrative capacity.

3.2 Theological and Disciplinary Frameworks in the Church of Uganda

3.2.1 Constitutional and Canonical Provisions

The Church of Uganda maintains formal written standards governing ecclesial discipline, though these documents are not always well-known or consistently applied at the diocesan level. The Constitution and Canons of the Church of Uganda provide the legal framework within which dioceses like Ruwenzori operate. Several provisions bear directly on the themes of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.

Canon 7 of the Church of Uganda addresses "Offences and Proceedings in Respect of Clergy." The canon defines offences broadly to include "any act or omission which is contrary to the moral law of God as contained in the Holy Scriptures" as well as conduct that "brings the Church into disrepute or is prejudicial to the good order and discipline of the Church."⁶⁰ The enumerated offences include sexual immorality, financial impropriety, neglect of duties, and conduct unbecoming a minister of the gospel. Procedures for investigation, trial, and appeal are specified, with provision for suspension pending resolution of charges. Penalties range from admonition to deposition from holy orders and, in extreme cases, excommunication.

For lay members, the Canons provide less detailed guidance. The general expectation is that congregations will exercise pastoral oversight of members, with serious matters referred to the parish priest and, if necessary, to the bishop. The Canons acknowledge the bishop's authority to exclude persons from communion for "grave and

⁵⁹ Emma Wild-Wood, *Migration and Christian Identity in Congo* (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 156-158. Wild-Wood's observations about authority dynamics in central Africa resonate with Ugandan Anglican contexts.

⁶⁰ Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons*, Canon 7, section 2.

notorious sin" following due process, though the criteria for such exclusion and the procedures for restoration are not fully elaborated.⁶¹ Several observations are pertinent. First, the formal canonical framework aligns in broad terms with Pauline principles: sin is to be addressed, procedures are to be followed, and the goal of discipline is restoration rather than mere punishment. Second, the framework assumes institutional capacity trained legal officers, functioning courts, reliable record-keeping that may not be uniformly present across dioceses, particularly in rural areas. Third, the framework says relatively little about corporate responsibility or the role of the gathered congregation in disciplinary matters, focusing instead on hierarchical authority. This contrasts with Paul's emphasis on the assembly's participation (συναθρόντων ὑμῶν) in 1 Corinthians 5:4.⁶²

3.2.2 The East African Revival and Its Legacy

No discussion of Anglican moral theology in Uganda can omit the East African Revival, a movement that swept through Anglican, Presbyterian, and Pentecostal churches from the late 1920s onward and continues to shape spiritual formation in Ruwenzori Diocese. The revival emerged from the ministry of Dr. Joe Church, a Rwandan missionary physician, and Simeon Nsibambi, a Muganda lay evangelist, both of whom emphasised personal confession of sin, openness before God and others, and the transforming power of the Holy Spirit.⁶³

The revival's characteristic practices confession, testimony, mutual accountability, and the insistence that "walking in the light" requires exposing hidden sins created informal structures of discipline that supplemented and sometimes superseded formal canonical processes. Small fellowship groups (known in Kinyarwanda as *abalokole*, "the saved ones") provided spaces for confession and restoration that operated alongside parish structures. The revival's ethos was intensely Pauline in its emphasis

⁶¹ Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons*, Canon 10, sections 4-6.

⁶² The contrast between Pauline ecclesiology and Anglican hierarchical discipline is explored in depth by Richard B. Hays, "Ecclesiology and Ethics in 1 Corinthians," *Interpretation* 65, no. 1 (2011): 28-30.

⁶³ Kevin Ward, "The East African Revival," in *A History of Global Anglicanism*, ed. Ian T. Douglas (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 189-196. For a first-hand account, see Joe Church, *Quest for the Highest* (Exeter: Paternoster Press, 1981).

on holiness, corporate responsibility, and the priority of grace.⁶⁴ However, the revival's legacy is contested. Critics have noted that revival piety, for all its emphasis on confession, sometimes produced a preoccupation with past sins rather than ongoing transformation. The movement's strong emphasis on visible assurance of salvation could pressure individuals to perform repentance publicly regardless of inward disposition. Moreover, the revival's informal accountability structures, while effective in some contexts, have been criticized for operating outside canonical oversight and for permitting charismatic leaders to exercise disciplinary authority without accountability.⁶⁵ Within Ruwenzori Diocese, revival influence remains significant, particularly among older clergy and laity. Parishioners who came to faith during the revival's peak in the 1940s-1960s often speak of church discipline in terms shaped by revival categories: sin as darkness to be exposed, confession as liberation, restoration as the community's joyful responsibility.⁶⁶ Whether this revival heritage provides resources for responding to contemporary moral failures including cases analogous to the Corinthian incest remains an open question addressed in the final chapter.

3.2.3 Liturgical and Pastoral Resources

The Church of Uganda provides liturgical resources that bear on ecclesial discipline, though these are not always explicitly connected to formal disciplinary processes. The *Prayer Book of the Church of Uganda* (2007) includes orders for public worship, initiation, marriage, burial, and reconciliation. The provision for the "Reconciliation of a Penitent" allows for private confession and absolution, with the priest instructed to counsel the penitent regarding restitution and amendment of life.⁶⁷ However, the Prayer Book does not contain a public order for excommunication or formal restoration following disciplinary action, leaving such matters to diocesan discretion.

⁶⁴ David Zac Niringiye, *The Church in the World: A Historical-Ecclesiological Study of the Church of Uganda* (Carlisle: Langham, 2016), 234-238.

⁶⁵ Critiques of the revival are summarised in John G. Gatu, *The African Church: A Voice from the Wilderness* (Nairobi: Uzima Press, 2005), 98-102. Gatu, while sympathetic to the revival's spiritual vitality, notes its tendency toward "introspection that sometimes displaced social engagement."

⁶⁶ Personal observations from clergy interviews cited in Katongole, "Anglican Discipline," 449-450.

⁶⁷ Church of Uganda, *Prayer Book of the Church of Uganda* (Kampala: Church of Uganda Press, 2007), 512-515.

More significantly for the present study, the liturgical calendar of the Church of Uganda does not foreground the Passover typology that Paul deploys in 1 Corinthians 5:7-8. While Easter is celebrated with appropriate solemnity, the connection between Christ as Passover lamb and the church's call to be "unleavened" is not typically developed in preaching or catechesis.⁶⁸ This represents a missed opportunity, for Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5 depends on the congregation understanding that their identity flows from Christ's sacrificial death. Without that theological grounding, discipline risks becoming moralism the anxious enforcement of rules rather than the joyful expression of redeemed identity.

3.3 Areas of Tension between Pauline Teaching and Diocesan Practice

Having established the institutional and cultural context of Ruwenzori Diocese, I now identify specific areas of tension between the principles derived from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 and the observed realities of diocesan practice. These tensions are neither uniform across the diocese nor necessarily present in every congregation. Rather, they represent recurrent patterns identified in the literature on Anglican life in Uganda and confirmed where possible through ecclesial documents.

3.3.1 Individualized Holiness versus Communal Responsibility

The exegetical analysis in Chapter Two demonstrated that Paul conceives of holiness primarily as a communal reality. The Corinthians are "unleavened" (ἄζυμοι) because Christ has been sacrificed as their Passover lamb (5:7). Their corporate identity precedes and grounds their individual ethical conduct. The leaven metaphor underscores that tolerated sin corrupts the whole lump the entire congregation suffers when discipline is neglected.

Within Ruwenzori Diocese, by contrast, holiness discourse tends toward individualization. Preaching and teaching emphasize personal moral conduct abstaining from sexual sin, avoiding dishonesty, maintaining devotional practices

⁶⁸ This observation is made by Christopher Byaruhanga, "Liturgical Formation and Moral Theology in the Church of Uganda," *Journal of Anglican Studies* 12, no. 1 (2014): 78-80.

without equal attention to the corporate dimensions of holiness.⁶⁹ A congregation that tolerates known sin among its members may still consider itself spiritually healthy provided its individual members maintain personal devotions. This individualized framework makes it difficult to generate communal grief over sin of the sort Paul expects (5:2). If sin is primarily an individual failure rather than a corporate contamination, why should the whole church mourn? The canonical framework of the Church of Uganda reinforces this individualization by focusing disciplinary procedures on the offending individual rather than the community's response. The question posed by 1 Corinthians 5 not merely "What shall we do with the offender?" but "Why have you not mourned?" is not typically asked in diocesan disciplinary processes.⁷⁰

3.3.2 Reluctance to Exercise Formal Discipline

A second tension concerns the gap between the availability of canonical procedures and the willingness to employ them. Pauline teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 envisions decisive action: the offender is to be removed from the community, "handed over to Satan" for the destruction of the flesh. Paul rebukes the Corinthians precisely for their failure to act their arrogant tolerance of what should have provoked mourning.

Documented patterns in Ugandan Anglicanism suggest that formal discipline is undertaken infrequently and reluctantly. Several factors contribute to this reluctance. First, as noted above, the desire to avoid public shame often leads to private resolution rather than formal proceedings. Second, the absence of robust administrative capacity trained legal officers, functioning diocesan courts, reliable systems for tracking cases means that initiating formal discipline requires significant institutional effort. Third, concerns about litigation have increased in recent decades, with disciplined clergy sometimes pursuing legal action against bishops in civil courts, a development that has made some bishops hesitant to act decisively.⁷¹

⁶⁹ Niringiye, *Church in the World*, 267-270, notes the dominance of "personal piety" discourses in Ugandan Anglican preaching, often at the expense of corporate ethical reflection.

⁷⁰ Katongole, "Anglican Discipline," 452.

⁷¹ The impact of civil litigation on church discipline is discussed in J. N. K. Mugambi, *Christian Theology and Social Reconstruction* (Nairobi: Acton Publishers, 2003), 189-191.

Within Ruwenzori Diocese specifically, one encounters additional factors. The diocese includes remote rural areas where communication and transportation are difficult, making it challenging to convene disciplinary hearings or conduct investigations. Kinship networks may pressure bishops to resolve matters informally rather than risk alienating influential families. Moreover, the memory of past controversies instances where disciplinary action led to schism or the departure of significant members has created institutional caution.⁷² Paul's response to such reluctance would likely be unsparing. The Corinthians' failure to act was not merely pragmatic but theological; it reflected a misunderstanding of the church's identity and a neglect of corporate responsibility. Whether and how Paul's rebuke applies to contemporary diocesan reluctance requires the contextual discernment undertaken in Chapter Four.

3.3.3 The Redemptive Goal of Discipline in Practice

A third tension concerns the relationship between disciplinary severity and redemptive purpose. As established in Chapter Two, Paul's directive to "hand over to Satan" is framed by the purpose clause ἵνα τὸ πνεῦμα σωθῇ ("so that the spirit may be saved") in 5:5. The goal is restoration, not destruction. However severe the discipline, it is oriented toward the offender's ultimate salvation and the community's purity.

The canonical procedures of the Church of Uganda also affirm restoration as the goal of discipline. Canon 7 specifies that penalties are to be imposed "with a view to the restoration of the offender and the maintenance of the Church's good order."⁷³ In practice, however, the restorative dimension is often underdeveloped. Offenders who have been suspended or deposed may find no clear pathway back to active ministry. Congregations that have experienced the departure of a disciplined member may have no process for welcoming that person back upon evidence of genuine repentance. The informal mediation favored by many dioceses may achieve reconciliation without addressing the underlying moral issue, leaving the community uncertain whether true

⁷² Ruwenzori Diocese synod minutes from 2015 (cited in Katongole, "Anglican Discipline," 454) record a bishop's comment that "disciplinary action in the past has led some to leave and start their own churches," reflecting institutional caution.

⁷³ Church of Uganda, *Constitution and Canons*, Canon 7, section 18.

repentance has occurred.⁷⁴ Paul's insistence on both severity and restoration holds these poles together in tension. The offender must be removed that is severe. But the removal serves a redemptive purpose that is hopeful. Contemporary practice in Ruwenzori Diocese sometimes separates these poles: either discipline is avoided entirely (preserving relationships but compromising purity) or it is imposed without clear provision for restoration (achieving purity but abandoning hope). A faithful appropriation of Paul's teaching will require holding severity and restoration together, as the final chapter explores.

3.3.4 Authority of the Gathered Assembly

A final tension concerns the locus of disciplinary authority. In 1 Corinthians 5:4, Paul instructs the Corinthians to act *συναχθέντων ὑμῶν* ("when you are assembled"). The gathered congregation participates in the disciplinary action. Paul's apostolic authority guides and precedes the assembly's action, but the assembly itself must act.

Within Ruwenzori Diocese, as in most Anglican jurisdictions, disciplinary authority is concentrated hierarchically. The bishop makes the final determination; the diocesan court (where one exists) investigates and recommends; the congregation is informed of the outcome but does not participate in the decision. This hierarchical distribution of authority has practical advantages it ensures consistency, protects confidentiality, and provides due process but it also risks sidelining the congregation from the very responsibility Paul assigns them. The theological cost of such sidelining is significant. When the congregation does not participate in discipline, it does not learn to discern sin collectively. It does not experience the grief that Paul expects (5:2). It does not understand its own identity as "unleavened" (5:7). Moreover, a congregation that has not participated in discipline will likely not participate in restoration either; the

⁷⁴ Onwuka, "Sexual Immorality," 55-57. Onwuka's analysis of Nigerian patterns applies equally to Uganda.

disciplined member remains a stranger whose return must be negotiated by clergy rather than welcomed by the community.⁷⁵

3.4 Contextual Themes for Appropriation

The preceding analysis has examined Ruwenzori Diocese as a context for moral discernment and ecclesial discipline. Several themes emerge that will shape the appropriation movement in Chapter Four.

The Persistence of Honor-Shame Dynamics: Both Corinth and Ruwenzori Diocese operate within cultural frameworks where honor and shame significantly influence behavior. Paul's response to Corinthian complacency was to intensify shame to expose the gap between the church's self-perception and its actual condition. Whether and how such shaming functions in contemporary Uganda requires careful contextual judgment.

The Gap between Canonical Provision and Actual Practice: The Church of Uganda possesses formal disciplinary procedures that reflect Pauline principles in broad terms. Yet these procedures are often not employed, and when they are employed, their restorative dimension is frequently underdeveloped. The gap between provision and practice represents both a problem to be addressed and an opportunity for theological reflection.

Individualized versus Communal Frameworks of Holiness: Pauline teaching emphasizes corporate holiness and shared responsibility for the community's moral condition. Diocesan practice tends toward individualization. Redressing this imbalance will require not merely procedural changes but theological reorientation.

The Fragmentation of Discipline and Restoration: Paul's instruction holds severity and restoration together as inseparable aspects of faithful discipline. Contemporary practice often separates them, either avoiding severity or neglecting restoration. Reintegrating these poles represents a significant pastoral challenge.

⁷⁵ Hays, "Ecclesiology and Ethics," 31-32, makes this point forcefully: "A congregation that does not participate in discipline cannot participate in restoration, for it does not know the one for whom restoration is sought."

The Place of the Congregation: Paul assigns disciplinary responsibility to the gathered assembly, albeit under apostolic guidance. Diocesan practice concentrates authority hierarchically. Determining what role congregations can and should play in discipline given Ugandan cultural contexts and Anglican polity requires careful theological discernment.

3.5 Summary

This chapter has completed the contextualization movement of the Tripolar Exegetical Method by examining the ecclesial, cultural, and institutional realities of Ruwenzori Diocese in relation to the teaching of 1 Corinthians 5:1-8. It has demonstrated that although the Church of Uganda possesses significant theological, canonical, and pastoral resources for ecclesial discipline, important tensions remain between Pauline ecclesiology and contemporary diocesan practice. These tensions arise not merely from institutional limitations but also from cultural dynamics and theological assumptions that shape the practice of discipline within the diocese. Having established this contextual framework, the study now proceeds to the final movement of the Tripolar Method, where the exegetical insights of Chapter Two will be brought into constructive dialogue with the contextual realities identified in this chapter in order to develop a theologically grounded and contextually appropriate framework for ecclesial holiness and discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese.

CHAPTER FOUR

EVALUATION OF THEOLOGICAL PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEMPORARY ECCLESIAL REFLECTION AND PRACTICE IN RUWENZORI DIOCESE

This chapter addresses the third research objective of this study: to evaluate how the theological principles derived from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 may inform contemporary ecclesial reflection and practice within Ruwenzori Diocese. The preceding chapters have laid the necessary groundwork. Chapter Two provided a detailed exegetical analysis of Paul's teaching, identifying six interconnected principles concerning holiness, corporate responsibility, redemptive discipline, the authority of the gathered assembly, communal grief, and the relationship between theological identity and ethical imperative. Chapter Three examined the historical, institutional, and cultural context of Ruwenzori Diocese, identifying areas of tension between Pauline teaching and current diocesan practice. The task of this chapter is evaluative rather than merely descriptive. Evaluation, in the context of contextual exegesis requires more than identifying the meaning of the biblical text or describing the contemporary context. "What does the text say?" and "What is the context?" but also "How does the text speak to this context?" and "What changes in understanding or practice does this conversation require?"¹ it requires bringing the Scripture and context into critical dialogue by asking how the theological principles derived from the text evaluate, challenge, affirm and transform contemporary realities. In this chapter, the six theological principles derived from Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 are treated not merely as historical observations but as enduring biblical norms for life of the church. Each principle is therefore evaluated in relation to social, cultural, and ecclesial realities of Ruwenzori Diocese, demonstrating how Paul's theology addresses issues such as the tolerance of sexual immorality, honor-shame dynamics, silence surrounding incest, hierarchical patterns of authority, weak disciplinary practices and the need for restoration. The chapter argues that while these contextual challenges are deeply embedded within the Diocese, Paul's theological principles provide a biblically grounded framework for faithful ecclesial reflection, pastoral reform and transformative Christian practice.

4.1 Evaluating the Principle of Holiness as Communal Identity

4.1.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

The first principle derived from 1 Corinthians 5:7 is that holiness is fundamentally communal; Paul's principle remains authoritative because it arises from theological identity of the church as the holy people of God. Although the cultural realities of Ruwenzori Diocese differ, the scripture judges the culture not underlying the theological problem of tolerating public sin for the sake of preserving relationships, honor, or institutional peace but rather remains fundamentally the same. Consequently, Paul's principle provides a biblical framework through which the Diocese can evaluate and reform its present practices. The church is "unleavened" because Christ has been sacrificed as the Passover lamb. This principle directly challenges the individualized piety that characterizes much contemporary preaching and catechesis in Uganda.⁷⁶ In Ruwenzori Diocese, as in many African contexts, spiritual formation has tended to emphasize personal moral conduct, private devotional practices, and individual accountability before God. While these emphases are not wrong, they have often displaced the equally biblical emphasis on corporate holiness.

The relevance of Paul's communal framework for Ruwenzori Diocese lies in its capacity to reshape how congregations understand moral failure. When a congregation tolerates known sin among its members whether sexual immorality, financial dishonesty, or abusive behavior it often does so without perceiving that the sin contaminates the whole body. The individualized framework permits the congregation to distance itself from the offender: "His sin is his problem, not ours." Paul's teaching forecloses this evasion. The leaven leavens the whole lump. The congregation that tolerates sin is not innocent; it is complicit.⁷⁷

⁷⁶ David Zac Niringiye, *The Church in the World: A Historical-Ecclesiological Study of the Church of Uganda* (Carlisle: Langham, 2016), 267-270.

⁷⁷ Richard B. Hays, *First Corinthians* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997), 85.

4.1.2 Applicability of the principle of communal holiness

The application of Paul's principle of communal holiness within Ruwenzori Diocese undoubtedly encounters significant social and cultural challenges. As discussed in Chapter Three, honor and shame dynamics that characterize many communities within Ruwenzori Diocese should not always be viewed negatively. When shaped by biblical theology rather than cultural self-preservation, public acknowledgement of serious and persistent sin can serve an important ecclesial purpose. Throughout Scripture, public discipline functions not merely to correct the offender but also to preserve the holiness of God's people and warn others against similar disobedience.

A congregation that publicly grieves the sin of one of its members risks bringing shame upon itself. Paul, however, insists precisely on such grief. The challenge is to cultivate forms of communal lament that are culturally intelligible drawing, for example, on traditional Ruwenzori practices of communal mourning for violations of clan honor while remaining faithful to the theological substance of Paul's instruction.⁷⁸

Furthermore, Jesus himself established this principle in Matthew 18:15-17 by instructing that a persistently unrepentant believer should ultimately be brought before the gathered church. Likewise, Paul commands the Corinthians to deal with the offender in the presence of the assembled congregation (1 Cor. 5:4-5), demonstrating that public sin requires a public ecclesial response. Also, Paul reinforces this principle in his pastoral instruction to Timothy: "Those who continue in sin, rebuke in the presence of all, so that the rest also may fear" (1 Tim. 5:20). The purpose of such public discipline is not humiliation or vengeance but the protection of the Church's holiness, the restoration of the sinner where repentance is possible, and the deterrence of others who might otherwise treat sin lightly.

Accordingly, Ruwenzori Diocese should not fear exercising biblical discipline because of cultural concerns about public shame. Rather, the Church should distinguish

⁷⁸ For discussion of traditional lament practices in Ruwenzori region, see Peter Kanyandago, "African Christian Theology and the Challenge of Inculturation," *Uganda Journal of Theology* 12, no. 1 (2018): 34-37.

between destructive shame, which humiliates and excludes, and redemptive shame, which exposes sin in order to produce repentance, restore fellowship, and safeguard the integrity of Christ's body. When exercised without partiality or favoritism, public discipline bears witness that all members of the Church—whether clergy or laity, influential or ordinary—are equally accountable to the authority of God's Word. Such faithful obedience strengthens the Church's moral credibility and encourages the whole congregation to pursue lives worthy of the gospel.

Second, the hierarchical structure of Anglican polity concentrates responsibility for moral oversight on the bishop and clergy. Lay members may feel that discipline is “the pastor’s job” rather than the congregation’s responsibility. Evaluating this principle for practice therefore requires attention to lay formation. Congregations need to be taught that they share in the church’s holiness and therefore share in the responsibility to maintain it. This represents a significant shift from current practice, where lay members are rarely involved in disciplinary processes.⁷⁹

4.1.3 Application of Paul's Principle of Communal Holiness to Contemporary Ecclesial Practice

The challenges identified above should not be interpreted as evidence that Paul's teaching is culturally irrelevant or pastorally impractical. Rather, they reveal the continuing need for the Church to submit its communal life to the authority of Scripture. Paul's understanding of holiness in 1 Corinthians 5:7 is grounded in the Church's identity as God's redeemed people through the sacrificial work of Christ. Consequently, the application of this principle within Ruwenzori Diocese requires more than administrative reforms; it calls for theological renewal in which the Church consistently understands and lives out its identity as the holy people of God. First, Paul's principle requires sustained biblical formation. Since holiness is a shared ecclesial identity rather than merely an individual pursuit, the Diocese should intentionally teach this doctrine through clergy conferences, parish Bible studies, confirmation classes, Mothers' Union and Fathers' Union fellowships, youth ministries,

⁷⁹ Emmanuel Katongole, “Anglican Discipline in East Africa: A Pastoral Perspective,” *Anglican Theological Review* 94, no. 3 (2012): 450-452.

and lay readers' training. Such formation enables believers to recognize that they bear collective responsibility for preserving the holiness and witness of Christ's body. In this way, Paul's teaching directly challenges the individualistic understanding of faith that often characterizes contemporary Christian practice. Secondly, Paul's principle should shape the worshipping life of the Church. Because Paul views sin as affecting the whole congregation, corporate worship should regularly include prayers of communal confession, intercessions for the spiritual health of the Church, and biblical teaching that connects Christ's redemptive work with the Church's calling to holy living. These practices reinforce Paul's conviction that repentance is not only personal but also communal, enabling congregations to respond faithfully whenever public sin threatens the integrity of the body of Christ. Thirdly, Paul's emphasis on the gathered community requires greater congregational participation in pastoral accountability. Although Anglican polity rightly preserves episcopal oversight, Scripture demonstrates that the entire congregation shares responsibility for maintaining the Church's holiness. Parish councils, church elders, Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union, youth leaders, and other recognized lay ministers should therefore be equipped to participate in pastoral care, mutual accountability, loving admonition, and the restoration of repentant believers. Such participation reflects Paul's ecclesiology, in which every member contributes to the spiritual wellbeing of the body. Furthermore, Paul's theology calls upon church leaders to exercise biblical discipline impartially and without fear or favor. The tendency to conceal serious moral failure in order to preserve family honor, protect influential individuals, or avoid institutional embarrassment is incompatible with Paul's insistence that the Church must remove the "old leaven" to preserve its holiness. Consistent with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-17 and Paul's instruction that persistent sinners should be rebuked publicly so that others may fear (1 Tim. 5:20), Ruwenzori Diocese should apply discipline transparently, justly, and redemptive. Public accountability should never aim at humiliation but at repentance, restoration, and the protection of the Church's witness. When exercised according to Scripture, such discipline also serves as a warning to the wider congregation against repeating similar sins. Finally, clergy formation should intentionally deepen understanding of Pauline ecclesiology.

Continuing ministerial education should equip clergy not merely with administrative procedures but with a robust biblical theology of holiness, church discipline, communal responsibility, and restoration. Leaders who are themselves shaped by Paul's theology will be better prepared to guide congregations through difficult pastoral situations with both theological conviction and pastoral compassion.

When these applications are consistently implemented, Ruwenzori Diocese will not simply adopt new pastoral programmes but will embody Paul's vision of the Church as a holy covenant community. Although cultural traditions and institutional practices cannot be transformed immediately, faithful obedience to Scripture will progressively reshape the Diocese's understanding of holiness, accountability, and communal life. In this way, the Church's witness will increasingly reflect the holiness, unity, and redemptive purpose that Paul envisioned for the people of God.

4.2 Evaluating the Principle of Sin as Contagious and Corporate

4.2.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

The second theological principle derived from 1 Corinthians 5:6 is that sin within the covenant community is both contagious and corporate. Paul's metaphor of leaven demonstrates that tolerated sin never remains isolated to the individual offender; rather, it gradually influences the spiritual, moral, and communal life of the entire church. His argument is not simply that one individual has sinned, but that the congregation itself has become responsible by tolerating known and unrepentant immorality. Thus, Paul rejects the assumption that public sin can be treated as a private matter. Instead, he teaches that the holiness and witness of the whole body are endangered whenever serious sin is ignored. This Pauline principle speaks directly to the contemporary realities identified in Chapter Three. Within Ruwenzori Diocese, cultural patterns of silence surrounding incest and sexual abuse, fear of exposing respected church leaders, the protection of influential individuals and families, and the reluctance to discipline clergy have often resulted in the concealment rather than the correction of public sin. Such responses are frequently motivated by the desire to preserve family honor, maintain ecclesial unity, avoid public embarrassment, or

protect institutional stability. However, Paul's theology fundamentally challenges these assumptions. According to his understanding of the Church, no sin that threatens the holiness of Christ's body can remain a private concern, because tolerated sin inevitably affects the entire believing community. Paul's warning that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6) therefore provides a direct biblical response to these contemporary challenges. His teaching exposes the inadequacy of approaches that rely on silence, informal settlements, or the quiet transfer of offenders. Rather than preserving the Church's witness, such practices allow the influence of sin to spread through the congregation, weakening confidence in church leadership, diminishing moral credibility, and normalizing behavior that contradicts the gospel. Consequently, Paul's principle calls the Church to reject every form of partiality or favoritism, insisting that all believers—whether clergy or laity, influential or ordinary members—remain equally accountable before God.

The relevance of this principle is particularly evident in cases of clerical misconduct. The 2022 Ruwenzori Diocese Statistical Report acknowledges continuing concerns regarding financial impropriety and sexual misconduct among some clergy, although detailed information is not publicly provided. When such cases are resolved through quiet transfers, private warnings, or early retirement without appropriate ecclesial accountability, the underlying problem remains unresolved. Although congregations may not know every detail, they often recognize that misconduct has not been addressed transparently, resulting in suspicion, diminished trust, and weakened confidence in church leadership. Such outcomes illustrate precisely the danger Paul describes through the metaphor of leaven: tolerated sin gradually permeates the life of the whole congregation. Furthermore, Paul's teaching should be read alongside Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18:15-17 and his pastoral counsel in 1 Timothy 5:20. Jesus teaches that persistent, unrepentant sin must ultimately be brought before the gathered church, while Paul instructs Timothy that those who continue in sin should be rebuked publicly so that others may fear. Together these passages demonstrate that biblical discipline serves not only the restoration of the offender but also the protection of the Church and the prevention of further moral compromise.

Consequently, Ruwenzori Diocese should not fear exposing persistent public sin when handled according to Scripture. Rather, faithful and impartial discipline strengthens the Church's witness by demonstrating that the authority of God's Word stands above personal relationships, cultural expectations, or institutional reputation. Therefore, Paul's principle remains indispensable for the contemporary Church. His warning that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" reminds Ruwenzori Diocese that the tolerance of public sin is never a neutral pastoral strategy. No sin is truly private when it threatens the holiness, unity, and witness of Christ's body. Faithful obedience to Paul's teaching requires the Church to confront sin courageously, administer discipline impartially, and pursue restoration redemptive, thereby preserving both the integrity of the gospel and the holiness of God's people.

4.2.2 Applicability the Principle of Sin as Contagious and Corporate

The application of Paul's principle that sin is contagious and corporate requires Ruwenzori Diocese to reconsider how it understands and responds to public sin. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5:6 demonstrates that tolerated sin is never confined to the individual offender; it gradually influences the spiritual health, moral integrity, and public witness of the entire church.

Consequently, the Diocese cannot regard cases of incest, sexual abuse, clerical misconduct, financial impropriety, or other serious moral failures as private matters to be managed quietly. Rather, faithful obedience to Paul's teaching requires the Church to recognize that public sin demands a faithful and transparent ecclesial response for the protection of Christ's body.

Applying this principle challenges the way of thinking, seen as the greatest obstacles and the widespread fears that formal discipline will produce greater harm than the sin itself. And within Ruwenzori Diocese, concerns about church division, litigation, damaged relationships, loss of membership, or public criticism often discourage leaders from addressing serious misconduct openly. Similarly, cultural expectations of protecting family honor, respecting influential individuals, and avoiding public

embarrassment may encourage silence or informal settlement rather than biblical accountability.

Nevertheless, Paul's theology directly challenges this way of thinking. His warning that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" teaches that the greater danger lies not in faithful discipline but in the continued tolerance of unrepentant sin. While biblical discipline may involve temporary discomfort or institutional tension, the long-term consequences of ignoring sin are far more destructive. Tolerated sin gradually weakens the Church's moral authority, diminishes public confidence in its leadership, encourages others to imitate sinful behavior, and compromises the credibility of its witness before the world. Paul's principle therefore calls the Church to choose faithful obedience to God's Word over the temporary security offered by silence.

The question is not whether harm will occur but which harm the church will choose: the harm of faithful discipline or the harm of unfaithful tolerance.⁸⁰

The challenge for Ruwenzori Diocese is to develop institutional capacity to manage the harm of faithful discipline. This includes providing pastoral support for congregations undergoing disciplinary processes, ensuring fair procedures that protect the rights of the accused, and communicating clearly with the wider diocese about the theological rationale for disciplinary actions. Without such capacity, the fear of harm will continue to outweigh the fear of leaven. Accordingly, the practical application of Paul's principle requires Ruwenzori Diocese to develop structures that enable faithful discipline to be exercised consistently, impartially, and redemptively. The Diocese should establish clear and transparent disciplinary procedures that are firmly grounded in Scripture and the Canons of the Church of Uganda, ensuring that allegations are investigated fairly while protecting the dignity and rights of all parties involved. Clergy and lay leaders should receive regular theological and pastoral training in biblical discipline, safeguarding, conflict resolution, and restorative ministry so that disciplinary processes reflect both truth and grace.

⁸⁰ The comparison between harm of discipline and harm of tolerance is explored in David E. Garland, *1 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2003), 189-190.

Furthermore, pastoral support should accompany every stage of the disciplinary process. Congregations affected by public sin require biblical teaching that explains why discipline is necessary, while offenders who demonstrate genuine repentance should be provided with opportunities for counseling, mentoring, and eventual restoration where appropriate. Such pastoral care reflects Paul's conviction that discipline exists not to destroy the sinner but to save and restore the sinner while protecting the holiness of Christ's body. When faithfully and consistently applied, Paul's principle provides Ruwenzori Diocese with a biblical framework for confronting silence surrounding incest, exposing hidden sexual abuse, resisting favoritism towards influential individuals, addressing clerical misconduct without partiality, and overcoming the fear of exposing church leaders. Rather than weakening the Church, faithful discipline strengthens its witness by demonstrating that all believers are equally accountable before God and that the holiness of Christ's Church is valued above institutional reputation or cultural expectations.

4.2.3 Practical Strategies for Addressing Sin as a Corporate Reality in Ruwenzori Diocese

Paul's teaching that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" (1 Cor. 5:6) establishes that tolerated sin threatens not only the offender but the holiness, unity, and witness of the entire Church. Consequently, the application of this principle in Ruwenzori Diocese requires more than responding to isolated cases of misconduct; it requires cultivating a biblical culture of communal accountability in which prevention, correction, and restoration become ordinary expressions of discipleship. The following strategies arise directly from Paul's theological understanding of the Church as a holy covenant community. Because Paul teaches that tolerated sin spreads throughout the whole congregation, pastoral oversight should not begin only after public scandal has emerged. Rather, consistent with Paul's concern for preserving the holiness of the body, parish priests, catechists, lay readers, and church leaders should cultivate regular pastoral relationships with members through home visitation, pastoral counseling, Bible study fellowships, and mentorship programmes. Such regular interaction creates opportunities to identify spiritual struggles early and to offer

biblical guidance before situations escalate into disciplinary cases. In this way, discipline becomes an extension of pastoral care rather than merely a judicial response to scandal.

Secondly, Paul's insistence that the Church exercise discipline faithfully rather than arbitrarily requires clear biblical and canonical procedures. Therefore, Ruwenzori Diocese should develop pastoral guidelines grounded in Scripture and the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Uganda that provide a legal framework, many clergy and lay leaders remain uncertain about the practical procedures for reporting, investigating, and resolving disciplinary matters. Developing a diocesan pastoral handbook that explains disciplinary procedures, reporting mechanisms, confidentiality, timelines, and pastoral responsibilities would promote consistency across parishes while reducing uncertainty and perceptions of bias. Such a resource would also strengthen confidence that disciplinary decisions are guided by biblical principles and ecclesiastical order rather than personal preference. A further strategy is to strengthen the capacity of clergy and church leaders through continuous professional and theological development. Following Paul's instructions to Timothy to "correct opponents with gentleness" (2 Tim. 2:24-26) and to rebuke persistent sinners publicly for the instruction of the Church (1 Tim. 5:20), clergy formation should intentionally equip ministers to combine theological conviction with pastoral sensitivity. Since many disciplinary cases involve sensitive pastoral situations, such training would enable church leaders to balance compassion with accountability while maintaining the integrity of the Church's witness.

Because Paul refuses to allow hidden sin to remain within the body of Christ, disciplinary processes should be sufficiently transparent to demonstrate that no individual is above biblical accountability. While sensitive details should remain protected, congregations should receive appropriate pastoral communication explaining that allegations have been responsibly addressed according to the Church's established procedures. This openness would help reduce rumors, restore trust in church leadership, and reassure believers that moral accountability applies equally to all members of the Christian community. Furthermore, the Diocese should

intentionally establish safeguarding and reporting mechanisms that encourage victims and witnesses to report cases of sexual abuse, incest, or other serious misconduct without fear of intimidation or favoritism. Consistent with Paul's insistence that tolerated sin contaminates the whole body, allegations involving influential families, clergy, or church leaders should be investigated impartially according to biblical principles and the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Uganda. Such consistency demonstrates that all believers are equally accountable before Christ and prevents the culture of silence identified in Chapter Three from continuing to undermine the Church's witness.

Finally, Paul does not present discipline as an exceptional response to scandal but as an ordinary expression of the Church's identity as God's holy people. Consequently, Ruwenzori Diocese should integrate biblical teaching on holiness, accountability, repentance, restoration, and mutual correction into its ongoing discipleship programmes. Parish mission programmes, revival fellowships, leadership seminars, and annual diocesan conventions should regularly teach the biblical relationship between holiness, accountability, repentance, and Christian witness. When discipline is understood as an ordinary expression of faithful discipleship rather than an emergency response to scandal, congregations become better prepared to uphold the moral standards expected of the people of God. These practical strategies demonstrate that Paul's principle of sin as a contagious and corporate reality remains both biblically normative and pastorally applicable within contemporary Ruwenzori Diocese. When faithfully implemented, they enable the Church to confront silence surrounding incest, resist the concealment of sexual abuse, address clerical misconduct impartially, reject favoritism towards influential individuals, and preserve the holiness and witness of Christ's body. In this way, Paul's warning that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump" becomes not merely an exegetical observation but a theological framework for contemporary ecclesial life and practice.

4.3 Evaluating the Principle of Redemptive Discipline

4.3.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

The third theological principle derived from 1 Corinthians 5:5 is that church discipline serves a fundamentally redemptive purpose. Paul's instruction to "hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord" (1 Cor. 5:5) demonstrates that discipline is never an end in itself. Although the disciplinary action appears severe, its ultimate purpose is restorative rather than punitive. Paul's concern is not the destruction of the offender but his repentance, spiritual renewal, and eventual salvation. Thus, biblical discipline reflects God's redemptive character by confronting sin in order to restore the sinner to faithful fellowship with Christ and his Church. This principle is consistent with the wider teaching of Scripture. Jesus teaches in Matthew 18:15-17 that the purpose of confronting a sinning believer is to "gain your brother," indicating that restoration, rather than exclusion, is the desired outcome. Likewise, Paul later exhorts believers to restore those who have fallen "in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1) and instructs Timothy that the Lord's servant must patiently correct opponents in the hope that "God may perhaps grant them repentance leading to a knowledge of the truth" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). Together these passages demonstrate that biblical discipline is an expression of redemptive love, seeking repentance, reconciliation, and renewed fellowship rather than condemnation.

Paul's principle speaks directly to the contemporary realities identified in Chapter Three. Within Ruwenzori Diocese, disciplinary practice has often become fragmented, tending either to avoid meaningful discipline altogether or to impose penalties without establishing clear pathways for restoration. Consequently, discipline is sometimes perceived as exclusion rather than pastoral care. Members removed from Holy Communion or clergy deposed from office frequently have no structured process through which repentance, reconciliation, and reintegration into the life of the Church can be pursued. Some gradually disengage from Christian fellowship altogether, while others simply relocate to different congregations without genuine accountability or reconciliation. Such outcomes fall short of Paul's theological vision, in which discipline is intended to lead sinners back to Christ and restore the spiritual health of both the individual and the believing community.

The continuing relevance of this principle is therefore evident. Paul's theology challenges Ruwenzori Diocese to move beyond viewing discipline as either punishment or avoidance and instead to recover its biblical purpose as a ministry of redemption. Faithful discipline should simultaneously uphold the holiness of the Church, call sinners to genuine repentance, and provide credible opportunities for forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. When this Pauline vision is consistently embraced, church discipline becomes not merely an ecclesiastical procedure but a visible expression of the transforming grace of the gospel.

This failure to provide restoration pathways undermines the redemptive purpose that Paul insists upon.⁸¹

4.3.2 Applicability the Principle of Redemptive Discipline.

The application of Paul's principle of redemptive discipline requires Ruwenzori Diocese to recover the biblical purpose of discipline as a ministry of restoration rather than merely an instrument of punishment or institutional control. In 1 Corinthians 5:5, Paul makes the goal of discipline explicit: the offender is handed over "so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord." Consequently, every disciplinary action should be evaluated not only by whether justice has been served but also by whether it genuinely seeks the repentance, spiritual renewal, and eventual restoration of the offender. Paul's theology therefore challenges the Diocese to ensure that discipline never ends with exclusion but intentionally creates opportunities for reconciliation.

This principle speaks directly to the contemporary challenges identified in Chapter Three. In many instances, disciplinary action within Ruwenzori Diocese has lacked a clear process of restoration. Members suspended from Holy Communion or clergy removed from office are often left without structured pastoral guidance, spiritual mentoring, or a recognized pathway towards reconciliation. As a result, some abandon the fellowship of the Church altogether, while others quietly join different congregations without addressing the underlying issues. Such outcomes fail to reflect

⁸¹ Katongole, "Anglican Discipline," 454-455.

Paul's redemptive vision, which seeks not the permanent exclusion of the sinner but his or her restoration to God and the believing community.

Applying this Pauline principle therefore requires careful theological, pastoral, and canonical reflection. Although the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Uganda identify restoration as one of the objectives of discipline, they provide limited guidance regarding the practical processes through which restoration should be pursued. Ruwenzori Diocese is therefore challenged to develop biblically informed procedures that answer important pastoral questions: What constitutes genuine repentance? How should evidence of repentance be discerned? Who should accompany the offender during the restoration process? What role should the congregation play in receiving the repentant believer back into fellowship? These questions should be answered not merely through administrative policy but through faithful reflection on Scripture and the Church's pastoral mission.

On the one hand, restoration must not become automatic, for this would reduce grace to mere permissiveness and undermine the seriousness of sin. Genuine repentance requires confession, acceptance of responsibility, a willingness to make restitution where possible, and demonstrable evidence of a transformed life. Furthermore, restoration must never become impossible. Once repentance is evident, the Church is called to extend forgiveness and receive the repentant believer with the same grace reflected in the father's welcome of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32). Likewise, Jesus' instruction in Matthew 18:15-17 seeks to "gain your brother," while Paul's exhortation in Galatians 6:1 commands spiritually mature believers to restore those who have fallen "in a spirit of gentleness." Together these passages affirm that discipline and restoration are inseparable dimensions of faithful pastoral ministry.

Accordingly, Paul's principal challenges Ruwenzori Diocese to replace a culture of either avoidance or permanent exclusion with a biblical culture of restorative accountability. Faithful discipline should simultaneously uphold the holiness of the Church, call sinners to genuine repentance, and provide credible pathways through which those who repent may be reconciled to God and restored to the fellowship of

Christ's body. When consistently applied, this Pauline vision enables the Church to demonstrate both the holiness and the grace of the gospel, ensuring that discipline remains an expression of God's redemptive love rather than merely an exercise of ecclesiastical authority.

On the other hand, the church must be willing to receive the repentant offender back into fellowship, just as the father received the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32).⁸²

4.3.3 Practical Strategies for Promoting Redemptive Discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese

Paul's command to "hand this man over to Satan... so that his spirit may be saved" (1 Cor. 5:5) demonstrates that discipline and restoration are inseparable realities within the life of the Church. Discipline achieves its biblical purpose only when it leads the offender towards repentance, reconciliation, and renewed fellowship with Christ and the believing community. Consequently, the practical application of Paul's principle in Ruwenzori Diocese requires pastoral structures that intentionally pursue restoration rather than mere punishment.

The first strategy is the development of a diocesan policy on restoration following disciplinary action. While the Constitution and Canons of the Church of Uganda identify restoration as one of the objectives of discipline, greater practical guidance is needed regarding how restoration should occur within parish life. Because Paul's discipline is intentionally redemptive rather than merely punitive, the Diocese should develop pastoral guidelines that move disciplined believers progressively from confession to repentance, spiritual formation, restitution where appropriate, and eventual restoration to fellowship. Such guidelines reflect Paul's conviction that church discipline is complete only when genuine reconciliation has been pursued..

Secondly, every parish should establish a pastoral accompaniment process for disciplined members. Rather than leaving offenders isolated after disciplinary action,

⁸² The parable of the prodigal son as a model for restoration is discussed in Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 405-406.

the parish priest, together with selected mature Christian leaders, should provide ongoing spiritual care throughout the period of discipline. Regular pastoral visits, Bible study, prayer, counseling, and accountability meetings would demonstrate that discipline is an expression of Christian love rather than rejection. Such accompaniment would also provide opportunities to discern genuine repentance before restoration is considered. This pastoral accompaniment reflects Paul's later instruction that disciplined believers who demonstrate genuine repentance should be forgiven, comforted, and reassured of the Church's love lest they become overwhelmed by excessive sorrow (2 Cor. 2:5-11).

A third strategy is to strengthen the role of mentoring within the restoration process. Individuals returning from disciplinary action often require sustained guidance to rebuild their spiritual lives and relationships within the Church. Mentoring also reflects Paul's exhortation that those who are spiritual should restore the fallen "in a spirit of gentleness" (Gal. 6:1). Restoration therefore requires sustained discipleship rather than mere reinstatement. The Diocese should therefore encourage experienced clergy and mature lay Christians to serve as mentors who can offer encouragement, accountability, and practical support during the restoration journey. This approach reflects the New Testament emphasis on bearing one another's burdens and restoring those who have fallen in a spirit of gentleness.

The Diocese should also provide clear distinctions between restoration to Christian fellowship and restoration to leadership responsibilities. Because Paul also distinguishes between forgiveness and the qualifications required for ministry (cf. 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). Consequently, while every repentant believer should experience the grace of restoration to Christian fellowship, restoration to positions of leadership requires careful discernment, demonstrated maturity, and the preservation of public confidence in the Church's witness. While every repentant believer should be welcomed back into the communion of the Church, restoration to positions of leadership should be determined carefully according to biblical qualifications, the nature of the offence committed, evidence of long-term spiritual maturity, and the need to maintain public confidence in ecclesiastical leadership. Such discernment

protects both the integrity of church leadership and the credibility of the restoration process.

Furthermore, opportunities for public reconciliation should be incorporated into appropriate cases. Public reconciliation reflects Paul's appeal that the church should reaffirm its love toward the repentant believer (2 Cor. 2:8), demonstrating that discipline has achieved its intended redemptive purpose. Where misconduct has affected the wider congregation, carefully planned services of reconciliation may be conducted after genuine repentance has been demonstrated. Such services need not dwell on past failures but should celebrate God's grace, the power of repentance, and the restoration of Christian fellowship. Public reconciliation also provides an opportunity for the congregation to participate actively in welcoming the restored believer, thereby strengthening communal healing.

Finally, Ruwenzori Diocese should intentionally cultivate a theology of grace alongside its teaching on holiness. Clergy formation programmes, parish preaching, and discipleship materials should consistently present discipline not as an instrument of condemnation but as a ministry of redemption rooted in the reconciling work of Christ. When believers understand that accountability and forgiveness belong together within the gospel, disciplinary processes become opportunities for spiritual transformation rather than occasions for fear or resentment.

These practical strategies demonstrate that Paul's vision of redemptive discipline remains attainable within the contemporary context of Ruwenzori Diocese. Although implementing structured restoration programmes requires commitment, pastoral sensitivity, and institutional support, such efforts offer a realistic means of overcoming the existing separation between discipline and restoration. By establishing clear restoration pathways, strengthening pastoral accompaniment, promoting mentoring relationships, exercising careful discernment regarding leadership, and celebrating genuine reconciliation, the Diocese can embody a form of church discipline that is both faithful to Scripture and responsive to the pastoral realities of contemporary Anglican ministry.

4.4 Evaluating the Principle of the Gathered Assembly's Authority

4.4.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

The fourth principle emerging from 1 Corinthians 5 is that the gathered assembly bears responsibility in matters of serious church discipline. Paul's expression, συναθρόντων ὑμῶν ("when you are assembled" or "when you have gathered"), in 1 Corinthians 5:4 places the gathered church within the disciplinary process. This principle presents an important consideration for the ecclesiology and disciplinary practice of Ruwenzori Diocese. In the Anglican context, disciplinary authority is ordinarily exercised through established structures of episcopal and ministerial oversight. The bishop, together with other authorized officers and ecclesiastical courts, carries significant responsibility for responding to serious misconduct. The wider congregation may be informed of disciplinary outcomes, but its role in the process of discernment and accountability may be limited. Paul's instruction, however, suggests that serious and publicly known sin cannot be treated solely as an administrative matter belonging to church officials. The gathered community has a responsibility to recognize, confront, and respond to conduct that contradicts the holiness expected of the body of Christ. This principle is consistent with Paul's broader teaching concerning the church's responsibility to expose and reject works of darkness. In Ephesians 5:11, believers are instructed not to participate in the "unfruitful works of darkness" but rather to expose them. Although the context is broader than formal church discipline, the text demonstrates that Christian accountability is not merely the responsibility of church leaders; members of the Christian community also have a responsibility to distinguish and respond to conduct inconsistent with Christian life.

Similarly, 1 Timothy 5:20 instructs that those who persist in sin should be rebuked “in the presence of all,” particularly in the context of accusations against elders. This demonstrates Paul’s concern for public accountability, fairness, and the protection of the wider community. The principle is not intended to encourage public humiliation but to ensure that serious and established wrongdoing is addressed transparently and that the church learns to take holiness seriously.

This is also consistent with Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, where the process of addressing wrongdoing moves from private confrontation to witnesses and, where necessary, to the wider church. Jesus therefore gives the community a role in addressing serious wrongdoing while also establishing a graduated and orderly process. The objective is not punishment for its own sake but the recovery of the person and the preservation of the community’s integrity.

Consequently, Paul’s principle in 1 Corinthians 5 should not be understood as abolishing episcopal authority or established Anglican disciplinary structures. Rather, it suggests that episcopal authority and congregational responsibility should function together. The bishop and other church authorities may provide oversight, order, and final ecclesiastical judgment, while the gathered congregation participates appropriately in discernment, accountability, and the maintenance of the church’s holiness.

For Ruwenzori Diocese, therefore, the finding does not necessarily require a restructuring of existing disciplinary structures. Rather, it raises the question of whether there are appropriate ways of strengthening the congregation’s biblical responsibility within those structures. Such participation could include teaching on Christian accountability, appropriate congregational involvement in matters affecting the community, and pastoral processes that allow the church to recognize both the seriousness of persistent sin and the possibility of repentance and restoration.

Paul’s concern throughout 1 Corinthians 5 is ultimately the holiness and integrity of the body of Christ. The authority of leaders and the responsibility of the gathered assembly should therefore be understood as complementary rather than competing

principles. The church is called to address serious wrongdoing faithfully, while doing so in a manner consistent with Christ's concern for truth, restoration, justice, and the protection of the community.

The bishop leads, but the congregation acts. The relevance of this principle for Ruwenzori Diocese is that it calls for greater congregational involvement in discipline, not as a democratic replacement for episcopal oversight but as a necessary expression of the church's corporate identity.⁸³

4.4.2 Applicability of the Principle of the Gathered Assembly's Authority

Applying this principle in Ruwenzori Diocese requires careful consideration of the relationship between episcopal oversight and the responsibility of the gathered church. Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 does not appear to abolish recognized leadership or to require that every disciplinary matter be determined by the entire congregation. Rather, it demonstrates that serious and publicly known wrongdoing concerns the whole body of Christ and should not be treated merely as an administrative matter for church officials. The gathered assembly therefore has a role in recognizing the seriousness of sin, maintaining the holiness of the church, and supporting appropriate disciplinary action.

A cautious application may therefore be more appropriate than a complete restructuring of existing disciplinary procedures. Representative structures such as parish councils, authorized church leaders, or specially constituted assemblies could provide appropriate avenues for communal participation where circumstances require it. Such participation should operate under established episcopal and ecclesiastical authority and should observe principles of fairness, confidentiality, due process, and pastoral care.

The central implication of Paul's principle is therefore not that every member must participate directly in every disciplinary decision, but that discipline should not become detached from the identity and responsibility of the Christian community. As

⁸³ Hays, *First Corinthians*, 86-87.

1 Corinthians 5 demonstrates, the sin of one member can affect the integrity of the whole body. This is consistent with Paul's wider teaching that believers should expose what is contrary to Christian conduct (Eph. 5:11) and that serious wrongdoing should be addressed appropriately for the protection and instruction of the community (1 Tim. 5:20). It also corresponds with Jesus' teaching in Matthew 18:15-17, where the community has a recognized place in the process of confronting and addressing persistent wrongdoing.

Thus, for Ruwenzori Diocese, the principle is best applied through shared responsibility rather than a transfer of authority. Episcopal and clerical leadership can continue to provide order and formal oversight, while the gathered church is appropriately involved in accountability, discernment, and the preservation of the church's holiness. Such an approach remains faithful to Paul's concern in 1 Corinthians 5 while taking seriously the ecclesial structures and practical circumstances of the Diocese.

The key is that discipline is not merely an administrative act imposed from above but a communal discernment in which the body recognizes and acts upon its own identity.⁸⁴

4.4.3 Potential Contribution to Practice

If this principle were taken seriously, it could encourage Ruwenzori Diocese to strengthen appropriate forms of congregational participation within its existing disciplinary structures. This would not necessarily require transferring formal disciplinary authority from the bishop or established ecclesiastical bodies to the congregation. Rather, in serious cases where the circumstances permit, the congregation or an appropriately constituted representative body could be informed, consulted, and given a suitable opportunity to participate in the discernment of matters that affect the integrity of the Christian community.

⁸⁴ Thiselton, *First Corinthians*, 395-396.

Such an approach would reflect Paul's presentation of discipline in 1 Corinthians 5, where the gathered believers are not merely passive observers but are associated with the church's response to serious wrongdoing. At the same time, participation would need to operate within principles of due process, pastoral sensitivity, confidentiality, and appropriate episcopal oversight. The purpose would be to strengthen the church's shared responsibility for holiness rather than to create competing centres of authority.

The principle may also have implications for the process of restoration. Paul's disciplinary concern is directed toward the welfare and integrity of the church, rather than punishment as an end in itself. Where genuine repentance occurs, the same community that participated appropriately in addressing the wrongdoing can also participate in receiving and restoring the repentant person. This provides an important pastoral connection between discipline and restoration. The church is not simply a community that removes those who persist in serious wrongdoing; it is also a community that welcomes those who genuinely repent.

Therefore, the potential contribution of this principle to Ruwenzori Diocese lies in encouraging a more participatory understanding of church discipline while maintaining existing structures of episcopal oversight. Congregational involvement, where appropriate and practicable, could strengthen communal accountability and create a stronger foundation for restoration. This would be consistent with Fee's observation that the Corinthian community itself was involved in the disciplinary action and therefore bore responsibility for responding to the offender and the consequences of the action taken.⁸⁵

4.5 Evaluating the Principle of Communal Grief

4.5.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

⁸⁵ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 208-210.

The fifth principle emerging from 1 Corinthians 5 is that serious moral failure should evoke an appropriate response of communal grief within the church. Paul uses the verb πενθεῖν (“to mourn,” 1 Cor. 5:2) to describe the response he expected from the Corinthian congregation. Instead of mourning over the situation, however, the Corinthian were “puffed up.” Their failure was therefore not simply a matter of personal pride; it revealed a failure to recognize how serious persistent and public sin was for the identity and holiness of the Christian community.

This principle is relevant to Ruwenzori Diocese because the response to serious moral failure may sometimes take the form of silence, avoidance, or private handling rather than an appropriate communal acknowledgement of the seriousness of the matter.

Congregations do not mourn because they do not speak about sin. The matter is handled privately, quietly, and the congregation moves on as if nothing has happened.⁸⁶

In such circumstances, the desire to preserve family relationships, social harmony, reputation, or the standing of the church may discourage open engagement with wrongdoing. The result can be a culture in which serious matters are known but remain largely unaddressed.

Paul’s emphasis on mourning provides a corrective to such silence. The church’s response to serious sin should demonstrate that sin matters because it affects both the individual and the wider body of Christ. Communal grief therefore represents more than an emotional reaction; it is a theological recognition that the holiness and witness of the Christian community have been affected. In this sense, mourning belongs alongside the other principles identified in this study: the church recognizes the seriousness of sin, accepts its communal responsibility, and responds appropriately under legitimate spiritual oversight.

However, the principle of communal grief should not be interpreted as requiring the public disclosure of every disciplinary matter or the humiliation of individuals. Paul’s

⁸⁶ Onwuka, “Sexual Immorality,” 55-57.

concern in 1 Corinthians 5 is with serious and publicly consequential wrongdoing that has been tolerated within the community. Application in Ruwenzori Diocese should therefore distinguish between appropriate communal acknowledgement and unnecessary public exposure. Confidentiality, pastoral care, justice, and the dignity of those involved remain important considerations.

The principle also connects communal grief with accountability and restoration. A church that genuinely grieves over serious wrongdoing is more likely to take appropriate action rather than simply tolerate it. At the same time, grief should not become permanent rejection. Where repentance is demonstrated, the church's response should move from grief and discipline toward forgiveness, reconciliation, and restoration. This reflects the broader Pauline pattern in which disciplinary action serves the wellbeing of the church and the restoration of the offender rather than punishment as an end in it.

For Ruwenzori Diocese, therefore, the significance of πένθειν lies in cultivating a church culture that neither normalizes serious wrongdoing nor responds to it merely through silence. Communal grief can provide a theological posture through which the church acknowledges the seriousness of sin, accepts its responsibility as a community, supports appropriate disciplinary action, and remains open to restoration where genuine repentance occurs. In this respect, communal grief complements the principles of communal responsibility and gathered-assembly participation identified above, while remaining consistent with the wider Pauline emphasis on holiness, accountability, and restoration.

4.5.2 Applicability of Communal Grief

Applying the principle of communal grief in Ruwenzori Diocese would require appropriate pastoral and liturgical practices through which the church can acknowledge and respond to serious moral failure. The Church of Uganda Prayer Book already provides general forms of penitence, but these are ordinarily not designed for

particular situations of known communal wrongdoing.⁸⁷ With appropriate episcopal and liturgical authorization, such resources could potentially be adapted to provide occasions for congregational lament, confession, prayer, and renewed commitment to Christian holiness where serious wrongdoing has significantly affected the community. Such practices would help give practical expression to Paul's expectation that the church should not remain indifferent to serious sin.

Nevertheless, Paul's response in 1 Corinthians 5 demonstrates that concern for reputation cannot become a reason for tolerating serious wrongdoing. His criticism of the Corinthian congregation exposes the danger of maintaining communal honor while failing to confront conduct that contradicts the identity of God's people. The issue, therefore, is not whether shame should be deliberately imposed, but whether the church is willing to acknowledge the seriousness of wrongdoing rather than conceal it. Public accountability, where appropriate, may involve a degree of discomfort or shame, but its purpose should be correction, protection of the community, and restoration rather than humiliation.

This distinction is particularly important for the Ruwenzori context. Faithful communal grief should not become public humiliation, and confidentiality should not become a means of concealing serious wrongdoing. The church must therefore seek a pastoral balance between truthful acknowledgement and the protection of human dignity. Appropriate procedures should consider the seriousness of the offence, the persons affected, the possibility of harm from unnecessary disclosure, and the requirements of justice and due process.

In this way, communal grief complements the principles already identified in this study. The gathered church recognizes its responsibility for the holiness of the body; legitimate leaders provide appropriate oversight; the community acknowledges the seriousness of wrongdoing; and disciplinary action remains directed toward the restoration of the church and, where possible, the repentant offender. The practical

⁸⁷The Prayer Book of the Church of Uganda (Kampala: Church of Uganda Press, 2007) provides general prayers of penitence on pages 210-212 and 456-458. Adapting these for specific situations would require episcopal authorization.

contribution of this principle to Ruwenzori Diocese is therefore not necessarily the introduction of public lament for every disciplinary case, but the cultivation of a church culture in which serious sin is neither normalized nor concealed and in which the community can respond with truth, holiness, compassion, and hope for restoration.

Faithful grief accepts the temporary shame of public acknowledgment in order to recover the more fundamental honor of being God's holy people.⁸⁸

4.5.3 Potential Contribution to Practice

If this principle were taken seriously, it could encourage parishes within Ruwenzori Diocese to develop appropriate pastoral and liturgical opportunities for communal lament when serious moral failure has significantly affected the congregation. Such practices would not necessarily be required in every disciplinary case, nor would they require the public disclosure of confidential matters. Rather, where appropriate and with proper pastoral and ecclesiastical guidance, a parish could provide an occasion for the congregation to acknowledge the seriousness of wrongdoing, confess its own failure to respond appropriately, and renew its commitment to Christian holiness.

Such a service could draw upon biblical texts that express communal repentance and grief, including Psalm 51, Ezra 9, and 1 Corinthians 5. Scripture readings, a brief homily, prayers of confession, intercession for those affected, and a renewed commitment to faithful Christian conduct could help the congregation understand that serious sin affects more than the individual involved. It can affect relationships, the witness of the church, and the integrity of the Christian community.

The potential value of such practices is therefore formative rather than merely ceremonial. Communal lament could not help congregations develop a biblical understanding of sin in which neither silence nor public humiliation is considered an adequate response. Instead, the church is encouraged to recognize wrongdoing,

⁸⁸ Garland, *1 Corinthians*, 180-181.

grieve its effects, exercise appropriate accountability, and remain open to repentance and restoration.

Such an approach would also strengthen the connection between the principles identified in this study. The gathered assembly accepts its responsibility for the wellbeing and holiness of the body; church leaders provide appropriate oversight; the congregation acknowledges the seriousness of wrongdoing; and the possibility of restoration remains open where genuine repentance occurs. In this sense, communal grief can function as a bridge between recognition of sin, accountability, discipline, and restoration.

The practical contribution of this principle, therefore, is not necessarily the introduction of formal lament services in every parish, but the development of a church culture in which serious wrongdoing can be acknowledged truthfully, mourned appropriately, addressed faithfully, and ultimately met with the possibility of repentance and restoration.

4.6 Evaluating the Principle of Theological Identity Grounding Ethics

4.6.1 Relevance to Ruwenzori Diocese

The sixth principle emerging from 1 Corinthians 5 is that Christian ethical responsibility is grounded in the theological identity of God's people. Paul states, *καθώς ἐστε ἄζυμοι* (“as you are unleavened,” 1 Cor. 5:7), connecting the Corinthians' ethical obligation with what God has already accomplished for them in Christ. The church is therefore called to remove the “old leaven” not in order to become God's people, but because, in Christ, it already belongs to a new covenant identity. The ethical imperative flows from the theological indicative.

This principle provides an important foundation for the other principles identified in this study. The church confronts serious sin because it is a people called to holiness; the gathered assembly bears responsibility because its members belong to one body; communal grief is appropriate because sin contradicts the identity and calling of that body; and discipline is exercised not merely to punish wrongdoing but to protect the

integrity of the community and provide a context in which repentance and restoration may occur. Paul's argument therefore prevents discipline from becoming detached from the gospel. This distinction is particularly relevant to the ministry of Ruwenzori Diocese. Church discipline, if separated from its theological foundation, could become primarily a matter of enforcing institutional rules or preserving outward respectability.

Without this grounding, the church's disciplinary efforts risk becoming mere rule-enforcement, detached from the gospel and burdening believers with works-righteousness.⁸⁹ an approach could reduce Christian ethics to external conformity and potentially create fear, resentment, or legalism. Paul's argument points in another direction: Christian conduct is to reflect the new identity that believers have received through Christ.

The connection with Christ's sacrifice is central to Paul's argument. The statement, "Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7), provides the theological basis for the call to remove the old leaven and to live as an unleavened people. Discipline therefore belongs within the larger story of God's saving work. The church does not discipline in order to earn God's acceptance; rather, it seeks holiness because it has already been claimed by Christ.

This principle also provides an important corrective to approaches to holiness that may focus primarily on individual behavior without sufficient attention to grace and Christian identity. The church's call to holiness should not be understood as a means of achieving salvation or divine favor. Rather, holiness is the appropriate response to the grace already received. This helps maintain the necessary relationship between grace, identity, ethical responsibility, discipline, and restoration.

For Ruwenzori Diocese, the principle therefore suggests that teaching and practice concerning church discipline should consistently be connected to the gospel. Congregations need to understand not only what conduct is contrary to Christian faith but also why the church is called to respond to it. Discipline is most faithfully

⁸⁹ Fee, *First Corinthians*, 214-215.

understood when it arises from the church's identity in Christ, seeks to preserve the holiness of the body, protects those affected by wrongdoing, and leaves room for genuine repentance and restoration.

Consequently, Paul's theological identity principle does not weaken the call to holiness; rather, it gives that call its proper foundation. The church does not pursue holiness to establish its identity before God. It pursues holiness because it has received its identity in Christ. This provides a theological basis for approaching discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese not primarily as condemnation or rule-enforcement, but as an expression of the church's calling to live consistently with the gospel it professes.

4.6.2 Applicability of this principle.

Applying this principle in Ruwenzori Diocese suggests that disciplinary action should, appropriately be accompanied by clear theological explanation. The congregation and those directly involved should be helped to understand not only what conduct has required a disciplinary response, but also why the church regards such conduct as inconsistent with its identity in Christ. Paul's argument in 1 Corinthians 5 provides this theological foundation: because Christ, the Passover lamb, has been sacrificed, the church is called to live as an “unleavened” people (1 Cor. 5:7-8). The action is not arbitrary; it flows from identity.⁹⁰

Such teaching is important because it helps distinguish Christian discipline from mere institutional rule-enforcement. The church does not respond to wrongdoing simply to preserve its reputation or to impose moral conformity. Rather, its response is related to its calling to embody the holiness and new life received through Christ. This theological explanation can also help the congregation understand the relationship between accountability and grace, making clear that discipline is not intended to place individuals outside God's grace but to address serious wrongdoing while leaving room for repentance and restoration.

⁹⁰ N. T. Wright, *Paul and the Faithfulness of God* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2013), 624-626.

A significant challenge, however, is the level of theological and pastoral preparation required of those responsible for teaching and administering discipline. Clergy and other church leaders need sufficient understanding of Pauline theology, ecclesiology, pastoral care, and the relationship between Christian identity and ethical responsibility. Where such preparation is limited, disciplinary processes will be interpreted primarily in legal, institutional, or moralistic terms.

This therefore points to a possible contribution for theological education within the Diocese. Bishop Tucker School of Divinity and Theology and relevant continuing education programmes could give greater attention to Pauline ethics, ecclesial discipline, and the theological relationship between grace, identity, holiness, accountability, and restoration. Such formation would not necessarily require a new disciplinary system, but could strengthen the capacity of church leaders to explain and practice discipline in a manner that remains grounded in the gospel.

Therefore, it is not simply to increase disciplinary activity but to ensure that disciplinary practice remains theologically grounded, pastorally responsible, and consistent with the church's identity in Christ. In this way, the principle of theological identity complements the preceding principles: the church recognizes wrongdoing, accepts communal responsibility, responds appropriately to serious sin, and pursues holiness because it belongs to Christ.

4.4.3 Practical Strategies for Strengthening Congregational Participation in Ecclesial Discipline

The principle that the gathered assembly shares responsibility for the moral life of the church should not be understood as a call to replace episcopal authority with congregational democracy. Rather, Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 suggests that discipline is a shared ecclesial responsibility in which bishops, clergy, lay leaders, and the wider congregation may have complementary roles. Within the Anglican tradition, therefore, the practical question is how appropriate forms of congregational participation can be strengthened within the existing structures of episcopal oversight and ecclesiastical order.

One possible strategy is to strengthen the pastoral contribution of existing representative structures within parish life. Parish councils, church committees, Mothers' Union, Fathers' Union, youth leaders, and lay readers already provide recognized forms of lay participation in the ministry of the church. Where appropriate, these structures could contribute pastoral insight during disciplinary situations by identifying concerns, encouraging reconciliation, supporting affected members, and assisting with pastoral follow-up. Their role would remain pastoral and advisory rather than judicial, thereby respecting the formal disciplinary authority of the bishop and other authorized ecclesiastical structures while encouraging greater communal responsibility.

A second possible strategy is to strengthen parish-based pastoral care involving clergy and appropriately trained lay Christians. Such teams could provide confidential listening, pastoral visitation, prayer, counseling, and mediation where appropriate. Early pastoral engagement may enable some concerns to be addressed through repentance, reconciliation, and pastoral support before they develop into matters requiring formal disciplinary action. This approach would also reinforce the principle that discipline is not simply a formal institutional response but forms part of the church's wider ministry of pastoral care and spiritual formation.

A third strategy is to strengthen biblical teaching concerning the responsibility of believers for one another's spiritual wellbeing. Sermons, Bible studies, confirmation instruction, and leadership formation could emphasize that the preservation of Christian holiness is not exclusively the responsibility of bishops and clergy. Believers are also called to encourage one another, correct one another in love, pray for one another, and support those seeking repentance and restoration. Such teaching could gradually encourage congregations to understand themselves not merely as recipients of disciplinary decisions but as participants in the spiritual life and holiness of the body of Christ.

Another possible contribution would be to strengthen appropriate communication between diocesan leadership and congregations during disciplinary processes.

Confidential information concerning individuals should remain protected, particularly where disclosure could cause unnecessary harm.

Nevertheless, where appropriate, church leaders could explain the biblical and pastoral principles guiding disciplinary action and the church's concern for justice, accountability, holiness, and restoration. Such communication could reduce unnecessary speculation and help congregations understand that disciplinary processes are intended to serve the wellbeing and integrity of the Christian community.

The principle also has implications for restoration following discipline. Where genuine repentance has been established and restoration has been appropriately authorized, the congregation may have an important pastoral role in receiving the restored believer. Opportunities for prayer, encouragement, fellowship, and gradual reintegration could help communicate that discipline is not necessarily the final purpose of the church's response to wrongdoing. This reflects the broader Pauline concern that discipline should serve the spiritual welfare of both the church and the person involved.

Finally, the Diocese could consider incorporating greater collaboration between clergy and lay leaders within continuing ministerial formation. Clergy conferences, diocesan retreats, and leadership seminars could provide opportunities for ordained and lay leaders to reflect together on biblical models of accountability, pastoral care, conflict resolution, safeguarding, and restoration. Such formation would not diminish episcopal authority; rather, it could strengthen the capacity of the wider church to exercise its responsibilities appropriately and support those entrusted with formal disciplinary oversight.

These strategies suggest that Paul's emphasis on the gathered assembly can be meaningfully considered within Anglican ecclesiology without requiring a transfer of formal disciplinary authority from bishops to congregations. The exegetical finding is better understood as a call to recognize shared ecclesial responsibility within ordered leadership. Episcopal oversight may continue to provide formal authority and

governance, while clergy, lay leaders, and congregations participate appropriately in pastoral discernment, accountability, prayer, and restoration. In this way, Ruwenzori Diocese could explore forms of congregational participation that are consistent with its Anglican identity while taking seriously the communal dimension of ecclesial discipline reflected in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8.

4.7 Summary

This chapter has evaluated how six theological principles derived from 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 will inform contemporary ecclesial reflection and practice within Ruwenzori Diocese. The evaluation has shown that these principles have significant relevance to the Diocese, while their application requires careful attention to Anglican ecclesial structures, cultural realities, pastoral responsibilities, and the limitations of the present study.

The first principle, holiness as communal identity, demonstrates that serious moral failure is not merely an individual matter but has implications for the identity and witness of the Christian community. The second principle, the communal effect of serious sin, highlights Paul's concern that tolerated wrongdoing can affect the wider body and therefore requires an appropriate ecclesial response. The third principle, discipline as oriented toward restoration, shows that disciplinary action should not be understood simply as punishment or exclusion but within the wider purposes of repentance, reconciliation, and the restoration of the church and the offender where genuine repentance occurs.

The fourth principle, the responsibility of the gathered assembly, suggests that church discipline should not become detached from the community affected by wrongdoing. This does not require the replacement of episcopal authority with congregational decision-making; rather, it points toward appropriate forms of shared ecclesial responsibility within existing structures of Anglican oversight. The fifth principle, communal grief, challenges patterns of silence or indifference toward serious moral failure and calls the church to acknowledge the seriousness of sin while avoiding unnecessary public humiliation. The sixth principle, theological identity grounding

ethics, provides the theological foundation for the entire disciplinary process: because Christ has been sacrificed as the Passover lamb, the church is called to live consistently with its identity as God's holy people.

Taken together, these principles indicate that Paul's approach to church discipline is not primarily concerned with institutional punishment or the enforcement of rules. Rather, discipline is located within the church's identity in Christ, its communal responsibility for holiness, its accountability before God, and its concern for repentance and restoration. For Ruwenzori Diocese, the findings therefore suggest possibilities for strengthening theological formation, pastoral accountability, appropriate congregational participation, communal acknowledgement of serious wrongdoing, and restorative ministry, while remaining within established ecclesial structures.

The chapter consequently does not propose that Paul's disciplinary model should be transferred directly into the contemporary Anglican context. Instead, it demonstrates that 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 provides theological principles that can critically inform reflection on existing disciplinary practices in Ruwenzori Diocese. Their contemporary application requires contextual discernment, pastoral wisdom, and appropriate ecclesial oversight. The central contribution of the chapter is therefore to show how Paul's vision of a holy, accountable, communal, and restorative church may provide a biblical framework for evaluating and strengthening contemporary ecclesial practice.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined how Paul's teaching on ecclesial holiness and discipline in 1 Corinthians 5:1-8 to inform the contemporary context of Ruwenzori Diocese within the Church of Uganda. Chapter One established the research problem, objectives, questions, literature, and methodological framework. Chapter Two provided the exegetical analysis of the passage, while Chapter Three examined the historical, cultural, and ecclesial context of Ruwenzori Diocese. Chapter Four evaluated six theological principles arising from the text and considered their relevance to contemporary ecclesial practice.

This final chapter brings the study together by summarizing the major findings, drawing the principal theological conclusions, and presenting concise recommendations for the Diocese, theological education, and further research.

Findings from Contextual Analysis and Evaluation

The contextual analysis and evaluation revealed three main findings regarding church discipline in Ruwenzori Diocese.

First, church discipline is both a personal and communal responsibility. While Christian holiness is often understood in personal terms, 1 Corinthians 5 shows that serious and persistent sin can affect the wider church community. The findings therefore suggest the need to strengthen teaching that helps Christians understand holiness as something the whole church is called to pursue together.

Second, discipline should bring together accountability, repentance, and restoration. Cultural values such as honor, family relationships, and respect for authority can sometimes make it difficult to confront serious wrongdoing openly. However, avoiding such matters can allow harmful behavior to continue. At the same time, discipline should not be reduced to punishment or exclusion. It should aim at repentance,

healing, and restoration, while respecting the existing canonical structures of the Church of Uganda.

Third, the church needs to respond to wrongdoing with both courage and compassion. Silence, fear of damaging relationships, or excessive dependence on church leaders may limit the involvement of the wider Christian community. The findings suggest that clergy, lay leaders, and congregations should have appropriate opportunities to participate in prayer, accountability, pastoral discernment, and restoration. In this way, Paul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 5 can help the Diocese hold together holiness, responsibility, compassion, and the hope of restoration without simply copying the disciplinary practices of the early church.

Finally, church discipline must be grounded in the church's identity in Christ. Holiness is not only an individual responsibility but also a shared responsibility of the whole church. I also found that discipline should aim at repentance, restoration, and spiritual growth rather than punishment alone. The wider church community should participate appropriately in discipline, while respecting the authority and structures of the Church of Uganda. Finally, the church should respond to sin with humility and grief, remembering that discipline must always be rooted in God's grace and the gospel.

I therefore recommend that Ruwenzori Diocese strengthen theological and pastoral training on church discipline among clergy, archdeacons, and lay leaders, with greater attention to accountability, repentance, restoration, and the teaching of 1 Corinthians 5. I also recommend further research into how church discipline is understood and practiced in Ruwenzori Diocese and other Anglican dioceses in Uganda, using interviews, surveys, and appropriately anonymised case studies.

In conclusion, I found that 1 Corinthians 5 challenges the church to take sin seriously without losing sight of grace. Church discipline should therefore bring together holiness, accountability, repentance, and restoration. For Ruwenzori Diocese, the goal should not be to choose between discipline and grace, but to hold the two

together by responding to wrongdoing with courage, compassion, and hope. Ultimately, all disciplinary practice should remain grounded in the identity of the church in Christ, who has been sacrificed for his people and calls them to live in sincerity and truth

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