



DEAR CHURCH

| A 1 CORINTHIANS STUDY JOURNAL |

04	HOW TO USE THIS BOOK
06	INTRODUCTION
08	THE CITY OF CORINTH
10	PAUL IN CORINTH
14	A MAP OF CORINTH
15	AN OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS
17	1 + 2 CORINTHIANS BIBLE PROJECT VIDEOS
18	WAYS TO ENGAGE 1 CORINTHIANS
24	LIFE GROUP PARTICIPANT COVENANT
26	WEEK 1 – WISDOM <i>1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16</i>

52	WEEK 2 – MATURITY <i>1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-9</i>
78	WEEK 3 – BUILDINGS <i>1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-23</i>
102	WEEK 4 – LEADERSHIP <i>1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-21</i>
124	WEEK 5 – SIN <i>1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-12</i>
147	WEEK 6 – DISAGREEMENTS <i>1 CORINTHIANS 6:1-11</i>
171	APPENDIX 1: ROOTED RHYTHMS
172	APPENDIX 2: ADDITIONAL RESOURCES
173	APPENDIX 3: VOMO
174	APPENDIX 4: MISSION, VISION, PRIORITIES
175	APPENDIX 5: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

HOW TO ————— USE THIS BOOK

Jesus said in **John 8:31**, *“If you abide in my word, you are truly my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* That means simply this: if we want to be Jesus’ disciples, if we want to know truth, and if we want to be set free, we need to be people who put his teachings into practice – what he taught in both word and deed.

This devotional book will be a bit different from past renditions. We are going to be hyper-focused over the course of this series on richly engaging the text of 1 Corinthians. We want God’s Word to us to sink into our very bones!

This devotional book will have pages for you to take sermon notes, daily inductive devotions guiding you through parts of 1 Corinthians, and weekly reflection questions to help you synthesize what you’re going over each week into your heart, mind, body, and soul.

Ideally, you’ll utilize this book in your personal devotional time. Use the pages to write down thoughts or questions, feelings and difficulties, things that encourage you, things that challenge you, and where you feel like God might be inviting you into with a step of faith.

To get the most out of this book and this sermon series, we suggest that you:

- Don't go it alone! Journey through this material and these practices with your life group. If you do not have a life group, find others in your family or perhaps one close friend and invite them into the journey!
- Fill out the participant covenant (if you're doing this with your life group)!
- Take notes on the sermon each week.
- Commit to engaging in the study material within.
- Bring your thoughts, invitations, reflections, and sermon notes to life group each week.

As individuals and as a group, our hope is that this series and these practices will help you connect to Jesus, to grow as a disciple, and to become an ever more pleasing aroma to the Lord and to those around you (**2 Corinthians 2:15**).

INTRODUCTION

*"To the church of God that is in Corinth,
to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be
saints together with all those who in every place
call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ..."*

1 Corinthians 1:2

These words penned from the Apostle Paul were written **to** a real people, at a real time, at a real place. Because the Word of God is living and active, these words from the Apostle are **for** you and me. In some ways, we could just take out the word "Corinth" and replace it with "Franklin Township." Why? Well...

- Corinth was an important economic center – located on an isthmus with two ports, Corinth grew into an economically flourishing center of commerce. **Much like our city.**
- Corinth was populated – it had become at the time of Paul's writing one of the most populated cities in the ancient world. **Much like our city.**
- Corinth was ethnically diverse – it was a metropolis consisting of people from all kinds of cultures, languages, ethnicities, and more. **Much like our city.**
- Corinth was pluralistic – there were many different religious belief systems that different people held to. **Much like our city.**

- Corinth had Christians in its midst – Paul had planted the church in the city of Corinth (see **Acts 18**) and a budding community following the way of Jesus of Nazareth, proclaiming his death, burial, and resurrection was meeting together, breaking bread, pursuing justice for their city, devoting themselves to the Apostles’ teaching, and more. **Much like our church.**
- Corinth had Christians working towards maturity in Christ – Even though this church had been planted by Paul, the Corinthians still had their struggles. Moral decay, division, false teaching, idolatry, legalism, and other ideologies threatened the life of this burgeoning church community. **Much like our church.**

There are many similarities between the place our church family finds itself in and the place that the Corinthian church found itself in. While the details of the Corinthians’ struggles may be different than ours, the heart of the issues they faced are the same as ever. So while the Apostle Paul was writing 2000 years ago, in many ways, Paul, through the Holy Spirit, is writing to us.

And we believe that through the Holy Spirit, through the dedication to know nothing but “Jesus Christ and him crucified” (**1 Corinthians 2:2**), and through the rich engagement with this letter, we will find lessons, encouragement, theology, challenge, and more to connect us to Jesus.

THE CITY OF CORINTH

The city of Corinth was massively influential in Jesus' and Paul's day. N.T. Wright says in his book *The New Testament in Its World* that,

"Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia" and that it, "Had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, but was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 BC and colonized by Roman freedmen from families with connections further east. It grew quickly and soon recaptured its former regional prominence. In Paul's day, Corinth had a population of about 80,000 with a further 20,000 in surrounding villages and settlements."

That may not seem like much to us in our day, but that was a budding metropolis in the ancient world.

Corinth, because of its population boom and potential for financial gain, found itself as a key location for all sorts of people wanting to get a leg up in life. Corinth had a small number of wealthy residents and many poor ones. The city consisted of everyone from government officials, soldiers, synagogue leaders, heads of households to merchants, artisans, laborers, slaves, and more.

Corinth was urban, it was hip, it was progressive, it was becoming a cultural center, and it was a place of entrepreneurship and business. Needless to say, other than Rome, Corinth was where the action was and so people were moving in left and right.

If you were walking around in 1st Century Corinth, you would find yourself hiking past amphitheaters for games and oratory displays, you'd find yourself coming face to face with the slave trade business where people from all walks of life were being bought and sold as pieces of property, and you'd come to see how economically and culturally influential this city was due to its geographical location on an isthmus between two halves of Greece.

Walking through the city, there's no way you would miss the Acrocorinth. The Acrocorinth was a mountain sitting 1,886 feet high that towers over the city of Corinth to this day. On the Acrocorinth, overlooking the city was the ancient Greek acropolis housing the temple of Aphrodite, the Greek goddess associated with love, lust, pleasure, procreation, and more.

If you kept on walking, you'd pass the home of Apollo, the son of Zeus and Leto and known as the Greek god of archery, music, truth and prophecy, healing, light, and more. Here, at the Temple of Apollo, his faithful followers would honor and pay their respects to him.

Eventually, you'd find yourself at the Temple of Octavia – the shrine dedicated to probably both the sister of Octavian Augustus and to the worship of the Roman gods Jupiter, Juno, and Minerva (in Greek, the gods Zeus, Hera, and Athena).

And finally, after passing the many legal buildings, fountains, sanctuaries, markets, and shops, you'd come across the local theater – a place where plays, music, and rhetorical contests were held much to the amusement and entertainment of both locals and visitors alike.

PAUL IN CORINTH

In the book of Acts, written by the historian Luke, we have an account of the Apostle Paul's missionary journeys. In **Acts 18**, we have Paul's arrival in the city of Corinth. Coming from a comparatively *unsuccessful* missionary endeavor in Athens, Paul was surely ready to see gospel fruit in a new and different city. In his mind, Corinth was the next logical place.

Here's what we read about Paul's time in this new city:

² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

So, upon Paul's arrival, he quickly ingratiated himself to both the local Jews and to Jews who had been displaced from their homes and moved to Corinth, presumably for opportunity. Paul spent time in the synagogues preaching and reasoning in their synagogues about the good news of Messiah Jesus. And after a while of solo work, Paul was then joined by Timothy and Silas.

Luke writes,

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. ⁶ But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

⁷ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸ Crispus, the synagogue leader, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized.

After initially facing opposition to the message of the gospel, Paul eventually found those with eyes to see and ears to hear. As opposed to his time in Athens where he soaked his message in rhetoric and philosophy and came away with just "some men" who joined him and believed, the Apostle preached Christ and Him crucified and found that "many of the Corinthians who heard Paul believed and were baptized."

Of course, with increased success, there's liable to be increased opposition. So, God spoke to Paul in a vision. Luke tells us that,

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." ¹¹ So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

A year and a half. That's 18 months. 18 months of preaching, teaching, correcting, training in righteousness, discipling, building a new church, practicing the way of Jesus, and more. This Paul was not here to hoodwink the Corinthians out of their money. He was invested. He loved them. He wanted to make sure they got the Message right and that their lives aligned with it too.

Of course, as his success increased, so too, did the hostility.

¹² While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews of Corinth made a united attack on Paul and brought him to the place of judgment.

¹³ "This man," they charged, "is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law."

¹⁴ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to them, "If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. ¹⁵ But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things." ¹⁶ So he drove them off. ¹⁷ Then the crowd there turned on Sosthenes the synagogue leader and beat him in front of the proconsul; and Gallio showed no concern whatever.

¹⁸ Paul stayed on in Corinth for some time. Then he left the brothers and sisters and sailed for Syria, accompanied by Priscilla and Aquila.

The gospel of Jesus caused quite the disturbance amongst the Jewish locals in Corinth. They tried to run Paul off, but couldn't because of his status as a Roman citizen. So, they took their anger out on their own man – Sosthenes – for allowing Paul to continue to have influence in their midst.

Paul stayed with the Corinthians for many more days following this incident, no doubt continuing to preach and manifest the gospel, no doubt continuing to disciple others, and no doubt doing everything he could to connect people to Jesus.

A MAP OF CORINTH



THE MEDITERRANEAN WORLD OF FIRST-CENTURY CORINTH

OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

Introduction: Greeting and Thanksgiving • **1:1-9**

Letter Body • **1:10-16:4**

- A. Paul Responds to Oral Reports About the Corinthian Church • **1:10-6:20**
 - 1. Divisions in the Church • **1:10-4:21**
 - A. The Problem: Rival Factions • **1:10-17**
 - B. The Cross as the Necessary Center of the Gospel • **1:18-2:5**
 - C. Christian Wisdom as the Necessary Growth • **2:6-3:23**
 - i. Spiritual People vs. Natural People • **2:6-16**
 - ii. Spiritual Christians vs. Carnal Christians • **3:1-23**
 - D. The Right Attitude Toward the Apostles • **4:1-21**
 - 2. A Case of Incest • **5:1-13**
 - 3. Lawsuits Between Believers • **6:1-11**
 - 4. The Seriousness of Sexual Immorality in General • **6:12-20**
- B. Paul Responds to the Letter From the Corinthians • **7:1-16:4**
 - 1. Concerning Marriage • **7:1-40**
 - A. To Those Currently or Previously Married • **7:1-16**
 - B. Analogies With Circumcision and Slavery • **7:17-24**
 - C. To Those Never Married or Contemplating Marriage • **7:25-40**
 - 2. Concerning Food Sacrificed to Idols • **8:1-11:1**
 - A. Introduction to the Problem and the Solution: Tempering Knowledge With Love • **8:1-13**

OUTLINE OF 1 CORINTHIANS

- B. A Second Application: Money for Ministry • **9:1-18**
- C. The Underlying Motive: Saving as Many as Possible • **9:19-27**
- D. Examples of the Danger of License: The Idolatry of Israel and Idol Feasts in Corinth • **10:1-22**
- E. Summary: Balancing Freedom and Restraint • **10:23-11:1**
- 3. Concerning Worship • **11:2-14:40**
 - A. Head-coverings • **11:2-16**
 - B. The Lord's Supper • **11:17-34**
 - C. Spiritual Gifts • **12:1-14:40**
 - i. Diversity Within Unity • **12:1-31a**
 - ii. The Pre-eminence of Love • **12:31b-13:13**
 - iii. Prophecy and Tongues: Prefer Intelligibility • **14:1-25**
 - iv. Prophecy and Tongues: Prefer Order • **14:26-40**
- 4. Concerning the Resurrection • **15:1-58**
 - A. The Certainty of the Resurrection • **15:1-34**
 - B. The Nature of the Resurrection • **15:35-58**
- 5. Concerning the Collection for Jerusalem • **16:1-4**

Conclusion: Travel Plans and Final Greetings • **16:5-24**

- A. The Travel Plans of Paul and His Co-workers • **16:5-12**
- B. The Formal Closing • **16:13-24**

This outline is taken from Craig L. Blomberg's commentary *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians*

BIBLE PROJECT

Scan the QR codes for overviews of 1 and 2 Corinthians from our friends over at Bible Project!

1 CORINTHIANS



2 CORINTHIANS



WAYS TO ENGAGE WITH 1 CORINTHIANS

There are multiple ways one can engage with the Bible. Followers of Jesus throughout history have been reading, meditating, re-reading the Scriptures and have found several ways to meet God in His Word. Below are several ways you can engage the Bible individually, as a family, or even as a community.

READ SCRIPTURE ALOUD AS COMMUNITY

Many different people engage with Scripture in many different ways today – some people read it first thing in the morning, other people read it at their favorite local coffee shop, and still others listen to it on an app. When the early church first started engaging with the Scriptures, they didn't even have their copies of the Bible. What they would do was, in postures of humility and surrender, they would listen to large portions of it being read aloud in community. To practice this way of engaging the text...

1. GET COMFORTABLE

You'll be reading for the next 20 or so minutes, so make sure that you're in a place, position, and posture to be still, attentive, and open to God.

2. ESTABLISH THE READER(S)

Decide who will read it. One person can read the whole thing, a few of you can split it, or (what we would recommend) each person can read some of it until the whole passage is read. Spend a moment to decide how you will break up the text and who will read.

3. INVITE THE HOLY SPIRIT

Take a deep breath and settle in. Have one person invite the Holy Spirit to help you all to listen in a posture of surrender and to form you by what is read.

4. READ

Spend time reading the entire text in one sitting aloud together.

5. SILENCE & PRAYER

After the last verse is read, don't rush onto the next part. Take a moment in silence and stillness, letting the words reverberate inside your mind and soul. After a bit, have someone pray to thank God for the experience of this practice.

6. DEBRIEF

When you have finished in prayer, discuss what stood out, what your experience was like, and what new thoughts and insights you have from this practice.

LECTIO DIVINA

Psalm 1 says, *“Blessed is the man...whose delight is in the law of the Lord and on his law he meditates day and night.”* Meditating on Scripture is different from studying Scripture. In studying, we are coming to the text to learn. In meditating, we are coming to meet with Jesus.

To do this, followers of Jesus have been practicing a discipline called Lectio Divina for many years. In Lectio Divina, the Jesus followers allow the Scriptures (in cooperation with the Spirit) to lead them into further intimacy with God as they move slowly, carefully, and repeatedly through the same text. Here’s how to do it:

1. PREPARE

Before beginning, be sure to turn your phone off and leave it in another room. Situate yourself comfortably in a quiet, solitary place. Calm your body and quiet your mind before God as you work to prepare your heart to receive what God has spoken through the text, and to respond accordingly. Finally, invite the Holy Spirit to guide your thinking and feeling as you read.

2. LISTEN

Read the passage. Sit quietly for a moment before you begin. Ask the Holy Spirit to speak and show you what the Lord wants for you in this passage. Mark words or phrases that stand out as you read.

3. LINGER

Read the passage again out loud. Are the same words or phrases you marked the first time still standing out? Write them down.

How do these words or phrases apply to your life right now?

4. LEARN

As you read the text for a third time, ask yourself, “How is God inviting me to respond? What does He want me to be learning from this?” Write out what comes to mind.

5. LIVE

Read the passage one last time and answer these questions:

- Why is God showing me this now?
- What does this mean for my life?
- What needs to change in my life?
- How do I need to live differently?

IMAGINATIVE PRAYER

Another way Jesus followers have been engaging with the Scriptures is through a practice called imaginative prayer. In this discipline, readers of the text actually imagine themselves in its story, encountering what is being written through their senses and creativity. Here's how to engage with 1 Corinthians in this way:

Read a portion of 1 Corinthians.

Visualize what is happening in the story. Take some time to imagine what the scene was like. Listen to the words spoken in the text again as if you were one of the first hearers of them.

Now begin to imagine the scene as if you were right in the middle of it.

- *Who are you in the story?*
- *What do you see?*
- *What do you hear?*
- *What do you smell?*
- *What's your position?*
- *Who else is there with you?*
- *What are you feeling?*
- *What's the mood of the crowd?*
- *What is your response to all you experience?*
- *What questions do you have?*
- *What fears do you have?*

Allow God to bring the story to life. The people we read about in Scripture were real people who walked the earth and had feelings and thoughts much like ours.

What are you noticing from your responses?

As you listen again, notice how you sense God inviting you to respond. What are His invitations from this story for you today?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

A fourth way that you can engage with 1 Corinthians is by praying it. To engage with the Scriptures this way, slowly read a text multiple times. Then, after finishing that section of Scripture, write out a prayer that expresses what that portion of Scripture prompted within you.

For example, if you were to read **Mark 10:13-16**, where Jesus says “*Let the children come to me...*” you might wind up writing a prayer like the following:

Father, you are indeed father to all the children of the world. Your kingdom was made for people such as these. Help me to become like a child – trusting, surrendered, and dependent on you, O God. For you are my Provider, my Deliverer, my Help, and my Refuge.

Your prayer could be longer than that or shorter. There’s no right or wrong way to go about it! The key is to slowly and prayerfully engage the text and to be real and honest before God.

STUDY

Another way that you can engage with 1 Corinthians is through the practice of study. This practice is intended to help the learner engage their mind and focus their attention on the scriptures to help them understand and apply biblical truth to the entirety of their lives.

There are three main steps to Bible Study:

1. OBSERVATION

In this step of study we're asking, *"What do I see in this text?"*

This might involve asking questions like...

- Who is involved in this text?
- What is actually happening in this text?
- What places or buildings are present in this text?
- What time period is this text?
- What metaphors, analogies, or commands are present in this text?

2. INTERPRETATION

In this step of study we are asking, *"What does this mean?"*

This might involve asking questions like...

- What is the author who wrote this text trying to convey?
- What would the hearers of this text have thought upon reading this text?
- What does the historical/cultural background of this text have to do with it's interpretation?
- What kind of literature is this text? How does that shape how this text should be read?
- What does this text mean in its literary context?
- What do these individual words or phrases mean?

3. APPLICATION

In this step of study we are asking, “*What do I do?*”

This might involve asking questions like...

- Is there an example to follow? Or *not* to follow?
- Is there a command to adhere to?
- How does this shape my current reality practically?
- What do I do because of this story?

TO HELP STUDY THE BIBLE, HERE ARE SOME SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Check out Bible Project: *bibleproject.com*
- A helpful online tool: *blueletterbible.org*
- N.T. Wright’s *For Everyone* Commentary Series: Choose a book of the New Testament and pick up one of NT Wright’s short *For Everyone* commentaries on that book. These commentaries are short, accessible, and could be read in small sections each day.
- Find a good study Bible. A couple good ones are the *ESV Study Bible* and the *NIV Cultural Backgrounds Commentary*.
- You could also buy a Bible Dictionary, other Bible commentaries, or other Bible background books such as *The New Testament in it’s World* by N.T. Wright and Michael Bird.

THE CREEK

A life group is a community of disciples intent on loving God, loving others, and making disciples in order to connect people to Jesus.

We are a community: As the family of God, we meet regularly to eat, pray, and share life together. Community is the place where transformation into Jesus' likeness happens best.

We are disciples: As disciples of Jesus, we make it our aim to be with Jesus, become like Jesus, and do what Jesus did. Through practice, teaching, community, and guidance of the Holy Spirit, we are learning what it means to love God, love others, and make disciples as apprentices of Jesus.

We want to connect people to Jesus: As people with a purpose in the Kingdom of God, we seek to proclaim and manifest the good news of Jesus and do justice in our community so that our message is grounded in words and deeds. We partner with God by giving our time, talents, and resources to see the Kingdom of God come in Indianapolis as it is in heaven.

Knowing that there are seasons and times for flexibility, in order to accomplish our goal of transformation into Christlikeness we are asking every life group participant to commit to:



Attending your life group weekly (even when it gets tough!)

Reflecting on the devotional material to enhance group time and contributing to group discussion based on the sermons

Practice being with Jesus, becoming like Jesus, and doing what Jesus did

Live and champion the seven rhythms of Rooted

Being vulnerable and authentic

Caring for your group members

Speak the truth in love and humbly receive loving accountability

Pursue unity with other group members

CONFIDENTIALITY

It is our desire to promote a safe environment for sharing the most important things in life. We want to provide a place where people can reveal openly and confidently the broken areas of their lives without judgment or condemnation. We are not here to “fix” one another. We encourage openness, vulnerability and intimacy during discussion, accountability, and prayer times. In order to ensure a safe haven for personal sharing, we ask that each life group member enter into an agreement of confidentiality.

Everything in this group is confidential, but according to Indiana law, we do have a duty to report abuse or neglect of a person whether they are a child or an adult. In addition, information may be shared for the express purpose of resource recommendations, accountability, discipleship, or for legal and safety reasons.

I agree to uphold the above commitments, to show up consistently both physically and mentally, and to keep all things shared by my group members confidential at all times unless what is shared falls under the aforementioned exceptions.

SIGNED: _____ **DATE:** _____

¹¹ Indiana Code 31-33-5-1, Indiana Code 12-10-3-9(a) and 12-10-3-2(a)

WEEK ONE

WISDOM

For this first week, we begin with one of the most difficult passages in the New Testament to think through. To help us in this journey, take this first day to read several different translations of this passage.

We'll provide you with three. We'd encourage you to pick an additional translation of your own (the NASB, NLT, The Message, NRSV, etc. are all good translations/paraphrases of the Bible).

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

New International Version

⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written:

*"What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived"—
the things God has prepared for those who love him—
¹⁰ these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. ¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. ¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, ¹⁶ for,

*“Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”
But we have the mind of Christ.*

English Standard Version

⁶ Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. ⁷ But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as it is written,

*“What no eye has seen, nor ear heard,
nor the heart of man imagined,*

what God has prepared for those who love him”—

¹⁰ these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. ¹³ And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

¹⁴ The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. ¹⁵ The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. ¹⁶ “For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.

Translation from New Testament scholar N.T. Wright

⁶ We do, however, speak wisdom among the mature. But this isn't a wisdom of this present world, or of the rulers of this present world, which is being done away with. ⁷ No: we speak God's hidden wisdom in a mystery. This is the wisdom God prepared ahead of time, before the world began, for our glory.

⁸ None of the rulers of this present age knew about this wisdom. If they had, you see, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ But, as the Bible says,

*"Human eyes have never seen,
Human ears have never heard,
It's never entered human hearts:
All that God has now prepared
For those who truly love him."*

¹⁰ -and that's what God has revealed to us through the spirit! The spirit, you see, searches everything, yes, even the depths of God.

¹¹ Think of it this way: who knows what is really going on inside a person, except the spirit of the person which is inside them? Well, it's like that with God. Nobody knows what is really true of God except God's spirit. ¹² And we haven't received the spirit of the world, but the spirit that comes from God, so that we can know the things that have been given to us by God. ¹³ That, then, is what we speak. We don't use words we've been taught by human wisdom, but words we've been taught by the spirit, interpreting spiritual things to spiritual people.

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic that Paul is writing about here? Explain.

What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

Okay. Let's dig into our text a little more. Since we're dropping down into this text without having done some of the background work (unless you've been taking really great notes in the sermons!), let's take a moment to think through where we're at contextually.

So, by way of recap, here's what Paul has talked about up until this point in his letter to the Corinthians:

- Paul has identified himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ • **1 Corinthians 1:1**
- Paul has identified who the people he wants to receive this letter are • **1 Corinthians 1:2**
- Paul has given thanks for God's work in the Corinthians • **1 Corinthians 1:4-9**
- Paul has encouraged the Corinthians to pursue unity, not division • **1 Corinthians 1:10-17**
- Paul has talked about how God's wisdom is not like the world's via the cross, the church, and the method of preaching • **1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5**

So, yeah, there's been a lot Paul has already written about. And, contextually, all the talk that Paul does about God's wisdom vs. the world's wisdom leading up to our passage today is done to serve as the *purpose* behind *why* the Corinthians should be unified, rather than divided as he encourages them to do in **1 Corinthians 1:10-17** (notice the use of the word "for" meaning "because") in 1:18, 1:25, and 2:2).

Now, in **1 Corinthians 2:6-16**, Paul is elaborating. He has just talked about not wanting to come to the Corinthians with words of wisdom. He didn't want to come like every other wise, sage-like person who rode into Corinth with big words, grand philosophies, and smooth rhetoric. Paul wanted to give the people of Corinth the essential gospel message: Jesus is God. Jesus died for sins. Jesus rose again.

But...that's not to say that he doesn't have any wisdom. He does. And...that's not to say that his message isn't wisdom at all. It is. His wisdom, imparted to him by the Spirit, is just different, unique, and wholly counter to the wisdom of the world. It's...well, you'll see.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-10a.

⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written:

*"What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived—
the things God has prepared for those who love him"—*

¹⁰ *these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

In verse 6, Paul says he has a particular kind of message and that it is for a particular group of people. How does he describe his message and who is his message to?

At first glance, who do you think are the “mature” in verse 6 that Paul refers to?

Gordon Fee, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians says,

“Since Paul says that he speaks this “wisdom” among “the mature” and that he could not so address them, it is thus often assumed that there are hidden depths of Christian truth that he did indeed possess but kept to himself in Corinth because of their lack of maturity. But the rest of the paragraph makes it clear that this would be a terribly unfortunate reading of Paul...The teleioi [“the mature”] of this verse are those who have received the Spirit (v. 12)...The argument of the whole paragraph, especially the language “for our glory” (v. 7), “for those who love him” (i.e., “us,” v.9), “revealed it to us” (v. 10), and “we have received the Spirit who is from God” (v. 12), implies that Paul is, as earlier, addressing the whole church and drawing them all into the orbit of what he is saying.”

So, the people that Paul is addressing here in this specific portion of 1 Corinthians aren’t super-Christians (in contrast to immature ones), but rather Christians in general (in contrast to non-Christians).

We begin to see this if we read a little further because Paul lists two groups with which this “wisdom from God” is contrasted with in verse 6. Who are those two groups?

Now read **Colossians 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3, 3:4, 3:9.**

Write out below what these verses say about the “mystery” of God? How is the “mystery” described?

In contrast to the heavy amounts of philosophy and rhetoric that wise men would walk into Corinth espousing, we can sometimes be tempted to think that’s what Paul is talking about here with regard to wisdom. For example, when we read phrases like Paul saying, “*We declare God’s wisdom, a mystery...*” in verse 7, we tend to think that there is some ultra-secret spiritual reality to be had. But Paul’s message isn’t esoteric. It isn’t for the enlightened few. God’s work wasn’t done in a corner. Paul, in this passage, says that the wisdom of God is clear and “out in the open” so to speak.

Now re-read **1 Corinthians 2:10a.**

Something happens to this “mystery” and “wisdom” (aka “these things”) and it’s being done by a specific person. What happened to “these things?” and who did it?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

1 Corinthians 2:10b-14

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. ¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

Yesterday, we began looking at the wisdom that Paul came to Corinth preaching and speaking about. This is a wisdom from God and that is wholly different from the wisdom of this world or from the rulers of this world. And finally, we learned that this wisdom, once previously hidden mystery, has been finally *revealed* by God's Spirit.

Now, Paul moves from the declaration of God's wisdom and how it is different from the world's wisdom to talking about the disclosure of God's wisdom.

Read **1 Corinthians 2:10b**.

What does the Holy Spirit "search" according to this passage?

Paul's point by beginning here with the Spirit of God being the Being who knows the things of God, is quite simply this: that "like is known by like." By this, Paul is arguing that humans, on their own, cannot know the things of God. Rather, it is the Spirit that knows the things of God. And the only way humans can know the things of God is by having God's Spirit in them. "Like is known by like."

Read **Matthew 16:13-17**.

How does Peter's experience here demonstrate the idea that "like is known by like?"

As Paul continues, he cements his argument about discerning the wisdom of God in everyday human experience.

Jump back up to **1 Corinthians 2**.

According to verse 11, who or what knows a person's thoughts? How does this relate to who or what reveals the thoughts of God?

Now what does verse 12 say about how the thoughts/wisdom of God is understood?

Look up **2 Corinthians 4:4-6**.

What does Paul say here about unbelievers? What does he say God has done for believers in Jesus (verse 6)?

Now re-read **1 Corinthians 2:13-14**.

How does **2 Corinthians 4:4-6** relate?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

1 Corinthians 2:15-16

¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, ¹⁶ for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ."

Here we come to the final portion of our text. Take a moment to look over the past two days of study. Jot down the key points of Paul's message from those two days in the space below.

Re-read **1 Corinthians 2:15**.

What is the difference noted in this verse between the person who has the Spirit and the person who does not?

In verse 15, Paul says that the person without the Spirit is subject to only human judgments. What other kinds of judgments is the unbelieving person missing out on?

Here, Paul makes it very clear. The believer has an advantage over the nonbeliever. The believer can see and comprehend both the wisdom of God and the wisdom of the world. The believer can judge between both arenas. The unbeliever cannot. He or she can only see the wisdom of the world.

And to add insult to injury, Paul lands the plane on this note by quoting **Isaiah 40:13**. He asks rhetorically, *“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”* A question like that can only have one answer: An emphatic “No one.”

After the **Isaiah 40:13** quote in **1 Corinthians 2:15**, how does Paul follow up his rhetorical question? What does he say at the end of verse 16?

Based on your study of this passage, **how** is it that believers can have “the mind of Christ?”

In your own words, what does it mean to “have the mind of Christ?”

Read **Philippians 2:5-8**.

What do you learn from this passage about having the “mind of Christ?” Jot down every element.

We are to have the same mind as that of Jesus. And this “mind” - or way of seeing the world or way of thinking - is something that we have but we need to cultivate.

How does Paul in **Romans 12:1-2** and **Colossians 3:1-2** tell you to cultivate the mind of Christ?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written:

"What no eye has seen,

what no ear has heard,

and what no human mind has conceived"—

the things God has prepared for those who love him—

¹⁰ *these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.*

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.

¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, ¹⁶ for,

*“Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?”*

But we have the mind of Christ.

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study this week.

WEEK TWO

MATURITY

Over the coming week, we're diving into **1 Corinthians 3:1-9** to see what the Holy Spirit might want to reveal to us through Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. While they were dealing with some distinct disagreements, their struggles weren't unique to them. They wrestled with the same sin we do today.

As we dig into this week's text, we're going to spend some time dwelling in the Scripture as a whole. One of the ways we can hear from God in His Word is by becoming curious about our observations. Pay attention to the smaller inferences. Notice words that bring meaning. For example, be inquisitive about why there is an "and" instead of a "but" or why certain words would have been used instead of others. Ask yourself questions as you read along like "What does this mean?," "Why would that be there?," and "What was going on here?" You may not be able to answer all of the questions you have, but noticing you have them is an important part of studying the Scriptures. Pay close, prayerful attention to the nuances in the passage.

Before you read the text today, take a deep breath and ask God to guide you through the verses we'll read today.

Read **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**.

¹ Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.

² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.

Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴ For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?

⁵ What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task.

⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

What are your initial reactions to the text?

Read through the verses once more, noticing what stands out to you.

What do you sense is the overall theme of this passage?

What words are repeated, if any?

What stands out to you? Why do you think that is?

What questions do you have?

What is confusing?

What is convicting?

What is encouraging?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

As we continue to dig deeper into **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**, we'll spend our time today examining verses 1-3. We're looking at the context of the passage to see what God might have to say to us in the nuances of Paul's words.

As we begin today, read verses 1-2 in **1 Corinthians 3**.

¹ Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.

² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.

Indeed, you are still not ready.

Paul states he was unable to address the Corinthians as "people who live by the Spirit," because they were still worldly. He calls them "mere infants in Christ." The Greek word for "infants" here is *nēpios*, meaning "an infant; simple-minded; immature person." Paul illustrates the immaturity of the people of Corinth by sharing how he gave them milk and not solid food. He goes on to specifically say why they are still immature.

Read **1 Corinthians 3:3**.

³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?

What reason does Paul give to the Corinthians for their spiritual immaturity?

What evidence does he cite that points to this reality?

It's important to flip back a chapter to see the context of what Paul is addressing with the church in Corinth.

Look at these verses from **1 Corinthians 2**.

¹ And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. ² For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ I came to you in weakness with great fear and trembling. ⁴ My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

⁶ We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. ⁷ No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. ⁸ None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. ⁹ However, as it is written:

*"What no eye has seen,
what no ear has heard,
and what no human mind has conceived"—
the things God has prepared for those who love him—*

¹⁰ these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. ¹¹ For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. ¹² What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. ¹³ This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words. ¹⁴ The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. ¹⁵ The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, ¹⁶ for,

*"Who has known the mind of the Lord
so as to instruct him?"*

But we have the mind of Christ.

What connections or themes do you see between **1 Corinthians 3:1-3** and **1 Corinthians 2:1-16**?

How does Paul speak of the differences between life in the Spirit and living by human or worldly wisdom?

What do you sense is the overall theme of this passage?

How does Paul explain life in the Spirit versus life in the flesh?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

“Forget them all. Come with me where you’ll never, never have to worry about grown-up things again.” Peter Pan

Look a As we begin today, take a moment to consider those words from Peter Pan. What do you think of when you think of “grown-up things?” Do bills, laundry, appointments and schedules, meetings, responsibilities come to mind? Do you think of the things that cause worry in your heart and mind? Do you wish to fly off with Peter Pan to a place where you don’t ever have to worry about those things again?

So many times, when we think about maturity or read about spiritual infancy, the nature of our adult lives and everything tied to them comes front and center. We think about maturity as leaning into hard tasks that leave us feeling overwhelmed or dutiful. We can, at times, glamorize the child-like nature of infancy, longing for simpler things.

As we dig into the text today, it’s important for us to recognize the differences between the sometimes-dreadful adult responsibilities and the kind of spiritual maturity God brings.

With this invitation in mind, read our text for today **1 Corinthians 3:1-4**.

¹ Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ.

² I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.

Indeed, you are still not ready. ³ You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans? ⁴ For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere human beings?

What do you notice about the connection between spiritual infancy (living in the world) and spiritual maturity (living by the Spirit)?

What specific behaviors does Paul depict as evidence of the Corinthians' worldliness or spiritual infancy?

As we dig into the meaning of the words for "worldly" in this text, it's important to note this information from commentator Craig Blomberg: "worldly" in verse 1 is a slightly different Greek word than in verse 3, but both are pejorative. The KJV translates both as "carnal," that is, "fleshly" or dominated by one's sinful nature, in this context manifested by jealousy and quarreling. "Spiritual" must therefore mean not merely having the Spirit but having the Spirit *in charge*.

Immaturity (or spiritual infancy) can be described as "the result of insufficient growth, or a failure to develop to one's full potential." Spiritual maturity is defined as "the development of Christlike character and behavior in the Christian through a renewed mind and tested faith." This development and transformation cannot happen apart from the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

In **Ephesians 4**, Paul paints another picture of the juxtaposition of those who have been built up to spiritual maturity and those who are living as spiritual infants.

Read **Ephesians 4:11-15**.

¹¹ So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, ¹² to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up ¹³ until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

14 Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. 15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

How does Paul depict spiritual maturity and spiritual infancy in the Ephesians passage? Does this support or align with what is written in **1 Corinthians 3**? How so?

God invites us into the process of spiritual maturity, but it's up to us what type of spiritual food we will eat. Will we be content to live on milk as infants or will we, through the Holy Spirit, grow to maturity and Christlikeness? Blomberg says, "Believers do not automatically have Christ in charge of every area of their lives. Christians are free to take back a certain measure of control and in essence do so every time they consciously sin." Surrender is a key part of our growth in spiritual maturity.

Is it possible to be a Christian without experiencing transformation or growing in maturity?

What keeps us from maturing? Do you desire spiritual maturity or do you think of it as drudgery?

Where have you taken back a certain measure of control in your life? What needs to be surrendered today?

Let's close out today with words from the writer of Hebrews who gives a message similar to the words we've already read from Paul.

Read **Hebrews 5:12-6:1**.

¹² In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food! ¹³ Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. ¹⁴ But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. Therefore let us move beyond the elementary teachings about Christ and be taken forward to maturity, not laying again the foundation of repentance from acts that lead to death, and of faith in God...

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

“Find something that you can grow and tend to.”

It seemed like the strangest thing to have a mentor say. In the middle of the quarantine lockdown, those were her words. Find something that you can grow and tend to. So, the first of many plants made its way into my living room.

The discipline of watering and pruning is slow work. You can't see the growth that's happening each day as the sun warms the leaves or as a new stem emerges. Then, suddenly, months and months later, you can finally see it. Growth needs time. Growth needs effort. Growth needs God.

Spiritual maturity is a slow work as well. It's not an outcome or one-time event. It's not something that can be manufactured. It's certainly not linear and you can't predict it perfectly.

Today, let's look at **1 Corinthians 3:5-9**. As you read, notice what stands out to you.

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷ So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸ The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹ For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

Which words or phrases jump off the page? What imagery does God give?

What do you notice about the process of spiritual maturity from these verses? According to Paul, who is responsible for growth?

What does that look like in your own life?

Where are you relying on yourself or others rather than God for the growth in your life? What do you want to ask God to grow in you?

Read the following quote from the *Baker Encyclopedia of Psychology & Counseling* on the goal of maturity:

“Progress, not perfection, should be the goal of maturity. It is learning to keep the flow of progress alive and maintain the achievement of growth. Maturity is the ability to transform schooling into learning, knowledge into wisdom, incidents into insights, and casual encounters into rich experiences. It is the virtue of learning from one’s own mistakes and failures, having the courage to apologize and ask for forgiveness, and remaining human and humble in the midst of successes and great accomplishments.”

How does this line of thinking connect with the texts we've read this week?
How do you see this to be true in your own life and in the lives of others?

Read these words from **2 Peter 1:3-9** that illustrate the progress of spiritual maturity:

³ His divine power has given us everything we need for a godly life through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. ⁴ Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature, having escaped the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. ⁵ For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; ⁶ and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; ⁷ and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. ⁸ For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ But whoever does not have them is nearsighted and blind, forgetting that they have been cleansed from their past sins.

What specific things does Peter list in verses 5-7 that are emblematic of Christlike maturity?

What do you notice in this passage about God's effort and our effort toward maturity?

How does this passage complement **1 Corinthians 3:5-9**?

Dallas Willard writes, *"Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment. It is, finally, a gift of grace. Though we must act, the resources for spiritual formation extend far beyond the human. They come from the interactive presence of the Holy Spirit in the lives of those who place their confidence in Christ."*

Knowing Christlikeness requires both our effort and the presence of the Holy Spirit, what needs to shift in your thinking and your habits?

Remember that God finishes the work He begins. Paul writes in Philippians that we can be confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus (**Philippians 1:6**).

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

As we wrap up this week in **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**, let's take a moment to re-read the passage, inviting God to both remind us of what we've learned and to show us anything else He would like to reveal today. Let's look at *The Voice* translation today:

My brothers and sisters, I cannot address you as people who walk by the Spirit; I have to speak to you as people who tend to think in merely human terms, as spiritual infants in the Anointed One. ² I nursed you with milk, as a mother would feed her baby, because you were not, and still are not, developed enough to digest complex spiritual food. ³ And here's why: you are still living in the flesh, not in the Spirit. How do I know? Are you fighting with one another? Are you comparing yourselves to others and becoming consumed with jealousy? Then it sounds like you are living in the flesh, no different from the rest who live by the standards of this rebellious and broken world. ⁴ If one of you is saying, "I am with Paul," and the other says, "I am with Apollos," aren't you like everybody else? ⁵ So who is Apollos really? Or Paul for that matter? We are only servants, agents who led you to faith, and the Lord commissioned each of us to do a particular job.

Paul's test for spiritually immaturity: Do you argue? Do you compare yourself to others? Are you jealous? Answer "yes" to any of these, then you are spiritually immature.

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

WEEK THREE

BUILDINGS

For this first day, read through **1 Corinthians 3:10-23** in its entirety.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶ Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

¹⁸ Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

²¹ So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic Paul is writing about here? Explain.

What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

What was confusing?

What was encouraging?

What's something to pray about as a result of reading this passage?

Today, we're going to start digging into parts of **1 Corinthians 3:10-23** by investigating verses 10-15. Let's start with verses 10-11.

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.

Last week, when we looked at the beginning of chapter 3, Paul used an agricultural metaphor. What imagery does he start to use in these verses? Does this change in metaphor help you understand in a different way what he's expressing?

Paul mentions the foundation he's laid. What foundation is that? Why is it important that he starts by saying, "By the grace God has given me...?"

Let's explore this foundation a little further. What does each of these verses say about this foundation?

Matthew 7:24-27

Therefore, everyone who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house.

The rain fell, the rivers rose, and the winds blew and pounded that house. Yet it didn't collapse, because its foundation was on the rock.

²⁶ But everyone who hears these words of mine and doesn't act on them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷

The rain fell, the rivers rose, the winds blew and pounded that house, and it collapsed. It collapsed with a great crash."

1 Peter 2:4-6

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says:

*"See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame."*

Ephesians 2:19-22

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

After reading these different passages, how would you describe this foundation? Does any of it seem contradictory? How might that expand your understanding of the foundation?

Now onto verses 12-13...

¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.

What do you notice about the building materials? What imagery do you think Paul might be trying to evoke? Any particular buildings he might be referencing?

What is the difference between how the first three and the second three would be used? What does it say about the purity of the building?

To what Day is Paul referring? What does it have to do with testing the quality of each person's work?

And now verses 14 and 15...

¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

What is the true test of a builder's work? What reward will they receive?

What do you think Paul means by "one escaping through the flames"? How does that relate to the building materials laid out above?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

Yesterday, we became builders. Now we're going to up the ante by looking at what's being built. Perhaps in your study yesterday, you concluded that when Paul described a building with gold, silver, and costly stones, he was describing the Temple in Jerusalem (or even a local Corinthian temple to another god). And you might very well be right!

It stands to reason that he would move right along to using the Temple as imagery for the church.

1 Corinthians 3:16-17

Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

What is God's temple? Or maybe more accurately, who?

What does it mean that God's Spirit dwells in their midst? What does it mean for us today?

There is a very important distinction that needs to be made in these verses. Many people, when reading this passage, will see the word “you” as meaning “me.” In that case, you could say, “I am the temple of God.” But that’s not quite the right translation. In this case, you should be translated as *y’all*. It’s plural, not singular. Paul is calling the church the temple of the Spirit. And he’s not talking about a physical building! The people are the church.

How does the change from singular to plural change the way you read that passage? How does it change the way you view the church?

Let’s expand that by looking at a few other places in scripture where the temple is discussed.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

2 Corinthians 6:16

What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said:

*“I will live with them
and walk among them,
and I will be their God,
and they will be my people.”*

1 Peter 2:4-6

⁴ As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says:

*“See, I lay a stone in Zion,
a chosen and precious cornerstone,
and the one who trusts in him
will never be put to shame.”*

Ephesians 2:21-22

²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Each of these verses talks about us being the dwelling place of God. List the similarities and differences in the way the temple of God is described. Look at the foundation, the builders, and whether it's the church or an individual.

Now spend some time in quiet reflection, asking God to create in your mind a more concrete picture of this metaphor used throughout these letters to the churches. Explore the mystery of God dwelling in us, whether as a group or as individuals. Journal about what God might reveal to you.

We've established God's temple is his people, his church. So in verse 17, when Paul starts issuing warnings about destroying God's temple, we'd better pay close attention!

What would you say destroys God's temple? What is it that Paul says destroys the church in the context of this chapter?

Let's look at two different Bible commentaries that will help us understand the gravity of this warning.

In Matthew Henry's commentary of these verses, he writes:

Every Christian is a living temple of the living God. God dwelt in the Jewish temple, took possession of it, and resided in it, by that glorious cloud that was the token of his presence with that people. So Christ by his Spirit dwells in all true believers. The temple was devoted and consecrated to God, and set apart from every common to a holy use, to the immediate service of God. So all Christians are separated from common uses and set apart for God and his service. If we are the temples of God, we must do nothing that shall alienate ourselves from him, or corrupt and pollute ourselves, and thereby unfit ourselves for his use.

The NIV Application Commentary says this:

The term for "destroy" must not be watered down to refer merely to temporal judgment...in light of the consistent testimony of Paul elsewhere, the rest of the New Testament, first-century Judaism, and the Apostolic Fathers. The reason Paul chose this term, over more common terms for eternal condemnation, is to show that the punishment fits the crime. They who would do away with God's sacred enterprise will themselves perish. Overall these two verses form the strongest warning in all the New Testament "against those who would take the church lightly and destroy it by worldly wisdom and division."

Reflect on the sacredness of God's temple and this warning. How do you respond to this emotionally? What can God teach you in your response?

How does this warning apply to us today?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

Now that we've explored the metaphor about the church being a spiritual building (or the place where God dwells), Paul comes back around with practical advice to conclude his point about how important Christ as our foundation is.

Re-read **1 Corinthians 3:1-9**. Remind yourself what issue and argument Paul is addressing.

1 Corinthians 3:18-20

Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness"; ²⁰ and again, "The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile."

How were the members of the Corinthian church deceiving themselves? What lies had they bought into?

How had the "standards of this age" and "the wisdom of the world" infiltrated the church in Corinth? To what result?

What does it mean to become foolish to become wise? To what foolishness is Paul referring? Feel free to cheat by looking at **1 Corinthians 1:18-25**.

Here, we see Paul weaving this all together: immaturity, comparison, division, and arguments are all results of trying to apply the world's standards to a 'building' where they don't apply. Division is the ultimate result of using lesser things as a means of salvation or kingdom work. Only the truth of Christ crucified and the work of the Spirit among his dwelling place can unite God's church. Even though that might look like foolishness to the world, ultimately it's wisdom in God's larger story.

What hope do you find in the "foolishness" of preaching the cross of Christ? How does that hope confound human wisdom?

So, what's the moral of the story? What's Paul's conclusion about the division in the church?

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

²¹ So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

What belongs to us? What does this have to do with boasting?

How does that impact the argument between followers of Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter)? How does this impact arguments that arise in the Church today?

What a beautiful promise that we are of Christ, who is of God! Again, remember that much of the church's fighting was the result of who followed whom. Was Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter) right? The fact they were all building on and belonging to the foundation (or cornerstone) of Christ makes them all right!

Why was it important for Paul to remind the Corinthians that everything was theirs in Christ? What does that say about their identity?

Why is it important for Paul to remind you that everything is yours in Christ? What does that say about your identity?

When our identity in Christ is worked out, what does that do to our arguments and immaturity? How does that look more like the Temple of God?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below. Begin by re-reading **1 Corinthians 3:10-23**.

1 Corinthians 3:21-23

¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹ For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. ¹² If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, ¹³ their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work. ¹⁴ If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward. ¹⁵ If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.

¹⁶ Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst? ¹⁷ If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.

¹⁸ Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become "fools" so that you may become wise. ¹⁹ For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness";

²⁰ and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” ²¹ So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours, ²² whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, ²³ and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study this week.

WEEK FOUR

LEADERSHIP

Flying over the Grand Canyon is amazing! If you're on a flight from anywhere in the midwest to Southern California, chances are you'll get a glimpse of this wonder from above.

But seeing the Grand Canyon up close and spending time in it is something else completely. To marvel at the detail, the beauty, and even hike it, gives you a perspective you could never get with a quick flyover.

So, this week as we continue to journey through 1 Corinthians, let's "hike" into the text and observe the ways God was speaking to the church in Corinth, and to us, through the Apostle Paul.

As we dive into week four of this series, you need to know that Paul is going to continue the conversation that he began in chapter three concerning the traits of a true servant of Jesus. Paul's words in the previous chapter must have hit the Christians in Corinth hard as he challenged them about their lack of spiritual maturity and their divisiveness. His solution in chapter three?

Build your life on the foundation of Jesus Christ and have complete dependence on God!

Sounds simple enough, right? Maybe. Maybe not.

We all know from experience how difficult this is to live out and how quickly we revert to old habits and ways in times of stress. That's why here, in chapter four, Paul continues the conversation about how the Corinthians are not to divide themselves over worldly standards of what leaders should look like, comparing one person to another. *Instead*, they ought to view everything through the eyes of heaven.

1 Corinthians 4:1-21

¹ *This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed.* ² *Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.* ³ *I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself.* ⁴ *My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*

⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! ⁹ For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹ To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹² We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it;

¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

¹⁴ I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵ Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸ Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic Paul is writing about here? Explain.

What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

What was confusing?

What's something to pray about as a result of your reading of this passage?

1 Corinthians 4:1-5

¹ This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

How does Paul describe himself and the rest of the Apostles here in verse 1?

Now read **Mark 10:45**. How do you think this verse informs Paul's understanding of servanthood?

In verse 2, Paul goes on to say that "those who have been given a trust must prove faithful." The word for "trust" is best translated as a "steward or manager of household affairs for the owner of the house."

Based on your journey through 1 Corinthians up to this point, what areas might Paul be calling our church to be faithful stewards? Why?

Read **1 Corinthians 4:1**. What word does Paul use to describe the thing he's been entrusted with?

Paul has become a steward of God's grace and the mystery of Christ. That word "mystery" can be the cause of a lot of confusion. It can conjure up ideas of God holding out on us or of something we have to hold onto by blind faith, but that's really not Paul's point. He's not talking about something unsolved or unknown. The word for mystery in the Greek has more to do with something being unveiled that was once previously hidden!

How does **1 Corinthians 2:7** relate to or clarify what Paul says here about God's mystery?

Now read **Romans 16:25-26** and **Ephesians 3:1-6**. What do these Scriptures say about this "mystery?" How do you see correlations between these verses and the "mystery" Paul mentions in **1 Corinthians 4**?

Paul concludes **1 Corinthians 4:1-5** by talking about “judgment,” particularly as it pertains to us standing before God and being judged as faithful stewards of what He’s entrusted us with.

In verse 5, what are the three things that Paul explains will happen at the judgment?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.

For today's study, we're going to look at the next section of this letter to the Corinthians as Paul continues to share his heart for this struggling church.

1 Corinthians 4:14-21

¹⁴ I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵ Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

According to verse 14, what was Paul's stated purpose for his lovingly confrontive words in this chapter? What do you think Paul is hoping to accomplish?

1 Corinthians 4:6-13

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? ⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us!

How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! ⁹ For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹ To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹²

We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

The Corinthian church was divided. Some preferred Apollos. Others preferred Paul. And still others preferred neither of these men! Just like our political landscape today, division was becoming a real issue. People were jockeying for position, thinking of themselves as better because of which leaders they attached themselves to, how many resources they had, and more.

In our text today, Paul is drawing a clear distinction between the servanthood of Apollos and himself with the pride of those in the Corinthian church.

As we mentioned yesterday, **1 Corinthians 4** is, in many ways, about servanthood to Christ. The word “servants” in **1 Corinthians 4:1** has several meanings. It can have connotations of...

- Anyone who serves with their physical hands
- In the New Testament, it can refer to the officers and attendants of magistrates
- It can refer to of the attendants of a king, servants, retinue, the soldiers of a king, of the attendant of a synagogue
- It can refer to anyone ministering or rendering service

As you read **1 Corinthians 4:6-13**, list out all the challenges and trials that Paul and Apollos are facing as servants of Jesus.

Take a moment to read through **2 Corinthians 11:23-29**. What does Paul list here about his sufferings as a servant of Christ?

Paul is making the point that his apostleship is not based on jockeying for any authority or position or power. He’s not here vying for the Kingdom of God with any ill-motive or ego or pride. Instead, he’s embarking on a downward journey. A self-emptying journey. A journey very much unlike the Corinthians themselves.

How exactly does Paul describe the Corinthians towards the end of verse 6?

The Corinthians are prideful, and their pride is bringing about their ruin. The interesting thing for the church of God at Corinth is that they have no reason to quarrel.

Take a moment to list all of the things the Corinthians possess in **1 Corinthians 4:6-13**.

What is their position in life the result of (see verse 7)?

How does the list above compare and contrast with the lives of the Corinthians?

How does Paul describe his relationship to the Corinthians in verse 15? What sort of role or authority in their lives does that position give him?

Think back to the first time you remember being “disciplined” or “corrected” for doing something wrong as a child. Not a great memory, right? In fact, it’s probably a memory that has some shame, guilt, or hurt associated with it.

Read the following verses. Then in the margins to the side or in a notebook, jot down some of the common themes followed by noting how these verses support Paul’s purpose for his challenging words so far in this chapter.

- **John 3:16-17**
- **Romans 8:1**
- **Hebrews 12:5-11**

In the context of “Godly discipline,” what is the goal of spiritual correction according to this passage? How is this different from your view of correction in the past?

Discipline (or correction) according to Paul is an essential part of the Christian walk. We commonly call this "accountability" in our day. The only difference is that with our culture's version of accountability, there tends to not be much weight behind it. Here, Paul uses his authority to help shape the Corinthians into the kind of people God wants them to be.

And he does it in three ways: (1) his example; (2) his writing; and (3) his son in the faith, Timothy.

All three of these ways of "correction" are for a singular purpose that is stated by Paul in the latter half of verse 17. What is that purpose?

As Paul wraps up chapter four of his letter to the Corinthians, he begins again to confront their pride, stating that when he finally gets to visit, he will be the one judging how they "talk" and what "power" they have (verse 19).

Re-read **1 Corinthians 4:18-21**. How does **1 Corinthians 2:1-5** relate to what Paul says here?

What is true “power” in the kingdom of God and how does it relate to worldly power (see **Philippians 2:5-11** for how Jesus exercised his power)?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below.

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. ² Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. ³ I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

⁶ Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. ⁷ For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

⁸ Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! ⁹ For it

seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. ¹⁰ We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! ¹¹ To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. ¹² We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; ¹³ when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

¹⁴ I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. ¹⁵ Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. ¹⁶ Therefore I urge you to imitate me. ¹⁷ For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

¹⁸ Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. ¹⁹ But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. ²⁰ For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. ²¹ What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

WEEK FIVE

SIN

For this first day, read through **1 Corinthians 5:1-13** in its entirety.

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? ³ For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. ⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ 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.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you

that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic that Paul is writing about here? Explain.

What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

What was confusing?

What was encouraging?

What's something to pray about as a result of your reading of this passage?

Okay, now that we've had space to observe our passage, to reflect on it, let's take a closer look at what exactly Paul is saying here in **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**. For today, let's just begin with the first two verses.

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this?

There are two main issues occurring in **1 Corinthians 5** that Paul is addressing, and both can be found in the first two verses. What seems to be the issue that Paul addresses in verse 1? What is the issue that Paul addresses in verse 2?

Verse 1

Verse 2

Paul begins chapter 5 by addressing the issue of porneia. Porneia is the Greek word for the phrase "sexual immorality" used by Paul in verse 1. This word is used all over the New Testament.

Matthew 5:32

*³² But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for **sexual immorality**, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.*

Matthew 15:19

¹⁹ For out of the heart come evil thoughts—murder, adultery, **sexual immorality**, theft, false testimony, slander.

Acts 15:19-20

¹⁹ It is my judgment, therefore, that we should not make it difficult for the Gentiles who are turning to God. ²⁰ Instead we should write to them, telling them to abstain from food polluted by idols, from **sexual immorality**, from the meat of strangled animals and from blood.

1 Corinthians 6:18-20

¹⁸ Flee from **sexual immorality**. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹ Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰ you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.

Ephesians 5:3

But among you there must not be even a hint of **sexual immorality**, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people.

After reading these different passages, how would you describe what sexual immorality IS?

And, do a little study of it's semantic range and we come to find out that sexual immorality (or *porneia*) is any sexual act committed outside of a marital relationship between one man and one woman.

According to **1 Corinthians 5:1**, what is the exact way this man was participating in sexual immorality?

After this consideration, and after reading the passages above, how would you describe the place *porneia* should have in the life of God's people? What should a Christian's disposition towards it be?

With that being said, take a look back at **1 Corinthians 5:2**. What is the Corinthians' disposition to the *porneia* in their midst? What does Paul say it should have been?

Corinthians' Thoughts

Paul's Thoughts

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

1 Corinthians 5:1-5

¹ It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? ³ For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. ⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ 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.

Okay. Yesterday, we discovered the main issues that Paul has started addressing in chapter 5 of 1 Corinthians. In this chapter, Paul is dealing with the issues of *porneia* (aka sexual immorality) and he's dealing with the Corinthians allowance and pride in the sin in their midst.

At the end of verse 2, Paul exhorts the Corinthians to "put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this." Strong words. In a culture like ours, bent on inclusivity and radical acceptance, words like these can come as quite a shock. Let's take a deeper dive.

The Apostle Paul is one who carries what theologians call "apostolic authority." This means that he was able to teach, preach, and pronounce judgments with *authority* for the church because of his status as an apostle (literally meaning "one sent from God").

Read **Matthew 10:40; John 17:20–21; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Thessalonians 2:6**. What do these verses say about the apostles and their role in speaking authoritatively to the early Christian communities?

So, as one who carries authority to teach the churches truth and correct them when they're in the wrong, Paul does just that. Of course, he doesn't correct the Corinthians or "judge" them in person. He's not with them, so he must correct the Corinthians "in spirit" through this letter.

In **1 Corinthians 5:3-4**, Paul corrects/judges the Corinthians in whose name? What do you think it means to correct/judge them in that way?

In **1 Corinthians 5:5**, Paul clarifies what the Corinthians are to do with this man. What does he tell them to do? Why does he tell them to do it?

Again, this can feel like pretty harsh language coming from our culture. But this isn't actually the only time that Paul says something like this.

Read **1 Timothy 1:15-20**. What does Paul say ought to be done to Hymenaeus and Alexander? Why?

Douglas Moo, in his commentary of this part of **1 Corinthians 5** writes that,

“The similar usage in 1 Timothy suggests that for Paul this was quasi-technical language for some kind of expulsion from the Christian community, probably from the gatherings of the assembly for worship, including the meals and supper in honor of the Lord (see on v. 11). Thus...it [is not] probable that Paul intends the language to be taken literally, in the sense of personally handing the man to Satan to “go to work on him,” as it were. More likely, the language means to turn him back out into Satan's sphere...In contrast to the gathered community of believers who experience the Spirit and power of the Lord Jesus in edifying gifts and loving concern for one another, this man is to be put back out into the world, where Satan and his “principalities and powers” still hold sway over people's lives to destroy them. By this action the church was to clean out the old leaven that it might become a new loaf without leaven (verses 6-8).

For Paul, to be aligned to Jesus and the way of Jesus places one in the sphere of life and salvation. This man, in an incestuous relationship, was not living in the way of Jesus. Therefore, by default, he had taken himself out of living on the path that leads to life and placed himself on the path that leads to death (see **Matthew 7:13-14**).

Read **1 Timothy 1:15-20**. What does Paul say ought to be done to Hymenaeus and Alexander? Why?

Douglas Moo, in his commentary of this part of 1 Corinthians 5 writes that,

“The similar usage in 1 Timothy suggests that for Paul this was quasi-technical language for some kind of expulsion from the Christian community, probably from the gatherings of the assembly for worship, including the meals and supper in honor of the Lord (see on v. 11). Thus...it [is not] probable that Paul intends the language to be taken literally, in the sense of personally handing the man to Satan to “go to work on him,” as it were. More likely, the language means to turn him back out into Satan's sphere...In contrast to the gathered community of believers who experience the Spirit and power of the Lord Jesus in edifying gifts and loving concern for one another, this man is to be put back out into the world, where Satan and his “principalities and powers” still hold sway over people's lives to destroy them. By this action the church was to clean out the old leaven that it might become a new loaf without leaven (verses 6-8).

For Paul, to be aligned to Jesus and the way of Jesus places one in the sphere of life and salvation. This man, in an incestuous relationship, was not living in the way of Jesus. Therefore, by default, he had taken himself out of living on the path that leads to life and placed himself on the path that leads to death (see **Matthew 7:13-14**).

Re-read **1 Corinthians 5:5**. What are the two reasons Paul gives as to *why* he wants this man exorcised from the community of believers?

Reason One

Reason Two

In Reason One, Paul talks about the “flesh.” In your own words, how would you describe the flesh?

Read **Romans 8:5-13** and **Galatians 5:16-25**. What do these passages say about life in the “flesh” vs. life in the “Spirit?”

What do passages like **Romans 8** and **Galatians 5** reveal to you about Paul’s hope for the sinful man in **1 Corinthians 5**?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on your reading and study today.

1 Corinthians 5:6-13

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

Yesterday, we saw two things: (1) We saw how Paul had the apostolic authority to pronounce judgment on the Corinthian church for allowing sexual immorality in their midst; and (2) We saw how Paul used it.

He told the Corinthians not to be proud of the sin in their midst but to mourn it! And he told them to expel the man engaged in the incestuous relationship from their midst, handing him over to Satan for the destruction of his sinful nature so that his spirit may be later restored.

In the rest of **1 Corinthians 5**, Paul begins explaining why his judgment was so firm.

In **1 Corinthians 5:6-7**, Paul uses a metaphor to show the Corinthians what the incestuous man's sin was doing to the church. What is that metaphor?

Here, Paul compares the sinful man to yeast in dough. Yeast affects *all* of the dough it encounters. It affects the whole lump – even at a molecular level.

This is something we have a hard time wrapping our heads around. Our culture doesn't do a very good job at seeing how personal sins affect our corporate church body. We could totally see how interpersonal immorality could lead to a church's demise (gossip, slander, etc.), but here Paul is letting us know that *personal* holiness matters just as much as interpersonal holiness.

And, in verses 7-8, Paul gives his reasoning. Read the first part of verse 7. What does Paul say will happen whenever the Corinthians "get rid of the old yeast?"

In these verses, Paul is using imagery from the Passover (that's the "Festival" he's referring to in verse 8) – that time in the Old Testament when God's people were in captivity in Egypt and God killed the first-born of anyone who did not have the blood of a lamb covering their doorposts. This occurs in Exodus 12.

Read **Exodus 12:15**. What was it that God's people were to remove from their homes in preparation for Passover? How does **Exodus 12:15** relate to what Paul is telling the Corinthians to do here in **1 Corinthians 5**?

Eventually, during the Passover, God *passed over* any home with the blood of the lamb on their doorposts (see **Exodus 12:6**).

In the latter half of **1 Corinthians 5:7**, Paul says that for the Corinthians, Christ is their what?

As stated above, Paul is appealing to the Passover festival to exhort the Corinthians to follow through with his admonishment to expel the sinful man from their midst. And the reason is because they *must become who they already are because of the sacrificial work of Jesus on the cross*. Paul appeals to both the Corinthians identity as the people of God and to their justification (i.e. their being made right before God) by the cross of Christ.

Now, read **1 Corinthians 5:9-11**. Who, in this passage, does Paul tell the Corinthians to not associate with? List out all of the kinds of people.

In verse 11, Paul clarifies the kind of person that the Corinthians shouldn't associate themselves with. It's anyone who is a "brother or sister" but who is not walking in the way of Jesus. And the reason for this is because of verses 12-13.

According to verses 12-13, who is responsible for judging those outside of the church?

According to verses 12-13, what role do believers have in "judging" or correcting other believers? How does that explicitly manifest itself here in this passage?

Of course, this “judging” can be kind of confusing.

Read **Matthew 7:1-5**. How does a passage like that from Jesus relate to what Paul says here in **1 Corinthians 5:12-13**?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.

On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below. Begin by re-reading **1 Corinthians 5:1-13**.

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ² And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? ³ For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. ⁴ So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵ 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.

⁶ Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough? ⁷ Get rid of the old yeast, so that you may be a new unleavened batch—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. ⁸ Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old bread leavened with malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— ¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. ¹¹ But now I am writing to you that

you must not associate with anyone who claims to be a brother or sister but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or slanderer, a drunkard or swindler. Do not even eat with such people.

¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? ¹³ God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked person from among you."

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

WEEK SIX

CONFLICT

As we spend time engaging with **1 Corinthians 6:1-11**, we'll be looking at the specific problem Paul is addressing and what his instructions for the church in Corinth means for us as believers today. Paul realizes that conflict is inevitable, even in the family of God. Not unlike those who find themselves in conflict today, believers in the early church preferred to manage conflict on their own, taking it before a secular court instead of taking it to God. How we respond to conflict is an opportunity to glorify God by displaying the grace and forgiveness we have received through Jesus. This week we'll be challenged to consider how we respond to conflict in our own lives and how that shapes our identity.

Today we're going to examine the passage in its entirety. While reading through it, take notice of what stands out to you, what you find confusing, and what you find encouraging. Following the passage, you'll find some questions to help you reflect on what you read. Sometimes it's helpful to read a passage in different translations/paraphrases of the Bible. We've included the NIV, ESV, and Message versions for you here. Feel free to explore a few other versions as well!

Read **1 Corinthians 6:1-11**.

New International Version

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? ² Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men[a] ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Revised Standard Version

When one of you has a grievance against a brother, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? ² Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, matters pertaining to this life! ⁴ If then you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who are least esteemed by the church? ⁵ I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no man among you wise enough to decide between members of the brotherhood, ⁶ but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers?

⁷ To have lawsuits at all with one another is defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?

8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud, and that even your own brethren.⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither the immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor sexual perverts, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

The Message

¹⁻⁴ And how dare you take each other to court! When you think you have been wronged, does it make any sense to go before a court that knows nothing of God's ways instead of a family of Christians? The day is coming when the world is going to stand before a jury made up of followers of Jesus. If someday you are going to rule on the world's fate, wouldn't it be a good idea to practice on some of these smaller cases? Why, we're even going to judge angels! So why not these everyday affairs? As these disagreements and wrongs surface, why would you ever entrust them to the judgment of people you don't trust in any other way? ⁵⁻⁶ I say this as bluntly as I can to wake you up to the stupidity of what you're doing. Is it possible that there isn't one levelheaded person among you who can make fair decisions when disagreements and disputes come up? I don't believe it. And here you are taking each other to court before people who don't even believe in God!

How can they render justice if they don't believe in the God of justice?

⁷⁻⁸ These court cases are a black eye on your community. Wouldn't it be far better to just take it, to let yourselves be wronged and forget it? All you're doing is providing fuel for more wrong, more injustice, bringing more hurt to the people of your own spiritual family.

⁹⁻¹¹ Don't you realize that this is not the way to live? Unjust people who don't care about God will not be joining in his kingdom. Those who use and abuse each other, use and abuse sex, use and abuse the earth and everything in it, don't qualify as citizens in God's kingdom. A number of you know from experience what I'm talking about, for not so long ago you were on that list. Since then, you've been cleaned up and given a fresh start by Jesus, our Master, our Messiah, and by our God present in us, the Spirit.

What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main problem Paul is addressing here? Explain.

Why do you think Paul is emphasizing this matter?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

Do you see repetitive wording in the different versions of the passage?

What was confusing?

What was encouraging?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer based on what you studied today.

Today let's spend some time examining the first portion of this passage. Paul is responding in outrage to the fact that the Corinthian Christians are engaging in competitive civil lawsuits in the public courts, often against one another. The process for trying civil lawsuits before the secular court generally favored the wealthy and well connected since they could afford lawyers and bribes to influence the outcome of their cases. Parties attacked one another's character and often became social enemies as a result. All this was carried out in the public marketplace for all to witness.

With that in mind, let's take a closer look at the passage.

Read **1 Corinthians 6:1-6**.

New International Version

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people?² Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church?⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?⁶ But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!

Why does Paul think believers filing lawsuits against one another was such a failure on the part of the church of Corinth?

Do you see the filing of civil lawsuits as an issue in the church today? Why or why not?

How do you see believers *today* dishonoring the church and one another in how they handle conflict?

It's important to make a few distinctions about what Paul **is** and **is not** saying when reading this passage:

- Paul is speaking of civil conflict between believers, not conflict between a believer and a non-believer.
- Paul is speaking specifically about civil lawsuits, not criminal matters.
- Paul is not saying believers should not submit to the authority of the law of the land.

What does Paul say specifically in **Romans 13:1-6** about how we are to respond to governing authorities?

With all of this in mind, how would you articulate what the responsibilities are as a follower of Jesus when it comes to disagreements with fellow brothers and sisters in Christ?

In verses 5-6, Paul lovingly shames the believers of the church in Corinth. Why does it matter how they handle conflict?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Invite God into any questions you have about your study today and ask Him how He's asking you to respond.

Anyone living in the Indianapolis metro area likely encounters a number of roundabouts in their daily commute. I've quickly learned that in traversing the roundabouts you can be an aggressor or an accommodator. Because drivers are required to make quick decisions based on traffic moving all around them, their decision to come to a stop, or drive through doesn't always match the decisions of the drivers around them. Drivers often must swerve or brake suddenly to accommodate the incoming cars. As a driver, I've learned this can be done with an attitude of grace and generosity or an attitude of aggression and hostility. Often, when I choose grace and generosity, it invokes aggression and hostility from other drivers. There doesn't seem to be a win-win scenario.

Today as we unpack the second half of this passage, Paul asks the Corinthian church to contend with how they were really being asked to respond when they were wronged by another believer. When Paul addressed the issue of lawsuits in the church, he was not telling them how to act if they were wronged by another believer. He was telling them to act this way when they were wronged by another believer. Paul knew that conflict was inevitable, even between brothers and sisters in Christ, so he proposed a new way of responding. Paul wanted the early church to realize that sometimes there isn't a win-win solution to conflict.

Read **1 Corinthians 6:7-11**.

New International Version

⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

How would you describe the way in which Paul attempts to stir up repentance in this passage?

Paul, in this passage, is truly counter-cultural. Our world tells us that we must always get what we're owed, or that if someone wrongs us, we should make that person compensate us fairly. But Paul is telling the Corinthians here that that kind of thinking needs to go right out the door when it comes to how we relate to fellow brothers and sisters in Christ.

In verse 7, Paul asks two questions that get to the heart of how Christians should respond to one another. What are those two questions?

Read **1 Peter 2:19-23**. How does our willingness to suffer and endure injustice deepen our intimacy with God?

When you think about values of the church and of yourself individually, how often are you willing to sacrifice being declared right?

In verses 8-10, Paul is cautioning those who claim they have the spirit of God in them, but their lives do not reflect his authority. He declares emphatically – “Do not be deceived”.

What are the other sins Paul mentions in verses 8-10 that he lumps the Corinthians’ knack for wronging and cheating one another in with?

Paul is describing here those who will not inherit the Kingdom of God. Essentially, he’s saying that there are two ways to operate in the world. We can either align with God’s vision for human flourishing or we can align with the world’s vision of human flourishing. God’s vision is one of sacrificial love, encouragement, service, respect, honor, dignity, purity, holiness, and so on. The kingdom of this world is one of drunkenness, cheating, stealing, wronging a brother or sister, impurity, and more.

In verse 9, Paul warns the Corinthians to “not be deceived.” How would you describe the relationship between deception and what Paul is articulating here about laying down your own rights, wants, and desires for your brother or sister in Christ?

In verse 11, Paul concludes on a more hopeful note. What are the three verbs Paul uses in this verse to describe what has happened to the Corinthians?

Whose name was this done in?

Who were these things done by?

In his commentary on 1 Corinthians, Craig Bloomberg notes:

Paul ends this section with a reminder that they have been washed (inwardly, but possibly thinking of the external rite of baptism as well). Made holy ("sanctified") and declared righteous ("justified").

That is good news for all of us.

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Invite God into any questions you have about your study today and ask Him how He's asking you to respond.

Our passage in **1 Corinthians 6** is all about conflict and disagreements amongst believers. And if I'm being honest, I have witnessed my fair share of lawsuits between believers – business deals gone sour, sale of cars that turned out to be lemons, dog bites, disgruntled landlords, etc. But even more than filing lawsuits in court, I've witnessed Christians taking one another to the court of public opinion via opinion pieces in the media, Facebook, or good old-fashioned gossip. Conflict seems inherently woven into the tapestry of life and followers of Christ are not exempt. Sometimes conflict can and should be avoided. However, when that is no longer possible, or when the perceived costs of avoidance exceed the costs of confrontation, Christians need only look to Scripture to discover a conflict resolution method taught by Jesus. In the Scriptures we can find a step-by-step process which aims to resolve conflict and restore relationships.

Let's look at what Scripture has to say about resolving conflict. Read the following verses and respond to the questions below:

Matthew 5:9

Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God.

Hebrews 12:14

Make every effort to live in peace with everyone and to be holy; without holiness no one will see the Lord.

Romans 12:18

If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.

James 1:5

If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

What do these verses tell you about the importance of how we respond to conflict?

Who do you struggle to live in peace with?

Jesus provides a framework for addressing conflict in the passage below. Read it and respond below.

Matthew 18:15-20

¹⁵ "If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over.¹⁶ But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.'¹⁷ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.¹⁸ "Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.¹⁹ "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven.²⁰ For where two or three gather in my name, there am I with them."

Write out the steps to biblical conflict resolution according to **Matthew 18:15-20**.

Have you used this process before? If so, how did it go?

Who specifically could you turn to if a conflict was not resolved after confronting your offender?

Is there unresolved conflict in your life?

Have you taken that conflict to the “public courts”? If so, how has that helped or hindered the conflict?

Read **Matthew 7:5**. Are there any “logs” you need to remove from your eye before you confront your brother or sister in Christ about their failings?

RESPONSE

What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER

Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.

For this last day, we'll revisit the passage. Read any translation you'd like.

1 Corinthians 6:1-11 • New International Version

If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? ² Or do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? ³ Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! ⁴ Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, do you ask for a ruling from those whose way of life is scorned in the church? ⁵ I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? ⁶ But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers! ⁷ The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? ⁸ Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters. ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men[a] ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

How does our approach to conflict communicate our identity?

What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

PRAYER

Write a prayer out based on your reading and study this week.

ROOTED RHYTHMS



**Daily
Devotion**



Prayer



**Freedom from
Strongholds**



**Serve the
Community**



**Sacrificial
Generosity**



**Share Your
Story**



Celebration

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BOOKS/COMMENTARIES

- *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* by Gordon Fee
- *1 Corinthians* by David E. Garland
- *A Week in the Life of Corinth* by Ben Witherington III
- *The NIV Application Commentary: 1 Corinthians* by Craig Blomberg
- *The Greco-Roman World of the New Testament Era: Exploring the Background of Early Christianity* by James Jeffers
- *The New Testament in Its World* by N.T. Wright

OTHER

- www.bibleproject.com
- www.practicingtheway.org

SUPPORT AND HELP

- **Deepen Groups** - Deepen groups will help you navigate obstacles that you encounter as you pursue loving God and loving others. We have relationships with partner organizations that cover a wide variety of topics (addiction, codependency, divorce, financial stewardship, sexual brokenness, grief, sexual abuse). Visit thecreek.org/page/782 for more information.
- **Care Appointments** - Care appointments are a one-on-one, one-hour sit-down with a pastor on our staff where you can go to receive encouragement, prayer, and resource recommendations. Find out more at thecreek.org/page/785.
- **Generous Matching Grants** - As you and your life group are looking for ways to serve, we know cost can often be a hindrance. We want to help with that. We want to support your ideas and make them possible by providing a matching fund and help alleviate financial burdens. To learn more about how this process works and to complete an application, go to thecreek.org/outreach and select "Life Group Projects."
- **Contact Us** - For any additional help, email us at contact@thecreek.org.

VOMO

VOMO is a one-stop shop to find all our serving opportunities. You, your family, and your group can find the volunteer needs from Generosity & Outreach at The Creek and our ministry partners. These opportunities are updated frequently, so you can have different serving experiences to find the right fit. If you'd like a member of our team to come to one of your meetings to help your group decide what's right for you, email TerriKilgore@thecreek.org.



MISSION, VISION, PRIORITIES

MISSION

Love God, Love People, Make Disciples

VISION

Connecting people to Jesus

PRIORITIES

Worship, Gospel, Kingdom, Scripture,
Identity, Community, Generosity

Worship • “All for the glory of God”
We seek God’s presence and
honor in everything we do.

Gospel • “Jesus Christ is Lord”
We proclaim the good news of Jesus and center
our lives on his teaching and example.

Kingdom • “As it is in heaven”
We desire to see the fame and deeds of God renewed
in our day—in Indianapolis and around the world.

Scripture • “Inspired and alive”
We delight in God’s Word and
live it out on a daily basis.

Identity • “Children of God”
We receive God’s love and embrace our
adoption as sons and daughters.

Community • “Devoted to one another”
We value relationships and build
our lives together as family.

Generosity • “More blessed to give”
We share our resources to enrich others
and advance God’s kingdom.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Dear church family,

I know I say this every time...but wow, I am just so thankful for the team of people who put these projects together!

I believe last time I embarked on writing a kudos section, I was ruminating on how BIG projects like this are and how, typically, the process of ideating, writing, designing, editing, printing, and binding an entire book takes most publishing companies and their writers/editors months, even years to get something to print.

And I think I mentioned something to the effect that the fact that we can compile a book like this with the kind of content that it has is a testament to God's people working together for God's glory.

What was true then, is true now. A work like this is truly a grace.

So this is, yet again, a kudos, a high five, a shout out, a celebration, a dance party, a whatever-connotes-happiness-upon-completion-of-a-big-project-to-you sort of exclamation point on a job well done.

To everyone who has helped make this book a reality...you're amazing and I thank God for you! Thank you so much for your time, talents, and energy that you put into this endeavor.

Special thanks (in no particular order!) to Laura Dingman, Brock Pickett, Clare Rice, Tom Harrigan, Leslie Huckstep, Caroline Lamkin, Dan Hamel, Chad Monahan, Michelle Hay (our awesome graphic designer!), our fabulous team of editors, and the rest of The Creek staff.

This project wouldn't have been possible without all of you!

Grace and peace,
Emerson

DEAR CHURCH

A 1 CORINTHIANS STUDY

THECREEK

THECREEK.ORG