



DAILY BIBLE READING

THE 1 CORINTHIANS CALL

Tim Blagg

Read. Ask. Live. Love

Daily Bible Reading

What?

Sometimes we find it hard to read the Bible, don't we? At church we hear it all the time: "*read the Bible more.*" But how? Some of the devotionals on offer seem to have less Bible than story. Some of the Bible reading plans seem too big to take on all at once; what should I think about? How can I possibly know what questions to ask as I read through God's word?

It's in light of these questions that these daily bible readings have come into existence! The aim is to help you read God's word for yourself and ask some of the questions to comprehend what God is saying to you today through his living and active word, with the hope asking these sorts of questions for yourself as you read through the Bible in bigger doses that this has to offer. It's a tool, and hence it's only as valuable as our use of it.

My prayer for you as you use these - whether by yourself or with your family around the dinner table - is that God will work through his word to grow you into the fullness of Christ and bring you joy as you come to know him through his word.

How?

The way to approach it every day (as recommended) is:

- 1) Pray to God; it is his word we're reading, so ask him to help you understand it.
- 2) Read the passage once or twice.
- 3) Ask: Go through each question, looking back at the bible to think through them.
- 4) Pray about what you have learned; ASK God's help, LIVE out the applications for today and in it all, LOVE God even more.

Want more?

If you want more studies like these ones, check out our online database at www.trinitycity.church/youth - just follow the links. Alternatively, if you're looking for more in depth bible reading plans, many can be found in study bibles or online. Chat to your bible study group leader or pastor for more information.

In Christ,

Tim

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WEEK 1

Day 1

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-17

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 17 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. Look at how Paul addresses the Corinthians; what titles/names does he give them? How would they feel to read these?

- Call for Today:

- The church in Corinth is infamous for their behaviour; Paul even cries out at one point in 1 Corinthians that they do things that non-Christians wouldn't dare to do (1 Corinthians 5:1)! This is a church that looks seriously sinful. And yet how does Paul address them? As saints - as “those sanctified.” Paul calls them brothers and sisters. For us today, it can be very easy to feel as if because we have sinned, we don't belong to God anymore. Don't get me wrong - sin is wrong and Christians aren't to sin! But if you believe in Jesus - if you call on him as your King - then you are a saint. You are saved. Isn't that great? Take a moment now to thank God for your identity as a saint.

Day 2

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:1

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who is writing 1 Corinthians?
2. What are his credentials? Why is he able to write this letter to them?
3. Who is writing with him? Why would the Corinthians know him? (Hint: check out Acts 18:12-17)

- Call for Today:

- One of the really important themes in 1 Corinthians, which we'll especially see in the coming days, is that Paul is an *apostle* of Jesus by the will of God. Paul isn't just writing because these letters because he feels like it; he's writing God's message to God's people, and his words have authority because they're God's words. When we read the Bible, it has an important meaning for us. It's not just a book of guidelines; it is God's authoritative word for how we ought to live. Take some time today to pray and ask God to help you not just read his words, but to obey them.

Day 3

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:2-3

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who is Paul writing to?
2. How does he describe who they are?
3. What greeting does he use?

- Call for Today:

- Another important theme that comes up in 1 Corinthians is true Christian unity. This is a unity that isn't just about being determined to hang out together. This is a unity that's given by God. The second half of v2 makes this very obvious; "...together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ - their Lord and ours..." There is no room for any attitude of superiority in the Christian life. We are united to all other Christians who call on Jesus as Lord. An easy way to express this is to pray for our fellow believers around the world. Pick a country and pray for Christians in it today - check out www.operationworld.org/country-lists and pray for a nation of our fellow believers today.

Day 4

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-7

- Think through the following questions:

1. Why does Paul thank God?
2. How did God confirm the testimony/message that Paul preached among the Corinthians?
3. What don't the Corinthians lack as they wait for Jesus to be revealed (that is, to return)?

- Call for Today:

- When Paul first went to preach in Corinth, he was pretty worn out. He had been chased out of Thessalonica and Berea, and even though he was in Athens preaching the gospel, his heart was especially anxious for the church in Thessalonica (see 1 Thessalonians 2:17-3:5). He got to Corinth and worked with his hands for a while with a couple of new friends - Priscilla and Aquila. Check out Acts 18:5-11 to see the story of Paul's time in Corinth. It was hard for him, as he was rejected by many of the Jewish people in Corinth. But God is good. Many people were saved! And more than that, God spoke to Paul and said, "I have many in this city who are my people." And now, as Paul writes 1 Corinthians, he can reflect that God has worked through him. Right now, pause for a moment. God has you exactly where he wants you to reach people who don't know him yet.

Wouldn't it be great to be able to write 1 Corinthians 1:4-7 about them? What steps can you take today to help them come to know Jesus? Put them into action.

Day 5

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:8-9

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say God will do for the Corinthian Christians in their faith?
2. Why will God do this for them?
3. What does Paul say about God's character?

- Call for Today:

- Theologians talk about a doctrine called "the perseverance of the saints." It's a fancy way for describing what Paul has said here in 1 Corinthians 1:8-9 - it's a promise from God that he will keep his followers faithfully following him. In one of the songs we sing at church, "Safe in the Arms" (Mark Peterson), the chorus goes:

*I take hold of him as he took hold of me
I make it my goal to be his faithfully
Jesus is here; Jesus is walking beside me always
I press on to win my eternal reward
I leave behind all that dishonours my Lord
Jesus is here; his Spirit is holding me safely all my days*

How do you feel to read those words? If you're a follower of Jesus, God is holding firmly onto you. He is holding you safe all your days. Not safe from pain or injury, but safe as his child. You will be blameless before God on that last day. Whether or not you feel close to God right now, you are 100% close to him because of Jesus. Isn't that great? Take some time to thank God. You might even like to pray the words of this song.

Day 6

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul appeal to the Corinthian Christians to do?
2. What have the Christians from Chloe's household/home church told Paul that's got him worried?
3. Why are the divisions based on teachers silly?

- Call for Today:

- These factions in Corinth have Paul worried. As we read through 1 Corinthians, we'll see that Paul writes to respond to a letter the Corinthians wrote to him asking some questions. But even more important than that letter are the issues that

Paul's hearing about right now from Chloe's people. The Corinthians are behaving badly; they are acting as if they are super-spiritual based on which teacher or leader they follow. We'll be spending a fair bit of time thinking about these issues over the coming weeks. But for now, it's worth getting to know Apollos a bit better (Cephas is the apostle Peter). Check out Acts 18 one more time - Acts 18:24-28 (remember that Achaia is where Corinth is). What is Apollos like? As for us today, we might not do exactly what Paul is describing here - we might be a bit more humble when it comes to talking about our leaders. On the other hand, maybe you look around you at school or work and think, "I'm the best Christian here because I go to a church/bible study/Fusion, but they don't..." Are there any ways you turn your faith into a competition with others? Take a moment now and apologise to God; ask him to help you see that you are united to your fellow Christians.

Day 7

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 2

Day 8

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 19 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. Paul talks a lot about two kinds of wisdom in this passage. What are the two kinds of wisdom? What makes them different?

- Call for Today:

- God is not anti-knowledge or anti-wisdom! Sometimes in history Christians have acted as if it's bad to learn or to grow in wisdom and understanding. But it's a great thing - check out Proverbs if you need any extra convincing that God wants his people to grow in wisdom. The problem with all human wisdom, though, is that it ignores God. It misses the big point; we need God's help to see it! In fact, human wisdom can be a barrier to knowing God. We'll unpack that a bit more this week. For now, thank God for the privilege we have of being able to study, of being able to learn about the world he's made. Pray that as you study, God will help you to grow in your God-wisdom and knowledge as well as your human-wisdom and knowledge.

Day 9

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-18

- Think through the following questions:

1. What did Jesus send Paul to do?
2. What is the message of the cross of Christ? What does it say?
3. How do people understand the message of the cross if they are a) perishing? b) being saved?

- Call for Today:

- One of the big things that the cross of Jesus does is it levels the playing field; the cross of Christ is an equaliser. The message of the cross says one thing louder than everything else: we aren't good enough. All our wisdom, all our strength, all our knowledge, all our good works. None of them are good enough or could ever be good enough to impress God. None of us can please God, and because of that, we have to be saved. We need someone to be good enough for us. The message of the cross is offensive because it says you're not good enough to

please God, but Jesus is. How do you feel to hear this? Take some time now to thank God for the cross.

Day 10

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-20

- Think through the following questions:

1. Think back to yesterday. Why is the message of the cross foolishness to those who are perishing, but the power of God for those who are being saved?
2. In Isaiah 29:13-24 (where Paul is quoting from in v19), God promises to overturn the leaders who have led his people astray, and instead to lift up those who are poor, weak and not impressive. Why do you think Paul is quoting this passage in 1 Corinthians?
3. How has God treated the wisdom of this world?

- Call for Today:

- In v20, Paul asks three rhetorical questions about the “usual” wise people of the times. You could put down, “the professor, the politician and the social commentator,” (or “the celebrity, the comedian and the songwriter”) and it’d come across today too. He’s not asking to find them; he’s asking “in God’s wisdom, what place does human wisdom which ignores God’s ways have?” The answer is that it has no place! Ignoring God and how he’s revealed himself and his plans to us is completely silly. It might be around in “this age” (v20), but it will disappear when Jesus returns. What would it look like for you to live knowing that this wisdom which ignores God will disappear? E.g. in a biology class, where the teacher says, “Because of these evolutionary truths, there cannot be a god.” In the philosophy class, where the lecturer says, “Morality is relative; as humanity we make our own truth to live by.”

Day 11

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:21-25

- Think through the following questions:

1. How do people come to know God and be saved?
2. What were the Jews and Greeks of Paul’s day looking for? How does the gospel not do this?
3. How is the message of about Christ received?

- Call for Today:

- When reading v25, it’s important for us to remember that God isn’t “foolish” or “weak.” But on the other hand, as Paul has just been writing, people who don’t believe, whether Jew or Gentile, think that the message of the cross *is* foolish and

weak. A crucified Christ seemed like nonsense to the Jews, and God dying as a human seemed just as ridiculous to the Greeks. But unlike the signs the Jewish people were looking for, or the wisdom that the Greeks so highly valued, the message of Jesus on the cross *saves* people. It is powerful. The message of the cross is not something to be ashamed of, no matter how countercultural it is. Take a moment today; praise God for saving you through the cross. Praise God for his countercultural and puzzling salvation through the death of his son.

Day 12

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31

- Think through the following questions:

1. What kinds of people are in the church in Corinth?
2. How does God like to work in the world? Why?
3. Who should we be proud of and boast about?

- Call for Today:

- Who gets the credit? Who has a right to be proud? One of the many things that worked to divide the church in Corinth was their pride. Some of them were proud because they were baptised by a particular preacher - Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. Some were proud because of how wise their teacher was. Some were even proud because of their own actions and holiness. But here Paul humbles them; it is only because of God that any of them are saved. It is only because of God that the church in Corinth has righteousness and holiness and redemption. There is no room in the Christian calling to boast about ourselves; about "God is pretty lucky to have me on his side," or "I'm a pretty awesome Christian." God gets 100% of the credit for our salvation. Which means that when it comes to our friends becoming Christians, God is also in charge. Take some time today, and pray for a friend who doesn't know God as yet but you'd love to see come to know him for themselves. Pray that God will help them see how much they need God's help to know him and to be saved. Pray that God will save them.

Day 13

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5

- Think through the following questions:

1. How did Paul preach the message/testimony of God to the Corinthians?
2. What did Paul resolve to know while he was with them?
3. What were the results of Paul's proclamation of the gospel to the Corinthians?

- Call for Today:

- There's an area of study in Christianity called apologetics (comes from a greek word which means defence - think of a lawyer defending their client). In apologetics, Christians work hard to show why our beliefs in God aren't crazy or irrational, but are very reasonable. For example, in apologetics Christians spend time defending why God exists in philosophical arguments, or why creation rather than evolution is a valid scientific understanding of the origins of the many species, or why there is evil and suffering in the world if God made the world good. Apologetics are good and helpful for encouraging Christians, and can be useful for people who really want to get to know God but think that a particular issue is a barrier. But when we read what Paul says here in 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5, it's apparent: apologetics work hard to use the wisdom of the world to show that the wisdom of God is reasonable. Apologetics done badly do not resolve to know nothing except Jesus Christ and him crucified. So crunch time: the gospel about Jesus is enough to save *everyone*. We don't need to worry about people asking us hard questions when we're sharing our faith, because the gospel is enough. Talk to God today; ask him to strengthen your faith. Ask God to help you trust his gospel even more today.

Day 14

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 3

Day 15

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 11 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. How does Paul say we can really understand God’s wisdom?

- Call for Today:

- Paul’s just explained the problems with the wisdom of the world, hinting at the goodness of God’s wisdom. In this chapter, though, Paul begins to talk even more about the wisdom of God which he speaks to those who are Christians. How do we grow in God’s wisdom? By reading the Bible and learning to think God’s thoughts after him, and turning what we learn about God into reasons to praise him even more. That’s what the Psalmist does in Psalm 111! Read Psalm 111 today, and memorise v10 - *“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.”*

Day 16

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-7

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who does Paul speak a message of wisdom to?
2. What is happening to the ‘rulers of this age’?
3. What does Paul tell us about God’s wisdom?

- Call for Today:

- When Paul uses the word “mystery,” he doesn’t mean “a puzzle we can solve by thinking hard enough.” Mystery means a secret we could never understand on our own, no matter how hard we tried to guess. Only by someone revealing it can we ever understand what the mystery involves. Paul doesn’t explicitly say what this mystery is here in 1 Corinthians 2, but he’s given a few hints. In Ephesians, on the other hand, Paul does explicitly say what this mystery is: first of all, to include Gentiles in God’s plan of salvation through Jesus in the gospel (Ephesians 3:6), and even more spectacularly, to unite all things under Jesus’ lordship (Ephesians 1:9-10). The mystery which God has destined for our glory before time began is for us to be involved in the biggest ever kingdom which will never end, with Jesus as our king. Isn’t that great? How do you feel to be a part of this? Pray about it now.

Day 17

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:7-10a

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul declare to the mature - the Christians?
2. How does Paul know that none of the rulers of this age understood God's wisdom?
3. What has God revealed to us by his Spirit?

- Call for Today:

- Paul tells us here that we can't even begin to comprehend the incredible things God has in store for those who love him. The biggest of all the things which God had in store is Jesus dying for us on the cross - the epitome of God's wisdom! And beyond that, just as Jesus was raised to life (which is where Paul goes in 1 Corinthians 15), we will be raised to life too. We will live with no more sadness, or pain, or death, or loneliness. We will live alongside God with Jesus as King forever. Can you imagine it? That's the future for all who love God (v9). These are the things which God has revealed to us by his Spirit. Spend a few moments now and just write down a list of everything God has done for you because of Jesus. Thank God for these things.

Day 18

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:10b-12

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say the Holy Spirit searches (i.e. understands)?
2. Who does Paul say knows a person's thoughts?
3. What Spirit have Christians received?

- Call for Today:

- One of God's fantastic gifts for Christians is the Holy Spirit, who lives in us. Back in John 14:26, Jesus promises that the Holy Spirit will teach us all things (all the things Jesus was teaching) and will remind us of what Jesus has said. And this is what Paul is making clear in 1 Corinthians 2: Christians have the Holy Spirit, which means we have the Spirit who knows all of God's thoughts, which means we can know God's thoughts by what the Spirit says. One of the really important ways this works for us today is when we read the Bible, or when we're at church and hear someone preach, the Holy Spirit works in us to help us hear *exactly* what God is saying to us through his word. We hear God's message loud and clear. Two important implications for us: first of all, we can understand God's word! You can open the Bible and, with God's help, hear what he has to say. Second, other Christians can understand God's word. Which means we need to listen carefully to

other Christians when they preach or teach the Bible, and be ready to hear what they have to say, checking it against the Bible. Put this into practice: read the passage that will be preached on at church this Sunday, and think hard: what do you think it means? What doesn't make sense? Ask God to help you understand.

Day 19

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:13-14

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say he speaks with?
2. Why doesn't the person without God's Spirit accept the message of God's wisdom?
3. How can we understand the message of God's wisdom?

- Call for Today:

- Once again Paul reminds us of the state of people who don't have God's Spirit. They might hear the message of the cross, but they can't understand it. Only by the work of the Holy Spirit can we understand God's message and be saved! We are 100% reliant on God's work to be saved. Who's the person you've been sharing the message of Jesus with? Keep on praying for them; pray that God will work through his Spirit to help them hear what he is saying. Pray that they will respond to God's message. Pray expecting that God will do it; God loves to save people!

Day 20

- Read 1 Corinthians 2:10b-16

- Think through the following questions:

1. What Spirit do Christians have?
2. What does it mean to not be subject to human judgements?
3. What mind do Christians have?

- Call for Today:

- In v15, Paul says that the person with the Spirit makes judgements about all things. *All* things. This doesn't mean that we can now play judge, jury and executioner on culture or society. Instead, it means that with God's Spirit in us, we can rightly understand how the world works. We can rightly understand how people work. We can rightly understand what is happening around us with God's understanding. Isn't that great? As a Christian, we can have God's perspective on what's going on. Which means that we see challenges here and now accurately. While we're at school or work, some of the assignments or relationship drama can feel very unnerving. But we can make accurate judgements about it; we can see

these things from God's perspective. We are part of God's eternal Kingdom, with Jesus as our King. Today, as you go about life, ask God to help you judge everything you come across accurately.

Day 21

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 4

Day 22

- Read 1 Corinthians 3

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 23 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. According to Paul in this chapter, all three persons of the Trinity are involved in building God’s church. What role does each person have?

- Call for Today:

- Paul hasn’t left behind his big concern, which is for a mature Christian unity in Corinth. Remember back in 1 Corinthians 1:10-12 the fights which they were having about which teacher they belonged to? The whole wisdom discussion and discussion about having God’s Spirit was there to call them to unity. How does what Paul says in chapter 3 call them to mature Christian unity? Bringing it closer to home, practically express the unity you have with other Christians this week by sitting next to someone you wouldn’t normally sit next to at church or at home group or at youth. Practically express the unity which we have with other Christians.

Day 23

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

- Think through the following questions:

1. How did Paul address the Corinthians when he was with them?
2. What does Paul mean when he says “I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it” (v2)?
3. How does Paul know that the Corinthians are worldly? What does it look like to be a worldly Christian?

- Call for Today:

- Christians are meant to grow up. We aren’t saved to stay at one point of Christian knowledge and maturity. When we’re first saved, we are like infants - baby Christians, newborns. We need the gospel, pure and simple. As we grow up as Christians, we need even more of the gospel; we look even more into what the gospel tells us and what God has done through Jesus’ death. The problem comes when, after years of being Christians, the Corinthians haven’t matured at all. They prove this by their actions - by being jealous and quarrelling. As we grow up as Christians, not only should we grow in our knowledge of the gospel, but we should

also grow in how we live out the gospel. That's how we'll look mature. So. In five years time, what kind of Christian will you look like? Use some of the space at the back of this booklet and write it down; "In five years, I will be a mature Christian because..." Pray that God will help you live this out.

Day 24

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9

- Think through the following questions:

1. How does Paul describe Apollos and himself?
2. What role did Paul and Apollos play in growing the church in Corinth? What role did God play?
3. Who deserves the glory for the church in Corinth growing?

- Call for Today:

- Paul and Apollos both had important roles to play in God's work of growing the church in Corinth. In exactly the same way, we have important roles to play in growing God's church here and now. It's 100% God's work - that's why we pray, and that's why we recognise God can do it without us. But our work matters too! Both things are true. God works through us to achieve his purposes. Whenever you come to youth or to church, you're involved in God's project of building his church. You're one of God's co-workers! Your other Christians need you. What would it look like for you to be more deliberate in being God's co-worker in sharing his gospel and building up his church? What steps can you take this week to be more deliberate?

Day 25

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15

- Think through the following questions:

1. Paul uses a building metaphor here. What foundation did he lay for the church in Corinth?
2. What kinds of things can people build with on the foundation? What are the differences between the first three items and the last three items? (Hint: how will they stand up in v13?)
3. What will happen to the builder if the work stands up? What will happen to the builder if their work doesn't stand up?

- Call for Today:

- Jesus is the foundation of the Christian life. The message of the cross of Jesus is what makes us Christian. As followers of Jesus, we *never* move beyond the message of the cross, but instead we build on it. We learn more about God's work

in saving us, we learn more about who God is and what he has done for us. That's the whole point that Paul is making here. We don't learn more *without* the cross; we learn more *about* the cross. If you're in a position of teaching others about Jesus - whether in a school lunch group, or in a children's ministry program or even helping out on youth camps, how are you teaching people more about the cross? What would it look like for you to do that even more? For all of us: pray for our teachers, for the men and women who work hard to teach us about Jesus. Pray that they will build with precious materials that will survive (v12-14).

Day 26

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul ask the Corinthians if they know?
2. Who dwells in the midst of God's church?
3. How might God's people destroy God's temple? How would that work in practice?

- Call for Today:

- Did you know that you are God's temple? What Paul is saying here is not that our individual bodies are the Temple of God; Paul is saying that us as God's church is God's Temple - the place where God dwells. As Christians, we need one another to be God's Temple. We need other Christians. There is no such thing as a solo-Christian or a Christian who doesn't need church; to be a Christian is to be a part of the Church and to be God's Temple. Today, write a card or a text or an email to another Christian at church, encouraging them. You might like to even include the words of 1 Corinthians 3:16 as you say how thankful you are for them.

Day 27

- Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say the Christians in Corinth shouldn't do?
2. How does Paul say people should think about human wisdom?
3. Why does Paul say that it's silly to boast about human leaders?

- Call for Today:

- If you're someone who is in Jesus, you already have everything. There is nothing which you don't have in an eternal sense. Why is it immature for Christians to fight and disagree over who they follow? Because if you're someone in Christ, then all the teachers belong to you! If we're found in Jesus, then everything belongs to us. Why? Because it all belongs to Jesus. And we're included in Jesus. To put it

another way, there's no "I" in Jesus. But there is an us. God's people, the church. We are found in Jesus. And because everything belongs to Jesus. Everything belongs to us. How good is that? Take time now to thank God for his goodness. Ask him to help you boast about him, rather than stuff he's made.

Day 28

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 5

Day 29

- Read 1 Corinthians 4

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 21 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. How does Paul describe what it means for him to be an apostle in 1 Corinthians 4?

- Call for Today:

- Paul cares very deeply for the church in Corinth. He loves them, and he is surprised and concerned by many of the ways that they are behaving. Paul wants to visit them again soon so that both he and the Corinthians can be encouraged, but because he loves them he wants to make sure they don't continue to behave in a way that contradicts the gospel. Because he loves them, he will tell them when they are not behaving rightly; when they are acting in a way that is sinful. What about you? Is there anyone in your life who you know will tell you if you are acting sinfully? If not, who could you ask? It isn't nice to be told that we've offended God. But it's much better to hear it from someone who loves us than from God on the last day! Today, talk to an older Christian or leader (could be one of your parents). Explicitly give them permission to approach you about sin in your life. And, for this to work well, be honest with them about areas where you struggle. You might like to set up regular catch ups with this Christian, times when you will be honest, even giving them questions that you want them to ask you when you meet up.

Day 30

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

- Think through the following questions:

1. How does Paul say the Corinthians should regard Christian teachers, himself included?
2. Whose judgement does Paul care about? Why?
3. What does Paul mean when he says “the appointed time”?

- Call for Today:

- Whose opinion do you care about? This is one of the most important questions in the Bible. Paul's words in vv3-4 are really helpful for us to pay attention to: he doesn't care about whether other people approve of him, or even his own

approval; he only cares about God's approval. This isn't a "screw you, I'll do whatever I feel like" attitude towards other people - that'd be a very bad way to understand 1 Corinthians. Instead, Paul's saying, "At the end of the day, I have to answer to God for how I live and what I do; not you Corinthians, and not even my own conscience. Only God's opinion will last." Whose approval do you live and work towards? Ask God to help you to value his approval more highly than anyone else's.

Day 31

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-7

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who has Paul applied his explanations to?
2. Why has Paul applied his explanations to them?
3. What reason does Paul have for the Corinthians not to be puffed up against one another?

- Call for Today:

- Paul might be sounding like a one-track mind here: he is concerned that the Corinthians ought not to boast. His logic is pretty simple - we've received everything we have. We don't have anything that we haven't received from God. So what reason do we have to boast? Another way to look at it: how quick are you to thank God for the stuff you have or the good things you're able to do? If we really understand that everything we have comes from God, then we should be very, very thankful people, praying pretty frequently saying thanks to God for the good things he gives us. For the next week, make a habit of writing down three things you're thankful to God for each night (use the pages for notes at the back of this book if that's helpful!); it's a very easy way not to boast!

Day 32

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13

- Think through the following questions:

1. How does Paul describe the Corinthians in these verses?
2. How does Paul describe himself and his co-workers in gospel ministry?
3. What are Paul and his co-workers experiencing while he's writing this letter?

- Call for Today:

- When we read these verses, it's pretty plain to see: Paul is writing very ironically. Which of these two groups do we normally expect the Christian life to look like though? When we read through the New Testament, the consistent message is that the Christian life involves suffering and discomfort now, but glorification and

comfort later (when Jesus returns). It's not a bad thing to enjoy comfort now if God has provided it. But there are people who would turn away from Jesus if life became hard or uncomfortable. How about for you? Would you be tempted to abandon trusting in Jesus if life became difficult? If people stopped being friend with you because of Jesus? If you got punished or bullied for being Christian? Pray today, and ask God to help you to be prepared for suffering for being a Christian. Read 1 Corinthians 4:8-13 again, praying that God will help you to trust Jesus firmly, even if (or when) what Paul writes about himself becomes true for you too.

Day 33

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-17

- Think through the following questions:

1. Why is Paul writing these things to the Corinthians?
2. What did Paul become to them in the gospel?
3. What is the connection between what Paul says and how Paul lives?

- Call for Today:

- In v16, Paul calls for the Christians in Corinth to imitate him. Not just to imitate what he says and teaches, but to imitate how he lives as well. Why? When we get to 1 Corinthians 11:1, we see that Paul says that they should imitate him, as he imitates Jesus. In other words, by imitating how Paul lives and what Paul says, the Corinthians should become more like Jesus. Here's two calls to reflect on today:

1) Who are you imitating? We're all imitating someone, whether we realise it or not. Who is mentoring you or leading you to look more like Jesus? If you can't think of someone in particular, maybe it's time to approach someone and ask them to mentor you as a younger Christian. Act on this today.

2) Do you think you could say to a younger Christian, "copy how I live and speak, and you'll look more like Jesus?" Why, or why not? Who could you be mentoring or leading to look more like Jesus? Pray about this today, and talk to another Christian about what it could look like for you to be an example who should be imitated.

Day 34

- Read 1 Corinthians 4:18-21

- Think through the following questions:

1. Why might some of the Corinthians be arrogant?
2. When does Paul say he will visit the Corinthians?

3. What are the two different ways Paul says he could come and visit the Corinthians? Why do you think there are two different ways Paul could visit?

- Call for Today:

- The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but a matter of power. God's kingdom isn't just about talking and boasting and saying the right answers in Bible study; God's kingdom is about *power*. God's kingdom is about *power* because the message about God's kingdom, the gospel, is *powerful*. The gospel transforms people. God's word transforms us and reshapes our actions and our thoughts and our hearts. So, when it comes to you, do you *trust* that God's word is powerful? Do you trust that God's kingdom involves us being transformed because of his power? When you are sharing the gospel with a friend, do you trust that God's word is powerful to transform them? Speak to God today, and ask him to help you trust him. Ask him to help you know that his word is powerful. To know that his word can and will transform us to look even more like Jesus.

Day 35

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 6

Day 36

- Read 1 Corinthians 5

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 13 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. How do the Corinthians look like non-Christians in 1 Corinthians 5?

- Call for Today:

- Sexual immorality is a pretty common phrase in the New Testament, and we'll come across it a few more times in 1 Corinthians. As far as Christians are concerned, it means *anything* outside of God's purpose for sex - a consensual, other-focussed, one-man one-woman, publicly recognised marriage. Anything outside of this context for sex is sexual immorality. In today's terms, that includes, but is not limited to, penetrative sexual intercourse outside of marriage, oral sex outside of marriage, mutual masturbation outside of marriage, pornography anywhere, “soft-porn” anywhere (e.g. Fifty Shades of Gray), sexting outside of marriage, lust anywhere, “dirty talk” anywhere. This is not a comprehensive list, but gets some of the big-ticket items out there. This would have been pretty full on for anyone living on Corinth to be told to quit sexual immorality, just like it is in Adelaide today. But, as Paul will go on to tell us, we belong to God. Right now, though, take a moment. Do you agree with God's definition of where sex belongs? Do you agree with God's definition of sexual immorality? Write down your own definition of where sex belongs, and pray that God will protect you from sexual immorality.

Day 37

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-2

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul hear reported as being among the Corinthian church?
2. What makes this report so shocking for Paul?
3. How did the Corinthians respond to this news? How does Paul think they should have responded?

- Call for Today:

- Tolerance is not a good thing. At least, not a tolerance that ignores serious problems. When you have an axe stuck in your head, you shouldn't tolerate it. You should report to hospital to have safely removed as soon as possible. The

Corinthians were proud of how tolerant they were, going “Look at what good Christians we are! We have someone who’s behaving worse than anyone else in this town who’s a part of our church, and we are so tolerant of them! Aren’t we good?” It’s a ridiculous attitude to have! It looks like it’s loving, but in reality it’s deeply unloving. God takes sin *seriously*; this kind of tolerance says “Sure God’s going to judge you one day, but it’s *okay* for you to be like this.” This is a bad tolerance, and Paul says that instead of being proud, the Corinthians should have kicked him out of the congregation (if he didn’t turn away from sin) to show him just how serious his sin was. Let’s be clear though: Paul is talking about someone who’s claiming to be a *Christian*, not about a non-Christian who’s visiting the Corinthian church. So what about us? Today, pray and ask God to give you the courage to confront your fellow Christians about sin in their lives when it comes up. Ask God to help you approach them about sin in their lives, not proud or boastful, but out of love. Pray that you will be ready.

Day 38

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:3-5

- Think through the following questions:

1. In what sense is Paul with the Corinthian church?
2. What does Paul say the Corinthian church should do with this man the next time they meet?
3. What does Paul hope this will accomplish?

- Call for Today:

- The phrase “hand over to Satan” is a weird one, isn’t it? Paul isn’t saying “give him to Satan forever,” since he hopes that he will be saved on the day when Jesus returns. Instead, it seems more likely that handing over to Satan involves kicking out of the church, the present expression of God’s kingdom, into the world, which at the moment is a region where Satan has some degree of power. Paul’s point? Being in the church is where we can enjoy the benefits of our relationship with God - fellowship with other believers, encouragement from the Bible, communion and hearing God’s word preached. By being kicked out of the church for a time, this unrepentant man is being very obviously confronted by the consequences he’ll experience forever if he doesn’t turn away from his sin (this process is kind of similar to what Jesus says in Matthew 18:15-20 about fellow believers who sin). Kicking someone out of church is a last-resort for the person who refuses to listen or be corrected by the Bible. And the hope is that they will repent. So what about us? Chances are that, while you don’t know anyone who’s been told not to come to church until they repent, you do know someone who is not currently attending

youth or church because they don't really want to. Pray that God will work in their heart and help them to return to him. Maybe even give them a call or text - check in to see how they're doing. Invite them again to youth or church.

Day 39

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:6-8

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say is not good?
2. Paul starts talking about yeast and the unleavened bread. Check out Exodus 12:1-20 to find out more about what he's discussing here.
3. Paul isn't calling yeast or self-raising flour evil here; he's speaking metaphorically. What do you think the yeast he's talking about represents?

- Call for Today:

- Who we are shapes what we do. In v7, Paul commands the Corinthians to get rid of all the old yeast, so that they can be a new unleavened batch of bread, which is what they already are. This is an important truth of the Christian life: we already have our new identity in Jesus. We are called to live in a way that matches who we are. Take a blank sheet of paper today, and write down two columns. In one, write out all the different things you are *because* of Jesus (i.e. your identity in Jesus). In the second column, write out for each identity, how that identity in Jesus means you act.

Day 40

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-11

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say he wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians? (Technically, the letter we have in our Bibles called "1 Corinthians" is actually the second letter Paul wrote to them! We don't know where the first one is).
2. Does Paul forbid Christians from spending time with non-Christians who don't behave like Christians?
3. Who does Paul forbid Christians from associating with?

- Call for Today:

- Paul says that there are people Christians should avoid spending time with: Christians who continually sin, even though other Christians have pointed out that it's wrong for them to do so, and claim that they aren't sinning, and claim that they're Christians. This brings us back to the "tolerance" thing we explored on day 37; it's really unhelpful for us to pretend that everything is alright for someone else when they're actually abandoning the truth of the gospel! Paul's instructions might

sound dramatic, but once again they are written with the hope that the person who is persistently sinning will repent and be saved. Today, pray for your pastor. Pray that God will give them the courage to confront sin in the lives of their congregation members.

Day 41

- Read 1 Corinthians 5:12-13

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who judges those outside the church?
2. Who has responsibility for judging those inside the church?
3. The quote that Paul uses in v13 comes from the Old Testament. One place where it's used is Deuteronomy 13:1-5. Why do you think Paul uses this quote when talking about judging those inside the church?

- Call for Today:

- We've talked plenty about what it means to judge those inside the Church - calling them to live by the standards of holiness in the Bible. However, here Paul says that Christians shouldn't judge those outside the Church. This means that anyone who doesn't claim to be a Christian *shouldn't* be held to Christian moral standards; why should they? However, God's judgement is declared in the Bible. Through his word, God makes it very clear what counts as sin. By sharing the news of what God's definition of sin is, that *isn't* a case where we're judging people outside the Church. That's a case of showing them what God's judgement is. The difference comes in what you're trying to achieve. Non-Christians *will* be judged by God for their sin, *unless* they accept the gospel of Jesus. On the other hand, Christians who have accepted the gospel are accountable for living as Christians, and one day God will hold all Christians to account for how they behaved. Today, pray for a non-Christian friend. Ask God to help you show them the gospel, and to help you graciously confront them with their sinfulness.

Day 42

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

_____.

WEEK 7

Day 43

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 11 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. How do the Corinthians look like non-Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11?

- Call for Today:

- In 1 Corinthians 5:12-13, Paul tells the Christians in Corinth that they are to judge other Christians inside the church - to confront them with their sinful behaviours and wrongdoing. This leads Paul to another big problem in Corinth; some Christians are treating one another terribly! We're going to look at this in more detail in the coming days. In John 13:35, Jesus says that the whole world will know that Christians are his disciples by our love for one another. But in Corinth, it is very hard to see that Christians are disciples of Jesus. Take a moment now and think about your actions. Would someone who's never met you before be able to tell that you're a Christian solely based on your actions towards other Christians? Why, or why not? Plan one intentional act of loving service you can do for another Christian this week, and do it.

Day 44

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-3

- Think through the following questions:

1. Where were some Corinthians taking their disputes with one another?
2. Who does Paul say the Church will judge one day?
3. Why should this make a difference to the Corinthians in their disputes?

- Call for Today:

- An important thing for us to note about justice in 1 Corinthians 6:1-11: Paul is talking about lawsuits, *not* about criminal justice. If a Christian believer has murdered someone else in the church, the church *should* hand them over to the appropriate authorities - police, government, etc. Paul is talking about trivial lawsuit cases, such as “I tweaked my neck working for Mr. Lee” or “Mrs. Green burned the birthday cake I paid good money for.” Christians should, and are more than qualified, to resolve these disputes in-house. You probably haven't sued anyone lately. But this is a good prompt for us to thank God for the justice system we do have in our country. Right now, pray to God, thanking him for the

government and the police who help us to live rightly in Australia. Pray for them to govern well and to bring justice, as God's representatives, for victims who have suffered.

Day 45

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:4-6

- Think through the following questions:

1. Where have some Christians been taking their disputes to be judged?
2. Why is this so shocking to Paul?
3. What kind of attitude do you think these Christians might have had?

- Call for Today:

- Paul is perplexed that the believers in Corinth act as though there is no one among them who is wise enough to help these Christians resolve their disputes. While we don't know much about these cases, it is possible that the Christians involved in these disputes acted as if "this is my business, and it's private." They might not have shared this with their fellow Christians, instead acting as if their fellow Christians have no business in knowing how they are acting or thinking, or another likely option is that they acted as if their fellow Christians had no right to *judge* them for their actions. Think about your relationship with other Christians at church. How well do they know you? More specifically, your small group leaders and the other members of your small group; how well do they know you? Do you act like your thoughts and actions and sins you struggle with are private, not to be shared with other Christians? By acting this way, we cut ourselves off from a great source of God's help - the church. This week at your small group, be more open and honest about something in your walk of faith which you haven't shared before.

Day 46

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:7

- Think through the following questions:

1. What evidence does Paul offer when he says that they have already been defeated?
2. What questions does Paul ask in v7? What do they mean?
3. Why do you think Paul asks questions like this?

- Call for Today:

- There is a line between being a doormat and being stubbornly independent as a Christian. In Corinth, Paul sees that some Christians are being stubbornly independent and demand that their 'rights' are fulfilled, no matter what it costs others. In v7, Paul isn't saying "none of your needs or rights matter." But on the

other hand, who is the Lord Christians serve? Read Philippians 2:5-11 today. What was Jesus' attitude when it came to his rights? What was Jesus' attitude when it came to serving others at his own cost? Praise God that Jesus sacrificed his rights, and pray that God will help you to look more like Jesus in your actions by not vehemently defending your rights, but instead sacrificing them for the sake of others coming to know Christ.

Day 47

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:8-10

- Think through the following questions:

1. How are the Christians in Corinth behaving?
2. Who does Paul say will not inherit the kingdom of God?
3. Are there any categories that Paul includes in vv9-10 that surprise you?

- Call for Today:

- In v8 we see the polar opposite to how Jesus wanted his disciples to act. Jesus said that the world would know that we are his disciples by our love for one another (John 13:35). The Corinthians were being known for their lawsuits against one another and for their bad behaviour towards one another. This is a terrible situation! And what about us? Have you treated another Christian badly? Almost certainly; Paul doesn't doubt that Christians will upset each other - that's why he talks about the Church judging matters within itself. But the call for us is to live out our Christian identity by repenting. Part of this involves apologising to our Christian brother or sister whom we've offended. So today, the challenge for us is to apologise for any lingering offence we've committed against a fellow Christian. Apologise to them face-to-face if possible. Ask for their forgiveness. And ask God to help you not to hurt them again in this way.

Day 48

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who will not inherit the kingdom of God?
2. Does this list in vv9-10 describe who the Corinthians are now?
3. What has changed for the Corinthians?

- Call for Today:

- The words of 1 Corinthians 6:11 are a huge comfort to all Christians. Sinners will not inherit the kingdom of God. But you are not a sinner. You are a saint. Today, take the words of 1 Corinthians 6:11, print them out or write them out, and poster them up in your bedroom or over your desk. Remind yourself of who you are.

Thank God that this is who you are! Memorise these words and remind yourself of them daily.

Day 49

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 8

Day 50

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 9 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. How do the Corinthians look like non-Christians in 1 Corinthians 6:12-20?

- Call for Today:

- Certain members of the Corinthian church are living as if anything goes. If it feels good, do it. They thought that ultimately, it didn't matter too much since our bodies will be destroyed anyway. In fact, lots of people in Corinth thought that the human body would be destroyed, but the human soul would live forever, and because of this, they didn't think it mattered to protect the body. This isn't Paul's attitude and it's definitely not God's attitude. What we do with our bodies matters. What we do with our bodies shows how much we submit to Jesus' kingship over us. Is there any area of your life - whether eating, or body image, or sex and sexuality, or exercise - which you act as if it's your's to control, and not God's? Reflect on this, asking God to help you see if you are holding out on him.

Day 51

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:12

- Think through the following questions:

1. What saying do the Corinthians have?
2. What does Paul think they are ignoring in their saying?
3. Why does Paul talk about being mastered or dominated?

- Call for Today:

- 1 Corinthians 6:12 has a lot to say about our entertainment. Technically, you could argue that for most of the shows on TV, there's nothing that's sinful to watch in and of itself. Some Christians have claimed that movies or TV series that are filled with sexual content or violence or gossip or crude humour are harmless, and that their freedom as a Christian means that it's alright to do this. To this, Paul would answer, not everything is beneficial. What shows do you watch on TV/Netflix/Youtube? Is it something that you can honestly thank God for? Or does it dishonour God and his purposes for humanity? If you're unsure about this, talk with an older Christian or one of your leaders. If you need to stop watching something, stop today.

Day 52

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:13-14

- Think through the following questions:

1. What saying do the Corinthians have here?
2. What does Paul say the body is meant for?
3. The Corinthians said that the Lord would destroy food and the stomach. What does Paul say that God will do for our bodies?

- Call for Today:

- The Corinthians' saying about food and the stomach seems to have been used to justify sexual immorality. They seemed to claim that if you're hungry, you eat food - it's a natural appetite. Based on this, they argued that if you feel like having sex, you have sex - it's a natural appetite. Besides, they argued, God will destroy the body anyway, so it doesn't matter. But this is where they were wrong. God didn't make our bodies for sex. He made our bodies to worship him. God made sex as one of the ways in which humanity can worship him, but not everyone will have sex. God made the body for himself, and he will raise it to new life in the future, just like he raised Jesus to new life (Paul talks a lot more about this in 1 Corinthians 15). Do you recognise that sex is *not* an essential appetite? Unlike food and eating, no one has died because they didn't have sex. Nor is sex evil. But it's not the reason our human bodies were made. We were made to worship God. Today, take some time to ask God to help you have a healthy view of sex in his creation, recognising that it is good, it isn't an essential appetite, and that your body is for God.

Day 53

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-17

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say our bodies are?
2. Why does Paul say Christians shouldn't have sex with prostitutes?
3. How are we united to Jesus?

- Call for Today:

- Back in 1 Corinthians 3, we saw that as the Church we are the temple of God; we are all part of God's building project. Here in 1 Corinthians 6, we see a vital element of this. We are members (or parts) of Jesus' body. We are united to Jesus in spirit. This deep, spiritual, intimate union is not to be treated casually. Paul says that if a Christian - one of the members of Jesus' body - unites with a prostitute, what they've done is taken part of Jesus' body and made it united to another;

they've committed adultery (spiritually speaking). This is very strong language! Sex is serious business. The bigger question behind sexual immorality is how strong our union with Jesus is; do we recognise this? Reflect on being part of Jesus' body today. You might like to go back over 1 Corinthians 3:5-17, and sketch what it looks like for you to be a part of Jesus' body. Pray that God will give you a stronger understanding of your union with Jesus.

Day 54

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:13-18

- Think through the following questions:

1. Based on these verses, why does the body matter?
2. Which sin does Paul command for Christians to flee?
3. What does he say is unique about this sin?

- Call for Today:

- Flee sexual immorality. This isn't the image of someone who tries to figure out where the line is. This isn't the person who asks "how far is too far." Fleeing from sexual immorality is taking every step necessary at every stage of life to recognise how you may be tempted to sexual immorality, and running away from it. As a teenager at school, fleeing sexual immorality looks very different to a married Christian couple fleeing sexual immorality. Think about your situation; are there any ways in which you might be tempted to sexual immorality? Come up with a specific and deliberate plan for fleeing it (the time to come up with a plan is definitely not when you're being tempted). What will you pray? Who will you call or text? What will you do to physically flee the situation (check out the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:1-12 - he literally flees temptation!).

Day 55

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul ask the Corinthians if they know?
2. Who do the Corinthians (and all Christians) belong to?
3. What does this mean we should do?

- Call for Today:

- Back in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul pointed out that the Church is the temple of the Holy Spirit. Here, now, Paul shows us that our individual bodies are also temples for the Holy Spirit, given that he lives in us. This doesn't mean "my body is a temple, so I can't drink Coke." It means that we cannot act as if our body is just temporary or unimportant; God cares deeply about our bodies, so much so that we

will be resurrected *bodily*; we won't just be souls floating around. Your body isn't yours to do with as you want to; you are God's property. This is ultimately why sin is so horrifying; we belong to God because he made us, and we belong to God even more because he saved us and bought us with the blood of Jesus. You belong to God. Your actions belong to God. Take some time out now to pray to God. Confess ways in which you haven't honoured him with your behaviour. Ask him to help you live as a good temple for his Spirit.

Day 56

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 9

Day 57

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-24

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 24 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. What different attitudes does Paul notice in Corinth regarding marriage and sex?

- Call for Today:

- As we’ve already seen in chapters 5-6, sexual immorality was a significant ordeal in Corinth; many Christians were acting in a loose manner; sex is a good, common, normal thing which goes with having a body. In response to this, some Christians went to the other extreme, claiming that avoiding sex entirely made them more holy. Paul doesn’t agree with this either; he defends sex as a good thing, but emphasises that what counts most is serving God in whatever situation we’re in. Right now, if you’re in high school and aren’t married, then God wants you to serve him in your situation. Which means honouring God with your body, obeying his commands, and sharing the great news about Jesus with anyone around you who doesn’t know him yet. Today, write down what it looks like for you to serve God in your situation right now.

Day 58

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

- Think through the following questions:

1. What matters did the Corinthians write to Paul about here?
2. In marriage, how does Paul say a husband and wife should approach sex?
3. What does Paul say is more important than sex in marriage?

- Call for Today:

- In v7, it can be surprising to read Paul say, “I wish that all of you were as I am” - referring to being unmarried, and therefore celibate (i.e. not having sex ever). This is radically countercultural in our day today, just as much as it was in Paul’s day. But Paul isn’t saying this because he wants Christians to never get married. He’s saying this because there’s something more important than sex or marriage. God’s Kingdom is more important. Today, check out Mark 12:18-27. What does Jesus say about marriage? Based on Jesus’ words and Paul’s words, do we need sex and marriage to be complete as humans? Ask God to help you see marriage and sex the way he sees them.

Day 59

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:8-9

- Think through the following questions:

1. Who is Paul addressing here?
2. What does he say to them?
3. In what situation does he say they should get married?

- Call for Today:

- Paul's most pressing concern for Christians is serving God with their whole lives. Which means that, if sexual temptation would be too difficult for a Christian to grapple with, marriage is the place in which they can express these desires in a way that serves God. However, for some people, they take Paul's advice on board and don't actually get married. Chances are, in your church, there are older Christians who aren't married currently, or who have never been married. Take time today to thank God for them and for their love for him, and their faithful service for him. Pray that, when it comes to sexual temptation, God will protect them and continue to energise them to serve him and love him.

Day 60

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-11

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul command married people to do?
2. Paul claims that the Lord (i.e. Jesus) said this (that's what he says, "not I, but the Lord"). Check out Mark 10:2-12. What does Jesus say there?
3. Why do you think Jesus gives this command? What does it say about what he thinks about marriage?

- Call for Today:

- Something important for us to realise here is that Paul is *not* writing a full explanation about divorce; it's beyond what 1 Corinthians was written to address. But what Paul is making clear (by repeating Jesus' command) is that marriage is not something which should be ended quickly or lightly. Marriage is an incredibly significant union, and shouldn't be ended just for the sake of marrying someone else or because you don't feel like being married to someone (which seems to be the situation Moses was addressing). And, like in 1 Corinthians 5:5, the aim of separation in a situation where one or both spouses is acting sinfully is always a healed relationship and forgiveness - that's where Paul jumps to in v11. Think of some of the married couples you know today, and pray that God will strengthen

their marriages. Ask God to help them grow in love and in forgiveness, and to protect their marriage. Married people need other people's help!

Day 61

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-16

- Think through the following questions:

1. What instruction does Paul have for a Christian who is married to a non-Christian? (Jesus didn't say anything specific about this situation when he was on earth - that's why Paul says "I, not the Lord.")
2. v14 is a bit weird, isn't it? What do you think Paul means here? (Hint: sanctified means "set apart" for God; in a special relationship with God apart from the rest of the world)
3. What is the hope for marriages where one member is a Christian and one member isn't?

- Call for Today:

- In 1 Corinthians 7, Paul is addressing Christians in the state they are in when they became a Christian. Which, in this case, there are couples who are married, maybe even with children. And all of a sudden, one of them becomes a Christian because they meet Jesus. What should they do? That's the question Paul's answering here. He is *not* saying that a Christian should marry a non-Christian. If you're an unmarried Christian, you should only marry an unmarried Christian of the opposite sex (which we'll see in 7:39). For couples where one member is a Christian but the other member isn't, it's heartbreaking for the Christian if their spouse doesn't follow Jesus. It makes church life really hard. It makes it hard to talk to the kids about following Jesus when dad/mum doesn't really care about him. And the Christian can't share with their spouse the most important relationship they have. Pray for any Christians you know who are married to not-yet-Christians. Pray that God will save their spouse (v16). Pray that they will be strong in trusting Jesus. If they have children, pray that God will grow their children to know him and love him.

Day 62

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

- Think through the following questions:

1. What rule does Paul lay down in all the churches?
2. What does Paul say counts?
3. What exception does Paul have to the rule?

- Call for Today:

- Wherever you are now, God can work through you. Do you know this? Sometimes Christians say “when I’ve finished school, then I can serve God properly,” or, “when I get married, then I’ll be able to get on with serving God,” or “when I’ve got a full time job,” or “when I’ve bought a house” or even “when I’ve finished travelling the world, then I’ll be able to serve God properly.” There’s nothing wrong with any of these things. But Paul’s point is very clear: wherever you are right now, God wants you to serve him and to keep his commands. Are you a high school student? Serve God, love him, and keep his commands. Are you single? Serve God, love him, and keep his commands. Reflect for a moment. Is there anything which is holding you back from serving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength? Is there anything which you’re waiting to change before you can serve God?

Day 63

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____
- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

WEEK 10

Day 64

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

- Think through the following questions:

1. What are the things that “jump out” at you from this text - the things that are surprising or stick in your mind?
2. What questions do you have from reading these 16 verses? Write them down, pray over them and think through them over the next week.
3. What does Paul think is the most important thing for Christians to do, no matter what their circumstances?

- Call for Today:

- You might have noticed already that Paul is very careful about repeating Jesus' words. Back in v10, when he knew exactly what Jesus said about divorce in general, he repeated it to the Corinthians: this is what Jesus said. However, in v12 and v25, Paul explains that he hasn't heard that Jesus said anything specific about these situations. But Paul still offers his advice, based on what Jesus said, and what the rest of the Bible shows that God has said. He finishes (in v40) by reminding the Corinthians that the Holy Spirit is speaking through him; Paul's advice isn't just “use it if you feel like it;” it's wisdom fuelled by God's Spirit for God's people! This is a great way for us to understand the Bible. It's not just sixty-six books by multiple different authors, packed together. It's got one author behind it all - God. Which means that “red-letters-for-Jesus'-words” Bibles are a bit silly; they're all ultimately God's words! But God's authorship of the Bible doesn't work in spite of the human authors; God works *through* them. God spoke through Paul, Which means, when we read Paul's words and understand them properly, we are reading God's words to us. Do you trust this? Talk with another Christian today about how you view the Bible. You might like to chat about these words here in 1 Corinthians 7.

Day 65

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-28

- Think through the following questions:

1. What subject is Paul answering the Corinthians' letter on here?
2. What is Paul's advice for this situation? (v27, being pledged to a woman is another way of talking about being married; bound by law)
3. There are two kinds of decisions in the Bible: there are sin/obedience decisions, and there are wisdom decisions. Which kind of decision is the decision to marry?

- Call for Today:

- In v28, Paul gives the reason why he thinks it's wise not to get married. He thinks that it's wise not to marry because marriage means "facing many troubles in this life." Paul's not saying that marriage is bad or evil! But if you're married, many decisions you make needs to take your spouse (and children) into consideration. If you're unmarried, you can very easily hang out with other Christians after church, or go on a missions trip, or change career pathways to volunteer at church or study at Bible College. If you're married, you need to discuss these decisions with your spouse *and* you need to make sure you care for your spouse and family. As Paul goes on to say in v32 onwards, marriage means your concerns to serve God start with your concerns to care for your spouse and family. Be honest with yourself: do you recognise the challenges that marriage brings? Do you see why Paul thinks remaining unmarried is a good option for Christians? If you're unmarried now, would you be willing to remain unmarried to serve God without extra concerns of family life? And if you're married now, are you serving your spouse and family well as well as God? And, there is a chance that a day will come when you are unmarried again if your spouse dies. Would you be willing to remain unmarried for the sake of serving God? Pray about these things now, and talk to another Christian about what you think about marriage and being single.

Day 66

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul mean when he says "the time is short"?
2. Which one of the upside-down ways for living surprised you the most or sounded the strangest to you?
3. What is happening to the world?

- Call for Today:

- This passage is the heart of all wisdom decisions. It's the biggest factor that Christians need to consider when it comes to making our life choices and decisions. Why? Because Jesus is coming again *soon*. And, according to 1 Corinthians 15:58, only the work we do serving God will last. How does Jesus coming back soon change what matters? Are you living as if Jesus could come back any moment, and making your decisions in light of that? Take a piece of paper, write "Jesus is coming back soon. Because he's coming back soon, I want to..." and prayerfully list the ways in which you think you could best serve God before Jesus comes back. Share your list with another Christian.

Day 67

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

- Think through the following questions:

1. What does Paul say he'd like for the Corinthian Christians?
2. What is the advantage of being unmarried? What is the downside to being married?
3. Why does Paul think about marriage like this?

- Call for Today:

- The instructions Paul has don't make sense if we living to honour Jesus isn't our top priority. But instead of talking about marriage and singleness again, let's pick up on something that was raised in vv30-31: using the things of the world. In our Western culture, we have a problem. We have so much stuff, and we think that it's not enough. We get caught up in the stuff we have around us. When we're younger, it might be the latest phone, or the best video gaming console, or the nicest clothes, or the slickest car. As we get older, it's the house, or the holiday, or the holiday house, or the stock and real estate portfolio. We might have forgotten what it means not to live as if engrossed in the things of the world. So here's a way to put this into practice: go without something you'd normally like, or alternatively, give something away. It could be the newest phone - next time your contract is up for renewal, or you get the opportunity to get a new phone, don't get the latest one. Next time you get the opportunity to buy clothes, why not buy some from a second-hand store? You can probably think of another way to live this out. If you find this hard, then maybe it's *exactly* what you need to do to remind yourself that Jesus is coming again soon.

Day 68

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:36-38

- Think through the following questions:

1. What is Paul's advice if two people are engaged, but not yet married, and they want to get married?
2. What is Paul's advice if two people are engaged, but not yet married, and they decide they don't need to marry one another, but can live unmarried lives serving God?
3. Why does Paul say the one who remains unmarried does better?

- Call for Today:

- Being unmarried is a situation that Paul endorses. But when we think of today, we can think "that's just too hard. It's too lonely to be unmarried. I can understand that sex is for marriage, and I can understand that having kids belongs in marriage. But

being unmarried is such a lonely place.” It can feel like what Peter says in Mark 10:28 - “...we have left everything and followed you.” But Jesus replied (v29-30), “Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.” In our churches, unmarried people should *never* feel like they don’t belong. They should never *feel* unloved or uncared for. It should be *plausible* for a Christian to remain unmarried and, as Jesus said, have a hundredfold brothers and sisters and mothers and children. The Church should be a big family, not a collection of lonely individuals. So, as a member of the church, how are you going at making your church a home for other Christians? How can you better care for unmarried people at church around you? Do it.

Day 69

- Read 1 Corinthians 7:39-40

- Think through the following questions:

1. When does Paul say a woman is bound to her husband?
2. Who does Paul say a widowed woman can marry?
3. What does Paul think is the best option for a widowed woman?

- Call for Today:

- Here Paul ends his answers to the questions that the Corinthians had about marriage. Reflect, and talk to God today, about how you feel about marriage and remaining single, looking back over 1 Corinthians 7.

Day 70

- Church Service - Passage covered: _____

- What was the talk about?: _____

- What do I need to change? _____

[illegible]

