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WELCOME GUIDE

PRAYER INVITATION

God, speak to me through Your Word. Help me not just read, but hear and do. Help me not just study, but change. I want to grow closer to You.

WELCOME TO OUR STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS

We're so glad you've chosen to walk through the book of 1 Corinthians with us as a church family. This letter, written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth, is both deeply personal and boldly corrective. It speaks to a church struggling with division, spiritual immaturity, moral compromise, and questions about worship, leadership, and daily Christian living. Sound familiar? Though written nearly 2,000 years ago, the challenges faced by the Corinthian believers feel strikingly relevant today.

This is more than a reading plan, devotional, or journal. This is your space to lean into God's Word, be shaped by His Spirit, and respond with your whole heart. As we walk through this letter together as a church family, we invite you to use this booklet not just to read, but to wrestle, respond, and record. Let it be your space to think, question, process, and pray. Don't worry about being neat or polished - just be honest.

Here are some simple invitations to help you get the most out of this journey:

SLOW DOWN AND PRAY

Before you begin each day, take a deep breath. Don't rush past the moment. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you see what He wants to show you. **(1 Corinthians 2:9-10)** •

Watch for the colored dots throughout the booklet—they serve as visual markers to help you locate the referenced scriptures in the side margins.

REMEMBER THE PURPOSE

Paul's letter to the Corinthians is packed with wisdom, challenge, and grace. He wrote it to a church that was struggling, divided, distracted - yet deeply loved. This letter speaks to us, too. **(1 Corinthians 1:2a)** •

As you read:

- Expect God to convict and comfort you.
- Watch for themes like unity, maturity, love, identity, spiritual gifts, and Godly wisdom.
- Look for where your story meets theirs.

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:9-10, NIV)

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people...
(1 Corinthians 1:2a, NIV)

Ask yourself: What might God be trying to correct - or encourage - in me?

WELCOME GUIDE

MAKE THIS BOOKLET YOURS

This is your journal. Your tool. Your space. Fill it up! Write in the margins. Underline what stands out. Draw arrows. Circle phrases. Scribble questions. Record prayers.

We want you to look back at the end of this study and see pages filled with the fingerprints of your journey - moments of clarity, conviction, and connection with God.

No one else needs to see this - it's between you and God. So be real. Be bold. Be honest.

CHOOSE COMMUNITY

While personal reflection is powerful, something uniquely life-giving happens when we open God's Word *together*. That's why we're encouraging everyone in our church to engage in a Life Group that will do a 3/3rds study through 1 Corinthians.

Life groups are a meaningful way to explore Scripture in community. Together, we read God's Word and walk through key questions:

- What did you like in this text?
- What did you find challenging?
- What did you learn about God?
- What did you learn about people?

S.P.E.C Method:

- S - Is there a Sin to avoid?
- P - Is there a Promise to claim?
- E - Is there an Example to follow?
- C - Is there a Command to obey?

You don't have to be a Bible scholar. You just need a willingness to show up, read Scripture, ask honest questions, and listen for God's voice. These groups create space to grow together, challenge one another, and celebrate what God is doing.

If you're not in a group yet, this is a great time to jump in.

ASK QUESTIONS

Faith isn't about having all the answers. It's about trusting the One who does. So bring your questions. Bring your doubts. Let them push you closer to Jesus.

Write them down. Pray them out. Talk them through. Some answers might come right away. Others may take time. But God is never threatened by your honest seeking.

Write in the margins. Mark it up. This is *your* space!

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

GOD IS FAITHFUL, HE HAS CALLED YOU INTO FELLOWSHIP WITH JESUS CHRIST.

God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:9

1 CORINTHIANS 1

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

1 Corinthians was written to the church at Corinth, around 53-54 A.D., but it is also written for us. We explore this and other truths in the introduction to this letter.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, 2 To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: 3 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. 5 For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge— 6 God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you. 7 Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. 8 He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

COMMENTARY

The church at Corinth was troubled. This letter, written by Paul from Ephesus, will challenge the church's behavior regarding division, sexual sin, food offered to idols, misbehavior when they gather together, and the fact that some don't believe in the resurrection. When you read all the problems of this particular church, you will be tempted to write them off as people who say they are believers but aren't. But before you do this, look closely at verse two. Paul states explicitly who he is writing to **(1 Corinthians 1:2)**. •

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus...
(1 Corinthians 1:2a, NIV)

Yes, Paul is writing to believers. As you read the letter and see the horrible lifestyle of the Corinthian church, you will be tempted to think, "Wow! I didn't know I could live like I was living and still be okay with God." But don't jump to that conclusion. Paul will lay out the expectations for how believers should live, challenge sin, and remind the church that when the Lord comes, he will... **(1 Corinthians 4:5b)** •

...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.
(1 Corinthians 4:5b, NIV)

Still, the first nine verses of this chapter lay a solid foundation for what is to come. They remind the reader that they are sanctified in Christ Jesus. They have been internally purified, set apart for God in Jesus Christ. (v2) They, through the grace of God given to them in Christ Jesus, have been supplied with everything they need through what they have been taught and what they know. (v4-5) In addition, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among them. Undoubtedly, they heard, responded to, and knew the truth. (v6) They are reminded that the Lord Jesus Christ will sustain them to the end, and they will be presented guiltless on the Day of the Lord (v8) Finally, they are told that God is faithful. (v9)

Paul has set the stage for the confrontation that is coming. Over the following 16 chapters of this letter, Paul will point out various sins that should not be exhibited in a believer's life. But before he starts, he reminds the believers of the same thing we must remember when sin infiltrates our lives. He reminds them of their identity in Christ. He reminds them they cannot live the way they are because of who they are. Are they saved? Are they lost? This is not what is at stake here. Paul is reminding those in Christ that because they are saved, they should live like they are saved and not like the world.

What about you? Are you remembering your identity in Christ? Does your life reflect His goodness and grace that has been extended to you? We all sin. We can all be forgiven. But this letter is written to those who seem comfortable in their sin. To people who have decided to take the easy way and to straddle the fence, Paul is writing to say, "Stop it!" And since this letter was written to us, we should heed his advice.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your unique gift of grace. I know that I am not perfect. I know that I sin. But I also know I am in Christ, and You see me complete in You. But Father, because I love You, I want to live consistently with Your Word and Your expectation of me living like Jesus. I cannot do it by myself. I need Your Holy Spirit to remind me, to lead me, and to empower me to be like Your Son. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Your identity is in Christ. Don't misuse the grace of God by living like the world lives.

What's in a name?
It turns out, a lot!

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17

10 I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

COMMENTARY

In the first ten verses of the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul invokes the name of Christ ten times. This is not insignificant. Before Paul starts to address the problems, he is laying a solid foundation: Jesus Christ Himself. In just a few chapters, Paul will say it very clearly **(1 Corinthians 3:11)**. •

In verse 10, Paul makes a plea. How he makes it is worth noting. He could have written, "I appeal to you, brothers, that all of you agree and that there be no divisions among you," but he didn't. He was an apostle with some measure of authority, but he chose a different route. Here are the words, inspired by the Holy Spirit, that he chose **(1 Corinthians 1:10)**. •

Paul appeals to them to live in unity but invokes the power and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ in his asking. In other words, it is something that he wants done, but more than that, he knows the Lord Jesus Christ expects unity among believers. We know this too. You may remember the words of Jesus from John 17 **(John 17:20-21)**. •

Is it any wonder that Paul asks the question in verse 13, "Is Christ divided?" With all the problems with the church in Corinth, nothing would frustrate him more than brothers and sisters in Christ living in disunity. Why? According to Jesus, when believers live in unity, the world can believe that the Father sent Jesus. So, conversely, if believers live in disunity, the world doesn't believe that Jesus came from the Father. How can the Kingdom of God advance if the gospel of Jesus Christ is hindered by division?

Paul challenges the believers at Corinth to be "united in mind and thought." He wants them to be united. He doesn't mean there cannot be disagreements among brothers. He doesn't expect us to all be the same. (Another topic he will be addressing later.) He means that differences in

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 3:11, NIV)

I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.
(1 Corinthians 1:10, NIV)

20 "My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message, 21 that all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
(John 17:20-21, NIV)

non-essential matters shouldn't cause division. The cause of Christ is more significant than any of our opinions about a person or a matter. As believers, if we each strive to live like Jesus and conform our lives to His, unity is the by-product. If we think and reason like Jesus, judgment is righteous, biblical, and not self-centered, selfish, or prideful.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want the lost of the world to know that You sent Jesus to save them. I do not want to be the one causing division. I want to be the one who pursues You so closely that my life resembles Yours, the truth of Scripture drives my thoughts, and my judgments are righteous and true. Let me never cause disunity. Let me be a vessel of peace. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Unity makes the Gospel message appealing to those watching. You play a role in keeping unity in the church.

For the remainder of this chapter, Paul will contrast the wisdom of man, which is foolishness, with the wisdom of God. Before we dive into that discussion, let's discuss the cross.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-21

18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

COMMENTARY

...not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
(1 Corinthians 1:17b, NIV)

In verse 17 of the first chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul explains that he had been charged with preaching the gospel and describes his approach to sharing it **(1 Corinthians 1:17b)**. •

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...
(Romans 1:16a, NIV)

It would serve us well to remember this. Our story is important. It helps us connect to people in a relatable way. Too often, we never get around to telling the story of the cross, the gospel of Jesus Christ. Frequently, when we tell our stories, we spend more time glorifying the sin in our lives instead of sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and the power of the cross. We must understand what Jesus has done for us. When we know the depth of our sin and our need for Jesus, we see His grace at a deeper level. When did we start confusing sharing our story with sharing the gospel? When did we stop believing that sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ and the story of the cross is not enough? Have we become ashamed of the gospel? Are we afraid to share it boldly and regularly? Paul wasn't just unashamed of the gospel, he understood that the story of the gospel must be told if people will experience salvation **(Romans 1:16a)**. •

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
(1 Corinthians 1:18, NIV)

Perhaps we don't share the gospel because we believe people will think we are silly or have lost our grasp on reality. Paul shouts, "Of course, they will unless they respond to the call of Christ." **(1 Corinthians 1:18)** •

Later in this letter, Paul will remind the Corinthians of the gospel that he preached **(1 Corinthians 15:1-6a)**. •

We need to commit to sharing the gospel when telling our story. We need to speak of the cross on which Jesus died for our sins. We need to share that He was crucified, died, and was buried and that the grave could not hold Him. He rose three days later, just as had been foretold. To some, this message will seem like folly. By the way, the Greek word for folly is mōria. It means silliness, absurdity, foolishness. There is no way around it. Some people you share the gospel with will think it is just a silly, absurd, and foolish story, and by inference, think you are ridiculous, outrageous, and

foolish for believing it. But others? Through the power of the cross, drawn by the Spirit of God, they will come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. 3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time,

(1 Corinthians 15:1-6a, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the gospel of Jesus. Thank You for the power of the cross. My prayer today is that I will not be ashamed of the gospel, that I will share it with people who don't know You, and that I will live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that others are drawn to Jesus and not repelled because of the way I live. Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The cross of Christ has power. When we share His story, the Spirit uses it to draw people into a saving faith.

Have you ever noticed that the world tries to imitate what Jesus provides? Jesus provides power through the Holy Spirit, but the world thinks that power is found in wealth, status, or position. Jesus defines wisdom as provided by an all-knowing God, and the world's wisdom is defined by what humans can know and understand.

19 since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. 20 For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

(Romans 1:19-20, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 1:22-25

22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

COMMENTARY

Paul is characterizing the difference between how Jews determine if something or someone is from God and how the Greeks reason things out. Jews, he says, demand a sign. Greeks, on the other hand, seek after worldly wisdom. But let's not be too hard on these people groups. The same is true today.

For the serious seeker, we have been given everything that we need to find a relationship with Jesus. First, there is the general revelation of the creator **(Romans 1:19-20)**.

We can calculate the sunrise and sunset precisely. Recently, scientists were able to tell us within 1/10 of a second when the solar eclipse would begin and end. Scientists can explain how things happen, but they can't explain why they happen.

Then, we have the Bible—66 books written by about 40 authors over 1,500 years and by all kinds of people. Though we look at it as one book, the Bible is a collection of historical documents that can be scrutinized, questioned, and challenged. When these documents are held up to the same standard as other historical documents, the quantity of manuscripts, accuracy of translation, and number of witnesses available to debunk them at the time of their writing far surpass any other historical document.

For instance, according to Christian Apologetics and Research Ministry, there are 643 copies of Homer's Iliad. The first copy was copied 500 years after it was written, and the internal consistency of the copies is 95%. Let's compare this to the New Testament. The entire New Testament was written less than 100 years after the events. There are 5,600 copies, and the internal consistency of the New Testament among the documents is 99.5%.

Then there is the crucifixion, death, burial, and resurrection. It was witnessed, written about, and the story told in a timeframe that would allow rebuttal. There are even hostile witnesses to these events—witnesses who have nothing to gain and everything to lose if the resurrection is true.

The point is this: Signs and wisdom from God are all around us in and through the person of Jesus Christ. The ultimate miracle, the only miracle we need to focus on, is the miracle of the cross. The death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, God in the flesh, makes the first move toward us to reunite us with Him **(1 Corinthians 1:24)**. •

If you will give it some thought, the only two things you need from God, He has given you in Christ. You need the power of God to save you, protect you, preserve you, and deliver you unto Himself. Or, you need God's wisdom to understand, know, and decide. Both of these are found when we see Jesus. When we decide that Jesus is enough, we have all we need.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.*
> **(1 Corinthians 1:24, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to see Jesus. I want to see Him so clearly that everything and everyone else pales in comparison, for I know that when I see Jesus, I will see that He is enough. Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

When you are struggling to know what to do or feeling overwhelmed by life, take time to pursue your Savior. You will have the answer to everything you need when you see Him clearly.

God's ways often seem upside-down to the world, but in Christ, we find everything we truly need.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:20 - 30

20 Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. 22 Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, 24 but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

26 Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. 28 God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, 29 so that no one may boast before him. 30 It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.
(1 Corinthians 1:25, NIV)

38 For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, 39 neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.
(Romans 8:38-39, NIV)

so that no one may boast before him.
(1 Corinthians 1:29, NIV)

COMMENTARY

Let's lay some groundwork for today's discussion. Read **1 Corinthians 1:25**. •

Turn that verse over in your mind. Burn it into your memory. God is wiser and stronger than anything man has to offer. True, human beings know a lot. We have surgeons who can open a chest and transplant a heart, engineers who can build bridges that span great distances, and scientists who can make an accelerator and smash particles at the speed of light. There are dictators who, at their command, launch attacks on other nations, businessmen and women who can donate millions and sometimes billions of dollars to worthwhile causes, and politicians who can impact the masses for good or evil just by writing an order. Still, God is wiser and stronger than anything man has thought or achieved. He is the God you serve and the one who watches over you. He is all you need, in life and death. He is the God who has a love so great for you that you cannot be separated from it. Four or five years after 1 Corinthians was written, Paul would pen the words of **Romans 8:38-39** • to the believers in Rome.

Paul's point in verses 22-31 is that God is great and greatly to be praised. He reminds us that no matter who we are, God is greater. He says that God is so great in wisdom and power that "no one may boast before him." **(1 Corinthians 1:29)** •

Paul wraps up the first chapter by telling us that, in God's great power and wisdom, we are in Christ Jesus. We couldn't attain that status on our own.

God the Father did it for us in Christ. He reached out to us while we were still in sin **(Romans 5:8)**. In Christ, we have wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Because we are in Christ, we have the wisdom of God revealed to us by the Holy Spirit. Paul will speak about this in the next chapter. We have the righteousness of Christ. That is, Jesus Christ's righteousness is imputed to us. We exist in Him and His perfection. We also, because we are in Christ, get sanctification. We are set apart for special use. Finally, because we are in Christ, we get redemption. We were bought at the price of Jesus Christ on the cross. He died in our place and then rose from the dead to prove that He holds the keys to death and the grave and will extend eternal life to all who believe in Jesus, the Savior.

After all that God has done for us through Christ, is it any wonder Paul closes out this chapter with the words of **1 Corinthians 1:31.**

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

(Romans 5:8, NIV)

Therefore, as it is written: "Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord."

(1 Corinthians 1:31, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, You are the sovereign, omnipotent, omniscient, everywhere present God of all things. Nothing is beyond Your ability to see, understand, and act. I am thankful that I am in Christ. I am grateful for all You have given me: wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. You are worthy of all praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

You are in Christ, and God is wiser and stronger than anything the world offers. He is the one who gives you wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

REFLECTION

As we work through this devotional, Day 7 of every week will be a day for reflection, and many things can be reflected upon. Hopefully, you have found some challenging and insightful reading in the devotional. Today is a good day to review the major points of each day's topics. We suggest you use a notebook or a journal to write about the things you discover during this time of reflection. You may want to argue that you are not a writer or that you don't enjoy journaling. We get it, but give it a try. Many great men and women of the faith journaled about their spiritual journey and have found a lot of benefit from it. In his article, Real Men Journal Too, Ivan Mesa, a writer for The Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood, gives seven reasons to journal. Here are 5 of them.

1. To keep a record of life's journey.

2. To have a tangible account of God's blessings.

3. To serve as a reminder of the long-term sanctification process.

4. To aid in prayer and meditation.

5. To be an enduring gift to posterity.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

As we begin this study, take a moment to write down the names of six people you want to be praying for over the next 16 weeks. These might be family, friends, neighbors, coworkers–anyone you hope will experience more of God's love, truth, and grace in their lives. This list is more than a task–it's an invitation to partner with God through prayer. In Luke 18:1, Jesus encourages us to always pray and not give up. So choose your six, write them down, and commit to praying for them regularly. You never know how God might move.

GOD HAS FREELY GIVEN US THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM 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.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12

1 CORINTHIANS 2

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

If you want what is best for those you love, today's reading is a great place to start.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

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.

COMMENTARY

How do you approach sharing the gospel with those in your life who are far from Jesus? A better question might be, "Do you plan to share the gospel with those in your life who are far from Jesus?" Many of us are fearful when it comes to sharing the gospel. We worry that we don't know enough or we won't find the right words when the time comes. Perhaps our most significant failure in our witness is that we don't have a plan. In the first couple of chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul lets us in on his plan to share the gospel with the people of Corinth. We can learn a lot by looking at his approach.

The people of Corinth were used to hearing great orators, entertainers, and the like. It was a huge part of the culture of that day. If you look closely at our culture, you will find yourself saying, "The more things change, the more they stay the same." So, what was Paul's approach to sharing the gospel with people who were so similar to us? He trusted Jesus to be enough **(1 Corinthians 2:2)**.

For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
(1 Corinthians 2:2, NIV)

Paul could have used a fantastic speech and dazzled the crowds with his wisdom. He could have focused on capturing the crowd's attention with lofty words and phrases. After all, this is what they were accustomed to. He came to them, "...proclaiming to you the testimony about God..." (2:1), but he didn't do it in his power or talent. He didn't want to be the big man on campus, the one everyone talked about. He didn't care about himself. He wanted what was best for the people far from Jesus. He wanted them to know Jesus Christ. He wanted them to respond to the message of the cross and the power of the Spirit so that their faith would rest on God's power **(1 Corinthians 2:5)**.

so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.
(1 Corinthians 2:5, NIV)

There is a time and a place for apologetics, the defense of the gospel. There is a time for reason and discourse. But unlike Paul, we often never get around to sharing the gospel truth. Are we ashamed of what Jesus did for us, or have we forgotten what Paul says in **Romans 1:16**?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.
(Romans 1:16, NIV)

Today's verse calls us to something else, too. If we want those in our lives who are far from Jesus to know "...Jesus Christ and him crucified," then we will not only take every opportunity to speak the gospel, but we will live

our lives in such a way that when we speak it, the gospel of Jesus Christ will not be compromised or questioned because of our actions or words. How many of us have lost opportunities with people because our actions did not match our words? How many of us have let our sin take center stage instead of holiness?

There is one final thing our verse reminds us of. We can say and do the right things, but the Holy Spirit's power must deliver the results. Perhaps we put too much pressure on ourselves for the results. Maybe the pressure we apply to ourselves should be placed on what we say and how we live and act so that the Spirit has something to work with when we share the gospel.

What would it look like if those in the Church, the Body of Christ, lived in such a way that we wanted for our people what Paul wanted for the people of Corinth? Would we see more fruit in our lives? Would we live differently? Would we trust God more? The answer is obvious.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, today, let me live my life in words and actions consistent with the holiness You have called me to. Let me not be ashamed of the gospel. Let me speak it to someone who needs You. Then, let the power of the Holy Spirit do His work to bring someone to Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The most important thing we can want for someone far from Jesus is that they will come to know Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

We looked at 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 yesterday, but there is another lesson to learn from this passage.

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:1, NIV)

For some say, "His letters are weighty and forceful, but in person he is unimpressive and his speaking amounts to nothing."
(2 Corinthians 10:10, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

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.

COMMENTARY

You may remember from Chapter 1 that Paul was appealing to the believers at Corinth to live in unity and not have any divisions among them. This group of believers had chosen their favorite teachers. Some preferred Apollos, others enjoyed listening to Cephas (Peter), and some followed Paul. This might provide the background for **1 Corinthians 2:1**. •

It could be that some of the people chose who they would follow based on how they spoke the gospel. This does not mean that Paul is chastising these teachers for how they spoke. He is simply saying that he decided not to use lofty speech or wisdom so they would experience a gospel presented by the power of God. In 2 Corinthians, we can see evidence that he achieved his objective **(2 Corinthians 10:10)**. •

If you know anything about Paul, you know he could form persuasive arguments, go deep into theology, and defend the faith through ironclad apologetics. When Paul says he did not use lofty speech or wisdom, he is not saying that he didn't know what he was talking about, couldn't put a sentence together, or in some way dumbed down the gospel. He is saying, "I presented the gospel in a way that the Spirit of God drove the results."

There's a lesson for us here. There are many different people with various styles of preaching and teaching. We all have our favorites for several reasons. But, as my mother used to say, "The proof is in the pudding." In other words, you don't know if the pudding is good until you taste it. The same is true of those preaching and teaching the Word of God. Many things are said that sound convincing. Words are often spoken with great passion, influence, and illustrations that give us goosebumps, but does it stand the test of Scripture? After it is scrutinized, will it be true? When applied in our lives, does the Holy Spirit's power produce fruit through its application?

Perhaps there is a more significant lesson here. Do we love others enough to let Jesus be the center of attention, not us? Are we willing to speak the truth of Scripture to others and leave the results to Him? Can we talk about the gospel with clarity, accuracy, and completely without trying to

be the one persuading someone to come to Jesus? We must ask someone if they will commit their life to Jesus, but we also need to let the power of the Holy Spirit work to draw them and to bring them to Him. For when we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work, a person's faith rests not on human wisdom or persuasion but on the powerful work of God **(1 Corinthians 2:5)**. •

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.
(1 Corinthians 2:5, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, today, allow me to share Jesus' story. Let me trust that as I share the Gospel, You will cause Your Holy Spirit to do His work in bringing someone to Jesus. And if, for some reason, they do not follow You, let me trust You for the results. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Be prepared and willing to share the gospel and give the invitation to come to Christ. Then, let the Holy Spirit do His work. When you do, the person led to Christ will base their faith not on your relationship with them but on the power of God to save them.

The things of God are more significant than anything we can see, hear, or imagine—prepared for those who love Him.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-10

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.

COMMENTARY

How good is God? I'm so glad you asked! I can't wait to tell you.

Paul has spent significant time telling the believers at Corinth that earthly wisdom will only take you down the path so far. No matter how sincere you are, you can't get to God by your own effort. You can try to reason God into your life. You can try to earn His favor by doing good. You can look for signs and miracles to prove His existence. But ultimately, if God doesn't move toward you, everything becomes a hopeless exercise in futility. The good news is that God *has* made a move toward you. That's really what today's important verse is about.

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:6, NIV)

In **1 Corinthians 2:6** •, Paul reminds us once again that the wisdom of this age and the wisdom of its rulers are doomed to pass away. Let's dig deeper into this thought and see if we can mine some gold.

When Paul says, "the wisdom of this age," you can think of it as the wisdom of this sinful world. It is all around us. The wisdom of this world tells us that the answers to all man's problems are found in government. Or it screams that I could escape my discontent if I had more resources or money. The world's wisdom tells us that there is always something more that will make us happy: clothes, medicine, entertainment, books, pornography, drugs—the list goes on and on. It gets worse. We are told that if we follow this leader, listen to this expert, become like this social media influencer, and copy this person's fashion, we will find what we are looking for. However, all this worldly wisdom is "doomed to pass away." But what God offers doesn't pass away. The things of God are eternal. There are not only excellent benefits while we traverse the earth but also perfect and holy benefits that follow us to heaven.

According to Paul, if the rulers of this age understood this, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory—but they did. Looking at Jesus from an earthly perspective doesn't give us the whole picture. From a worldly perspective, from man's wisdom, we only see a man, not God, in the flesh.

We see only a person dying on a cross, not a sinless sacrifice shedding His blood for our sins. We know the resurrection only as a fable, a lie that was propagated for selfish purposes. Mmm...just like the worldly leaders in Jesus' day.

The thing God gave us, the move He made towards us, was the gift of His Son, Jesus Christ, the Lord of Glory. No matter how well you can see, hear, or imagine from an earthly perspective, you can never comprehend how good God is and how He has provided for you. So, how do we know, if we can't understand this through earthly wisdom? Let's talk about that tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who forgave my sins and gave me the hope of spending eternity with You. Lord, let me never take for granted this great and powerful gift. Continue to help me become more like Jesus as I look forward to eternity with Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Jesus Christ is a gift so great that only God could give it.

Today, we will look at the importance of the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:10-13

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.

COMMENTARY

The focus of our time today and tomorrow will be the work of the Spirit of God. As we start, we see the Spirit, the Holy Spirit, searches "everything." This makes sense. We understand that our God is three in one. We use the term Trinity to describe this. There is one God in three persons. The Father is not the Son, the Son is not the Spirit, and the Spirit is not the Son or the Father. Yet, the Father is God, The Son is God, and the Spirit is God. Think of a pretzel. There are three distinct holes, each consisting of the same dough. The dough surrounding each hole in the pretzel is exactly like the dough around every other hole. If you take away the dough surrounding any one hole, you don't have a pretzel. (Like other examples, this doesn't fully explain the Trinity, but it will give us a working knowledge of the Triune God.) So, since the Spirit is God, and God is everywhere, He searches everything, and since the Spirit is God, He knows the depth of God's thoughts.

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV)

This is the basis for all that follows in the remainder of 1 Corinthians Chapter 2. We need the Spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, for many reasons. One of those reasons is to hear from and follow God **(1 Corinthians 2:12)**.

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:
(1 Corinthians 1:2, NIV)

Notice that this passage says, "Now we have received…." Who is "we?" Let's go back to the beginning of this letter **(1 Corinthians 1:2)**.

Those who have received the Spirit of God have called upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. That's the believers at Corinth, and that is you and me. If you are a follower of Jesus, you have the Spirit of God within you. Since the Spirit of God is in you, you can understand the things freely given to you by God. The Greek word for understand (eido) means to know, get knowledge of, understand, or perceive.

Upon accepting Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, the Holy Spirit was placed inside of you. You can trust Him, know Him, and follow Him. Unfortunately, we, like the believers at Corinth, tend to lean on worldly wisdom instead of the wisdom of God that is revealed to us through His Word, interpreted by the Holy Spirit into our hearts and minds. We'll look more at this tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the gift of the Holy Spirit. Help me learn to listen closely to Him so I can know You better, follow You more closely, and become more like Jesus. Lord, I want to be a student of the Word of God so the Spirit can impart to me Your wisdom. And in those times when the Spirit is warning me of sin, protecting me from the enemy of the cross, and comforting me, Thank You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

As a follower of Jesus, you have the Holy Spirit inside you. He imparts God's wisdom to you as you read the Word of God and obey His leading.

Yesterday, we examined the importance of the Holy Spirit's work in our lives. Today, we will explore one of the benefits of the Spirit's presence in our lives.

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
(1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV)

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:14, NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!
(2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV)

So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.
(Galatians 5:16, NIV)

These are the people who divide you, who follow mere natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.
(Jude 19, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 2:14-16

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.

COMMENTARY

What is the difference between the spiritual and natural person? Depending on who you ask, you can get many answers. Since we believe the Bible has the final say in everything, let's figure out what it says.

First, the spiritual person is a person who has received... **(1 Corinthians 2:12)** •

These words describe the natural person **(1 Corinthians 2:14)**. •

But aren't we all natural people? Yes and no. Of course, we are all human. We are natural in that sense, but read what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in **2 Corinthians 5:17**. •

So, we are all natural people because we are human beings. And even Christians can revert to thinking and acting naturally. This is why Paul has to remind us to...**(Galatians 5:16)** •

For our purposes, the natural person is the person who does not have the Spirit of God inside of them. They are not believers in Jesus. We can see this more clearly when we look at the meaning of the Greek word used for natural, psychikos. Psychikos means governed by the sensual nature. We get a clearer picture of what Paul means by looking at how Jude used the word when he wrote his letter **(Jude 19)**. •

Verse 14 points out that there are people who are devoid of the Spirit. These people have not accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and cannot understand spiritual things because they don't have the Spirit. Remember, this takes a lot of pressure off of us.

We are called to share the gospel with those who don't know Jesus. We need to live in a way that does not strip the message of Jesus' cross of its power. What we say and do should be closely aligned with how Jesus spoke and lived, so that people will get a clear presentation of the gospel and have a great example of the changes that the Holy Spirit can make because of His presence. Spiritual things are spiritually discerned. The Holy Spirit must do His work, and the person must respond to the Spirit's calling if they will become a believer in Jesus. We should not stifle our

passion for the lost. We should never tire of praying for them and sharing the good news of Jesus, but we are not the Holy Spirit. We cannot make someone understand. We cannot cause them to move toward God. That's the Spirit's work.

There is one more thing we should address as we close out this week: What does it mean that we have "the mind of Christ?" (2:16)
The answer to that question is found in verses 10 & 12 of Chapter 2. First, read what verse 10 tells us **(1 Corinthians 2:10b)**. •

Then, verse 12 reminds us that we have received the Spirit who is from God **(1 Corinthians 2:12).** • Followers of Jesus have the mind of Christ in that they have the Holy Spirit inside of them. The Holy Spirit searches everything. He searches our thoughts, motives, and actions. He confirms, convicts, and empowers, and the Spirit connects us directly to God! God can, through the Holy Spirit, consistent with His Word, speak clearly to lead, guide, and direct us. We have the mind of Christ in the sense that we have the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit searches the depths of God.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
(1 Corinthians 2:10b, NIV)

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
(1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the presence of the Holy Spirit in my life. I am grateful that He connects me to You. He searches my heart, convicts me of sin, and empowers me to live for You. Let me be faithful in following Him, trusting Him, and sharing the gospel by His power. Lord, help me remember that Your work through the Spirit makes the difference. Draw people to Yourself and use me to convey the message of the cross. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

You have the Holy Spirit in you. The Holy Spirit searches all things and connects you with God.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 2 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Paul wanted the believers at Corinth to have faith that would "...not rest on the wisdom of men but in the power of God." Are there areas of your life where you tend to rest in the wisdom of men instead of trusting God to take care of you through His power? What will it take for you to start trusting God?

2. We are told that, as believers in Jesus, 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." Why is this important to remember as you spend time reading the Word of God and trying to draw close to Him?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 2:14. How does this help take the pressure off of you when you have someone in your life who needs Jesus, and you can't seem to get through? How does it help you to pray effectively for them?

4.) What impacted you the most in this week's lessons? What adjustments will you make because of your time with the Lord?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

BUILD EVERYTHING UPON THE FOUNDATION OF JESUS CHRIST.

[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.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-11

1 CORINTHIANS 3

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

As we start Week 3 of our study of 1 Corinthians, you should strap in. The waters might get a little choppy!

...to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people...
(1 Corinthians 1:2, NIV)

...gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it.
(1 Corinthians 3:2a, NIV)

Indeed, you are still not ready.
(1 Corinthians 3:2b, NIV)

37 Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' 38 This is the first and greatest commandment. 39 And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' 40 All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments.
(Matthew 22:37-40, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3

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. 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?

COMMENTARY

Imagine for a moment that you have a newborn baby. What would your expectations be for this child? Wouldn't you expect very little from them? Wouldn't you understand that you, the father and mother, had to meet all of their needs? Of course, you would. Now, in your mind, fast forward 2-3 years, and your child is only drinking milk. They are not yet eating solid food. What would you say? Wouldn't you say, "Something is wrong!" Of course, you would. Why? Because babies are supposed to change as they grow. Where once they could drink only milk, as they grow, they should be able to chew, swallow, and digest. If they can't, you not only worry about them, but you take action and encourage them to grow.

Paul founded the church in Corinth in A.D. 50. Three to five years later, Paul heard that the church was divided. This division is a sign that the church is not growing spiritually. This is the background for our study. After 3-5 years of being in Christ, Paul knew that spiritual growth was expected. Since there has been little to no growth, Paul writes to the church to promote them to maturity.

It is important to note that the discussion Paul is having with them is about something other than whether they are saved. Paul wrote the letter addressed to... **(1 Corinthians 1:2)** •

You are saved if you are sanctified (separated unto God, purified from within). The point Paul is making is that spiritual growth is expected for those who are sanctified. However, these believers need to grow. Something is wrong. Paul uses the baby child analogy we started today's lesson with. For the 18 months that Paul was in Corinth, he...
(1 Corinthians 3:2a) •

And now, 3-5 years later, Paul says, **(1 Corinthians 3:2b)**. •

We don't want to miss the lesson here. When you accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life, this is a great day. But if you are 3-5 years down the road and your life does not look any different than when you first accepted Christ, you have some evaluating to do. You have some changes to make. There is a connection between faithfulness and maturity that cannot be overlooked. You mature in Christ by being faithful to the Word of God. Now, you might say, "That's a lot of words. Where should I begin?"

The answer is easier to find than you might think **(Matthew 22:37-40)**.

Start there. Read the Word of God and apply it to your life so that you actively love God and love others. You will, without a doubt, start maturing in your faith.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I know that there is never a moment that we arrive at maturity when it comes to our faith in You. You are like the depths of the ocean. When it comes to knowing and growing in You, the more we learn, the more we realize there is to learn. But Lord, empower me through Your Spirit to be faithful. Remind me of my responsibility to walk where You lead and to act like Jesus in every area of my life. Help me grow up in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Spiritual growth is expected from the believer in Jesus. There is a connection between faithfulness and maturity.

Today, we will explore how God uses people to move you deeper in the Lord.

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.

COMMENTARY

In Chapter 2 of 1 Corinthians, Paul reminded the believers in Corinth that they have been given the Spirit of God so that they can understand the things of God (2:12). He also explained that spiritual things are understood through the Spirit (2:14). And as we learned yesterday, three to five years from their coming to Christ, they have not matured spiritually as they should. The example Paul gives to show they are immature is jealousy and strife caused by the fact that they have chosen to follow men instead of God **(1 Corinthians 3:4)**. ●

For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere human beings?
(1 Corinthians 3:4, NIV)

When studying the Bible, it is good to read the passage of Scripture in different versions to capture the essence of the passage. If you do that with this verse, you will find things like, "...are you not ordinary people?" (NASB), "...are you not carnal?" (NKJV), "...are you not acting like people of the world?" (NLT). The point that is being made is that Christians, although human beings, can live differently than their non-believing counterparts because of the presence of the Holy Spirit in their lives.

Paul doesn't demean or minimize his and Apollos' contribution to the Body of Christ. He puts things in perspective. If you read verse 5 closely, you will notice that he doesn't say, "Who then is Apollos? Who then is Paul?" No, he asks, "What then is Apollos? What is Paul?" In other words, "What is Apollos' and Paul's purpose in your Christian walk with the Lord?" Then Paul jumps into an agricultural analogy. He likens himself to the one who plants and Apollos to the person who waters.

...explained to him the way of God more adequately.
(Acts 18:26b, NIV)

Paul started the church in Corinth. He brought them the gospel. Apollos met with Priscilla and Aquila in Ephesus, where they were... **(Acts 18:26b)** ●

Then, he went to Corinth and replaced Paul. Paul tells the believers in Corinth, "Look! God used me to bring the gospel to you, and Apollos has been there watering what I planted. But he and I are instruments used by God. Only God can give growth to what is planted and watered.

What about you? Where are you placing your allegiance? God has given pastors and teachers to the Body of Christ to... **(Ephesians 4:12-15)**

So, having pastors and teachers to help you is good. You may say things like, "I get so much out of their sermons." Or "There's something about how they communicate that helps me understand." But if that is your understanding of why you are growing spiritually, you have missed the point. God must be, and is, involved in every aspect of your growth. The Spirit of God was given to you so that you can understand, and the Spirit of God interprets spiritual things to you, a spiritual person alive in Christ. The Spirit was given to you by God so that He can change you from the inside out.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

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.

(Ephesians 4:12-15, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, let me never put any man in Your place. Let me always remember that You are the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End. It is You who began a good work in me and You will see it to completion. Thank You for Your faithfulness to me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Pastors and teachers are God's blessing to the church to help you mature in Christ. But God, through the Holy Spirit, interprets spiritual truth to you through the Word of God and causes you to grow.

Today, we will examine what it means to be God's field.

1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9

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.*

COMMENTARY

A farmer went out to sow his seed...
(Matthew 13:3b, NIV)

Paul has spent a significant amount of time on an agricultural analogy. He talks about sowing, watering, and harvesting. He doesn't use those exact words. He says planted, watered, and growth. However, it is interesting that Jesus used an agricultural analogy in Matthew 13:1-23 and we can lay this example alongside the 1 Corinthian passage. Read how Jesus starts off the parable **(Matthew 13:3b).** ●

We find out later in this passage that the seed being sown was the Word of God. The seed, we are told, lands in four different types of soil. The soil represents the hearts of men. Satan comes and snatches away what was sown on the rocky path. These are men and women who refuse to believe. The second heart in the parable is represented by rocky ground. These people hear the Word of God and immediately receive it with joy. But there are no deep roots in this person's heart, and when things get tough, they fall away. In the third soil, seeds are sown among the thorns. The thorns are the cares of this life and the deceitfulness of wealth. The Word is choked out, and there is no fruit. Finally, some seeds are sown in good soil. These people hear and understand the Word of God and bear fruit in varying degrees. Some bear fruit at hundredfold, some at sixtyfold, and some at thirtyfold. Read Paul's statement **(1 Corinthians 3:9)**. ●

For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.
(1 Corinthians 3:9, NIV)

Today, we want to ask ourselves, "What kind of soil do I have in my field?" When you examine your heart, what do you see? Are you a person who refuses to believe? Have you heard the gospel's message and received it joyfully, but you find yourself without any real spiritual roots? Are you happy with the Lord when things go well with you but fall away when times of hardship come on you when you try to share your faith? Are you someone who hears the Word of God but keeps getting derailed by the cares of the world, or are you being deceived by the world's wealth? There is good news if you find your heart residing in one of these three soils. God is calling. He hasn't given up on you, but you have to respond to His calling. You have to do things God's way. He will not bless your way if your heart's field is one of these three soils. What do you do?

There is an Old Testament passage where Hosea, a prophet of God, tells the people of Israel what to do when the soil of their hearts is hard in **Hosea 10:12**.

The answer you are looking for is to repent. To turn around and pursue the Lord, His way, not your way. When you do, you will find that you will begin producing fruit. The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, gentleness, faithfulness, and self-control. You will see the fruit of obedience overtake your life because it is driven out of love, and you will see fruit for the Kingdom of God— People coming to a saving faith because of your faithfulness.

You are God's field.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Sow righteousness for yourselves, reap the fruit of unfailing love, and break up your unplowed ground; for it is time to seek the Lord, until he comes and showers his righteousness on you.
(Hosea 10:12, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want my heart to cause my life to produce good fruit for You. I never want to find myself not believing the things of God, running away when things get difficult, or being distracted by the care of this world or the deceitfulness of wealth. Forgive me, lead me, guide me, and restore me to a close and fruitful relationship with You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God longs to have a relationship with you. He is still calling. If you have found yourself resistant to the things of God, you can break up your unplowed ground and return to the Lord.

If you build something substantial, you better start with a good foundation.

TODAY'S READING

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.

COMMENTARY

By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it.
(1 Corinthians 3:10a, NIV)

But each one should build with care.
(1 Corinthians 3:10b, NIV)

...all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ
(1 Corinthians 1:2b, NIV)

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 3:11, NIV)

In the immediate context of today's reading, Paul is comparing himself and Apollos as builders **(1 Corinthians 3:10a)**. • The Greek word for skilled is sophos, which can also mean wise. Paul is saying he is a skilled and wise master builder. It is also clear that Paul was a foundation builder. The image here is that he came into Corinth, started the church, meticulously laid a proper foundation, and now, someone else is building on his foundation. Since Apollos replaced Paul in Corinth, this is most likely who he is referring to. Then, Paul makes this statement. It is a statement that we must give some attention to **(1 Corinthians 3:10b)**. •

If we are going to interpret this passage correctly, we must first figure out what the context is. Paul has just finished talking about how he planted and Apollos watered. Earlier in the first chapter, Paul mentions division in the church because people are picking their favorite teachers. Those teachers were Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (Peter). So, the immediate context is that Paul laid the foundation, and other teachers are building on that foundation. Now that we have considered the immediate context, let's reason this out a little deeper. In Chapter 1, verse 2, we find that Paul wrote this letter to those in Corinth, sanctified and called to be saints. But he didn't stop there. He also said the letter was to... **(1 Corinthians 1:2b)**. • Have you called upon the Lord Jesus Christ? Is He your Lord as He was the believers at Corinth? I trust the answer is yes. If this is the case, then when we consider how to apply the warning "Let each one take care how he is building upon it.", we must admit that this can apply to any pastor, teacher, preacher, or evangelist who instructs us in the Word of God. More than that, isn't it true that it can also mean us as individuals? Of course, it can. It doesn't matter who is doing the building. The builders must be careful as they build. Before we build the building, we must have a solid foundation. Read what Paul tells us in **1 Corinthians 3:11**. • Did you catch that? No one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid. In other words, other things are not a foundation. There is only one foundation, and that is Jesus

Christ. Jesus pointed this out Himself toward the end of the Sermon on the Mount. He said that if you hear His words and do them, you are like a wise man who built his house on the rock. When the rain fell and the flood came, the house did not fall because it had been founded on the rock. The Greek word used for founded means foundation. The house didn't fall because its foundation was solid. That foundation was hearing the Words of God and doing them **(Matthew 7:24-27)**. • When we read in 1 Corinthians that Jesus Christ is the foundation, we don't just mean we are saved through Jesus. Of course, this is true. But the foundation is the doctrine of Christ—all His teachings, not just a select few verses. Of course, if you are going to have a solid foundation, you start by accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life and being baptized into Him. Then, for the rest of your life, you become a reader and student of the Word of God, applying it to your life. When we hear and apply the Word of God, our foundation is strong because we trust in Jesus and His wisdom, not the earthly wisdom that the world provides.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *24 "Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. 25 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. 27 The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash."*
> **(Matthew 7:24-27, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want my life to be built solidly on You. As I read and study the Word of God, open my eyes to see and my ears to hear, and empower me with Your Spirit to live faithfully. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

There is only one foundation, and that is Jesus Christ. We should order our lives around His teachings and be students of the Word of God.

When we build our life on the foundation of Jesus, all things are given to us for our good.

Do not deceive yourselves.
(1 Corinthians 3:18, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-23

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.

COMMENTARY

Today's scripture reading starts with a warning we need to heed **(1 Corinthians 3:18)**.

It is one thing to be deceived by someone else. It is another thing when we deceive ourselves. The Scriptures give us several warnings about self-deception.

- You deceive yourself if you think you are something when you are nothing and believe you can reap without sowing. (Galatians 6:3)
- You deceive yourself if you think sinners can get to heaven without being washed, sanctified, and justified in Christ by the Spirit of God. (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)
- If you believe you have no sin, you are self-deceived. (1 John 1:8)
- You deceive yourself if you think bad company does not corrupt good character. (1 Corinthians 15:33)
- If you only hear the Word of God and don't obey it, you deceive yourself. (James 1:22)

And here, in 1 Corinthians 3:18, you are self-deceived if you think you are wise based on the wisdom of the world instead of the wisdom of God. Specifically, Paul is telling the believers in the church not to act like the world. The world elevates entertainers, sports figures, the rich, the benevolent, and yes, even pastors to a position on a pedestal they don't deserve and can't live up to. Instead, Paul reminds the believers that everything, including pastors and teachers, is given to them for their good in the Lord. It is worth exploring the list to see how good God is.
Believers have been given the world. It was created perfectly for us at creation and will be renewed by God for us to live in for eternity, but there are benefits in the world now. Some parts of the world still retain evidence of God's handiwork—the sunrise, sunset, the moon, the stars, trees, mountains, and valleys. The animals, flowers, and ocean creatures remind us of the glory and majesty of the One who loves us.

Life and death may seem like odd additions to God's list of gifts. But when we accept Jesus as Lord and Savior, we immediately receive eternal life. Death is not the final event in our lives but a prelude to the realization of eternity.

The present and the future are both gifts from God for our good. Your circumstances right now may make you want to question God's goodness, but running to Him in prayer, absorbing and applying His word to your life, and experiencing God's provision when you thought there was no hope is a great gift from Him. When you think about your future in Christ, you have to smile. Your eternity is boundless in time and His presence. Your future is full of hope, blessing, praise, and glory, and the reason for all this is because we are Christ's, and Christ is God's. All of these great blessings belong only to the believer. For the non-believer, they are only reminders of what had been or what could be. For the believer, they are also reminders of our mission. We want the whole world to know that Jesus died for them, and these blessings can be theirs. If non-believers look at and ponder them, there is evidence all around them of a God who loves them and longs to be in a relationship with them.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the pastors, teachers, and leaders who represent You well and help me grow and mature in You. They are a real blessing in my life. But Lord, let me never elevate any of these people in my life to a position reserved for You that can only result in hurt and pain for me when these leaders fail to represent You well. In Jesus' Name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Don't elevate men or things to a position that only God deserves.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 3 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Reflecting on your spiritual journey, would you say you drink milk or eat meat? Are there areas of your spiritual life that you resist growing up in? Why must you make decisions that keep you growing in the Lord? Take a few minutes and pray, asking God to reveal areas you need to make a plan to improve. Then, ask for His wisdom in deciding what to do.

2. How solid is your foundation? Is your foundation a proper foundation, laid solely in Jesus Christ? If yes, why do you believe this to be true? If not, what is keeping you from coming to the Lord? Who can you meet with to help you overcome the barrier in your life that keeps you away from God?

3. If someone in the church watches your actions or hears you speak, would they say you desire unity? Why or why not?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

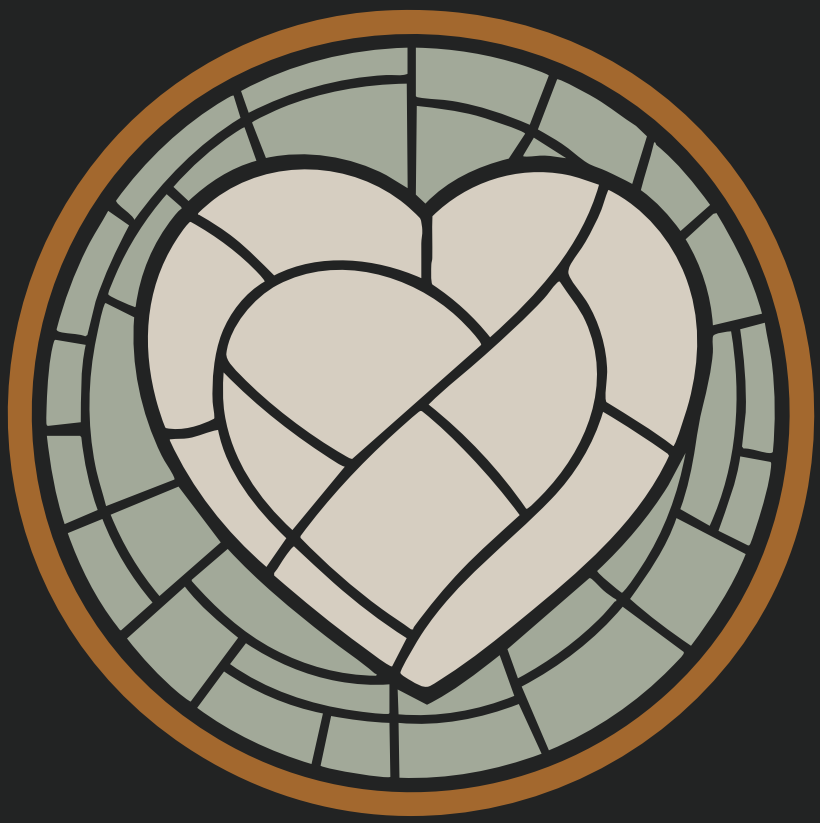
KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

HE WILL REVEAL WHAT IS HIDDEN IN DARKNESS, AND EXPOSE THE MOTIVES OF THE HEART.

[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.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:5



1 CORINTHIANS 4

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

Are you a faithful steward?

...all are yours, ***23*** *and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.*
(1 Corinthians 3:22b-23, NIV)

Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.
(1 Corinthians 4:2, NIV)

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.*
(1 Corinthians 4:1-2, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-2

[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.

COMMENTARY

Paul has been discussing division in the church, which is based on choosing which leader to follow. Read how he concluded chapter 3 **(1 Corinthians 3:22b-23)**. •

At the beginning of Chapter 4, he says that these leaders should all be regarded as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In other words, leaders were given to the church for the good of all. They should be viewed as servants of Christ, not men on a pedestal. And leaders given to the church are responsible for stewarding the truth of God's word. While leaders are not perfect, they should be found to faithfully hold to the truth of God's Word in their ministry **(1 Corinthians 4:2)**. •

So, how can we apply this scripture personally? Let me tell you a story to answer this question. As I sit in my office and look across the street, I see a nursing home. God gave me a heart for the elderly, especially those in nursing homes who have no one to visit them. Once a week, I drop by the home and visit three or four people. I've seen God do amazing things in my life because of this. Don't misunderstand. I hope God is doing something in the lives of those I visit, but I know He has done something in my life because of my time with them. They bring value to my life.

When one of the administrators heard that I was a pastor, she asked if I would consider holding a service or a Bible study there each week. Then, she told me a story I will never forget.

Ann, a 97-year-old resident of the nursing home and a believer in Jesus, found out that there was no Sunday worship service or Bible study. She could have just settled in and gone about her business. Instead, she talked with some residents and started teaching a Bible study once a week. I would find out later that this led to her getting the residents together and hosting a makeshift worship service with her playing the piano. Now remember, she is 97 years old! In Chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians, Paul pens these words **(1 Corinthians 4:1-2)**. •

Would you regard Ann as I do? Would you consider her a servant of Christ? I do. At 97 years old, she will be found faithful when she sees the Lord, probably sometime in the next few years, but I see her faithful today. Can all this be said of me? Of you? Is your faith so real that you are looking for opportunities to be a servant of Christ? When others look at you, would they use the words, faithful steward, to describe your service to the Savior?

If I am honest, I am old enough now to fall into the trap of believing that my best years of service are behind me. But when I think of Ann, I realize that if God is willing, I have many more years ahead of me to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to live my life so that others will see that I am Your faithful servant. More than that, I want to live my life so that You will consider me faithful when I see You. Give me the courage and the vision to step into whatever ministry You have for me. And let me see Your faithfulness to me as I trust You to work through me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We should live so that people will see us as faithful servants of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Today, let's look at one of the ways the Holy Spirit helps us.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-6

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.

COMMENTARY

I had to take our dog to the veterinarian, a trip that should take about 10 minutes. We live in a rural community, and the veterinarian we use is in the country. And while the clinic is directly adjacent to a highway, it is not easy to get there because of road construction. We used to drive down the highway, turn into the median crossover road, head back down the highway, and take an immediate right into the parking lot. All that has changed. The crossover through the median is closed.

I knew the drive would be about 6-8 minutes longer, and since I didn't know exactly which road to take through the country to end up on the highway, I left plenty early. Of course, not knowing the road didn't cause me to use my GPS. After all, I'm a man with a good sense of direction and who needs the silly thing anyway. Three wrong turns later and time running on the clock, I put the veterinarian clinic location in the GPS. It turned out I was still a mile and a half from the road I needed. My appointment was at 11:30 a.m., and I walked through the door at 11:29 a.m. But I should explain how this ties in with our scripture today.

Paul is not concerned about other people judging him because he knows that God is the ultimate judge, and he admits that he is unaware of anything against himself. As I traveled to the veterinarian, I wasn't concerned about what other people thought about me not using my GPS, and with every turn that I took, I felt I was right. As it turned out, I didn't know I was wrong. I needed something or someone to show me I was wrong. When I finally turned the GPS on, it took the information I didn't have, informed me of my mistakes, showed me where I was, and led me, turn by turn, to the destination. This is an example of what Paul is saying. He's not saying he doesn't look at his life and try to assess it. He is acknowledging the fact that his assessment is not always correct. Ultimately, it is the Lord who makes those decisions **(1 Corinthians 4:5b)**.

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart.
(1 Corinthians 4:5b, NIV)

This is what the Holy Spirit does in our lives. He is the one we must trust with the assessment of our actions and our motives. Why? Because, **Jeremiah 17:9** •, **Proverbs 14:12** •, and finally **1 Corinthians 2:12**. •

So, don't trust your own spiritual GPS; let the Holy Spirit do His revealing work. When He shows you sin, repent. When He leads, follow. And when He calls you, go.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
(Jeremiah 17:9, NIV)

There is a way that appears to be right, but in the end it leads to death.
(Proverbs 14:12, NIV)

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:12, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to see what You see in my life. I want to be more like Jesus. Let me not live in self-condemnation, and let me not excuse any sin in my life that prevents me from effectively showing Jesus' love to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The Holy Spirit is the one who can search your heart and motives and lead you to be more like Jesus. Trust Him.

It is easy to see sin in others and be judgmental. Let's see what we can learn from a revival that took place over 200 years ago.

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."
(1 Corinthians 4:6a, NIV)

18 I warn everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this scroll: If anyone adds anything to them, God will add to that person the plagues described in this scroll. 19 And if anyone takes words away from this scroll of prophecy, God will take away from that person any share in the tree of life and in the Holy City, which are described in this scroll.
(Revelation 22:18-19, NIV)

If anyone speaks, they should do so as one who speaks the very words of God.
(1 Peter 4:11a, NIV)

Anyone who runs ahead and does not continue in the teaching of Christ does not have God; whoever continues in the teaching has both the Father and the Son.
(2 John 9, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 4:1-7

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?

COMMENTARY

At the beginning of the 19th Century, the Restoration Movement began. It was a movement to unite all Christians using the New Testament, particularly the Book of Acts, as a model for the Church. One of the early leaders was a man named Thomas Campbell. In 1809, during an address he was giving, he said, "Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." These words would help solidify a movement that began at Cane Ridge, KY, in 1801. However, it is not that Thomas Campbell spoke these words that made the difference. The words were powerful because they reflected the truth of scripture.

Paul had just told the believers that the Lord is the judge and that He will expose the purposes of man's heart. Now, Paul gives some solid instructions—the exact instructions that Thomas Campbell would give centuries later **(1 Corinthians 4:6a)**. •

Paul would not be the only New Testament writer to allude to this truth. Read what Jesus says in the closing few words of the Bible **(Revelation 22:18-19)**. •

Peter alluded to it in **1 Peter 4:11a.** •

The apostle John agreed when he wrote **2 John 9**. •

And when Jesus chastised the Pharisees and scribes for not honoring their fathers and mothers **(Matthew 15:8-9)**. •

"Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent." This simple statement can still serve us well today. Spend time getting to know the Word of God. Treat it like a treasure. Store it up in your heart.

Speak it with your mouth, and in those times when you are tempted to judge others, remember it. Don't go past what the Word of God says.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *8 These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. 9 They worship me in vain; their teachings are merely human rules.*
>
> **(Matthew 15:8-9, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, as I read and study the Bible, Your word, plant its truth deep inside me. Etch it in the folds of my mind so that I remember it. Use it to move my hands, feet, and lips to serve You. And when I am tempted to judge others, let me remember that Jesus is the judge of all and that I am not. Let me stay firmly within the truth of Scripture and speak only where it speaks; where it is silent, let me remain silent. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

"Where the Bible speaks, we speak; where the Bible is silent, we are silent."

Look at the apostles' lives for an example of commitment to the Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 4:8-16

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.

COMMENTARY

As we look at verses 8-13 of I Corinthians 4, we see that Paul uses sarcasm to make his point. However, amid the sarcasm, we find a truth that hits home and an example to live up to.

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich!
(1 Corinthians 4:8a, NIV)

Evidently, some at Corinth were challenging Paul's authority. And seeing how he writes, they were challenging his authority as an Apostle. Paul was the one who started the church at Corinth. He was the pastor there for 18 months. He saw many come to Christ, and he may now be writing back to some who were a little full of themselves and boasting about their knowledge. Read what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 4:8a**. •

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.
(1 Corinthians 4:11-13, NIV)

Does this sound familiar? No? Take a minute and think about believers in the United States. Could these words be written about the Church here? Haven't many in the church stopped longing for the love of God? Are we constantly in pursuit of riches? Don't we have trouble loving our neighbors? Why can't people of different political parties get along? We don't want anything to do with people of other religions. We let them quietly go to hell while we remain distant and aloof. We shy away from the downcast, unfortunate people with different values and of other races. Yes, Paul may have written this to the Church today, but there is another story to tell from this passage.

Alongside the sarcasm is a model of commitment that we should strive to imitate. In verse 16, Paul says, "...be imitators of me." Of course, we don't need to sell everything we have. We don't have to give all our money away to live downcast and impoverished lives, unless God calls us to. However,

we do need to be willing to do whatever it takes to follow the Lord. There may come a time when hard decisions have to be made. God may require some great sacrifice from us for the Kingdom of God. He may move us outside of our comfort zone. A once comfortable life may become problem-filled. Resources may dwindle, and our health and safety may not be as it once was. If we, as believers in Jesus, want to be prepared to follow Him, that decision must be made daily. The Apostles did. Look past the sarcasm in this passage and read what the Apostles endured **(1 Corinthians 4:11-13)**.

I hope you and I can remember Jesus' words when things get difficult. I hope we cannot forget that we are called to lifelong self-sacrifice **(Matthew 16:24)**.

But as we remember and live out these words, let us also remember what Jesus said in **Matthew 11:29**.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
(Matthew 16:24, NIV)

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
(Matthew 11:29, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for all the blessings You have given me. I am thankful that I live in a country where I can worship You freely and live for You so easily. But Lord, I have brothers and sisters around the world who are being persecuted in Your name. Watch over them, their families, and all my brothers and sisters in Christ. Protect them and give them what they need. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We have been called to follow Jesus regardless of the circumstances of the lower story. Sometimes, those circumstances are difficult, and sometimes, they are easy. Regardless, Jesus is always with us.

Let's discuss the difference between imitating someone and following them.

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?

COMMENTARY

In our section of scripture today, Paul reminds the believers at Corinth that he became their spiritual father through them being won to Christ under his ministry. Then, he urges them to imitate him. However, we need to clearly understand what Paul tells them to do.

The Greek word used here is mimētēs, and it means to be an imitator or one who is like another. Paul is simply telling these believers that the things he does and has taught about following Christ should be remembered and imitated. It is like what a good father expects of a child. A good father knows that the child is watching and imitating (mimētēs) everything he says and does. This is what builds character in the child. We can see this is what Paul meant because he sent Timothy to remind them of his ways in Christ. He is not saying he is taking Christ's place and should be followed instead of Christ. No. To see the difference between what Paul means to imitate and what Jesus means to follow, you must look at **Matthew 16:24**. •

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
(Matthew 16:24, NIV)

First, Jesus says, "If anyone would come after me..." The Greek words used here indicate coming behind Him. You can think of the little child's game, follow the leader. Then He says that you must deny yourself if you want to come after Him. The Greek word used here is aparneomai, and, hang on to your hat, means to forget one's self, to lose sight of one's self and one's own interest. Finally, Jesus says that if you follow Him, you will take up (carry what has been given to bear) your cross, and to carry the cross means a commitment to death.

Jesus' call to follow Him is very different from Paul telling the church at Corinth to imitate his life. But there is more in this passage of scripture. When we look at verse 20, we see that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of power. Read what Paul writes in **1 Corinthians 4:20**. •

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.
(1 Corinthians 4:20, NIV)

This, of course, does not mean that we don't have to share the story of the Gospel with words. We do. It means that there is a power behind our words and actions that makes a difference, and that power is the power of the Holy Spirit. The power of God Himself. It is a power that was promised by Jesus Himself **(Acts 1:8)**.

I hope you have someone around you who you can imitate (mimētēs) how they live for the Lord, but don't idolize them. Learn their ways, but (aparneomai) follow Jesus with a commitment that lasts a lifetime and beyond.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*
>
> **(Acts 1:8, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for the people You have placed in my life who have demonstrated how to live and grow in Jesus. Let me learn the lessons I need to know. But I never desire to follow them instead of following You. Teach, guide, protect, and empower me to serve You with all my heart, mind, soul, and strength. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God blesses us with people we can watch and learn from, but Jesus is the only one we should follow. When we follow Jesus, the power of the Holy Spirit works in and through our lives to change us and to see others come to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 4 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. How should you regard the leaders of the local church and those who instruct you in the way of the Lord?

2. What does Paul mean when he says, "I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby aquitted. It is the Lord who judges me."?

3. When you read verses 11-13, what impact do they have on you? Why?

4. Concerning what you do to follow Christ, would you be comfortable telling others to imitate your ways? Why or why not? What changes do you need to make in your life?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

THE POWER OF OUR LORD JESUS IS PRESENT.

4 So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present...

1 CORINTHIANS 5:4

1 CORINTHIANS 5

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

For the next five days, we will study 1 Corinthians 5. Because it is such a short chapter, we will read it daily. This will help you grasp the content and structure of the chapter in a way that will benefit your understanding.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

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."

COMMENTARY

We don't want to read too quickly past the first segment of the first verse of Chapter 5. It is easy to want to get to the gory details of the sexual sin that Paul is speaking of. But if we miss the truth in the first part of the verse, we might miss Paul's overall point **(1 Corinthians 5:1)**. •

As you have seen in the letter, the Corinthian church has many problems, which will be seen more clearly throughout the rest of the book. Perhaps, if you were looking for a church in Corinth, this is not one that you would choose. Paul has spoken of disunity. He will talk about lawsuits among believers, marriage and divorce, idol worship, abuse of the Lord's supper, misuse of spiritual gifts, a lack of love, and even wrong beliefs about the resurrection of Christ. Yes, this church, in a lot of ways, was a mess.
The city of Corinth was steeped in sexual sin. There was a Greek word developed because of the degradation found there. The word korinthiazomai means "to live immorally like a Corinthian." So, it should probably be no surprise that sexual immorality infiltrated the church. After all, when someone comes to Christ, they are a new creation, but it takes time to learn God's ways, grow in Christ, and understand what it means to

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.
(1 Corinthians 5:1, NIV)

The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
(1 Corinthians 6:13b, NIV)

live a holy life. But these believers had been taught by Paul himself for 18 months, and it appears that Paul penned more than two letters to the Corinthians. The words, "It is actually reported..." indicate that the tolerance of sexual immorality in the church had risen to the point of it being noticed and talked about. It is an indication that the church, because of the sexual immorality, was seen as no different than the surrounding sexual immorality of the pagans in Corinth. Actually, it was worse. The type of sexual immorality that was being tolerated in the church would not be tolerated among the pagans, Paul tells them. The point we need to take away from this statement, "It is actually reported..." is that there shouldn't be reports of sexual immorality within the church because there should not be sexual immorality within the church.

No doubt today, like in the church at Corinth, there are those trying to find answers, and those who haven't accepted Christ, who attend our churches, and many of them have sexual sin in their lives. This should be expected. However, for the believer in Jesus Christ, sexual immorality should never be the accepted norm within the church. We have been called to holiness.
We will examine this again later when we get to Chapter 6. For now, let's solidify Paul's point by quoting two verses: **1 Corinthians 6:13** • and **1 Corinthians 6:18a**. •

It must also be acknowledged that it should be the desire of a faithful follower of Jesus to be held accountable for how they live for the Lord. Why wouldn't we want someone to watch over us and help us if it is done in love and for our good? No doubt, there is an expectation of preserving the integrity of the local church and her witness for Christ brought forth in this passage of scripture. This, we will leave for a time when a deeper discussion can occur. So, for now, suffice it to say this is why God put such a stringent standard on elders in the church.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Flee from sexual immorality.
(1 Corinthians 6:18a, NIV)

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful that when we confess our sins, You are faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness. But Lord, I want to lean on the power of the Holy Spirit to transform me so that I live a life of holiness. A life in which others can clearly see Jesus. And a life as far from sin as I can live. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The believer in Jesus Christ has been called to a life of holy living, a life that, when watched by others, shows the transforming work of the cross of Christ.

Having a proper attitude towards sin.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

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."

COMMENTARY

Paul is giving direction to the believers at Corinth regarding a horrible sexual sin that is taking place in their midst. Most scholars agree that the sin is a son who is having sexual relations with his step-mother. Verse 1 ends with, "...for a man is sleeping with his father's wife." Paul didn't use the word mother. No doubt, this sin was horrible. But, perhaps you noticed as you re-read this chapter today that Paul instructs what to do with the man in only two verses: verse 2 and verse 13. In the rest of the chapter, he either gives instructions on how to handle the matter or why handling the matter is so important. Today, we want to focus on a proper attitude toward sin. As a body of believers, these people had not only allowed a fellow believer to continue in sin without confrontation; they were arrogant and boastful about it. For whatever reason, they had a flippant attitude toward not just sexual sin but a sexual sin that even the pagans would have done something about. Many who read this passage of scripture focus on the severity of discipline. But that is not the only point. Yes, the discipline in this case is severe, but it is severe for the purpose of correcting and restoring **(1 Corinthians 5:5)**. •

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.
(1 Corinthians 5:5, NIV)

Unfortunately, today, many people want to see sin dealt with in the church, not with an attitude of correction and restoration, but with an attitude of wanting a pound of flesh and seeing someone else get what they deserve. On the other hand, there are those in the church who believe that as fallible human beings, each with our sins, we should never point out sin in the lives of others. After all, who are we to judge someone else? Both extremes have no place in a healthy church of the Lord Jesus.

Before we spend a few days looking at how the church should deal with sin, let's ask a more personal question. What attitude do you have toward sin when it happens in your life? Does the presence of sin cause you to mourn? Do you see it as the thing that cost Jesus His life? Do you realize that without the grace of God, sin, no matter what it is, would separate you from Jesus for eternity? Are you grateful for the cross of Christ? Do you take advantage of confessing sin to God and man **(1 John 1:9 • , James 5:16 •)**?

Or does your attitude toward sin mirror the Corinthians? Do you ignore it, laugh about it, excuse it away? Are you arrogant and boastful about the sins that you commit? Colin Smith, a pastor, wrote an article titled "Six Ways to Mourn Over Your Sins." We won't have room for the whole article, but I think the six points are worth noting.

1. Spiritual mourning names particular sins.
2. Spiritual mourning involves heartfelt sorrow.
3. Spiritual mourning arises from humility.
4. Spiritual mourning is infused with hope.
5. Spiritual mourning happens at the cross.
6. Spiritual mourning will lead you to forsake sins.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
(1 John 1:9, NIV)

Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
(James 5:16, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am thankful for Your mercy, grace, and forgiveness of my sin. I'm grateful that I don't have to fear sin and that You have made a way for me to always remain in relationship with You. But Lord, I never want to take sin lightly. I don't want to minimize its destructive nature in my life. Give me a humble and hopeful mindset. Cause me to remember that sin is always destructive and that I can't live in sin and experience all You have for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Our attitude towards sin matters. It is not a laughing matter or one that does not have spiritual consequences.

The importance of killing sin.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

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."

COMMENTARY

Leaven in the Scriptures is used to illustrate both bad and good. More often than not, it is associated with sin. Paul has been discussing the church's tolerance of sexual sin and their arrogance and boasting about the sin. Now, Paul asks a question in **1 Corinthians 5:6b**. •

Don't you know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough?
(1 Corinthians 5:6b, NIV)

Although asked of the church in Corinth, this question has a personal application for us today. Do we believe that a sin can take root, grow, and mature to the point that it destroys our lives? The quick answer might be yes. But the follow-up questions are, "Do I live my life in a way that reflects this truth?" And, "What does it look like to live like I believe a sin is serious?" Let's take the question in reverse order. John Owen, a famous Puritan pastor and theologian, said two things we'd like to consider today. The first is, "Be killing your sin, or your sin will be killing you." The second is, "Trying to kill sin and behave morally through personal strength and efforts using personal tools and techniques is the foundation of all the false religions in the world." His point is based on **Romans 8:13**. •

For if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live.
(Romans 8:13, NIV)

John Owen argues that the killing of sin in our lives must be done through

the power and presence of the Holy Spirit. He does not suggest that we can pay for our sins or forgive our sins for salvation. This can only be done through faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. But he is suggesting that we play a role in combating sin in our lives. We must take sin and its consequences in our lives seriously. Read what James, the half-brother of Jesus, reminds us in **James 1:14-15**.

As you read this passage of scripture, think of the joy of pregnancy. Something wonderful, good and exciting. But then, instead of a healthy baby being born, the unthinkable happens. The baby is born without life. That's the horrible image James paints regarding the damage sin does in our lives. Paul, James, and John Owen make a point that every sin must be taken seriously. There is no innocuous sin. Each one has the seed of destruction in it. Like yeast, each can work its way through the dough of our lives.

So, how do you live your life so that it reflects the truth that you take sin seriously? You let the Holy Spirit have the lead. When He convicts you, you confess your sin, and show repentance by turning away from the sin and back to the Lord. You, with the Holy Spirit, engage in the battle. You set about, by the Holy Spirit, to put to death the misdeeds of the body.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed.*
> *15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*
> **(James 1:14-15, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the presence and the power of the Holy Spirit in my life. Give me the wisdom I need to know when He speaks, leads, and empowers me to live free from sin. And in those times where He convicts me of the presence of sin in my life, let me not delay! Let me return to You and abandon the course of my life that leads me into sin. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives empowers us to put to death the sin that shows up in our lives, not for salvation but for sanctification.

The importance of killing sin.

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

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.

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COMMENTARY

Yesterday, we discussed the what and how of fighting sin in our lives. We considered that we need the Holy Spirit to truly kill the sin that occasionally raises its ugly head and that we must prioritize killing sin. Today, we will examine why we take advantage of these things.

It's a little word, really, "for". But this little word can mean much more than it seems. In the context of Chapter 5, Paul admonishes the church at Corinth not to be arrogant or boastful of the sexual sin they are tolerating in their midst. It is a sexual sin that would make godless pagans cringe. A father's son is sleeping with his step-mother. Paul has also asked the question that we looked at yesterday, "Do you not know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch?" And although this was written for the church at Corinth yesterday, we personally applied this passage. Today, we will do the same.

Paul says to get the sexual sinner and sin out of their midst so they can be a "new batch" of dough. Then he adds, "...as you really are." But what does this mean? How can you have leaven (sin) in your midst as a church and in

your life as an individual and be unleavened? I think the answer is that Paul reminds the believers at Corinth to live up to who they are in Christ.

The presence of sin doesn't change the fact that, for the true believer, all their sins, past, present, and future, have been forgiven through their faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. What Paul is saying is, "Look! Start living in the lower story a life that matches the truth of the upper story." In other words, let your actions on earth match the truth of what Jesus did for you on the cross. If He has forgiven your sin, live in obedience to the call of Christ by forsaking sin in your lower story life. This is where the little word "for" takes on a significant meaning.

We are called to live holy lives because "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." This whole discussion about eradicating sin is based on the premise that Jesus Christ died for our sins. There was an understanding in the early church that obedience was the proper response to grace. Unfortunately, many have lost this view of the cross. Excusing sin has taken the place of speaking the truth in love. And for many, when I make that statement, we think about someone else's sin, but that is not where I want this devotional to go. Do you speak the truth in love to yourself regarding your sin? Do you listen to the quiet voice of the Spirit as He convicts you of sin that you have become so easily accustomed to excusing? No doubt, in the context of this passage of scripture, Paul was giving direction to the church. But it is not far-fetched for us to apply this scripture personally. After all, the church is not an organization or a building. The church is made up of individuals who have a saving faith in Jesus. If we, as individuals, hold ourselves to a high standard of holiness, the Church, collectively, will not have to deal with the things that had to be dealt with in Corinth.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Jesus's sacrifice on the cross for my sins is, beyond question, the greatest gift I have ever received. My prayer is that, through Your Holy Spirit, You will strengthen me, guide me, protect me, and teach me to walk in obedience, which will result in me living a holy life that clearly reflects Jesus to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Because Christ, the Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for your sins, obedience is the proper response. Holiness should be our pursuit.

Today, we will try to unravel a passage that is often misunderstood.

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.
(John 13:35, NIV)

The goal of this command is love, which comes from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith.
(1 Timothy 1:5, NIV)

13 And as for you, brothers and sisters, never tire of doing what is good. 14 Take special note of anyone who does not obey our instruction in this letter. Do not associate with them, in order that they may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard them as an enemy, but warn them as you would a fellow believer.
(2 Thessalonians 3:13-15, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-13

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."

COMMENTARY

Read what Jesus said in **John 13:35**. •

Let's ground our discussion in this verse before we dive into today's passage. I'm sure you have heard that a follower of Jesus should love God and love others. Based on the passage above, our love for one another causes people to know that we are disciples of Jesus. Any discussion about confrontation and potential separation must be grounded in this truth. So, when Paul says not to associate with a brother guilty of grievous sin, there must be a foundation of love behind any action we take. We can see this in some of Paul's other writings. After telling Timothy to charge certain people not to teach any different doctrine, read what Paul says **(1 Timothy 1:5)**. •

In 2 Thessalonians, 3:13-15, Paul has written about judgment at Christ's coming, the second coming, standing firm in the faith, being steadfast in Christ, and warning them against idleness. Then see what he writes **(2 Thessalonians 3:13-15)**. •

In these two passages, we find something that will help us with our Corinthian text. The Timothy passage speaks to our motive in helping a brother in sin. Do we have a "...pure heart and a good conscience, and a sincere faith?" We should check our motives before telling a brother or sister about their sin. Wanting a pound of flesh is never the right motive. Judgment belongs to the Lord. Wanting a brother or sister to grow in Christ, be like Jesus, and live faithfully for the Savior is a good reason to confront someone about sin.

There is a lot to digest in this passage of scripture, and it will take more space than we have here. However, this doesn't mean that we should minimize what is written. Maintaining holiness through love is the basis of understanding we should arrive at when thinking through this passage.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, let me be concerned about the sin in my life before I am concerned about the sin in someone else. And when I need to challenge a brother or sister in Christ regarding sin, let me do it when Your Spirit is with me, when I am doing it in love, with a pure heart, a good conscience, and sincere faith. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Check your motive before confronting a brother or sister in Christ regarding sin. Make sure you do it in love, with a pure heart, a good conscience, and a sincere faith.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 5 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Verse 7 concludes, "For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." Journal your thoughts about the verse. Include why and how it can shape how you speak, act, and worship.

2. Make a list of 50 people you interact with regularly. How many of them are non-believers? When was the last time you had a non-believer come to your home for fellowship?

3. Search for the word leaven, or yeast, in the New Testament. Then, read the associated passages. Journal what you learned.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

YOU WERE WASHED, SANCTIFIED, & JUSTIFIED IN THE NAME OF JESUS.

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.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:11

1 CORINTHIANS 6

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

For the next five days, we will study 1 Corinthians 6. As we start, you may look at a passage of scripture about going to court against a brother and think, "This doesn't apply to me." But you might be surprised.

1 CORINTHIANS 6 : 1 - 11

1 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 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.

COMMENTARY

To set the stage, we must first look at the end of verse 2, "...are you not competent to judge trivial cases?" This passage is not talking about criminal cases. It also does not speak about issues with non-believers. It is speaking to trivial issues between two brothers or sisters in Christ. The Greek word used for trivial is biōtikos. It means pertaining to life and the affairs of this life. In other words, everyday interactions that happen to us in life. Criminal cases and lawsuits against us should be abnormal for the believer living under Jesus' lordship.

If you remember, in Chapter 1, Paul said that it had been reported to him that "...there are quarrels among you..." (1:11). Then he spoke about how the believers in Corinth were choosing leaders to follow. Now, five chapters later, Paul is dealing with another issue causing quarreling and division: trivial matters between brothers in Christ resulting in disputes and, ultimately, being laid before the civil courts of the day.

So, some believers in Corinth are at odds with one another. Their grievances have been allowed to fester to the point that one believer took another to civil court to resolve the issue. And Paul is having none of it. His wording about the situation is strong **(1 Corinthians 6:1)**.

So, what can we take away from a passage like this? First, Paul is tenacious in challenging the church to live in unity. And he should be. After all, it was Jesus who prayed this prayer **(John 17:21b)**.

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?
(1 Corinthians 6:1, NIV)

May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
(John 17:21b, NIV)

Disunity among believers, quarrels left to fester, and unresolved relational issues don't attract people to Jesus; they repel them.

Second, Paul places a high value on the church to be able to resolve trivial issues. Third, the people of the Corinthian church must not have seen value in submitting to other believers to help them live a life worthy of the Lord. They were selfish, wanted to be declared right, and put another brother down. Shouldn't they have longed to resolve the issue so that the brother and the relationship could be preserved? When quarrels between brothers and sisters rise to the point of lawsuits over trivial matters, there is a misunderstanding of the church's role in a believer's life. More importantly, perhaps, is a misunderstanding in the believer's life of what it means to submit to the Lordship of Jesus.

Finally, Paul does not say that the grievance against a brother is unjustified. Sin happens. He is not saying that true believers get along ideally and never have issues with each other. No, the question that must be asked is this, "As a believer in Jesus, isn't it better to have someone who loves Jesus, knows us, knows the situation, and wants what is best for us in the Lord help us resolve issues than it is to have non-believers resolve the problem without any regard to the truth of Scripture?"

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Let me see the church as Your instrument to grow me, advise me, and help me become more like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Maintaining unity among believers is a high priority. If an issue arises with another brother or sister in Christ, don't ignore it. Pursue a resolution consistent with the Word of God and one that loves the person you are at odds with. If necessary, find a mature believer in Christ to help you.

Yesterday, we discussed the importance of resolving trivial matters in the church. Today, we will discuss the selfless attitude of the believer.

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.
(James 2:8, NIV)

Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
(Matthew 22:37, NIV)

Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?
(1 Corinthians 6:7b, NIV)

If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that?
(Matthew 5:46, NIV)

Make sure that nobody pays back wrong for wrong, but always strive to do what is good for each other and for everyone else.
(1 Thessalonians 5:15, NIV)

29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. 32 Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.
(Ephesians 4:29-32, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 6 : 1 - 11

1 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 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.

COMMENTARY

Read what James, the half-brother of Jesus, wrote **(James 2:8)**.
There is some debate as to why James called it the royal law. It could be because Jesus quoted it as part of the two great commandments, the first being **Matthew 22:37**.

It could also be called the royal law because King Jesus said it. Regardless, the royal law provides an excellent backdrop for discussing the scripture at hand. Paul has just laid the groundwork for dealing with grievances against another believer. He has advised the believers at Corinth not to take trivial matters to the civil courts of the day. Instead, he suggests that you trust the saints, believers in the church, when deciding issues of division. But now, Paul steps it up a notch. He says that you have already been defeated if you have a lawsuit among believers. Then, he deals with the individual. Which individual? Both of them. They are both believers in Jesus. This means that what Paul will advise is every believer's personal responsibility. Read what he says in **1 Corinthians 6:7b**.

It seems harsh. I've been wronged, and I want my pound of flesh—I want to be vindicated. After all, watch any lawyer commercial on TV, and you know that regardless of what happens, you are not at fault. It's the other guy. Right must prevail. Otherwise, people will see me as weak. My story needs to be told, or the lies will be believed. But wait! We should look at some other Scriptures before dismissing what Paul is saying **(Matthew 5:46)**, **(1 Thessalonians 5:15)**, **(Ephesians 4:29-32)**.

This may seem like "The long way around the barn," as my great-grandmother used to say. But all this plays into Paul's point. The greatest cause is the cause of Christ. The greatest message is the message of the Gospel. The greatest commandment is to love God and love others. And we should never be an obstacle to any of these, even if it means we sacrifice something here on this earth in the process. After all, **Romans 12:17-19** •

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> ***17*** *Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone.* ***18*** *If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.* ***19*** *Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.*
>
> **(Romans 12:17-19, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to learn to live selflessly for You. I know that I have a long way to go. But I ask that You help me understand that everything I say and do reflects upon You. I want my life to reflect You. If I must give up something, I trust You to care for me. And I pray for wisdom as I figure things out. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The cause of Christ is the greatest pursuit. We need to live in a way that offers others a chance to see Jesus in us. If we suffer loss for His cause, He will care for us.

It is important to have the proper perspective on liberty.

1 CORINTHIANS 6 : 12 - 19

12 I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.
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;

COMMENTARY

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people
(1 Corinthians 5:9, NIV)

It is often the little things that cause our understanding to become clouded. Such is the case with today's section of scripture. The book we are studying, 1 Corinthians, was not Paul's first letter to the church in Corinth. Look at what Paul says in Chapter 5 **(1 Corinthians 5:9)**. •

In proper hermeneutics (a fancy way of saying interpretation of Scripture), the use of reason should be assumed. What is logical makes the most sense. It makes sense that in Chapter 5 and Verse 9, Paul refers to another letter that he has written and not to something previously in the same letter.

Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."
(1 Corinthians 7:1, NIV)

Secondly, we know that even though Paul has received word from Chloe's people about the division in the church, the church also wrote a letter to Paul that he is responding to. Read what Paul wrote in **1 Corinthians 7:1**. •

In verses 12 and 13 of Chapter 6, Paul quotes something from the letter he received: "I have the right to do anything..." Evidently, the people at Corinth were using what they considered their liberty in Christ to do whatever they wanted to do. It shouldn't surprise us; after all, Corinth was a very sinful city, and any new believers coming to Christ would carry all kinds of baggage with them. But it is worthwhile to consider what Paul is saying here. "I have the right to do anything" is often misapplied in the church today. No doubt, there is a lot of latitude on many things, but does this saying mean that we are not accountable for our actions? Does it mean that we can do anything and everything we want? Of course not. Perhaps a good way of looking at this statement is, "All things that God has not declared unlawful are still unlawful to me." As one example, let's look at verses 9 & 10. Paul lists nine sins and says those who commit them "...will not inherit

the kingdom of God." In this sense, all things are not lawful. For instance, sexual immorality is on the list, and Paul is getting ready to transition to a whole segment about the necessity of fleeing sexual immorality.

There are many areas where wisdom must be applied. So, Paul adds two things to the statement, "I have the right to do anything" First, he says that not everything is beneficial. Then he says, "I have the right to do anything", but he will not be mastered by anything. In other words, not everything that we might do helps make sure the gospel is proclaimed unhindered. And we should not be dominated by anything that would prevent someone from hearing the gospel. Then Paul quotes another line from the letter: "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food." Paul adds to this statement **(1 Corinthians 6:13a)**.

It appears that the people at Corinth used the saying "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food" to justify sexual immorality. Just like food is for the stomach and the stomach for food, you can approach sex the same way, they reasoned. Paul points out that food and the stomach are both temporary. Then, he addresses why they are not thinking correctly **(1 Corinthians 6:13:b)**. There's a good lesson here. No matter the topic, the body is meant for the Lord, and the Lord for the body **(Romans 14:8)**.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both.
(1 Corinthians 6:13a, NIV)

The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
(1 Corinthians 6:13b, NIV)

If we live, we live for the Lord; and if we die, we die for the Lord. So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.
(Romans 14:8, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Help me assess my life through Your eyes, not mine. If I use my eyes, I may excuse something as freedom that You want me to walk away from. I belong to You. Help me order my life to represent You faithfully. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

You are meant for the Lord. This should be reflected in everything you participate in.

It is important to have the proper perspective on liberty.

1 CORINTHIANS 6 : 12 - 19

12 I have the right to do anything," you say—but not everything is beneficial. "I have the right to do anything"—but I will not be mastered by anything. 13 You say, "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both." The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! 16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But whoever is united with the Lord is one with him in spirit.
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;

COMMENTARY

Today, we revisit the same passage of scripture that we read yesterday. It's often beneficial to dwell on whole sections from the word of God for several days. The psalmist, in speaking about the decrees of the Lord, says 'They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold...' (Psalm 19:10). Just as you would dig, mine, or sift through mountains of sand and gravel for gold, the Scriptures are a treasure waiting to be discovered. Paul has just said that the body is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord and the Lord for the body. Now, he transitions to the resurrection of Christ and a reminder that we, too, will be resurrected. It causes us to ask how all this is connected.

First of all, the reminder that God raised Jesus from the dead is not a disjointed statement when we remember that Jesus Christ was God incarnate. Jesus was God in the flesh. He was God embodied with flesh and blood, just like us. His earthly body, like ours, was meant for God, God for the body. He was here to serve God the Father, and God the Father was with Him as He did. It also reminds us that our bodies, temporal as they are, are also eternal. They are eternal because, like Jesus, we will be resurrected and given a new body.

The power, of course, that raised Jesus from the dead is the Holy Spirit. The same Spirit who was placed in you when you accepted Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior of your life **(Romans 8:11)**. •

Read what Paul asks in **1 Corinthians 6:15a**. • Since Paul has been talking about earthly bodies in verse 13, there is no reason to think that he is not still speaking about earthly bodies in verse 15. His point is that you have a body now, and when you are resurrected, you will have a new spiritual body. So, if you are in Christ now and will be in Christ in eternity, and Jesus

And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies because of his Spirit who lives in you.
(Romans 8:11, NIV)

Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?
(1 Corinthians 6:15a, NIV)

is Lord of your life, act like this is true now **(1 Corinthians 6:19b & 20)**! •

Live for the Lord. Don't live in sin. Abandon sexual immorality. (v18)

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

You are not your own; ***20*** *you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.*
(1 Corinthians 6:19b & 20, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am Yours now and for all eternity. I will allow the Holy Spirit to help me put to death the misdeeds of the body (Romans 8:13). In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

You are not your own; you have been bought at a price. That price cost Jesus His life. So glorify God in your lower story body. Live faithfully and holy for the Lord.

Have you noticed how many times the practical advice in the Scriptures is based on the cross? Let's look at some examples today.

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.

COMMENTARY

As believers in Jesus, the cross of Jesus Christ is the starting point for a new life in Christ and the reason for life change in our lower stories. If you look closely enough, you can see it in 1st Corinthians.

In Chapter 1, Paul asks, "Was Paul crucified for you?" (1:13). He asks this question to a group of people following earthly leaders instead of the crucified Christ. The implication is that, as we mentioned earlier, the starting point for right living is Jesus' death on the cross. Next, Paul said, "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing... " (1:18). What do you need to change both your upper-story and lower-story lives? You need God's power, which is rooted in the cross of Jesus.

Paul said in Chapter 2 that the most important thing he wanted to know about the church in Corinth was "...Jesus Christ and him crucified." (2:2)

In Chapter 5, Paul reminds the believers that they are already unleavened (declared righteous by Christ) because "...Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed." (5:7).

When we get to Chapter 6, we are reminded that God raised the Lord and will raise us up by His power. He raised Jesus up from the dead after He died on the cross.

Yes, the cross of Jesus is the starting point of all things for the believer. As we get to our scripture for today, we are reminded that the Holy Spirit is within us and that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit that God gives. He is part of the trinity, God Himself. And then, again, Paul takes us back to the cross of Jesus Christ. If the Spirit of God is in us, He is there because of our faith in Jesus Christ and His work on the cross. You cannot have the Spirit of God within you unless the cross of Christ has impacted your life through faith.

You are not your own; 20 you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies.
(1 Corinthians 6:19b-20, NIV)

Then, Paul reminds the believers in Corinth, and us, that if the Spirit of God is within us, a price was paid, and that price was the death of Jesus on the cross **(1 Corinthians 6:19b-20)**. •

It is also interesting that in just a few chapters, Paul will discuss the proper approach to communion. And what is communion? On the most basic level, it is remembering the cross of Christ.

Everything we do, what we believe, and how we act should be driven by

the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. We are almost 2,000 years removed from the cross, but for the believer, the cross of Jesus is foundational to all we believe, say, and do.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, there are no words that can express my gratitude for Jesus' sacrifice for me. The cross, in all its ugliness, hate, and pain, caused by men but endured by Jesus, is without question something that I don't deserve, but it is something that I treasure. Let me live faithfully for Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Remember Jesus' suffering, death, burial, and resurrection. It all began with the cross. The cross of Jesus should shape your beliefs, guide your actions, and drive you to share the gospel.

REFLECTION

Or, you can read Chapter 6 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Match the letter (word) to their definition:

A.	Salvation		Set apart by God for His use
B.	Justification		God's final removal of sin from the life of a believer
C.	Sanctification		Being saved by God from the wrath of God
D.	Glorification		God pronouncing a sinner righteous through Jesus

2. In 1 Corinthians 6:18, Paul says to flee sexual immorality. What are ways that you can flee sexual immorality?

3. Reread verses 19-20 of Chapter 6. What stands out to you about this passage? Why?

4. How were you bought with a price?

5. Give examples of what it means to glorify God with your body? What areas of your life need improvement if you are going to glorify God with your body? You won't be able to change on your own. How can you let the Spirit change you? What is your part and what is the Spirit's part?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

LIVE WITH UNDIVIDED DEVOTION TO THE LORD.

35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:35

1 CORINTHIANS 7

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

Evidently, the believers at Corinth had written Paul asking him questions about marriage and other topics. In our reading today, we will look at Paul's opening statement.

1 CORINTHIANS 7 : 1 - 7

1 Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command.7 I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

COMMENTARY

Some of the believers at Corinth appear to be pushing for celibacy. From Paul's point of view, celibacy is not a bad thing. You can see this in verse 1, where Paul writes, quoting what was written to him, "...It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." However, this should not be read as a command. Instead, it is an observation seen through the lens of the Lordship of Jesus Christ in the life of a believer. As you read any advice that Paul gives in this chapter, think about the Lordship of Jesus first. It will serve you well if you do. The other indicator that this is not a command from Paul is found in verse 2 **(1 Corinthians 7:2)**. •

But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband.
(1 Corinthians 7:2, NIV)

So Paul agrees that there is a benefit to a man or a woman living a celibate life, but he also recognizes it is not the answer for everyone. Later, Paul will tie celibacy to a gift from God. **(1 Corinthians 7:7)**. •

I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.
(1 Corinthians 7:7, NIV)

There are two issues Paul is concerned with: the temptation of sexual immorality and the lack of self-control. The culture in which the Corinthian church existed, much like today, was steeped in sexual immorality. Like today, some believers from that culture struggled to leave some of its practices behind. Paul's answer was not to avoid marriage and sexual intimacy within the bounds of marriage. The answer was to marry and mutually support one another. The husband and wife are to work together to meet each other's sexual needs and to help each other avoid sexual immorality. And it is to be done within the confines of marriage and with an other-orientated attitude. "Love your neighbor as yourself" **(Mark 12:31)**, • after all, still applies to married couples as it does to others.

The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."
(Mark 12:31, NIV)

What is interesting about Paul's point is that it is best seen in the light of the Lordship of Jesus. We see this when Paul speaks to the couple about agreeing to abstain from sex to focus more fervently on the Lord **(1 Corinthians 7:5a)**. •

Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer.
(1 Corinthians 7:5a, NIV)

Then, he acknowledges that the couple should come together again so that Satan doesn't win **(1 Corinthians 7:5b)**. •

In this entire passage of scripture, bookended by "But because of the temptation to sexual immorality..." and "...because of your lack of self-control..." Paul gives guidance on not just avoiding sin but using what God has provided to live effectively in the Lordship of Jesus. So, Paul is saying if you have the gift of celibacy, like himself, you don't have to marry. But if you don't, marriage offers many benefits. One of them is husband and wife mutually fighting against sexual immorality.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.*
> **(1 Corinthians 7:5b, NIV)**

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, You sit on the throne—You and You alone. There are many things that I may not understand, but You do. Father, in my (marriage/singleness) be glorified. In my (marriage/singleness), let me represent You well. Strengthen me when I am tempted, and in all things, let me remember the Lordship of Jesus when I have choices to make. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Marriage, like celibacy, is a gift from God and has many benefits. One benefit is the mutual fighting against sexual immorality by the husband and wife team.

Many read Chapter 7 of 1 Corinthians and have decided that the issues being written about are straightforward and that there is no room for debate. But is this the case? Today, we will provide insight that may cause you to think differently about this chapter.

Now for the matters you wrote about...
(1 Corinthians 7:1a, NIV)

I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that
.(1 Corinthians 7:7, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 7 : 1 - 11

1 Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. 3 The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. 5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 I wish that all of you were as I am. But each of you has your own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. 8 Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I do. 9 But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. 10 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. 11 But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

COMMENTARY

Chapter 7, like the other sixteen chapters in this letter, did not have chapter and verse numbers or section headings identifying what each section was about. We need to keep this in mind as we examine this chapter. We must also remember the audience to which it was written and the culture to which the original letter speaks.

The culture at Corinth, as we have mentioned many times, included sexual sin, temple prostitutes, polytheism, idol worship, and a host of other things, and they had infiltrated the church. Paul is writing this letter to challenge believers to live differently than they did before Christ. Christ has saved them, and the Holy Spirit was given to them. They are expected to live lives consistent with how Jesus would live. The same is true for us today. Perhaps the first argument for saying that Chapter 7 is not a checklist is the fact that Paul seems to be writing, "...for the matters you wrote about..." **(1 Corinthians 7:1a)**. ●

In this chapter, Paul does not write only about marriage. He also discusses a slew of problems and how to view them in light of one's new life in Christ. Here are a few challenges to overcome when interpreting and applying the truth found in this chapter **(1 Corinthians 7:7)**. ●

Paul is speaking of the fact that he is celibate. The Bible doesn't tell us if Paul was ever married. If he was, it is likely his wife had passed away. But notice that Paul refers to celibacy as a gift bestowed upon him. Why is this important?

For one thing, Paul tells the believing wife that if she separates from her husband, she should remain unmarried or reconcile with her husband. Does the wife get Paul's gift of celibacy, or does she have to white knuckle the passion that rises in her? Remember, this would be the same passion that Paul told the unmarried, "...it is better to marry than burn with passion." We are not trying to solve this issue here. We are just pointing out some difficulties in interpreting this chapter. Read what Paul says later on in this section of Scripture **(1 Corinthians 7:19-20)**.

Still, in Acts 16:1-5, Paul had Timothy circumcised before he went with him in ministry. Why? Did circumstances make the difference? Again, we are not trying to solve these issues here. But, serious thought and study should be given when interpreting this chapter. Although many examples can be given, we'll look at just one more. Paul mentions the unmarried. What does that mean? Are they people who have never been married? Married in the past but now divorced? Are they people who have pledged to be married but are not? It would seem highly unlikely that Paul would write an entire chapter on marriage and not consider that at least some of the recipients are divorced and now "unmarried." The point of today's lesson is that you can trust the Word of God, and it is worth the effort to study it, absorb it, and rightly divide it, faithfully following the tried and tested methods of interpretation.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.*
> *20 Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.*
> **(1 Corinthians 7:19-20, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I don't want to look for the easy way out. I'm not interested in loopholes or misapplying scripture. Guide me and direct my thoughts and actions so that I will, over time, become more like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

There are hard truths in the Scriptures. Often, they are hard to follow. Other times, they are hard to understand. In both cases, we have a God Who is faithful. The Holy Spirit can and will lead you into all truth and guide your walk to a life that looks more like Jesus.

Today, we will explore the difficult issue of Christians who are married to non-believers.

2 and he began to teach them. He said: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. 5 Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. 7 Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 11 "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. 12 Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. 13 "You are the salt of the earth. But if the salt loses its saltiness, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. 14 "You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house.16 In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.
(Matthew 5:2-16, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 7 : 12 - 16

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. 13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. 14 For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. 15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 16 How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

COMMENTARY

Take some time and read **Matthew 5:2-16**. • These are the opening words in the greatest sermon ever preached. The Sermon on the Mount. Why? You will find that Jesus' words shed some light on Paul's intent in 1 Corinthians Chapter 7.

As you read the opening of the Sermon on the Mount, you will see that Jesus expects a believer in Him to live differently than a person who does not know Him. You will notice that some pretty difficult topics are addressed in the above passage. It discusses persecution, being reviled, and having all kinds of evil spoken against you. Yes, Christians are expected to respond like Christ in these types of circumstances. He is our example. Take a minute and reflect on His path to the cross. All three acts, persecution, reviling, and being spoken evil of, were involved. And how did Jesus respond? In hatred? In trash-talking? Anger? No, none of these. He responded in love and hoped that His persecutors and those slandering Him would come to faith in Him after His resurrection.

Many of us think of those who live in persecution and hardship for the cause of Christ around the world, and we pray that if it ever happens to us, God will find us faithful. But we don't see the same opportunity before us when our marriage to non-believers gets difficult. Often, believers, especially those who come to the Lord without their spouse coming to the Lord, are too quick to pull the trigger on separation or divorce. We start looking for a way out instead of looking to live for Jesus amid a difficult situation. Paul's point in this section of scripture is similar to Jesus' point in the Sermon on the Mount **(Matthew 5:16)**. •

This is not to say that there are no times when separation or divorce is advisable. However, many times in today's society, believers choose divorce instead of staying and living for Jesus. They choose their happiness over living faithfully for the Lord. They give up too early and miss seeing how God can use their faithful lives to bring their unbelieving spouse to the Lord.

Do you find yourself in danger? Get to safety! If your children are in danger, protect them by removing them from the danger. However, when an unbelieving spouse treats you like they want to be married to you, but your faith in the Lord becomes a point of contention, look for an opportunity in the marriage to live like Jesus. Read what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 7:16**.

> *How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?*
> **(1 Corinthians 7:16, NIV)**

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, cultivate in me the desire to live for You and represent You well in every difficult circumstance I face. Let this be true even if a difficult situation arises in my marriage. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The believer is called to be the light of the world. This includes being the light of Jesus in a less-than-perfect marriage. Unless you or your children are in danger, represent Jesus well. Love your spouse in such a way that they will want to come to the Lord.

What does it mean to live a life the Lord has assigned us? Let's find out.

1 CORINTHIANS 7 : 17 - 24

17 Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. 18 Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. 19 Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. 20 Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.
21 Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. 22 For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freed person; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave. 23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. 24 Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.

COMMENTARY

Nevertheless, each person should live as a believer in whatever situation the Lord has assigned to them, just as God has called them. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.
(1 Corinthians 7:17, NIV)

Paul has covered many topics that the Corinthians had questions about. It is tempting to consider verses 17-24 a digression. The verses before and after address issues regarding marriage, but this is not quite as clear in verses 17-24. However, if we consider this passage a parenthesis or a bridge, it makes sense. In this section of scripture, Paul gives us a general principle that can be used for many situations in life, one of which is marriage **(1 Corinthians 7:17)**. • What makes this section of scripture so interesting is that Paul does not directly use examples from marriage. Instead, in a chapter on issues that arise in marriage, he uses circumcision, uncircumcision, bondservant, and freedman as examples.

The general principle he is citing works like this: If a person at Corinth was circumcised, they should not seek to be uncircumcised. If, when they came to Christ, they were uncircumcised, they should not seek to be circumcised. They should remain as they are because "...this is the life that the Lord has assigned to him."

Paul gives similar advice for bondservants. Paul says if a person was a bondservant when he came to Christ, "Do not be concerned about it." But he adds, "Although if you can gain your freedom, do so." Because of this, we can see that Paul is giving guidance, not a firm rule. But how does all this apply to life and marriage?

The application of this principle requires us to consider the omniscience of God. God knew what was going on in your life when you came to Him. It requires us to consider the omnipresence of God. God is with you wherever you are and whatever situation you are in. It requires us to consider the omnipotence of God. God is powerful enough to take care of you regardless of the problem. Finally, it requires us to consider the Lord,

and the price He has paid for us. before deciding about staying or leaving a situation. Of course, regarding marriage, we can see this principle being applied in verses 12 and 13 **(1 Corinthians 7:12-13)**.

We all were in certain situations when God called us to Him. No doubt, some of those situations need to be fled. A drug addict should not continue to live in a place where drugs flow freely. People living where illegal activity is the norm should remove themselves from that environment. If a person lives in a place where their life is in danger because they decide to follow Christ, given the opportunity, they should protect themselves. However, the determining factor in making decisions of change is not what we want. Our first consideration should be what God wants. Why? Read **Corinthians 7:23-24**.

As believers, let's let our first allegiance not be to our circumstances but our Lord.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.
13 And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.

(1 Corinthians 7:12-13, NIV)

23 You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of human beings. *24 Brothers and sisters, each person, as responsible to God, should remain in the situation they were in when God called them.*

(1 Corinthians 7:23-24, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, You are my Lord. I am submitted to You and long to please You. Sometimes, I get it wrong. I pursue things consistent with my desires instead of waiting for You to guide and direct me. Please forgive me. Let me learn to stay in step with the Spirit so that I please You in all my decisions. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

In any situation, our first question should be, "What does God want?"

In Chapter 7, Paul makes several statements or eludes to someone remaining single and not marrying as the better choice. Today, we will look at why he says this.

1 CORINTHIANS 7 : 25 - 40

25 Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. 26 Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. 27 Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife. 28 But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.
29 What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not; 30 those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; 31 those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. 32 I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.
33 But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife— 34 and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. 36 If anyone is worried that he might not be acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if his passions are too strong and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. 37 But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. 38 So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does better. 39 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. 40 In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

COMMENTARY

Perhaps those of us who are married understand Paul's point when he counsels people to remain single. However, before we look at this point, we must make something clear. Although Paul says it is better to stay single, he does not mandate singleness. We see this in verse 35.

The principle Paul wants us to understand is that being married divides our interests. Married people understand this. In virtually every situation, the spouse must be consulted before making decisions. For instance, a single person can make dinner arrangements on a given night to disciple someone. All they need to do is look at their calendar. The married person must look at their calendar and the calendar of their spouse. A married person with a family must also consider the children's calendar. This doesn't mean the married person doesn't love the Lord as much as the single person. It is a statement of fact. The married person's interests are divided. This is why it is so essential for the believer, when they are single, to consider a couple of things.

I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.
(1 Corinthians 7:35, NIV)

First, should they remain single? In Paul's writing, it seems that the determining factor is two-fold. Does the believer have a burning passion in them that, if not married, would result in sexual immorality, or does the believer have the gift of celibacy? Marriage is the solution if they "burn with passion," as Paul puts it. However, we are not advocating marriage only for sexual release. This, too, would be disastrous. However, if the Holy Spirit gives the gift of celibacy, that is, someone can serve God without being driven or distracted by sexual impulses, then remaining single will offer them a greater opportunity for availability for ministry that the married person doesn't have. They are not distracted by someone else's schedule, attendance at children's events and activities, etc. Again, let's be clear. This is not a discussion about who loves the Lord more. It is only a discussion about practicality in ministry and availability for ministry. How important is this discussion? Ask a former pastor who has left the ministry because his family was falling apart. Or, look at the number of marriages that have ended in divorce because they couldn't survive a full-time ministry position. Ultimately, Paul's reason for the advice about singleness versus marriage is in **1 Corinthians 7:35**. •

As you read the verse above again, notice that Paul is not saying marriage is wrong or sinful. He is simply stating the obvious: marriage divides, at least in some measure, our devotion to the Lord. We can be, and should be, sold out to the Lord in our marriages. This is why in 2 Corinthians 6:14 Paul tells believers not to be unequally yoked to unbelievers. The man and woman who are committed to the Lord and are married can pursue the Lord's agenda to a greater degree than a believer who is married to a non-believer. For married believers, there will always be a part of our lives that is unavailable to the Lord because of our God-required commitments to our spouse and our family. We are not dishonoring Him when we care for our wife and are present with her and our children. The same is true for a wife who honors her husband. No, we honor God this way. But Paul is letting the single person know there is greater opportunity for availability in ministry in their singleness.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

(If you are married)
Heavenly Father, thank You for my wife/husband as I learn to commit my life to You in a deeper way, and realize my responsibilities to my spouse. I recognize that fulfilling those responsibilities honors You. Let me be an example to my family so they will see Jesus's love and character in me. Lord, let me never miss an opportunity that You place in my life to serve You. In Jesus' name, Amen.
(If you are single)
Heavenly Father, thank You for my singleness. Give me wisdom to know when, or if, to marry. Provide for me, if You're not giving me the gift of celibacy, a spouse who will walk beside me in the Lord faithfully to accomplish great things for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

If you are married, there is no reason to seek singleness to honor the Lord. Live faithfully for the Lord in your marriage. According to Paul, if you are single and desire to have a wife or a husband, you do not sin. But, if you have been given the gift of celibacy, it is good to consider how available you are to the Lord because of your singleness.

REFLECTION

Or, you can read Chapter 7 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Chapter 7, no doubt, is a very difficult chapter to understand. What is it about this chapter you struggle with and why?

2. Sometimes, when something is difficult to understand, it helps to search and apply things we do understand. Read the following verses and write an application for each one that applies to your life's situation:

- 1 Corinthians 7:3-5
- 1 Corinthians 7:12-16
- 1 Corinthians 7:23-24
- 1 Corinthians 7:35

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP WHILE LOVE BUILDS UP.

[1] Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. [2] Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. [3] But whoever loves God is known by God.

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-3

1 CORINTHIANS 8

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

Today, we look at the foundational principle in Chapter 8.

Teach me knowledge and good judgment, for I trust your commands.
(Psalm 119:66, NIV)

But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
(2 Peter 3:18a, NIV)

If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
(1 Corinthians 13:2, NIV)

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.
(James 2:8, NIV)

So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets.
(Matthew 7:12, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 8 : 1 - 3

1 Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that "We all possess knowledge." But knowledge puffs up while love builds up. 2 Those who think they know something do not yet know as they ought to know. 3 But whoever loves God is known by God.

COMMENTARY

Once again, we encounter the words "...now concerning...", indicating that Paul is going to touch on a subject that was discussed in a previous letter. It appears that the Corinthians were defending their actions by declaring that they knew what was right and had knowledge about right and wrong. The implication is, of course, that others were wrong.
The use of knowledge throughout the scriptures can be used in a positive form, as in **Psalm 119:66** • and **2 Peter 3:18a**. •

However, knowledge is also shown in its negative form, as it is in our reading today and again in **1 Corinthians 13:2**. •

The problem, and the reason that knowledge is sometimes shown in a negative light, is that prideful knowledge is focused on ourselves. Let that sink in. Prideful knowledge thinks about self first. So, if the knowledge that we possess is applied inappropriately, we violate the royal law **(James 2:8)**. •

Ultimately, Paul's words in this chapter are driven by the understanding that the Christian life is about loving God first and then loving others as we would love ourselves **(Matthew 7:12)**. •

By the time you get through Chapter 8, you will see that the answer to many issues lies in the truth that if we love others well, our actions will honor God, honor others, and allow a lost and dying world to look at the Church and say "I want what they have."

Of course, there is no compromise regarding moral issues, which God clearly defines as sin. However, many issues are not moral issues, and we must give people room to grow in knowledge and understanding of the Lord and His ways.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Give me wisdom to discern between issues that You have clearly said are sinful and those where there is freedom. Let me love others more than I love myself. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Issues that are not moral issues need to be dealt with with grace and with an attitude of loving others more than we love ourselves.

Today, we look at an apparent contradiction in this passage. Is there one God or many gods?

1 CORINTHIANS 8 : 4 - 6

4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

COMMENTARY

So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one.
(1 Corinthians 8:4, NIV)

In verse 4, Paul reminds the readers in Corinth that he is addressing issues they either wrote about or were brought directly to Paul **(1 Corinthians 8:4)**.

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords")
(1 Corinthians 8:5, NIV)

Paul quotes what they said in their communication when he said, "...is nothing at all in the world" and "...there is no God but one." Paul agrees with this statement. We know this because of **1 Corinthians 8:5**.

For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God,
(1 Corinthians 8:5-6a, NIV)

When Paul uses the word "we," he includes himself in the discussion. So, Paul's premise for this discussion is that an idol is nothing and that there is only one God. Then, he makes a statement that can be confusing if you don't think it through **(1 Corinthians 8:5-6a)**.

...yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.
(1 Corinthians 8:6, NIV)

This begs the question, "If an idol is nothing and has no real existence, how can there be many 'gods' and many 'lords'? The answer is found in Paul's premise. The underlying truth is that there is only one God. Idols of any kind can never be a capital "G" God. There is only one true God. There has to be! If a capital "G" God shares His throne with another, then He is less than a capital "G" God. Paul asserts that there is only one God. No so-called god is equal to or greater than the great God, Jehovah. A believer in Jesus knows that an idol has no real existence. But they also know that there are so-called gods and lords for the unbeliever.

Everyone worships something! Some are animists. They believe everything has a spiritual component; rocks, trees, waterfalls, clouds, etc. are all spiritual. Then there are polytheistic religions. That is, they worship many gods just to make sure that their bases are covered. Finally, there are people who let non-material idols into their lives. These so-called gods can be money, fame, accomplishments, pastime activities, ego, and other so-called gods.

Paul closes this section by identifying the one and only true God **(1 Corinthians 8:6)**.

We will look into this verse tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, As I take time to consider Your greatness. Let me remember the blessings of Your greatness, sovereignty, and the fact that no one is equal to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

There is only one God. There is no one like Him, and He cannot and will not be dethroned. He is Jehovah. He is the self-existent God above all.

Yesterday, we looked at the fact that there is only one God. Today, we'll explore the benefits of living for that one God.

called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:
(1 Corinthians 1:2b, NIV)

Blessed are those whose help is the God of Jacob, whose hope is in the Lord their God. **6** *He is the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them*
(Psalm 146:5-6a, NIV)

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.
(John 5:19, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 8 : 4 - 6

4 So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that "An idol is nothing at all in the world" and that "There is no God but one." 5 For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"), 6 yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is but one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.

COMMENTARY

Reread the scripture above. The first question you should ask yourself is, "Who is 'us' in this passage?" To find that answer, we need to go back to Chapter 1 **(1 Corinthians 1:2b)**. ●

Have you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior of your life? If you have, you have been called to be saints. You are part of the family of God, and the 'us' in the verse above includes you.

Since you are part of God's family, let's examine the truth of this scripture together. For you, there is only one God. That God is God the Father, creator of heaven and earth **(Psalm 146:5-6a)**. ●

This is what "...from whom are all things..." means. But God is not just the creator. He is the sovereign who sits on the throne. We exist, according to this passage, for Him. Let's think deeply about this. How often do you make your life about you? How many times do you think the world revolves around you? You might not verbalize it, but you act like it, at least sometimes. So do I, by the way. However, this passage of scripture reminds us that all things come from God the Father, and we live for God the Father. In other words, we should become like Jesus **(John 5:19)**. ●

Notice in the passage that Paul uses the words God for the Father and Lord for Jesus. Remember, there is only one God. So, he is speaking to two relational interactions. We interact with the Father as creator and sovereign ruler. We interact with Jesus as Lord. However, we can also see that God created "through" Jesus, and we exist in God through Jesus. That is, through our faith in Jesus and His redemptive work on the cross. This is what "through whom are all things, and through whom we exist" means.

I think it will serve us well if we look at one more scripture today. Although it is not in the book we are studying, it will help us see, perhaps more clearly, this relationship between us and God and us and Jesus.

Take some time to read the following passage through and then mark the connection between God, Jesus, and us. I think you will find it clarifies what we've discussed today. **(John 15:1-5)**. ●

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. **2** *He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.* **3** *You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you.* **4** *Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.* **5** *"I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.*

(John 15:1-5, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I often live as if I live for myself. Help me to remember that I exist for You and Your pleasure. I'm thankful that Jesus died to save me and has brought me into a right relationship with You. Help me to abide in Him so that I will be fruitful. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

All things created are from God. You exist for Him. God the Father created through Jesus, and it is through faith in Jesus and His work on the cross that brings us into a right relationship with God the Father.

When was the last time you asked yourself, "Is what I am doing affecting others?" Today, we will see why we should ask this question.

1 CORINTHIANS 8 : 7 - 9

7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

COMMENTARY

Paul is addressing the issue of whether it is ok to eat food offered to idols. It sounds like an odd topic to us, but to the people at Corinth, it was a commonplace cultural event they needed to figure out. Let me give you a 21st-century example to help you see the real issue.

Pick virtually any town in the United States, and you will find people who grew up, or perhaps never grew up, is a better way of putting it when it comes to going to bars for entertainment and catching up with friends. Our churches are full of people who have accepted Jesus as the Lord and Savior of their lives and still struggle with whether or not it is acceptable for a Christian to go to a bar for either food and/or an alcoholic beverage. Some don't see anything wrong with it, and others believe it is sinful for a believer in Jesus to be seen in a bar or drinking in public.

It is this type of problem the Corinthians were dealing with. Some, perhaps many, had come out of the worshiping of idols culture, and now, as believers, they are trying to figure out what to do. The meat was not the main focus of a meal in Corinth but, as today, something many wanted. The meat that had been offered to idols was cheap and more abundant. Some didn't see a problem with eating meat that had been offered to idols. They knew that "...an idol is nothing at all in the world." Remember our discussion over the last couple of days? Paul describes others as having weak consciences, believing they are being defiled if they eat this meat.

If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right.
(James 2:8, NIV)

Wouldn't it be great if Paul said, "Yes, you can eat meat offered to idols." Or, "Are you crazy? Of course, you can't eat meat offered to idols!" But he doesn't. Instead, he invokes what is equivalent to the Royal Law **(James 2:8)**. •

So, when was the last time you asked yourself, "Is what I am doing affecting others?" This is Paul's point. He says that even with the proper knowledge, you can still be a stumbling block for those with weak consciences. Let me give you an example.

Remember our scenario about drinking in public? Now, you go to a restaurant or bar, and, as a believer, you have decided that alcohol is not a problem. So, you intend to order a glass of wine with your dinner. As you sit

down, you notice a fellow believer in Jesus who you know has struggled with alcoholism. You also know that he believes that a believer in Jesus should avoid alcohol at all costs. What should you do? According to the passage we are looking at today, you should consider the other brother as you decide. You may be right. It may not be a salvation or moral issue for you. But what about him? He may be wrong. But he believes he is right. What should you do? Read what Paul would say **(1 Corinthians 8:9)**. •

Just so we are clear, if a moral issue is clearly defined in Scripture, we don't need to compromise. We are only discussing debatable matters that are not essential issues for salvation.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.
(1 Corinthians 8:9, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want my actions to help others move toward Jesus. I want to do it even when I need to adjust my life to help them. Help me think of You first and then love others as You would. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Our actions can negatively impact others. What we do and how we do it matters. If you question whether something will negatively affect others, think of others first and love them as Jesus would.

Yesterday, we reviewed what it means not to be a stumbling block to the weak. Today, we will see how serious the Holy Spirit was when He inspired Paul to write these words.

1 CORINTHIANS 8 : 7 - 13

7 But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. 8 But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. 9 Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. 10 For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? 11 So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. 12 When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. 13 Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to fall.

COMMENTARY

As you read through the passage of scripture we cover today; you will notice that it deals with how we treat our brothers and sisters in Christ. Think about that for a minute. As we live for Jesus, one of the first thoughts we should have is, "How will what I do impact someone else's ability to follow the Lord?" It would have been nice if Paul had quit writing after verse 9. No sincere believer wants to be a stumbling block to the weak. But if Paul had stopped there, we would not be able to see the seriousness with
which he wrote.

So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.
(1 Corinthians 8:11, NIV)

In verse 10, we learn that our actions may encourage someone with a weak conscience to do something detrimental to them. This, of course, is the apparent point of the passage. But when we get to verse 11, the focus is back on us. How? When we do something encouraging others to violate their conscience, we are not looking at them through the cross of Christ **(1 Corinthians 8:11)**.

When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.
(1 Corinthians 8:12, NIV)

First, notice the dire consequences of our unthoughtful actions. The weak person is destroyed. Not hurt. Not set back for the moment. Destroyed! And the Greek word indicates it may be an eternal loss. Why is this so important? Because he is a brother for whom Christ died! Jesus went to the cross not just so our sins could be forgiven but so that we could be set free from the bondage of sin. Our actions, even if we know they are OK, can eternally damage someone. We may stop them from following Jesus. That will hurt if you let it take root in your heart. But it gets worse! There is a more brutal truth here.

Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge
(Psalm 51:4, NIV)

According to verse 12, when you cause a brother or sister in Christ to violate their conscience when it is weak, you sin against them. Paul said more on this subject **(1 Corinthians 8:12)**. Read what we are told in the Psalms **(Psalm 51:4)**.

Any sin is first a sin against God. It is evil in His sight. This is the starting point. This is the point of verse 12. When we, in our knowledge, cause a weak-conscience brother or sister to violate their conscience, we sin against Christ and against them. The critical part of verse 12 is that the two are connected. So, given the opportunity, remain faithful to Christ. Don't sin against Him. If you do this, you will not sin against your brother or sister either.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, It is obvious to me that how my life affects the lives of others is important to You. It is so important that sinning against my brother is also a sin against You. I do not want to sin against either. Help me to live faithfully for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

I cannot sin against my brother and not sin against Christ.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 8 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Pray and ask the Holy Spirit to help you inventory your life. Ask Him to reveal to you what you are doing that, if others saw you doing it, would cause them to want to know more about Jesus Christ. Then, ask Him to reveal anything in your life that you do that would call into question your relationship with Jesus as Lord of your life if others saw you doing it.

2. After you complete the inventory, ask God to reveal to you the actions you must take to leave behind those things that cause people to question your relationship with the Lord and to strengthen those areas that effectively move people toward Jesus.

3. If necessary, seek Godly counsel for help and/or confess your sin and intentions to follow the Lord more closely.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

DO NOT RUN AIMLESSLY. RUN IN SUCH A WAY TO GET THE PRIZE.

[24] Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. [25] Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. [26] Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. [27] No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-27

1 CORINTHIANS 9

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

In Chapter 9, Paul defends his apostleship. And although we are not apostles, we can learn lessons from his defense. This week, we will look at those lessons.

Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus was living among us, 22 beginning from John's baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection

(Acts 1:21-22, NIV)

Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. 9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.

.**(1 Corinthians 15:7-10, NIV)**

This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me.

(1 Corinthians 9:3, NIV)

For we are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

(Ephesians 2:10, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 9 : 1 - 2

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

COMMENTARY

In the most basic definition of the term, an apostle is someone who is sent on a mission. However, just before giving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, Peter announced that someone needed to be selected to replace Judas as an apostle. The criteria in **Acts 1:21-22** • is clear.

An apostle is someone sent on a mission who accompanied the other apostles from John's baptism through the ascension and witnessed the resurrected Christ. Ultimately, Matthias was selected to be an apostle. Paul is considered to be the apostle to the Gentiles. By his own admission, he was an apostle abnormally born **(1 Corinthians 15:7-10)**. •

On the road to Damascus, Paul saw Jesus, and Jesus gave him his marching orders. Paul would be an apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15). Now, in our passage today, there are some at Corinth who are questioning his apostleship. We know this because of what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:3**. •

With that as a background, let's look at one of Paul's rhetorical questions: "Are you not the result of my work in the Lord?" The obvious answer that does not need to be spoken is, "Yes!" But this question also causes us to ask, "Is there anyone I could point to that is my workmanship in the Lord?"

True, we are not and cannot be apostles. But we have been given work to do. See **Ephesians 2:10**, **Matthew 28:18b-20**, **John 15:5**. •

Can you look at your life and point to your workmanship in the Lord? Who is it that you are leading? Who would come to your defense and say they are closer to the Lord because of your influence? When was the last time you led someone to Christ?

For some, these questions may have different answers than you wish they had. If this is the case, don't condemn yourself. Confess your shortcomings to the Lord and follow the Spirit's lead. He will show you what you need to do and empower you to do it. Ask Him to show you who He has prepared for you to minister to. He will be faithful.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

*All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. **19** Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **20** and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*

(Matthew 28:18b-20, NIV)

I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

(John 15:5, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to faithfully accomplish the work You have given me to do. And while that work can be anything, You have also called me to be a witness and to grow others in You. Let me see who in my life I have influence over. Then, help me find a way to impact them for You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God has saved you and called you to move others closer to Jesus.

To what degree was Paul willing to go to share the gospel effectively? We'll find out today. However, the ultimate question that will need to be answered is, "How far are you willing to go for the gospel?"

1 CORINTHIANS 9 : 1 - 12

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don't we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

COMMENTARY

People with poor hermeneutics (a fancy way of saying interpretation of Scripture) arrive at various conclusions about the Scripture passage we observe today.

Some believe this scripture teaches that pastors or ministers should not get paid. They should work outside the church to support themselves and not burden the congregation. They view God's call on a pastor's life as a sacrifice he has been called to make, even if that means living in poverty.

Others interpret this passage of Scripture to show that a pastor has the right to be taken care of by the church. They use this scripture to shame the church when they feel they do not make enough compared to others and often when a poor work ethic is the norm.

If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?
(1 Corinthians 9:11, NIV)

Paul clarifies his position in **1 Corinthians 9:11**. •

If you notice, there is a cause and effect here. "If" is the qualifier. "If we have sown spiritual seed among you…." The implication is that the people of Corinth had benefited from the spiritual ministry of Paul and Barnabas. Paul and Barnabas did their job faithfully and evidently with much fruit. It was not too much to ask that the church support them financially.

However, in this case, read what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 9:12b**.

Paul acknowledges that he had the right to be supported but decided not to be supported by the church. But why did Paul do this?

It appears that Paul personally believed that the church supporting him would make his proclamation of the gospel less effective. You will notice that he doesn't say that the brothers of the Lord, Cephas, or the other apostles are wrong to accept support. It is a personal decision that Paul, and evidently Barnabas, had made. But it is why they made this decision that helps us create an application of this passage of scripture.

How high a value do you place on your ability to share the gospel unhindered? What would you give up to ensure there is no stumbling block to presenting the gospel message? Would you give up personal time, finances, or location? Would you stop something you like to do to do something that provides an opportunity to share the gospel? This is what we all need to struggle with. Each of us should take regular opportunities to assess our lives and ask the Lord if we need to adjust our time, finances, location, and recreational activities so we don't hinder the furtherance of the gospel.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.*
> **(1 Corinthians 9:12b, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, show me where I place the propagation of the gospel as a priority in life. Give me my marching orders. Let me hear You clearly and make any adjustments I need to make so as not to hinder the message of Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The Gospel of Jesus should be honored and prioritized in our lives. We should adjust our lives to allow the gospel to be heard frequently, clearly, and unhindered.

Yesterday, we considered the question, "How far am I willing to go for the gospel?" Today, the question is, "How do you look at the people around you?"

1 CORINTHIANS 9 : 1 - 12

1 Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? 2 Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

3 This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. 4 Don't we have the right to food and drink? 5 Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? 6 Or is it only I and Barnabas who lack the right to not work for a living?

7 Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? 8 Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? 9 For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain." Is it about oxen that God is concerned? 10 Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. 11 If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? 12 If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ.

COMMENTARY

According to ResearchGate, if you are between the ages of 20 and 55, you interact with 20 to 23 people daily. Of course, this may vary for any number of reasons. But the point is we interact with a lot of people. Unfortunately, many of us don't know how to get from point A to point B. How do we get from interacting with someone to speaking the truth of the gospel? Paul gives us at least one option in our verse for the day. He says, "...I have made myself a servant to all." That's a pretty bold statement.

Many of us go to a restaurant and look to be served. We go through the drive-through at a bank because it is convenient and limits the amount of interaction we have to have. No one likes talking through a speaker. We pass person after person and worker after worker while we walk around the grocery store. However, while we may smile and nod, we don't engage. But it gets worse.

We go to church, and the young lady sitting a few seats away cries during the invitation. We sit quietly, listening to the voice that tells us, "This is a private time. Don't ask if you can pray with her." Or, "Are you crazy? What if she has a question I can't answer? It's better to be safe than sorry."

Many people's first problem is an unwillingness to engage. But Paul gives

us a perfect solution: Serve someone—anyone. Are you serving as a Difference Maker in church? If not, get started. Do you have neighbors? Most of us do. Go old school. Bake brownies, have a cookout or mow a lawn. Do anything that will help you build a relational bridge that will hold the weight of the Gospel when you get a chance to share it.
Next, prepare yourself to share your story quickly and the Gospel effectively. Two tools to help you with this are the 15-second testimony and Three Circles. There are many examples of how to use these. All you need to do is search for them on YouTube.

Finally, ask the Lord to instill a passion for seeing people who need Jesus in your heart and life. Everywhere you go, you have a potential opportunity to serve, build relationships, and share the love of Jesus and the message of the cross of Christ.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, There are people all around me who need Jesus, but so often, I don't see them this way. Instill in me a desire to see everyone come to a saving faith in Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

There are lost and dying people all around us. They need to hear the message of the Gospel of Christ. Serving people provides an opportunity to engage people in a way that softens their hearts so they can listen to the truth of the Gospel.

Today, we will continue to look at the high priority of the gospel.

1 CORINTHIANS 9 : 19 - 23

19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. 20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. 21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. 22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some. 23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.

COMMENTARY

Paul identifies three groups of people in this section: the Jews who are under the law, the Gentiles who are outside the law, and the weak. As we begin, let's look at each group of people.

To the Jews, Paul became a Jew. How can this be since Paul was already a Jew? He is probably referring to some of the Jewish practices he observed to minister to the Jewish people effectively. Paul was careful to say that he understood he was not under the law but under grace: "...though I myself am not under the law."

Then, he turns his attention to Gentiles—those outside the law—in other words, not the people the law was given to. Paul is indicating that he lived as a Gentile in practices not normally acceptable to Jews. But, again, he points out that he is never outside the law of God and that he is under the law of Christ. In other words, he did not live lawlessly. He obeyed Christ.

Next, Paul tells us that to the weak, he became weak. This appears to be a throwback to the weak conscience individuals mentioned in Chapter 8 who were sidetracked because of their weak consciences by believers who ate meat offered to idols.

The point Paul is making is that everyone needs Jesus. There is no exception for those who need to hear the Gospel. The people in the deepest, darkest sin need Jesus. The person you easily connect with because of your common interests needs Jesus. The homeless guy on the street corner you judge because "He's probably making more money than I am" needs Jesus. And we should be the people who, for the Gospel's sake, figure out how to lovingly, faithfully, and with uncompromised Gospel integrity become all things to all people so that we might see some of them saved.

When we see someone come to Christ, they are not the only ones who receive a blessing. We are also blessed **(1 Corinthians 9:23)**.

I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.
(1 Corinthians 9:23, NIV)

It is clear that Paul has a high view of the Gospel. He sees it as a priority in his life—a priority that is not just to know but to share. Christ has done an amazing work in the life of the believer. How can we keep it to ourselves? How can we not do what we can, whenever we can, by any means we can, short of sin, to see people come to Jesus?

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am settled in my ways. There are things I like and things I don't like. But, Lord, I do not want any obstacles to be in the way of me building relationships with others and being in a position to win them to Christ. Help me find my way. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Everyone needs Jesus. Do whatever you can, short of sinning, to position yourself to share the gospel message of Jesus' work on the cross.

Even Paul loved a good sports analogy.

1 CORINTHIANS 9 : 24 - 27

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. 25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. 26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air. 27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

COMMENTARY

In the third verse of the 9th Chapter, Paul states that what he is about to say is his defense for those who would examine his apostleship. He has spoken about giving up his rights to eat and drink like the other apostles, not taking a wife with him on his journey, working to support himself instead of having the church helping him, and enduring anything instead of building obstacles that prevent people from hearing the Gospel. He said he became a servant to all to win some people to Jesus. He was a Jew to a Jew, a Gentile to a Gentile, and weak to the weak, all for the sake of the Gospel. Now, in these final three verses, he puts things in perspective and speaks to his motive. To do all this, he uses examples from running and boxing.

When you first read this transition it seems a little out of place. Actually, it is not. Paul was a master at using things people are familiar with in everyday life to make a point about how to live for Christ. In this sense, he was a lot like Jesus.

We have something in common with the Corinthians. We all love the Olympics. But the Corinthians also had the Isthmian games. They were hosted in the spring of the Olympic year and the spring of the second year after the Olympics. What sports were at the Isthmian games? You guessed right if you said foot racing and boxing. So, it appears that the backdrop for Paul's object lesson was the Corinthian's understanding of the events and the rules of the Isthmian games.

The first rule is that all the runners run, but only one runner receives the prize. The games are not "every participant gets a ribbon" games. Only one person wins the victor's prize. That prize was a pine wreath. The runners of the Isthmian games received a crown of pine that would soon perish. Everyone understood this. Then Paul reminded them to both run to win and that when you win, the crown you will receive is an imperishable crown. Paul also brings in the concept of self-control. All through this chapter, you can see Paul's self-control. He controls everything in his life for the sake of the gospel. He is running according to the rules and doesn't let anything stop him from winning. As he says, "I don't run aimlessly." Actually, the Greek word means "uncertainly." Paul knew the rules of the

race; he knew the course. He is not running around haphazardly, just for the sake of running. We shouldn't either.

Then Paul uses a boxing example. He doesn't shadowbox or "beat the air." Paul boxes and runs with purpose. He disciplines his body and keeps it under control. Why? So that after preaching to others, he won't be disqualified. This statement may also be an allusion to the Isthmian games. Participants were disqualified when they didn't train according to the rules. We see this in the Olympics. Some participants will try to circumvent the rules; sometimes, whole countries participate in the attempted deception. The participant is disqualified when things like doping are discovered before the games. It appears that Paul is saying, "Look, I don't want to tell you guys how to run the race and then not do what I tell you to do. I don't want you to participate and put myself in a position to be disqualified."

This is still good advice for each of us today.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Help me run the race faithfully for Jesus. Let me be self-controlled and run with purpose. Let me keep the goal of sharing the Gospel regularly and effectively at the forefront of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Run according to the rules. Discipline your body to give yourself every opportunity to share the gospel with others.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 9 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 9:3. What does it mean to be known by God? How does being known by God impact your life?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. What areas of your life do you need self-control? Read Galatians 5:22-23. What do you learn about self-control from this Scripture? How should this impact the areas of your life where you are lacking self-control? How can you learn to depend on the Holy Spirit, not your willpower?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

WHATEVER YOU DO, DO IT ALL FOR THE GLORY OF GOD.

[31] So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:31

1 CORINTHIANS 10

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

In Chapter 10, Paul transitions from defending his apostleship to warning the believers in Corinth about idolatry. We need to heed his warning, too.

1 CORINTHIANS 10 : 1 - 6

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.

COMMENTARY

No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.
(1 Corinthians 9:27, NIV)

Remember, the first-century Greek language had no chapter and verse numbers. These were added about 1100 years after the last verse of the Bible was written. I mention this because of what Paul has just mentioned in **1 Corinthians 9:27**. •

The need for self-control is not separated from Paul's warning in Chapter 10 regarding idolatry. As you read this chapter, you will see many instances where self-control will help avoid sin. So, look for examples of this as you read.

Paul starts this section of scripture, including the passage we observe today, with a history lesson. Spanish philosopher George Santayana said, "Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it." You can see evidence of this in our culture today. However, Paul's object lesson was from approximately 1400 B.C., the time of Israel's exodus from Egypt. You can see it in our Scripture today in words like "under the cloud," "passed through the sea," "spiritual food" (manna), "spiritual drink" (water from the rock), and "wilderness." Then, Paul reminds the Corinthians of a critical point in Israel's history **(1 Corinthians 10:5)**. •

Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.
(1 Corinthians 10:5, NIV)

We know that only Joshua, the son of Nun, and Caleb, the son of Jephunneh, men from the original Exodus from Egypt, were allowed to enter the promised land with all those who were under 20 years old at the time the people sinned against God. (Numbers 14)

Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did.
(1 Corinthians 10:6, NIV)

Paul then goes on to say what we need to consider deeply **(1 Corinthians 10:6)**. •

This does not mean that God caused the rebellion and sin so that we, and the people from Corinth, would have an example. It means that it actually happened, and if we take the time to look closely at history, we can clearly see an example of what it means when we don't take God at His word and how seriously He takes worshiping something other than the all-powerful, all-knowing, everywhere-present God of the universe.

Tomorrow, we will examine some of the idols they succumbed to and consider how we should live because of their example.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I get caught up in the here and now. Sometimes, I need to look at the good and bad examples recorded in the Scriptures for us to emulate or avoid. Lord, make the lessons of biblical history come alive to me so that I can be the person You want me to be. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We can learn from history's lessons. The entire Bible provides a clear picture of God's character, His expectations, and the consequences of our rebellion.

Yesterday, we reviewed the importance of learning from examples provided to us in biblical history. Today, we will look at some of those examples.

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...will inherit the kingdom of God.
(1 Corinthians 6:9-10, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 10 : 1 - 11

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

COMMENTARY

Our reading today provides four examples from biblical history. We are warned against idolatry, sexual immorality, putting Christ to the test, and grumbling. We will examine them in pairs, beginning with idolatry and sexual immorality. Tomorrow, we will examine putting Christ to the test and grumbling.

You may not have given this much thought. Still, it is interesting to look at how many times idolatry, sexual immorality, or adultery, a form of sexual immorality, are found in close proximity in scripture. You can observe this in the New Testament alone in Galatians 5:19-21, Ephesians 5:5, Colossians 3:5, and Revelation 2:14, 20, and 21:8. And if you don't want to turn a lot of pages you can read it in **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**. •

But the example in our scripture today points to a time in Israel's history that is recorded in the Old Testament in Exodus 32. Here, you will find Moses had been on the mountain with the Lord for an extended period of time. During this time, God gave Moses the Ten Commandments. Down at the foot of the mountain, the people demanded that Aaron, Moses' brother, make them idols that would go before them. Now, think about all that God has done for them. He used 12 plagues to get Pharaoh to let the people go. He provided a Passover so they would be spared the death of the firstborn. He caused Egypt to be plundered so the Israelites would have resources. He parted the Red Sea, provided dry land for them to walk through, closed the sea on the Egyptian army, turned bitter water to sweet, provided manna (bread) from heaven for them to eat, provided water from a rock that would quench the thirst of millions, and delivered

them from the army of the Amalekites. And what do the Israelites do? They build an idol. They commit adultery against the Lord. To help us understand the flippant attitude of the Israelites, Paul quotes part of **Exodus 32:6**. • These people, the Israelites, after all that God had done for them, simply made an idol, worshiped it, and celebrated by eating, drinking, and playing. The Hebrew word for playing, ṣāhaq, means to laugh, mock, play, and make sport with. These people didn't take their new idol any more seriously than they took the God of the universe! It was all about themselves.

Then Paul gives an example of sexual immorality that is, possibly from Jewish history not specifically recorded in the Scriptures. Because of this sexual immorality, twenty-three thousand died in one day. What other illustration do we need to understand that sexual immorality should not be in the life of a believer? Of course, sexual immorality in any form, like the idolatry of the Israelites, is driven by selfish, self-centered desires.
In the end, we are not that much different from the Israelites. Our sin is all about us. That's why we need a Savior—that's why we need Jesus! Using examples from history, Paul reminds us that when Jesus comes into our lives, we are free from sin. He reminds us that we can live differently through the self-control that is provided by the Holy Spirit.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *...they sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry.*
> **(Exodus 32:6, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I will probably never go out and build a golden calf or an idol to sit on a shelf. But, Lord, idols can take other forms in my life. Time, treasure, material possessions, achievements, and many others can replace my time with You and cause me not to do what You ask me to do. Help me! Strengthen me! Let me learn to live fully and completely for You and to keep You in the proper place in my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Idolatry and sexual immorality have no place in the believer's life.

We've been looking at biblical historical examples Paul uses to warn believers in Corinth about the dangers of idolatry. Today, we continue with illustrations of putting Christ to the test and grumbling.

1 CORINTHIANS 10 : 1 - 11

1 For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers and sisters, that our ancestors were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. 2 They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 3 They all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

6 Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. 7 Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." 8 We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. 9 We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. 10 And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. 11 These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.

COMMENTARY

The examples of testing Christ and grumbling are taken from two Old Testament passages in the Book of Numbers. The example of testing Christ is believed to be taken from Numbers 21:4-9. In verse 5, we see that the people spoke against God. After all God had done for them, they still did not trust Him for safety and provision. God doesn't take kindly to their testing Him, and He sends venomous serpents, which bite the people, and many of them die. By the way, the people ultimately repent, Moses prays, and God provides a remedy so they won't die when bitten by the venomous serpents. He has Moses make a serpent and lift it on a pole amid the people. If a person is bitten by one of these venomous serpents, they can look at the serpent on the pole and live. Does this have a familiar ring to it? It should. We are a rebellious people who are always challenging and testing God. The serpent has bitten us, and death is imminent. When we sin, we are separated from God. Rebellion is complete, and the curse of death is on us. But when we repent and turn, in faith, to the Christ lifted on the cross, the effects of sin subside. We are free. We have passed from death to life. We live because of God's provision through Jesus Christ and His sacrifice on the cross in our place.

In addition to testing Christ, we are grumblers. Turn on any talk show, news broadcast, or TV show with those commenting on current affairs, and what do you find, grumblers. Nothing suits them. There is always something wrong, and the focus is on themselves. But let's not be too harsh! After all, we could fill in for many of them quite nicely.
But grumbling against the Lord, that's another matter. Perhaps we need to define the term grumbling. The Greek word is gongyzō. It means to

murmur, mutter, grumble, or say anything in a low tone. It is used in this passage for those who discontentedly complain. The illustration for grumbling Paul uses probably comes from Numbers 16. It is the story of Korah's rebellion. A group of people, led by Korah, were grumbling against Moses, the man God had been using to deliver them. Effectively, they were grumbling against God himself. The story climaxes when God tells Moses to separate himself from Korah and his rebellious group. After he does this, God opens up the earth and swallows Korah, his family, and all the others with him. You would think that's the end of the story. It's not.

The very next day, let me say that again, the very next day the congregation of people started grumbling again, blaming Moses and Aaron for killing the people of the Lord. Once again, they are grumbling against God. In the end, God responds, and 14,700 people die before Aaron stands between death and the people. How seriously does God take grumbling against Him? You decide. Of course, we are fortunate that we live under grace we don't have to worry about being eternally condemned. Because of Jesus' work, however, like in the time of the Israelites, sometimes there are earthly consequences for our testing God and grumbling against Him. Because of the tremendous cost of Christ's sacrifice, God wants us to live Holy lives.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for Your grace. I'm thankful that I do not have to worry about being eternally condemned for my sin because of the redemptive work of Christ. Still, You want me to live a holy life. This is what I want, too. Help me not to test You and grumble against You. You have called me to be holy. Help me live a holy life so that others are drawn to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Testing God and grumbling against Him has no place in the believer's life.

When you run across the word "therefore," you should stop and see what it is there for. This is what we will be examining today.

These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come.
(1 Corinthians 10:11, NIV)

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord. **9** *"As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*
(Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!
(Romans 11:33, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 10 : 12 - 13

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! **13** *No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.*

COMMENTARY

Paul has been using examples from biblical history to warn the Corinthians and us about the dangers of idolatry. Specifically, read what he has just finished saying in **1 Corinthians 10:11**. •

If you take time to read the stories in the Old Testament, you will find that the people involved in idolatry, sexual immorality, putting God to the test, and grumbling thought they were standing firm. They, after all, were the chosen people of God. We can get into this mindset, too. We live in God's grace, after all. We don't always see the immediate consequences of our sins. We know that we should live differently, but we lack the motivation, just like the Israelites of old.

Paul reminds us that it is not just about being a child of God. Being a child of God means we must live like a child, which means doing what He says. Why? Because God's way is the best way. His way is a way of peace, contentment, protection, deliverance, and victory. But it is also a way that we cannot always know **(Isaiah 55:8-9)**. •

Read what Paul, three or four years after penning 1 Corinthians, would write to the church in Rome **(Romans 11:33)**. •

You can rest in the fact that God is enough in any and all circumstances, even in circumstances we don't understand. We may encounter challenging circumstances that we don't think we deserve and see no need for or the good that might be in them, going through desert times when we can't understand His plan and looking at the proverbial sea of trouble before us and wondering why God brought us to it. We may be required to live in the uncertainty of lower story trouble and persecution just because we know He has told us it might happen. However, we are never alone and never without a way to deal with the difficult things in life. We'll look at this tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Your ways are above my ways, and Your ways are beyond finding out. Regardless, I trust You. I trust You to guide me and watch over me. Lord, let me learn from the examples found in the Bible. Let me emulate those who follow You closely and learn from the failures of those who don't. Father, keep molding me to be like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We should rest comfortably in our position in Christ. It is secure because of Him. However, in our lower story walk, we should be mindful of the devil's schemes and take heed lest we fall into sin.

Yesterday, we read Paul's warning to "...be careful that you don't fall." Today, we will come to understand that we are not alone.

When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.

(Genesis 3:6, NIV)

3 The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread." 6 "If you are the Son of God," he said, "throw yourself down. For it is written: "'He will command his angels concerning you, and they will lift you up in their hands, so that you will not strike your foot against a stone.'" 8 Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor. 9 "All this I will give you," he said, "if you will bow down and worship me.

(Matthew 4:3,6,8-9, NIV)

For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world.

(1 John 2:16, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 10 : 12 - 13

12 So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall! 13 No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it.

COMMENTARY

Today, let's just walk through verse 13 and see if we can mine some gold sufficient to protect us from the enemy and allow us to live faithfully for the Lord.

"No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind." You are not special when it comes to facing temptation. There is no temptation that you will ever experience that has not been experienced before. Over the years, I suppose, new things have grabbed our attention. However, the underlying draw to sin remains the same. They are the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. You will find these three areas of temptation in **Genesis 3:6**. ●

You will also find these temptations in the wilderness during Jesus' temptation **Matthew 4:3,6,8-9**. ●

Read what the apostle John says in **1 John 2:16**. ●

You are not special when facing temptation. We all face the same temptations, and it has been this way throughout history.

"God is faithful..." This is the foundation to living rightly for the Lord. God is always faithful. You can trust Him. When temptation is at your door—God is faithful. When you are on cruise control and all is well—God is faithful. When you don't understand—God is faithful.

"...he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear." God is faithful. He will not let you be tempted beyond your ability. That is, you are not facing anything that your ability AND God's faithfulness cannot overcome. If you depend only on your ability, you lose.

"...but when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out..." Think of it this way: God does not tempt us **(James 1:13-15)**. ● However, with each temptation we face, God attaches to it an escape plan. God is faithful. You can trust Him. The escape plan will always be there.

"...that you can endure it." To endure in Greek is the word hypopherō. It means to bear by being under, to bear patiently, to endure. The temptation will, at some point, subside. But until it does, God will give you a way to bear up under it. He is and will be enough. God is faithful. He may

tell you to flee (see verse 14). He may take it away. He may ask you to change friends or places. Whatever He asks you to do, do it. It is the way of escape.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *13 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; 14 but each person is tempted when they are dragged away by their own evil desire and enticed. 15 Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death.*
>
> **(James 1:13-15, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, It seems that my temptations are insurmountable and unbearable. But Your word tells me that they are not more than I can bear and that You are faithful and will provide a way of escape. Show me how to trust Your faithfulness and to see Your provision for overcoming or enduring temptation. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

You are not special. Everyone faces temptation. God is faithful and will provide a way of escape. God will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but you can't depend only on your ability. You must connect it to God's faithfulness.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 10 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 10:12. Are there areas of your life where you have stopped being careful and are starting to fall? What are they? What do you need to do so that history doesn't repeat itself?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:13. Why did we say in the devotional that God's faithfulness is the starting point for escaping temptation? Have you tried to overcome temptation by your own ability? What were the results? How can you make sure to connect your abilities to God's faithfulness?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 10:24 & 31. How might these two verses be connected? What needs to change in your life to live consistently with these two verses?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

WOMAN IS NOT INDEPENDENT OF MAN, NOR IS MAN INDEPENDENT OF WOMAN.

[11] Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.
[12] For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:11-12

1 CORINTHIANS 11

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

What did Paul mean when he said, "Be imitators of me..."? Let's find out.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 : 1 - 16

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

COMMENTARY

32 Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God— 33 even as I try to please everyone in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.
(1 Corinthians 10:32-33, NIV)

Let's do a little housekeeping before we get started.

If you look closely at your Bible, you may find that 1 Corinthians 11:1 is situated on the page where it connects closely to 1 Corinthians 10:33. Most translators believe that verse one of Chapter 11 should be included in Chapter 10. It makes sense. Read what Paul said a few verses earlier in **1 Corinthians 10:32-33**. • "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" fits nicely with these verses. And remember, in the original Greek language of the first century, there were no chapter and verse indicators or punctuation as we know it. Let's look at this verse, regardless of which chapter it belongs to. To understand this verse thoroughly, let's examine three Greek words. All three of these Greek words can be translated as the word "follow." Where the ESV translates one of the words as "imitate," the NIV and the KJV use the word "follow." They are both proper interpretations.

Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will send you out to fish for people.
(Matthew 4:19, NIV)

First, read what Jesus said in **Matthew 4:19**. • The Greek word used is duete. It means come, come now. Jesus used this word when calling His disciples. He intended to get them to go with Him - to follow Him right then.

The second Greek word used for "follow" is akoloutheō. This word means to join or accompany. This word has a significant impact when you consider what Jesus told his disciples and us in **Matthew 16:24**. Jesus invites us, if we want to be His disciples, to deny ourselves and follow Him, even to the point of death. You see, when Jesus said to take up your cross, the disciples in the first century knew precisely what He meant. There was only one purpose for the cross, which wasn't a flippant purpose. The cross was meant to kill. When Jesus uses the word akoloutheō, He asks anyone who calls themselves a disciple to make a commitment so serious that even death will not derail them.

Finally, Paul uses the Greek word mimētēs in **1 Corinthians 11:1**. Paul, throughout this letter so far, has not only told the Corinthians how to live, but he has compared it and often challenged them to his way of life. Paul is not saying, "Follow me instead of Christ." He is not calling the believers at Corinth to come to him and follow him. He is implying, I've told you how I live. I have shown you how to live by my example, so mimic what I do when I follow Christ as long as I am mimicking (mimētēs) what Christ would do. This should prompt us to ask ourselves, "Would I be comfortable having others watch my life and mimic me so they can follow Christ closely?"

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
(Matthew 16:24, NIV)

Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.
(1 Corinthians 11:1, NIV)

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, let me remember that people are always watching how I live. Let my actions be acceptable to You so that others can mimic what I do and follow You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

As you follow Jesus, live consistently so others can mimic your lifestyle and become more like Jesus.

Head coverings? Really? What is this all about? Let's look into this issue today.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 : 1 - 16

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

COMMENTARY

Unfortunately, as we approach Chapter 11, we find out that there are some things in this chapter that people use as a point of contention. It can be used to drive division within the church. Of course, Paul's intent was never to create division in the church. After all, he starts the book of 1 Corinthians, speaking against division. So, as we approach this chapter, our intent should not be to be divisive. In the second verse, Paul states that the Corinthians have been maintaining the traditions he delivered to them. So the question that must be answered is, "Are the traditions that Paul handed down to the Corinthians applicable to us today?"

The first thing we can see in verse two is the Greek word for traditions, paradosis, which means a giving over, done by word of mouth or in writing. So Paul either preached about it while he was in Corinth or wrote about it in some previous letter. But this causes us to ask, "Is this tradition something we should maintain today?" But before we can answer that question, we need to look at another word found in verse 16. Read what Paul says at the very end of the section on head coverings **(1 Corinthians 11:16).**

If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.
(1 Corinthians 11:16, NIV)

The Greek word for practice is synētheia, which means custom. So, we can

see in the verse that there is no other custom in any of the churches except for women covering their heads and men not covering their heads when they are praying or prophesying. But is this enough for us to say we should follow this custom today?

If you are like me, your first thought might go to the kippah or yarmulke worn by Jewish men today. Interestingly enough, this custom didn't start until about 500 A.D., so Paul could not be referring to this head covering. Or, you might think about the scarves or bonnets that Jewish women wear or the hijab that Muslim women wear. But with a bit of research, you will find that nothing in the Old Testament requires either men or women to cover their heads. You will find that in Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures, the woman covering her head was a universally accepted practice. So, it appears that Paul, like Jesus, is taking an example from everyday life in the first-century culture and applying it as an object lesson of biblical truth. Head coverings are not an essential issue. There is freedom in this. We should not expect all women to wear head coverings in the church. Nor should we look down on those women who choose to.

So, if you are a woman, you don't have to wear a head covering. But regardless of whether we are male or female, we do need to appropriately apply the lesson Paul is teaching. We'll start digging into this tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I know You are not surprised by the difficulty we sometimes have in understanding the hard things in scripture. However, You give us the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us. This is what I want as I study this week. Remove any preconceived ideas or agendas, and let me see the truth. For, as Jesus said, "You will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Sometimes, digging a little deeper to understand the truth of Scripture is necessary. Don't make non-essential issues not required for salvation become a point of contention or division in the church.

When Paul uses head coverings as an object lesson, what lesson does he want us to learn?

1 CORINTHIANS 11 : 1 - 16

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. 2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels. 11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

COMMENTARY

Remember, the discussion is about what is going on in the church. It is about the actions of some that affect the lives of others. Paul doesn't want division in the church, and he wants us to understand how to live in unity in the church. Some teachers, preachers, and theologians try to make this passage say more than it does. Some spend all their time on the first ten verses, never resolving the issues found in the last six verses of this first section of the chapter.

Many people get stuck on the phrase, "...the head of the woman is man." This is interesting to me because there is another part of verse 3 that is critical to our understanding of what Paul is teaching. The phrase we should all turn over before we look at the man and the woman is "..and the head of Christ is God." What does this mean, and why is it important for us to think it through? Let's look at some of Jesus' statements to answer this question **(John 5:19, John 15:1-2)**. •

We all know that Jesus is God. This is not in question. But as the Son of Man, Jesus walked the earth fully God and fully man. But in His actions, He was submissive to God the Father. He spoke and did only what the Father gave Him to say and do. We are in Christ. He is the true vine. But the

Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.
(John 5:19, NIV)

1 I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. 2 He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.
(John 15:1-2, NIV)

Father makes all the decisions regarding the branches and the fruit. What we can see in all this is what Paul meant when he said the head of Christ is God.

In both God's design and His redemptive work, He created an effective and God-honoring order. In the church, God is honored when man humbly submits to Christ, his head. God is honored when the wife submits, in humility, to her husband, her head. This does not mean that a woman is not submitted to Christ. It doesn't mean that she is less than a man. It doesn't mean her value is in man. It also doesn't mean that man lords it over his wife, is the final authority, and can mistreat his wife and abuse her. No! This is about unity and worship. By the way, this passage of scripture speaks to both men's and women's worship. Again, in the first-century custom, a man who worships with his head covered dishonors his head. And if a woman worships with her head uncovered, she dishonors her head.

This passage on order is also a passage on humility in worship. However you worship, worship in humility, not abandoning the divine order that God has instituted. This is what some men and women were doing in the first century. But this is not the end of the lesson. We'll finish this up tomorrow.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want to learn to live in humility and obedience as Christ did when He submitted to God the Father. I don't always understand why You have us do what You ask us to do. But I do understand You are good. Help me humble myself before You in worship and become like You in life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God is good. Everything He gives us is for our good. God gave a divine order, and as we live within this divine order, there is a great blessing.

Yesterday, we examined the divine order. Today, we will look at divine interconnectedness.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 : 11 - 16

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. 13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

COMMENTARY

In verses 3-10, Paul discusses divine order and how it matters in worship. Then, in verse 11, Paul uses the word nevertheless. It is like he is saying, "All the stuff I just talked about is important and necessary to know. But regardless of all this, man is not independent of woman, and woman is not independent of man, in the Lord." This critical truth cannot be overlooked in this passage of Scripture.

For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.
(1 Corinthians 11:12, NIV)

In verses 3-10, Paul returns to the garden and shows divine order. Now, after creation, he states the obvious and talks about interconnectedness **(1 Corinthians 11:12)**. •

In verses 11 & 12, it is like Paul understands some of the earthly, cultural objectives of what he has just written. But Paul doesn't say that what he has written is of lesser value. He doesn't say it is not important. He is saying, "Nevertheless," this is also true and must be remembered. Why? Suppose a man doesn't recognize the interconnectedness with the woman in the Lord. In that case, he can not effectively love her as a sister in Christ, love her as a God-honoring husband should love his wife, and lead her in a way that moves them both, and their family, closer to the Lord in a humble, kind, and meaningful way.

Suppose the woman doesn't remember the interconnectedness with man in the Lord. In that case, she will not effectively love him as a brother in Christ, love and support him as a God-honoring wife, and not pull alongside him to accomplish great things for the kingdom.

But perhaps the most powerful statement is,
"But everything comes from God." (1 Corinthians 11:12)

Why do you think this is such an essential part of this passage? Isn't it because all good things originate with God? Isn't it because we, man and woman, husband and wife, are here for the glory of God? What Paul is effectively stating is this: The divine order was instituted and given by God. The interconnectedness in the Lord is from God, too. If we want to experience the fullness of God and we believe that God's way is the best

way, we cannot solve only one side of the equation. We must solve both sides.

The first side of the equation is the divine order and all that it brings to worship and life. The second side is that man and woman are interconnected in the Lord. When we get both of these right, amazing things happen in our worship, our ministry, and our lives. We both, men and women, worship humbly, sincerely, and fruitfully before the Lord, trusting that He knows us better than we know ourselves.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, the Psalmist said, "Search me, O God, and know my heart. Try me and know my thoughts! And see if there is any grievous way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!" Father, when it comes to divine order and divine interconnectedness, search me like the Psalmist asked to be searched. And lead me in the way everlasting. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God is the author of divine order and divine connectedness. Both males and females must live in God's design to experience life to the fullest. God's way is the best way.

We now move from head coverings in worship to the Lord's supper.

1 CORINTHIANS 11 : 17 - 34

17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do
more harm than good. 18 In the first place, I hear that when you come
together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I
believe it. 19 No doubt there have to be differences among you to show
which of you have God's approval. 20 So then, when you come together, it
is not the Lord's Supper you eat, 21 for when you are eating, some of you
go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains
hungry and another gets drunk. 22 Don't you have homes to eat and
drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who
have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in
this matter! 23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you:
The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, 24 and when he
had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you;
do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way, after supper he took
the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this,
whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." 26 For whenever you eat
this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he
comes. 27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in
an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood
of the Lord. 28 Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of
the bread and drink from the cup. 29 For those who eat and drink without
discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves.
30 That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you
have fallen asleep. 31 But if we were more discerning with regard to
ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. 32 Nevertheless,
when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so
that we will not be finally condemned with the world. 33 So then, my
brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together.
34 Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when
you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will
give further directions.

COMMENTARY

As you read 1 Corinthians, remember that Paul is doing everything he can to teach the Corinthians about proper worship and living in unity. Paul started by calling out the Corinthians for choosing leaders to follow and causing divisions in the church. Then, he discussed how hardships are caused by people living in the flesh instead of following the Spirit. He addresses sexual immorality, idolatry, and head coverings. All these things affected either worship or unity. Now, Paul is moving on to another problem in the church that causes division and disunity. The background of this section of Scripture is that instead of the believers gathering together in unity, division was the norm. They would come together for a meal, calling it the Lord's supper. However, Paul said they were not eating the Lord's supper. He gave several reasons why this was the case. First, people were concerned about what they would eat. They went first, not

considering others. He said that someone goes hungry because of this, and others get drunk. You can see Paul's concern when he writes **1 Corinthians 11:22b**. • This is a great lesson. Everything we do as believers in Jesus is a reflection of the church of God. As Paul said, if we are not representing Jesus and His church well, we should not be commended. After telling the believers at Corinth that what they were doing was not the Lord's supper, he tells them the Lord's instructions.

The bread represents Christ's body sacrificed on the cross for you. The cup is the "...new covenant in Christ's blood." God's old covenant with Israel was sealed with the blood of animals. The new covenant is between God and all those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior through faith in Jesus. It was sealed with blood, the blood of the crucified Christ. Read what we are told in **1 Corinthians 11:26**. • Communion is a message of the cross. When we participate in it, according to this passage of scripture, we proclaim the Lord's death. That is, we proclaim the work of Jesus on the cross. We remember that Jesus redeemed us through His death. But there is more to be found in this scripture. If you notice, we "...proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." Here, you see the resurrection. How can He come again unless He is alive? Secondly, you can see the promise that Jesus will return. This is our great hope. Jesus will come for us.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

(1 Corinthians 11:22b, NIV)

For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

(1 Corinthians 11:26, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, It is easy to get in the habit of doing something and forgetting the purpose of why we do it. The next time I take communion, remind me to treat it as an event that proclaims Your death and to remember Your promise of returning to take me home. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The Lord's Supper should not be taken lightly. It is an active form of worship that reminds us of the cross, the resurrection, and Jesus' future return.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 11 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 11:11-12. Now, read Ephesians 5:21-33 and write what you learn about the interconnectedness of the husband and the wife.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 11:20-22. Explain why it matters how you live your life inside and outside the church. Are there areas of your life where you must reconsider how you live? What can you do to change the way you are living?

3. Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Find a spot where you can reflect on the death, burial, resurrection, and return of Jesus, then take communion. You can do this alone or with your family or small group.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

WHETHER JEWS OR GENTILES, SLAVE OR FREE, WE WERE ALL GIVEN THE ONE SPIRIT TO DRINK.

[13] For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:13

1 CORINTHIANS 12

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

We will explore spiritual gifts and the body of Christ this week in Chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 : 1 - 7

1 Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. 3 Therefore I want you to know that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit.

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.

7 Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.

COMMENTARY

I can think of many times when I have heard someone say, "I wish I knew what God's will was for this situation in my life." In all honesty, I've said it too. Now that I have some years of walking with the Lord, I realize this statement doesn't make much sense. After all, if, as believers, we are told to do the will of God (Matthew 7:21), what kind of God would He be if He told us to do His will and then hid His will from us? No, God wants us to know His will. Paul starts Chapter 12 by stating a similar truth **(1 Corinthians 12:1)**. ●

Now about the gifts of the Spirit, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be uninformed.
(1 Corinthians 12:1, NIV)

So, as we jump into Chapter 12, we know right from the start that there is something in these verses that will inform us about spiritual gifts. There are a lot of views concerning spiritual gifts divided by doctrinal lines. So, we want to look closely at the Bible and be faithful in our interpretation of Scripture. The starting point is knowing that we can be informed about this topic. We know this because this is the reason Paul wrote this chapter.

The various components of spiritual gifts are varied, based on Scripture. There is no one-size-fits-all solution for all aspects of spiritual gifts **(1 Corinthians 12:4-6)**. ●

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. 5 There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. 6 There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.
(1 Corinthians 12:4-6, NIV)

You will also notice that the Father (God), Son (Lord), and Holy Spirit (Spirit) are involved in the spiritual gifts. There are various gifts, which Paul will show, and we will discuss them tomorrow. There are a variety of services. The Greek word used here, diakonia, means service or ministering. So, the various gifts are used in various ministries. There are also various activities. The Greek word here is energēma. It is related to our word energy and is translated as to work or to effect.

There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.
(1 Corinthians 12:6, NIV)

So, various gifts are used in various ministries in various ways. Based on verse 6, there is something else we need to know **(1 Corinthians 12:6)**. ●

Here, we can see clearly where the power of the gift comes from. It comes from God, not us! We don't turn the gift on and off; God does. We can't manifest the gift; God does. And the results of using God's gift in us belong to God, too. Read what Jesus says in **John 5:19**.

Why would we think we can conjure up spiritual gifts anytime we want? Why would we believe that when acting in our God-empowered spiritual gift(s), we can contribute more than He? Let's not be uninformed about spiritual gifts.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *Jesus gave them this answer: "Very truly I tell you, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does.*
> **(John 5:19, NIV)**

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I do not want to be ignorant of spiritual gifts. I want to align my beliefs according to the truth of Scripture. Help me understand my gift and how You want to use it. I want to follow You closely in this. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit each play a role in spiritual gifts. There are various gifts, services, and activities. God empowers them all.

Yesterday, we learned about various spiritual gifts, services, and activities. We also learned that the power of the gift comes from God and that God is responsible for the gift. Today, we will continue to learn about spiritual gifts.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 : 8 - 11

8 To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, 10 to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.

COMMENTARY

Everybody wants to run to the list of gifts when studying spiritual gifts. They can't wait to know what their gift is. They try to determine their gift by asking others, taking a spiritual gift inventory online, or figuring it out on their own. This is akin to giving your kid a car before he can drive. Knowing that the vehicle is yours might be fun, but you have no idea how to use it properly. So, before we get to the list of gifts, let's spend more time on foundational things. These things will help you minister within the church appropriately and effectively with your God-given gift(s).
Verse 8 starts, "To one there is given through the Spirit...." This is critical. "For to one..." indicates that the gift, or gifts, is personal. Just because someone else has a gift, you don't get it, too. It doesn't mean you are the only one with a particular gift, but it does mean that the gift you have was given with you in mind.

As you read verses 8-11, you will see statements such as, "...by means of the Spirit...," "...by the same Spirit...," "...by the same Spirit...," "...by that one Spirit...," and "...the work of one and the same Spirit..." Why is this important? It is important because the Holy Spirit assumes front and center stage when it comes to spiritual gifts, their use, and deployment. It is not us! You don't get to turn your gift on and off. You, through your effort, don't decide when is the right time to use the gift. The Spirit does all this. This makes a lot of sense if you think about it. God is omniscient. That is, He knows everything. We are not omniscient, no matter how much we act like we are. Read what the Bible says in **Isaiah 55:8-9**. •

8 "For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways," declares the Lord.
9 "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.
(Isaiah 55:8-9, NIV)

When you serve a God this informed, why would you or I want to be the one who decides when and how our spiritual gift is used? It doesn't make sense.

Your natural talents and abilities are not your spiritual gift. God may use them along with the gift He has given you. However, that talent or ability, while it may be described as God-given, is not a spiritual gift in the strictest sense of the term. Got Questions describes the difference between talents or abilities and spiritual gifts in this way. "A person (regardless of his belief in God or in Christ) is given natural talent as a result of a combination of genetics (some have a natural ability in music, art, or

mathematics) and surroundings (growing up in a musical family will aid one in developing a talent for music) or because God desired to endow certain individuals with certain talents (for example Bazalel in Exodus 31:1-6)."

So, don't confuse your abilities and talents with spiritual gifts. They are not the same thing. In the end, it is the Spirit who "...distributes them to each one, just as he determines." And, the gifts are apportioned to individuals as the Spirit wills for the common good. Spiritual gifts, as well as your abilities and talents, are not given for selfish reasons. They are not for you. They are for others. Spiritual gifts are for the benefit of others in the church.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for the abilities and talents You have given me, and I want to use them for Your kingdom and glory. But You have also given me a spiritual gift for use in the church to build up others. Teach me what I need to know to follow the Spirit in this area of my life. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The Holy Spirit is the one who is front and center regarding giving and empowering us to use the gifts of the Spirit.

To understand spiritual gifts, one must have a proper focus.

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
(Ephesians 4:11-12, NIV)

For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.
(1 Corinthians 12:13, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 12 : 12 - 13

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

COMMENTARY

Let's be clear. The list of spiritual gifts found in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 does not contain every spiritual gift available. There is a lot of debate in theological circles concerning how many spiritual gifts there are. For instance, read **Ephesians 4:11-12**. •

Some theologians argue that apostles, prophets, and evangelists are not people possessing certain spiritual gifts but people who God has called to fulfill a particular office in the church. Then, others focus on the showy gifts to the extent that they rise to the top of the list, where people are considered more spiritual and connected to God if they have them. These gifts include tongues, interpretation of tongues, and the gift of healing.

The problem with spiritual gifts is not just a problem of theologians. It is a problem of personal pride. Many of us look at spiritual gifts as evidence of closeness to God. We act as if we are something special because God chose to use us. We forget that God used a donkey to speak in the Old Testament. (Numbers 22:28-30) Recently, I was having dinner with a gentleman I had just met. We were only a few minutes into the conversation when he discovered I was a pastor. He said, "I don't know what you think about spiritual gifts, but I have spoken in tongues." Honestly, I wasn't thinking about spiritual gifts at that moment and certainly didn't care whether he had spoken in tongues. I have never had dinner with someone who said, "I have the gift of helps."

The point of this discussion is that our focus is wrong. The focus of our discussion on spiritual gifts is on the gifts; it should be on the triune God, particularly the Holy Spirit. And although we pointed this out yesterday, it is worth reviewing. Go back and read verses 4-13 of 1 Corinthians 12 and look for how many times the words Spirit, Lord, or God show up. If you use the NIV, you will find these words twelve times in 10 verses. This should say something to us. Our focus should not be on the gifts but on the giver of the gifts. Of course, we should be willing to be used in whatever gift(s) God has given us. But we must remember that it is the Spirit who empowers the gift. To attempt to use our gift(s) apart from the working of the Spirit of God is to do ministry with pride and arrogance.

As Paul begins his discussion on the body of Christ, he closes this part of his discussion on the gifts of the Spirit with the words of **1 Corinthians 12:13**. •

Regarding our focus on spiritual gifts, this verse points to the True North. There are indeed many members in Christ's body, and it takes all of us to function in unity to represent Christ well. But the catalyst, the motivation, the stimulant behind all we do is the Spirit of God. If we focus on God and listen to His Holy Spirit, the body's needs will be met, Jesus Christ will be shown on the throne of our lives, and a lost and dying world around us will see the hope that Jesus offers them through the cross.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, my prayer today is that I will get out of the way and allow the Spirit of God to control every area of my life, including any gift that You expect me to use for Your glory. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The focus in any discussion on the gifts of the Spirit is the Holy Spirit Himself—not the gifts.

Perhaps there is no other passage of Scripture that contributes more to our understanding of the body of Christ than 1 Corinthians 12:12-31. Today, we will examine verses 12-20.

1 CORINTHIANS 12 : 12 - 20

12 Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 14 Even so the body is not made up of one part but of many.

15 Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 16 And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. 19 If they were all one part, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

COMMENTARY

As you know, the Corinthian church had many issues that Paul needed to deal with. But the common thread flowing through them all was unity being attacked, and division became the reality. There was division because of choosing one teacher over another, tolerating sexual immorality, and suing a brother in court. There was division because of sexual immorality, marriage, and divorce, eating food offered to idols, and putting your rights above the good of others. Head coverings caused division, and so did a selfish approach to the Lord's supper and a misunderstanding of the role of spiritual gifts. Paul, like the Lord Jesus, valued unity, not division. And while discussing spiritual gifts, Paul takes time to give an example of how the body of Christ works. He uses a picture of the human body as an example.

There are two principles involved in the discussion of the human body. First, the individual members cannot leave the body because they don't like the position in which they have been placed. The foot cannot stop being part of the body because it is not a hand. The ear cannot stop being part of the body because it is not an eye. Secondly, if every part of the body were the same, the body would suffer and be both incomplete and ineffective. You can experience this by laying a dime on the table in front of you and picking it up without using your thumb. Opposable thumbs are one of the great examples of a loving God who thought of everything. The consequences of the second principle can be experienced if you are willing to have some fun with someone who calls you. The next time your cell phone rings, accept the call and hold the earpiece up to your eye instead of your ear. I promise you that the call will be a one-sided experience.

If you try both of these experiments, you will find yourself smiling. But, at

this point, you need to remind yourself that Paul is giving you an object lesson. This discussion isn't about our physical body but the body of Christ! The same two examples can be applied to our understanding of the church. You cannot leave the body of Christ with your gift(s) and not hurt the church. This is why attending a church service online is not equal to attending a service in person. You may be encouraged by what you experience online. However, you are not contributing to the overall health of the body of Christ. The local body of Christ cannot and will not operate as effectively and efficiently without you there. The local body of Christ will not be all it can be if you refuse to use your gift(s) in a way consistent with your giftedness. For instance, if you have the gift of helps, you are one of those amazing people who work best in the background, supporting others. Then, the body will suffer if you try to be a leader. And the same is true the other way around. But why is this true? **(1 Corinthians 12:18)**. •

When you don't let others do what God has gifted them to do, or you don't do what God has gifted you to do, you are not living in the Lordship of Jesus. You are being prideful, arrogant, and selfish. "God has placed...as He wanted them to be." Who are we to live as if God doesn't know what He is doing?

But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be.
(1 Corinthians 12:18, NIV)

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, speak clearly to me. Reveal to me the role You have given me in the body of Christ. Let me be content to live in that role and let others live in the role You gave them. Let me find my worth in You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God has arranged the members of the body as He chose. Let Him be the Lord of your life and your giftedness.

Today, we will continue to examine Paul's comparison between the proper functioning of our physical bodies and the proper functioning of the body of Christ.

Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.
(1 Corinthians 12:31a, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 12 : 21 - 31

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head
cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" 22 On the contrary, those parts of
the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, 23 and the parts that
we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts
that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, 24 while our
presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has put the body
together, giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, 25 so that there
should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal
concern for each other. 26 If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if
one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.

27 Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. 28
And God has placed in the church first of all apostles, second prophets,
third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, of helping, of guidance,
and of different kinds of tongues. 29 Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are
all teachers? Do all work miracles? 30 Do all have gifts of healing? Do all
speak in tongues? Do all interpret? 31 Now eagerly desire the greater gifts.

COMMENTARY

Yesterday, we noted that Paul's underlying concern at Corinth was a misunderstanding of how essential unity is to the proper functioning and witness of the body of Christ, the church. In today's scripture, Paul drives this very point home.

Paul's beginning point is that there are no insignificant body members. Every part of the body serves a purpose. He also notes that the parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we look at as having less honor, we bestow greater honor.

Perhaps the little toe will help us to understand. Yesterday, we talked about the great blessing of having opposable thumbs. Today, we ask, "What happens if I lose my little toe?" You know, the little piggy that cried "wee, wee, wee, all the way home." As it turns out, if you lost your little toe, you would find out that your balance, propulsion, and gait are affected. You see, there are no insignificant parts of the body. Every part that God has given us has a purpose. It's true; some like to play the game 'Would You Rather.' Would you rather lose your little toe or one eye? Of course, we would all answer, our little toe. However, we must think a little deeper to understand Paul's point. Paul is not saying that there are no greater gifts and lesser gifts **(1 Corinthians 12:31a)**. •

No, Paul is saying that every member of the body of Christ has a purpose within it. And when our lesser gifted members are hurt, every other gifted body member is affected. It is also true that a person who is missing a thumb may not feel like the thumb is necessary until they trip and try to grab something to catch their balance. In the church, seemingly

insignificant gifts go unnoticed until they are needed.

In this discussion, Paul points out that every member of the body of Christ matters and has a purpose. Everyone suffers when someone is hurt and rejoices when other members are honored. There is one more truth we need to look at. When it comes to the physical body, we often point to the words of **Psalm 139:13-14**, • which reminds us of God's intimate involvement in our creation.

And this example holds true for the body of Christ as well. God is in charge. This is why we must live in unity in the church. We cannot ignore others. We cannot disparage the body of Christ **(1 Corinthians 12:24b)**. • Not us!

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *13 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
> *14 I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well.*
> **(Psalm 139:13-14, NIV)**

> *But God has put the body together...*
> **(1 Corinthians 12:24b, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for composing the body of Christ to be effective for Your glory. Give me compassion for others. Help me remember to rejoice when they rejoice and suffer alongside them when they suffer. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We need each other. We need to honor one another and rejoice when they are honored. And we need to suffer alongside those who are suffering.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 12 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-7. Look closely at the words Spirit, Lord, and God. This is an example of the trinity in scripture. Reflect on the connection of each member of the trinity to spiritual gifts. What conclusions can you come to?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 12:11. How many spiritual gifts are empowered by the Holy Spirit? Who is the most crucial prayer in the administration and use of spiritual gifts? Who is it that has given you your spiritual gift?

3. According to 1 Corinthians 12:7, what is a spiritual gift? (Hint: It is not the same as a gift). What are spiritual gifts used for? Are spiritual gifts given to us for personal use or selfish ambition? Why is it important to know these things?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE. BUT THE GREATEST OF THESE IS LOVE.

[13] And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:13

1 CORINTHIANS 13

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

This week, we will look at one of the most quoted chapters in the Bible.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 1 - 3

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

COMMENTARY

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8 Love never fails.
(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a, NIV)

You rarely go to a wedding where the first eight verses of 1 Corinthians 13 are not quoted or referenced. They are fitting verses for such an occasion. They are poetic and strum at the heartstrings of our emotions. They are words full of hope, expectation, and anticipation. As we watch the one we love get married, we long for them to experience the kind of love described in these verses **(1 Corinthians 13:4-8a)**. •

But as is often the case with Scripture, there is more to the story. As is frequently said, context is king, and these verses are part of a larger context.

Have you noticed that the real lessons are often in negative statements rather than positive statements? This is the case in the first three verses of Chapter 13. The words, "But do not have love..." ring like a warning as clear as an old church bell used to ring on Sunday mornings. It speaks of the priority, frequency, and depth of love a believer in Jesus Christ must have in their lives.

We are told that a believer in Jesus may speak like men or angels. They may tell the future and have great wisdom and discernment. Perhaps they have great faith that can be the catalyst for amazing things happening, or they may be the most selfless, generous person on earth. They may even be willing to offer their bodies to be burned, and something could still be missing.

For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.
(1 Corinthians 3:11, NIV)

As you read these three verses, it becomes apparent that it is not the spiritual gift that a person has that is the most important thing. No! Paul says that love is the foundation upon which all things must be laid. Why? Because God is love. There is no other foundation upon which we can build. You might remember this verse from Chapter 3 of 1 Corinthians **(1 Corinthians 3:11)**. •

Paul has just finished a section on spiritual gifts and the body of Christ. Now, he takes the time to write this eloquent, poetic passage of scripture about love. It is as if he is drawing attention to it. He will go on to speak more about spiritual gifts. But is it essential to see that this passage of scripture is not separate from the gift discussion, although it has many applications in life. If you look closely, you can see spiritual gifts in this

passage. They include the gift of tongues, prophecy, discernment, knowledge, and faith. However, the words, "But do not have love..." ring the loudest. Love! The kind of love described in this chapter is the primary characteristic of a true believer in Jesus.

What drives you? Is it your passion for being used by God? Is it the giftedness you bring to the table? Is it the sacrifice that you are willing to make? All these have a place in your life. But if they are not driven by love, we are not being who God expects us to be.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I want my life to matter for You. I want to represent You well. To do this, my thoughts, words, and actions must be driven by love. Let me live so close to You that my love for people is Your love for them, too. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God is love. If we will represent Him well, everything we do and say must be driven by love.

Yesterday, we saw how love is the foundation for believers. Today, we will see what we are like without love.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 1 - 3

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

COMMENTARY

Much has been made in theological circles about what Paul meant when he wrote about speaking in tongues of angels. Is there a heavenly language, a prayer language in another tongue? However, focusing on this means missing this passage's larger, more significant point.

The great emphasis should be on "If I speak...without love." It doesn't matter whether it is a language you know or don't know. You are a noisy gong or clanging cymbal if you speak without love. Now, there is nothing wrong with a gong or a cymbal. They both have specific uses in music and culture. Initially, the gong was used to announce the arrival of a spiritual or political leader or dignitary. Later, the gong started being used in music. If you take a cymbal and randomly walk around the house beating it, you would be chastised for making a bunch of noise. However, using a cymbal at the proper time in a symphony ignites emotions and expectations. However, in verse 1, Paul implies that if you don't speak with love, your words are out of place, and you make a bunch of useless noise. Next, Paul talks about prophetic powers, understanding all mysteries, and all knowledge. He adds to this, possessing a faith that can move mountains. And what is the result of possessing all these gifts if you don't have love? Paul says, "I am nothing." Think about this. We all want to have value. Walk through the aisles of any bookstore, and you will see volume after volume of books that offer to help improve your self-worth. But the scriptures remind us that we are nothing if we don't have love. Love is the basis for all things in life.

Finally, Paul doubles down. You can be the most generous person in the world. You can give away everything that you have. You can even offer your body up to death. But there is nothing for you to gain if you don't do it in love. It's true; we all like to get to verses 4-8 in this chapter. They are beautiful, poetic, even melodic. However, in life, you will never get to the beauty of love until you understand the importance of love. You won't see the fruit of love until you firmly abide in the vine of love, Jesus. If we are honest with ourselves, we write ourselves too many passes. We explain away our need to live in love because of our hurts and pain. For the believer, this is not an option. According to this passage of Scripture, we are nothing and gain nothing if love is missing. Instead, we go through life making noise that irritates people and causes them to resist the gospel of Jesus.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, help me to abide in Your love. Then, let me focus Your love toward others, even those who have caused me harm and pain. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

There is no exception for the believer in Jesus Christ. We are called to love always. The love that we, as believers have flows from the cross of Christ.

Love is...

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 1 - 8A

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails.

COMMENTARY

Maybe you sit at a wedding—alone. Perhaps you sit there with a spouse—alone. Then, you hear the words of **1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**.

You might ask yourself, "I wonder if I will ever experience love like that?" Or, "I wish my spouse loved me like that. " When we hear these verses, we deeply desire to experience this kind of love, and for good reason.

Instilled in each one of us is a desire to know God. And when you know God, you see this kind of love.

When you see the cross of Jesus and what it cost Him to pay for your sins, an honest evaluation will have you make the following declaration. "God is patient and kind to me. He doesn't envy because He has everything. He doesn't boast about being worthy of praise but is worthy of praise. He's not arrogant, yet there is no one greater than He. He's not rude. He doesn't come bombarding His way into my life. He doesn't insist on His way. I can choose not to follow Him. But His way is the best way and the only way to a relationship with Him. He is not irritated by my actions; He is above that. He knows I am weak and loves me despite my fragility. Still, He doesn't rejoice at my wrongdoings. He does rejoice in truth. His word is truth. He bore all my sins, He believes all truth, He is the hope in which all things exist, and He endured all the pain, suffering, and consequences of my sin so I can be with Him. Finally, His love is eternal. It will never end.

But, as you sit at a wedding listening to these words, what is your spouse or former spouse thinking? What is your son, daughter, or friend thinking? Perhaps the question we should ask ourselves when we hear or read this passage of scripture is, "How am I doing at loving others? Am I patient and kind? Do I not envy or boast? Am I humble and polite instead of arrogant and rude? Do I insist on my way? Am I irritable and resentful? Do I enable

those in my life to keep doing wrong, or do I rejoice in the truth?

This poetic passage tells us about Jesus' love, informs us about what He has done for us, and provides a barometer for examining our lives to help us see if we are representing Him and His love well.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for Your great love for me. As I abide in you, produce the fruit of love in my life so others can see Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The love described in this passage is the standard for all believers in our relationships.

In the Christian life, there is an expectation of maturity.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 8 - 11

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

COMMENTARY

The context of today's verses are love. We know this because of the bookends—the parenthesis found in verses 8 and 13. "Love never fails...the greatest of these is love." Everything in between must be considered in light of love. There are many theological debates centered around the verses between the parenthesis, and we won't try to solve the debates that have gone on for hundreds and hundreds of years. But, as a preacher friend of mine said, "We can argue about the things we don't understand, or we can focus and act upon the things we do understand." This is good advice. It doesn't mean we shouldn't study and come to some conclusions about the hard things. We should. But when it comes to faithfully living out the Scriptures in our lives, we can easily understand and apply plenty of things. Verse 11 is one of those verses.

We have all seen them. Grown men and women who speak, think, and reason as a child. Men and women at 40, 50, and 60 (maybe older) make decisions or say things that hurt themselves and others because they have never matured as they should. But let's be clear. No one gets things right 100% of the time. However, a two-year-old's decisions are expected to make messes. Someone who is in their teens is held to a higher standard. And the standard gets even higher by the time we are in our twenties, thirties, and forties. Paul is saying that he gave up childish things when he became a man. We don't want to miss a couple of things in this statement. First, there is an expectation of growth **(1 Corinthians 13:11)**.

When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.

(1 Corinthians 13:11, NIV)

Here, we see Paul's expectation that the boy child would become a man. However, this can be applied to women as well. You are not concerned if you have a six-month-old who is not talking or walking. But you know something is wrong if you have a two-year-old who is not talking or walking. They are not maturing physically as they should. Your expectations of the six-month-old are different than those of the two-year-old. The same is true spiritually. A new believer, a babe in Christ, will make messes. They will say and do things inconsistent with a believer's way of life. We shouldn't be surprised when this happens. Then, there are those in the church who profess to be believers for years and years, and they still make childish errors and cause division. Why? Because they have never matured in love.

If you go back and read verses 4-8a in Chapter 13, you see the love of a

mature believer in Christ. Again, none of us get it perfect. But as we mature spiritually, our love should grow to the point that we have a mature love for others.

The second thing you will notice is that mature decisions are required to become mature **(1 Corinthians 13:11b)**. •

What decisions do you need to make to give up childish ways?

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me.
(1 Corinthians 13:11b, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, are there areas where I still act childish in my life? If there are, expose them to me so that I can choose to give up childish things. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We are expected to grow spiritually. To do this, we must love as Jesus loved and make decisions based on mature spiritual thought and reason.

Do faith, hope, and love abide forever? Let's find out.

1 CORINTHIANS 13 : 1 - 13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. 2 If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing. 3 If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5 It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6 Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7 It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

8 Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, 10 but when completeness comes, what is in part disappears. 11 When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put the ways of childhood behind me. 12 For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

13 And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.

For now we see only a reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
(1 Corinthians 13:12, NIV)

COMMENTARY

To fully grasp the meaning of verse 13, we need to spend a few minutes on verse 12 **(1 Corinthians 13:12)**. •

This is such a great passage of scripture. It speaks of a time when we will see Jesus clearly. No matter how hard we look at the Bible, pray, or worship the Savior, we see Him only through faith. Of course, we sense His presence because of the Holy Spirit and hear Him clearly when the Spirit speaks. But there will be a time when we will see Him. We will know Him better than we can know Him now. Also, in verse 12 is the great truth that we, right now, are fully known by God. This should be a great encouragement to us, no matter what is happening in Your world. Amid struggle or blessing, pain or joy, peace or turmoil, God the Father is fully aware and knows the circumstances and you.

So why is this important to our understanding of verse 13? Great question.

Verse 12 deals with a future time when Jesus will return, and we will be with Him. This is called eschatology in theological circles. Knowing how verse 12 fits with verse 13 will help us figure out how faith, hope, and love abide, but the greatest is love.

This passage of scripture is true for the life we live now. Now, we must have faith. But there is coming a time when our faith will become sight. Now, we have hope in Christ. It is not a hope, as in, "I hope I win the lottery." That kind of hope has a measure of uncertainty. The hope we have in Christ has no uncertainty. Our hope for salvation is firmly placed in Jesus Christ. And while we, through faith, have already passed from death to life **(John 5:24)**, we will realize our salvation when Jesus returns for us.

So, faith and hope are things that we need now. We need them for this life. We don't need them for the life to come with Jesus. We won't need to see by faith when we can look at Him in person. We won't hope for our salvation because we will be experiencing it in reality. But love? Love is eternal. We have the love of God now, and we will live in the love of God in our future home with Him. Love never ends. (13:8) Love is eternal because God is love **(1 John 4:16)**.

So, faith, hope, and love abide even now. But the greatest of these is love because love will never end.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

"Very truly I tell you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life and will not be judged but has crossed over from death to life.

(John 5:24, NIV)

And so we know and rely on the love God has for us.

God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God, and God in them.

(1 John 4:16, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I am grateful for a faith that allows us to experience the presence of Jesus and trust You in all things. I am thankful for the hope of the return of Christ when my salvation is realized. But I am excited that I will live in Your love for eternity. Thank you. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We live in faith, hope, and love now, and we will live in love for eternity because God is love.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 13 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Which devotional this week impacted you the most, and why? What action do you need to take this week?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7. Take each descriptor of love in this passage and reflect on how Jesus has loved you. (i.e., Love is patient. God waited for me to...)

3. Read 1 Corinthians 13:11. Are there still areas in your life where you tend to be childish? What are they? Who can you go to to confess this issue? What can you do to put away childish things?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

YOUR GIFTS SHOULD BUILD UP THE CHURCH.

[12] So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

1 CORINTHIANS 14:12

1 CORINTHIANS 14

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

Speaking in tongues is a hot topic for many people and can divide believers. As we work through Chapter 14, we will not debate the nuances of the gift of tongues. Instead, we will focus on clearly understood but often overlooked things.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 : 1 - 5

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. 4 Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

COMMENTARY

The first noticeable thing we see in our passage of scripture today is the words "follow the way of love." Of course, this ties our passage today with Chapter 13, the love chapter. Remember, there were no chapter and verse numbers in the original letter. Paul has just spent an entire chapter describing love, and now, at the beginning of Chapter 14, he tells the reader to pursue it.

44 But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, 45 that you may be children of your Father in heaven.
(Matthew 5:44-45a, NIV)

What does the pursuit of love look like in your life? Have you given it much thought? If not, you should. God is love, and if we will represent Him well, we must be loving individuals. The mark believers must leave on the world around us is a love so great and selfless that Jesus is clearly seen. We may be considered loving by those closest to us, but how would the stranger describe us because of a brief interaction with them? A more difficult question might be, do our enemies know we love them? Look at what Jesus said in **Matthew 5:44-45a**.

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy.
(1 Corinthians 14:1, NIV)

When Paul tells us to follow the way of love, it is no small thing in our personal lives and the church. In Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians, Paul uses the Greek word ekklēsia nine times. This is not insignificant when correctly applying this chapter. Ekklēsia is an assembly of people. Specifically, the word is used in the New Testament to refer to the assembly of Christians gathered for worship. So, when Paul tells the reader to follow the way of love, he reminds them to follow the way of love in the ekklēsia, the assembly of the church during worship.

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
(1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV)

In **1 Corinthians 14:1**, Paul is saying that a spiritual gift, properly used, will be used in love for the good and the benefit of others. It should not be used selfishly and for personal benefit. This is consistent with Paul's words in Chapter 12 **(1 Corinthians 12:7)**.

I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy.
(1 Corinthians 14:5, NIV)

But wait, it seems that Paul wants everyone to speak in tongues. After all, look at **1 Corinthians 14:5**.

Does this mean that we should all have the gift of tongues? No, it does

not. If you reflect for a minute on the closing of Chapter 12, Paul asks several rhetorical questions, and all of them are answered: no. Two questions are, “Are all prophets?” and “Do all speak in tongues?” The answer is, as stated above, “No.” Let me give you an example to help you see what Paul means.

I have been to Myanmar three times. I want all of you to go, but even more for you to financially support the missionaries there. Is it possible that God would allow you to go to Myanmar? Yes, it is. This would be consistent with my desire for everyone to go. Can all of you give financially to this mission? The answer to this is no. However, if you financially supported the indigenous missionaries already working there, you would have a more significant impact on the ekklēsia, the assembly of believers, in Myanmar.

Paul is not condemning the gift of tongues. He is saying that in the ekklesia, the assembly, this gift is not as beneficial as the gift of prophecy. That is, to speak forth the divine will, to interpret the purposes of God, or to make known in any way the truth of God, which is designed to influence people.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today’s passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God’s Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, above all, help me love others. In the church, let me use the gift(s) You gave me to build others up, not myself. In Jesus’ name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Pursue love. Spiritual gifts are for the building up of the ekklēsia, the assembly of believers.

Sometimes, we miss the obvious. Today, we will look at obvious things that shed light on our understanding of speaking in tongues in the church.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 : 1 - 5

1 Follow the way of love and eagerly desire gifts of the Spirit, especially prophecy. 2 For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people but to God. Indeed, no one understands them; they utter mysteries by the Spirit. 3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort. 4 Anyone who speaks in a tongue edifies themselves, but the one who prophesies edifies the church. 5 I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified.

COMMENTARY

Yesterday, we mentioned the word ekklēsia, the assembly of gathered believers for worship. The context of Chapter 14 of 1 Corinthians is narrow. Paul has mentioned many gifts in the last few chapters. Now, in Chapter 14, he will narrow the focus to two gifts: tongues and prophecy. Many, when they read Chapter 14, start looking for the mysterious. They want to know what tongues are and what they are not. They want to see if they are still available today. Pursuing an understanding of all these things is worthy. However, before trying to find an answer to the mysterious, let's first observe the obvious.

As mentioned on Day 1 this week, the Greek word ekklēsia occurs nine times in Chapter 14. This is significant. The word ekklēsia means an assembly—an assembly of Christians gathered for worship. By frequently using the word ekklēsia, Paul specifically set the context of this chapter in the gathering of believers for worship. We can think about a Sunday morning worship service or a small group gathering in a home for worship. Keeping this in mind, we can know several things.

First, "...anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to people, but to God" (v2). When believers are gathered, Paul's concern is that other believers would be able to understand the things of God. When speaking in tongues, Paul says, "...no one understands them..." (v2)

Second, Paul says this is not the case when someone speaks a prophecy. When a prophecy is given, it is spoken to "...people for their strengthening, encouraging, and comfort." (v3) By the way, the prophecy here is not foretelling; it is forth-telling. It is not about predicting the future or giving some new revelation. It is about expounding upon and proclaiming the Word of God. So many of us think about the benefits that we get personally from being in church. Yes! That is important. Fewer of us think about the impact we have on others while we are at church. We must build people up, encourage them, and comfort them. Many people have said, "I got in the habit of watching the worship service online during Covid. I get a lot out of it. So, I have made the decision that I would rather

watch online. What are they missing? They are missing out on the fact that when they are not at church, the church cannot be impacted by them.

The third thing is that the one who speaks in tongues, in the ekklēsia, builds themselves up. The one who prophesies builds up the church. (v4)

Finally, we see that one who speaks in tongues must have someone to interpret. When tongues are spoken and interpreted, then there may be a benefit to the church (ekklēsia). Why? Because others can understand. The life of the believer is meant to be selfless. We are meant to look like Jesus. Our worship in the collective gathering of believers should be selfless, too. We should benefit and bless other believers who worship with us.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I often enter worship wondering what You will do for me. I rarely think about how You can use me to build up, encourage, or console others. Let me be sensitive to the Spirit of God and worship in a way that impacts those around me. If I pursue You this way, You will always be enough for me. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Worship in the church in a way that strengthens, encourages, and comforts others.

Yesterday, we saw Paul explain why prophecy is greater than tongues. Today, we examine Paul's illustration for this point.

I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be edified..

(1 Corinthians 14:5, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 14 : 6 - 12

6 Now, brothers and sisters, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or word of instruction? 7 Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the pipe or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? 8 Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? 9 So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air. 10 Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. 11 If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker is a foreigner to me. 12 So it is with you. Since you are eager for gifts of the Spirit, try to excel in those that build up the church.

COMMENTARY

What is it like when someone speaks in tongues in the church? We don't have to guess! Paul illustrates this with musical instruments. Have you ever heard an elementary student play a woodwind instrument for the first time? If you haven't, you have missed some great entertainment. Don't believe me? Borrow a flute, clarinet, or oboe and give it a try. If you make any sound with it at all, it will be, at best, more air than music. At worst, the instrument will honk like geese flying overhead on a cool fall morning. While the sound of the geese is beautiful in the wild, it isn't very pleasant if it happens in the middle of Beethoven's 5th Symphony.

What does all this have to do with speaking in tongues in the assembly (ekklēsia) of believers? According to Paul, it is the same as an instrument that doesn't make a distinct sound. There is no purpose of tongues in the assembly of believers since the person speaking speaks to God (vs. 2), and they cannot be understood unless someone is there to interpret (vs. 5).

In this chapter of 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses the issues of love, unity, and building up the church. He uses speaking in tongues and prophecy to show that when it comes to spiritual gifts, regardless of what gift it is, they should be used in a way that clearly expresses the love of Christ, brings unity and not division to the church, and builds up individuals in the church so they become more like Jesus.

Remember, we are not trying to solve every issue regarding speaking in tongues. We are focusing on the ekklēsia, the assembly of believers for worship. In this sense, we can see that tongues play a much lesser role than other gifts. Unfortunately, many have abused this passage of scripture. In many churches around the country, the norm is that someone in the assembly will give a message in an unknown language. Then, they interpret what they just said, saying that God has given them the gift of interpretation, too. When this is done, checks and balances disappear.

Read how Paul combats this in **1 Corinthians 14:5**. •

There is other support for the person speaking in tongues and someone with the gift of interpretation of tongues being different people **(1 Corinthians 12:10b; 1 Corinthians 14:27-28)**. • However, the crucial words in 1 Corinthians 14:5 are not prophesies, tongues, or interpret. We should focus on the critical words "...that the church may be edified." If, as members of the body of Christ, we can grasp this truth, our ekklesia would be a place that we go, and when we walk away, we are edified, and we have used our gifts to build others up.

Paul also gives another example that those who have traveled outside the country can understand. He acknowledges that there are many different languages in the world and they all have meaning. However, he says that if he doesn't know the meaning of the language, he will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker to him. When I am in Myanmar, the churches there call me Mawpaw Walt. When I first went on a trip there, I understood the word Walt but had no idea why they called me Mawpaw. Later, I learned that they were saying, Pastor Walt. As you can imagine, Mawpaw is now an endearing term to me. What made the difference? Understanding. Once I understood the words, I was built up. This is Paul's point. In whatever gift you have, strive to excel in building up the church.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to still another the interpretation of tongues.
(1 Corinthians 12:10b, NIV)

27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.
(1 Corinthians 14:27-28, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, instill in me the desire to build others up in You. Let me use my giftedness, empowered by the Holy Spirit, to minister to others. But Lord, let me be humble enough to let others, in their giftedness, build me up so that I become more like Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Whenever you join the assembly of believers, strive to use your gift to build others up. Also, allow others who are gifted differently than you to build you up.

It may seem like we are repeating the same material. However, we should ask ourselves, "Why does Paul keep repeating the same advice?"

1 CORINTHIANS 14 : 13 - 25

*13 For this reason the one who speaks in a tongue should pray that they
may interpret what they say. 14 For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays,
but my mind is unfruitful. 15 So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit,
but I will also pray with my understanding; I will sing with my spirit, but I
will also sing with my understanding. 16 Otherwise when you are praising
God in the Spirit, how can someone else, who is now put in the position of
an inquirer, say "Amen" to your thanksgiving, since they do not know what
you are saying? 17 You are giving thanks well enough, but no one else is
edified.*

*18 I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. 19 But in the
church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than
ten thousand words in a tongue.*

*20 Brothers and sisters, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be
infants, but in your thinking be adults. 21 In the Law it is written:*

*"With other tongues
and through the lips of foreigners
I will speak to this people,
but even then they will not listen to me,
says the Lord."*

*22 Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy,
however, is not for unbelievers but for believers. 23 So if the whole church
comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or
unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? 24
But if an unbeliever or an inquirer comes in while everyone is
prophesying, they are convicted of sin and are brought under judgment
by all, 25 as the secrets of their hearts are laid bare. So they will fall down
and worship God, exclaiming, "God is really among you!"*

COMMENTARY

Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good.
(1 Corinthians 12:7, NIV)

But in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue.
(1 Corinthians 14:19, NIV)

If we remember that the original letter didn't include chapters and verses, we can see that Paul's greatest concern is for the gathering of believers, the ekklēsia. This thought starts in **1 Corinthians 12:7**. • Paul is still striking this drum as we work through Chapter 14. In the ekklēsia, see what Paul says in **1 Corinthians 14:19**. • You can see Paul's great concern for the church. Five words clearly thought out versus ten thousand words that cannot be understood. His point is clear. Think about others first! Ensure that anything you do in the church that results from the gifts God has given you is for the common good. That it is suitable for building others up.

In verses 22 and 23, Paul says some things that are often overlooked. Yet, we must closely examine what he says to ensure we follow his advice

thoroughly **(1 Corinthians 14:22a)**. • Let's think this through. The gift of tongues is not about the ekklēsia, the gathering of believers. It is, according to Paul, a sign for unbelievers. In Chapter 14, verse 5, Paul writes, "...so that the church may be edified." In Chapter 14, verse 12, he writes, "...try to excel in in those that build up the church." In Chapter 14, verse 19, he writes, "...in the church I would rather speak..." So, by Paul's admission, the gift of tongues offers no benefit to the congregation of believers unless they are interpreted. Because Paul says that tongues are a sign for unbelievers, the gift of tongues in the ekklēsia would only be beneficial if unbelievers were present and could understand what was being said. They would have to understand the language when the speaker couldn't, or a proper interpretation would have to be given. But there's more, Paul also writes these words that we don't pay enough attention to **(1 Corinthians 14:23)**. •

So, on the one hand, tongues are for unbelievers. On the other, if unbelievers come into the assembly, and tongues are being spoken without having an interpreter, the unbelievers think the people of the church are nuts. So, what does Paul see as the better choice? Prophecy. The expounding upon God's word. When this is done, unbelievers are convicted, the Holy Spirit reveals the secrets of their hearts, and they repent and come to God.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

Tongues, then, are a sign, not for believers but for unbelievers
(1 Corinthians 14:22a, NIV)

So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and inquirers or unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind?
(1 Corinthians 14:23, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I don't want to major in the minors. I don't want to keep people from hearing the Gospel message and coming to faith in Jesus. As I assess the spiritual gift You have given me, let me be faithful to stay in step with the Spirit and to use this gift to build the church up and see others come to Jesus. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Tongues are a sign for unbelievers, not for believers. If they are not interpreted, unbelievers may think the people in the church are out of their minds. The better choice is to expound upon the Word of God so that the unbeliever comes to a saving faith in Jesus Christ.

As we close Chapter 14, we will examine three principles that Paul provides for ensuring an orderly worship service.

1 CORINTHIANS 14 : 26- 40

26 What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up. 27 If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at the most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. 28 If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and to God.

29 Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace—as in all the congregations of the Lord's people.

34 Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says. 35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

36 Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? 37 If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. 38 But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.

39 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. 40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

COMMENTARY

As we approach the last section of Chapter 14, we see some tough things that deserve thought and study. It is always worth spending time in the Word of God, digging deep for the gold within. But as you study this section of Scripture, don't miss the three underlying principles that hold everything together like glue. The first principle is one that Paul has spoken of many times in this letter **(1 Corinthians 14:26b)**. ●

If you were going to pick a theme that flows throughout the first 14 chapters of this letter, building others up might be that theme. It is a principle that, if understood and practiced by every believer in the church, would change everything. There would be peace among brothers and sisters in Christ, and unbelievers watching the church would be drawn to it instead of repelled by it. If you are going to build others up, you must love them. And it is love that identifies us as disciples **(John 13:35)**. ●

Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.
(1 Corinthians 14:26b, NIV)

By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."
(John 13:35, NIV)

The second principle reminds us of Who God is and how our worship services should be conducted **(1 Corinthians 14:33a)**.

Our worship services should not confuse the believer or the unbeliever. We should worship in a way that unbelievers are brought face to face with the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ, our Savior. And the believer should worship in the peace that flows from the cross of Christ because a sinner was reconciled with God. How we live and worship matters. God is not a God of confusion! Why should our worship service confuse anyone? In another letter, Paul wrote these words **(Philippians 4:9)**.

Finally, there is one last principle—the principle of decency and order **(1 Corinthians 14:40)**.

When it comes to the proper use of spiritual gifts in the church (ekklēsia), the execution of these gifts should be done decently. The Greek word is euschēmonōs and is only used three times in the New Testament. The two times it is used outside of our passage, it is translated honestly. Here, it indicates that the execution of spiritual gifts in the assembly should not be done willy-nilly. They should be used honestly, decently, and with order. In other words, spiritual gifts used in the assembly have a place. And they should not be used to create chaos, confusion, or a lack of peace.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.
(1 Corinthians 14:33a, NIV)

Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.
(Philippians 4:9, NIV)

But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.
(1 Corinthians 14:40, NIV)

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, as I learn more about how You intend to use me and the spiritual gift You have given me, help me to remember these principles so that others will not be driven away but drawn to You. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Spiritual gifts should be used to build others up and create peace, and they should be performed in a decent and orderly manner.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 14 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1.) What are ways spiritual gifts can build up others?

2.) When have you been encouraged by the spiritual gift of another believer? Why was it impactful? How did it strengthen your faith?

3.) We looked at three principles towards the end of Chapter 14. Let all things be done for building up. God is not a God of confusion but peace. And all things should be done decently and in order. What benefit will the church experience when following these principles?

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

BAD COMPANY CORRUPTS GOOD CHARACTER.

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:33-34

1 CORINTHIANS 15

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

Sometimes, the verses we read seem almost insignificant. Then, we experience the truth. All Scripture is God-breathed.

1 CORINTHIANS 15 : 1 - 11

1 Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. 2 By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.

3 For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. 6 After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, 8 and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born.

9 For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. 10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me. 11 Whether, then, it is I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed.

COMMENTARY

Have you ever wished you had someone else's story? A better testimony, less baggage, or the ability to communicate like someone else? At times, we all have. However, the verse we focus on today helps us see ourselves as Jesus sees us and as we should see ourselves.

Paul has just finished explaining that more than 500 people witnessed Jesus' resurrection. As John reminds us in his letter, Jesus was seen, touched, examined, and heard by more than 500 believers. (1 John 1:1-3) Now, Paul reminds his readers that he, too, saw Jesus after His resurrection.

As Paul explains himself, you get the sense that he sees himself as less than the other believers. He uses words such as, "...last of all He appeared to me...," "...one abnormally born...," "...least of the apostles..." and "...do not deserve to be called an apostle." We've all been there, when something triggers the memories of our past. We slip into sadness, remembering the truth about ourselves before we came to Christ. Sin and mistakes from the past slip in, at least for the moment, and haunt us.

Paul was indeed abnormally born if the target in sight is being a physical witness to the resurrection. It is also true that Paul persecuted the church. He wasn't the only one who thought he was unworthy to be an apostle. Ananias balked at being in Paul's presence when the Lord called him to go and pray for him. **(Acts 9:13-14, NIV)** •

13 "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. 14 And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name."

(Acts 9:13-14, NIV)

Yes, from an earthly point of view, Paul was a mess, and we can say the same things about our lives before Christ. After looking back at his shortcomings, Paul, in verse 10, acknowledges the value that God has placed in him. **(1 Corinthians 15:10, NIV)** •

The same is true for you and me. There would have been no change in our story. "But by the grace of God..." We would have been left in our sin and hopelessness. "But by the grace of God..." It is what made the difference in Paul's life and yours. You didn't deserve grace. You deserved favor to be withheld. You didn't deserve mercy. You deserved judgment. You didn't deserve to be forgiven or reconciled with God. You deserved eternal separation from God. *"But by the grace of God..."*, you have been made new.

But there's more. Paul said that the grace God showed him was not in vain. He worked hard. Even then, he says that it wasn't him but the grace of God that was with him. We often think of grace concerning our salvation, and this is true. God's grace has more benefits than just our salvation. We need God's grace many times in our lives. All this does beg the question, "Was God's grace not in vain in your life?" Are you living faithfully for Him because of the grace He has given you and continues to give you?

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> ***10*** *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.*
>
> **(1 Corinthians 5:10, NIV)**

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for Your grace! Empower me with Your Spirit so that Your grace toward me will never be in vain. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God extends His grace to you at salvation and throughout your life. Live your life so that God's grace is not given to you in vain.

Paul has described the gospel and its benefits. Next, he moves on to defend the resurrection.

1 CORINTHIANS 15 : 12 - 28

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? 13 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. 15 More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. 16 For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. 18 Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. 19 If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.

20 But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. 22 For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. 23 But each in turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. 24 Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. 25 For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. 28 When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all.

12 But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?
(1 Corinthians 15:12, NIV)

COMMENTARY

We can only speculate how Paul knew that some of the people in Corinth were proclaiming there was no resurrection of the dead. For Paul, all the witnesses he mentioned in verses 5-8 of Chapter 15 were enough evidence to make his case. **(1 Corinthians 15:12, NIV)** •

Before we go on, let that sink in. Eyewitnesses proclaimed Christ was raised from the dead. That was enough for Paul. What is essential for us to remember is that we have the entire Bible to draw from. Paul and the people of Corinth only had the Old Testament and testimony of eyewitnesses. The New Testament book of Mark would not be written for another 10 years. This shows how vital the eyewitness testimony was to Paul. "...if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"

What do you think Paul would write to us today if someone in the church said there is no resurrection of the dead? We have far more irrefutable evidence because we have the entire New Testament and the Old Testament scriptures to draw from.

The Word of God is not a single book. It is a collection of 66 writings written by about 40 different authors over 1500 years. They are historical documents held to a very high standard of verification. How does the Bible compare to other ancient books? For starters, there is no other ancient book with a larger number of early manuscripts. There are about 643 copies of Homer's Iliad. There are over 25,000 early manuscripts, including whole text and partial manuscripts of the New Testament. You can and should research this topic. We have reliable evidence that the resurrection of Jesus happened. And it's a good thing. Paul tells us why.

Paul gives five consequences of there being no resurrection from the dead. First, if there is no resurrection, Jesus Christ is still dead. Then, if Jesus is dead, the preaching of the Gospel has no benefit. Thirdly, if there is no resurrection from the dead and Jesus is still dead, our faith in Jesus does not matter. Then, if there is no resurrection from the dead, Jesus is still in the tomb, and our faith is futile, and we are still in our sins. If there is no resurrection, we have not and cannot be reconciled to God. Finally, if there is no resurrection from the dead, the people who have gone before us, believing in Jesus for their salvation, have perished. They have been eternally separated from God. We can be thankful that the resurrection of Jesus happened and that one day, all those who have died in Christ will be resurrected, too.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, Thank You for the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Thank You for ensuring that we have enough evidence to support our faith. Our faith is not blind faith. Because of You, it is an informed faith. I am grateful, too, that those who have gone before me who had faith in You will be raised to be with You forever. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

The resurrection of the dead is an indisputable fact based on reliable eyewitnesses and historical documents that are held to a higher standard than other historical documents.

...

1 CORINTHIANS 15 : 29 - 34

29 Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? 30 And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? 31 I face death every day—yes, just as surely as I boast about you in Christ Jesus our Lord. 32 If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus with no more than human hopes, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised,

"Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die."

33 Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." 34 Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

COMMENTARY

It's important to understand the power of the resurrection. In yesterday's reading, we highlighted five consequences of the resurrection not taking place. Paul has clearly emphasized the importance and the validity of the resurrection. Furthermore, Paul is leveraging the beliefs of other religions to show the importance of the resurrection. If other people have built false beliefs based upon the power of the resurrection, then why are Corinthian Christians having such a hard time believing that resurrection really happened? This is part of Paul's argument when he writes, "Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them?" Baptism on behalf of the dead was not a practice of the early church. Rather, it was a practice of false religions forming during this time in history. Paul's argument continues to validate the resurrection of Jesus Christ. People outside of Christianity understood this truth, which helped Paul prove the authenticity of resurrection.

Paul then uses a personal story to emphasize the importance of the resurrection. The people in Corinth knew Paul, and they would have heard of what Paul had to endure in order to spread the Gospel. Paul's pursuit of spreading the Gospel put him in danger every single day. But the message of Jesus was so powerful that Paul was motivated to reach every person possible. This wasn't a boastful claim, but further evidence that the resurrection indeed took place. If the resurrection didn't take place then Paul would be putting his life in danger for no reason.

This pushes me to evaluate my beliefs, just like the Corinthians were supposed to evaluate their beliefs. Yes, I believe that Jesus was sacrificed, buried, and resurrected. And if I believe this foundational truth, what evidence in my life points to that truth? Do I have an overwhelming conviction to share the Gospel? Do I put myself in uncomfortable situations for the sake of the Gospel? Am I committed to reaching every person possible? At times, that answer is yes, but other times that answer

is no.

All of this tension leads us to a powerful statement, “bad company corrupts good character.” It is easy to invite bad company into your life. In fact, I think it is easier today than any other time in history. Our character and beliefs can be shaped by the things that surround us. The people we trust, the wisdom we seek, and the content we consume. Access to the internet and social media can be a wealth of information. But there is just as much, if not more, corrupted knowledge as there is truth. We must allow God’s Word to be the foundation for all of our beliefs. There are countless beliefs and opinions in this world. And these voices seem to change daily. God’s Word, and the truth of Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection, are eternal. God’s word has remained the same, and holds power in today’s world, just as it did when Paul was writing this letter to the Corinthian Church.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today’s passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, help me evaluate my life and my beliefs. Help my life and actions reflect the power of the Gospel. Surround me with healthy influences and Godly friends. Build my character so I can passionately share the Good News with every person possible.

REMEMBER THIS

The Gospel should be the mirror in which we examine our beliefs and character. God’s unchanging Word should be the foundation within a world full of shifting voices and corrupted knowledge.

...

1 CORINTHIANS 15 : 35 - 49

35 But someone will ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" 36 How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. 37 When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. 38 But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. 39 Not all flesh is the same: People have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. 40 There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. 41 The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor.

42 So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; 43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; 44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.

If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. 45 So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. 46 The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the dust of the earth; the second man is of heaven. 48 As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven. 49 And just as we have borne the image of the earthly man, so shall we bear the image of the heavenly man.

COMMENTARY

The curiosity of heaven is embedded in human nature. The concern of what happens after this life is fueled by every sickness, death, and tragedy we experience. It is natural for us to have questions about the details of eternity. But some questions, we won't be able to answer until we experience it firsthand. Paul emphasizes this truth in 1 Corinthians 15:36. It is not until our physical bodies die, that we will experience our eternal or resurrected bodies. It is valuable for us to know the reality of eternity, but the black and white details of how this happens are difficult to explain. We know the earthly body is perishable and weak. But our heavenly body will be imperishable and strong.

Paul uses an analogy of a seed. They are small and show no promise of what will develop with the proper care. But when planted, watered, and cared for a seed will blossom into something beautiful. The plant may be derived from the seed, but with a beauty far beyond comparison. This is how Paul explains our resurrected bodies.

Instead of getting lost in the details, we should live motivated by the splendor of God's beauty. Think about the beauty of the things we can

view on this earth. The mountains, oceans, rivers, and lakes. The sky, sun, moon, and stars. The animals on land and the oceans below. The flowers, plants, and trees. There is beauty found in every corner of the physical world. Imagine the beauty found in Heaven.

This changes how we view suffering. It means that your sickness doesn't get the last word. It means your disability doesn't disqualify you. Whatever has been bruised or broken won't always be that way. Jesus resurrected from the dead, and will do the same for us when eternity comes. We don't put our hope in the limitations of this world, we fix our eyes upon heaven. We trust Jesus to do what only He can do, which is make dead things alive again.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I place my hope in You. Help me look beyond the troubles and questions that arise in this life. I fix my eyes upon Heaven. You are the Alpha and the Omega, and You will always have the last word. I thank You for the promise of eternal life, and I place my trust in You.

REMEMBER THIS

Eternity with Jesus is a reality. We don't establish the rules, or negotiate the terms. We place our hope in Jesus, the only one Who can make dead things alive again.

The Gospel and the resurrection have been explained. Now, Paul speaks about a mystery and a victory.

1 CORINTHIANS 15 : 50 - 58

50 I declare to you, brothers and sisters, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. 51 Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed— 52 in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. 53 For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. 54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."

55 "Where, O death, is your victory?Where, O death, is your sting?"

56 The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. 57 But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.
58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

COMMENTARY

In this section of scripture, Paul writes about the future of believers. You can tell by the way he writes he was expecting the Lord to return at any time. "We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed." This, of course, is true. But the Corinthians have all slept. They all died in Christ. But one day, and God gets to choose that day, He will return and there will be believers still alive. They will not die, but they will be changed. Why? Because flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Later in this section, in verses 54 & 55, Paul gives us more hope. **(1 Corinthians 15:54-55, NIV)** •

There will come a day when we experience this great change and realize our salvation. We will no longer have to live by faith because we will live by sight. But what about now? Paul also addresses this.

Because of the gospel, the truth of the resurrection, and the fact that we, too, will be raised and changed, Paul reminds us to be steadfast and immovable in our faith. Don't cave! Don't give in! Don't quit! While we wait for the Lord to come, we should abound in the work of the Lord because we know that in the Lord, our labor will never be in vain. Paul says it this way, **(1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV)** •

54 When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory."
55 "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?"
(1 Corinthians 15:54-55, NIV)

58 Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.
(1 Corinthians 15:58, NIV)

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the glorification of the saints. We will all be changed. We will all become imperishable and will be with You forever. Now, as I wait for that moment, use me to accomplish Your purpose of growing the Kingdom of God. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

We, as believers, will be raised or changed. We will be with the Lord forever. During our time on this earth, we must be steadfast and immovable in our faith and always work for Him. When we work for Him, our labor is never in vain.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 15 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. Read 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Have you ever shared the Gospel with anyone? What came easy for you? What was difficult? Is there something that you need help with? If so, reach out to your Campus Pastor or Life Group Leader. Tell them what you are struggling with and follow their advice.

2. Read 1 Corinthians 15:10. What is your story, and how has the grace of God made you what you are today? Find someone to share your story with.

3. Read 1 Corinthians 15:58. How do we stand firm in our faith? What role do others play in us remaining steadfast and immovable? Do you have people in your life to support you spiritually? If not, start praying about it. Ask God to show you who you should reach out to.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

KEEP PRAYING

Each week, keep writing down the same six names. Don't lose heart. In Luke 18:1, Jesus reminds us to always pray and not give up. Consistent prayer matters—it shapes our hearts and invites God to keep working in the lives of those we're lifting up. Stay faithful. Keep asking. Trust that He hears.

BE ON GUARD.
STAND FIRM.
BE COURAGEOUS.
BE STRONG.
DO EVERYTHING
IN LOVE.

[13] Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. [14] Do everything in love.

1 CORINTHIANS 16:13-14

1 CORINTHIANS 16

Date:

Speaker:

Key Scriptures:

Watch the sermon here:

SERMON NOTES

Things I Need To Do Because Of What I've Heard:

When was the last time your heart broke for the persecuted Christians around the world?

1 CORINTHIANS 16 : 1 - 4

1 Now about the collection for the Lord's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4 If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

COMMENTARY

Once again, Paul starts this section of his letter with, "Now about..." He does this multiple times throughout the letter. It appears that when he uses words like this, he answers questions or provides direction on something the church at Corinth had previously written about or otherwise communicated to him.

As far as we can tell, the offering in question was a one-time offering collected for the Christians in Judea who were under great persecution and poverty. The Corinthians were not solely responsible for it. The churches of Galatia, Iconium, Lystra, Derby, and Antioch of Pisidia also contributed to it.

We do not want to use this text to justify receiving a weekly offering in the church today. That's not what this passage of Scripture is about. There are plenty of other passages in the Bible that discuss the giving of tithes and offerings. However, this does not mean nothing can be applied to the believer today.

First, it becomes clear, when you know the background of why the offering is being given, that as believers, we should have a worldview of the persecution of believers and not just a local view. Today, all around the world, believers are being persecuted and killed for their faith. There are also reputable Christian organizations actively providing aid to these believers and churches in the area of persecution. As Christians, we should be generous to persecuted believers around the world. There are many ways we can help. The first, of course, is with an offering above the tithe. Another way is to pray. And finally, there are organizations that you can give tangible items to transport and distribute to believers in persecuted areas. Like the believers at Corinth and Galatia, your small group, Bible Study, or Life Group can give an offering that makes a difference in the lives of persecuted believers in Jesus. To do this, check out websites like https://www.persecution.com/actionpacks/ and opendoors.org. You can also visit Northside's Global Outreach Wall to get more information about the workers we support.

While we shouldn't use this scripture regarding weekly offerings in the church today, this doesn't mean there isn't wisdom that can apply today.

Those of us in the United States are blessed beyond measure compared to the rest of the world. Keeping a close eye on our blessings and how much we prosper allows us to make generosity foundational in our lives. Though not mandated by this Scripture, looking at how we have prospered and setting aside some of that money to meet the needs of others will yield great blessings in our lives.

Do you want to reach your neighbor for Christ? As God prospers you, set aside some ministry money. Then, use that money for a cookout and invite your neighbors and tell them about Jesus. Or, if a single mother on your block is struggling, help her make ends meet. Finally, do you know someone living for Jesus but in the midst of challenging or difficult times? If so, help meet their needs.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

WHAT IS *S.P.E.C.* ?

S.P.E.C. is a simple tool to help us engage with God's Word. Reading in multiple translations can bring fresh insight. Most passages highlight a Sin, Promise, Example, or Command. Use the space provided to explain what you find.

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for taking care of me. Lord, I need You to open my eyes to the needs of believers worldwide. Empower me to meet some of those needs. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God prospers us so that we can minister to others. Have a worldview when it comes to persecuted believers.

How deeply and spiritually do you think about where you travel and what you will be doing? Paul gives us a lot to think about in this section of scripture.

1 CORINTHIANS 16 : 5 - 11

5 After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going
through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even
spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7
For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to
spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8 But I will stay on at
Ephesus until Pentecost, 9 because a great door for effective work has
opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

10 When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is
with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11 No one,
then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so
that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.

COMMENTARY

I don't know about you, but when it comes to vacations, I tend to pick the places that interest me the most. Of course, when it comes to vacations, I suppose there is nothing wrong with this approach. After all, vacations are about disconnecting from devices, relaxing, and escaping our everyday responsibilities. I also suppose that in the first century, vacations didn't exist. Travel was with purpose. This being the case, it is no wonder that Paul didn't separate travel from ministry. Perhaps it would be good for us, wherever we go, to consider God's will in our plans. As indicated by verse 8, Paul was in Ephesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians. He longed to spend at least a few months with the believers in Corinth and wanted them to participate in his future ministry when he left there.

Sometimes, I drop everything for a chance to see family or friends for a few hours. I have even made an hours-long trip to have a meal with someone because they were so close and didn't have the time to come to my house. Paul greatly desired to visit Corinth but wasn't willing to drop everything and go to them. Why? This is what we need to explore in greater detail.

According to verse 9, there was a door open in Ephesus for effective work. The Greek words used here are megas thyra. As you can clearly see, megas is where our word mega comes from. It means great or massive. The word thyra means a door or, when used as a metaphor, as it is here, an opportunity. So, Paul is saying that there is a mega (massive) door (opportunity) for effective work in Ephesus, and he can't walk away from it. Perhaps the first lesson for us in planning our schedules is to look at what is happening where we are and assess the God-given spiritual opportunities in our everyday lives. Are we in a season of mega-opportunity? Is God doing something so amazing that it would be detrimental to the kingdom of God if we walked away?

However, the most significant lesson may be found in the fact that along

with the megas thyra, the massive opportunity for the Lord, comes many adversaries. People often leave where they are because of the many adversaries opposing them in their ministry. Here, Paul reminds us that with massive opportunity comes many adversaries. As a general rule, when we face adversity, we should double down on the work that God is doing, not run away. And, of course, we must double down on abiding in Christ so that the fruit of the ministry is a by-product of being in an abiding relationship with the Savior.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, let me see what You are doing through me for the kingdom of God. Don't let me miss or run away from the open doors You have given me for effective work. When adversaries arise, move in me and through me to draw closer to Jesus and abide closely in Him. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Opportunities may present themselves in many different circumstances and locations. However, before leaving where you are, assess what God is doing. Don't focus on the adversaries; focus on the Savior and allow Him to guide and direct you.

Today, let's see what we might learn from Timothy and Apollos.

16 *All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness,* **17** *so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.*

(2 Timothy 3:16-17, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 16 : 10 - 12

10 When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. **11** *No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.*

12 *Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.*

COMMENTARY

About 64 AD, Paul would pen these words **(2 Timothy 3:16-17)**.

Shortly after these words were penned, Paul would become a martyr for the cause of Christ, but the truth of these words still rings loudly 1960+ years later. There is not a single word in the Bible that we should discount. As we near the end of Paul's letter to Corinth, we call 1 Corinthians; it will serve us well if we remember that "all Scripture is God-breathed."

In verses 10-12 of Chapter 16, we examine two people responding to Paul differently. We will ask, "Was one response better than the other?" In verses 10 and 11, Paul discusses Timothy's case. He says, "When Timothy comes..." Later, in verse 12, Paul asks Apollos to visit "...with the other brothers...." The other brothers probably included Timothy. But instead of going to Corinth, where Apollos had been a pastor, he decides against it. When you read "...but it was not at all his will to come now" (ESV) or, "...He was quite unwilling to go now..." (NIV), you may conclude that Apollos was more concerned about himself than the believers at Corinth. But is this the case? It turns out that the word thelēma means, "What one wishes or has determined shall be done—of the purpose of God to bless mankind through Christ—of what God wishes to be done by us (commands and precepts) and will, choice, inclination, desire, pleasure." This is why the ESV includes the footnote "Or God's will for him...." Apollos may have been, and probably was, seeing the same opportunity in his ministry that Paul was when he mentioned the "...wide door of effective work." And he may have felt like God didn't want him to go to Corinth at that particular moment. Paul, Timothy, and Apollos were all prioritizing the work of the Lord. Paul and Apollos chose to stay where they were and continue the work that God had given them to do. Timothy decided to go to Corinth, and Paul tells us in verse 10 that Timothy is "...carrying on the work of the Lord just as I am."

The first lesson for us is that we need to consider God's will when making life's decisions. There may be two equally good opportunities. However, God may favor one over the other. Always choose God's will, not your own. The second lesson is that we may ask someone to do something that we believe will benefit the Kingdom and be confused about why they say no.

But they may have received higher marching orders than we brought them. We should be gracious and give people room, like Paul did with Apollos, to follow the Lord.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, You are an infinite, omniscient God. You have every available resource and know all things. I trust You to lead and guide me where I need to be. I want to serve and work for You where You want me to be. Give me the wisdom and sensitivity to the Holy Spirit to remain in Your will. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

God has a plan for your life and will lead you to where you need to be. Follow Him, not others. Trust Him to show you where you need to be.

How can we stand firm in faith and still lead with love? This passage gives us a roadmap.

1 CORINTHIANS 16 : 13 - 18

13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 Do everything in love.

15 You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord's people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 17 I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18 For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

COMMENTARY

Most commentators agree that verse 13 begins Paul's closing statement. Let's ensure we are all on the same page as we start. To do this, we need to observe the word imperative.

Oxford Languages defines imperative as being of vital importance. The second definition is giving an authoritative command, peremptory. So that you know, I had to look up peremptory. It means insisting on immediate attention or obedience. I point all of this out because the two verses we look at today are imperatives in Greek. There is not an option here for the Corinthians or us. Paul means what he says, and he expects obedience. The language indicates that Paul means do this and do it now. Don't wait! Get started! So, since it is imperative (notice what I did there?) that we understand what Paul wants us to do, Let's look closely at what he commands.

Be on your guard - grēgoreō. As a metaphor, it means to give strict attention, be cautious, and be active. It also includes taking heed lest, through remission and indolence, some destructive calamity suddenly overtake you. We should be watchful so that sin does not overtake us and we do not forsake Christ.

Stand firm—stēkō. To persist, to persevere, and to stand fast. Paul ties this directly to faith. He appears to mean both our faith in Christ and the truth of the Bible, Christ's message.

Be courageous - andrizomai. This is the only use of this word in the scripture. The image is a man in battle. The word means to make a man of or make brave. It includes showing oneself a brave man; to quit like men. In other words, even though the imagery is masculine, we must stand in the Lord like men who don't quit.

Be strong - krataioō. This is an interesting word because it is passive. This means it is something done to you, not something you do on your own. We put ourselves in a position that allows the Lord to strengthen us

through the presence of the Holy Spirit in our lives.

Paul ends these imperative statements: "Do everything in love." What does this look like? Read Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians.

So, there you have it. We have our marching orders from Paul **(1 Corinthians 16:13-14)**. •

Of course, we cannot do this alone. We need the Holy Spirit, and we need each other.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

> *13 Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 Do everything in love.*
> **(1 Corinthians 16:13-14, NIV)**

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, I need this in my life! I need to watch so sin doesn't creep in and derail me. I need to stand firm in the faith, unmovable. When things get hard, I don't want to quit the battle. I need You to make me strong. Lord, I need to always lead in love. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, don't quit, put yourself in a position where the Holy Spirit can strengthen you, and let all you do be driven by love.

It seems backward, but Paul closes his letter with a greeting.

God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.
(1 Corinthians 1:9, NIV)

My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.
(1 Corinthians 16:24, NIV)

If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!
(1 Corinthians 16:22, NIV)

3 Join with me in suffering, like a good soldier of Christ Jesus. 4 No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, but rather tries to please his commanding officer.
(2 Timothy 2:3-4, NIV)

16 For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. 17 For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.
(John 3:16-17, NIV)

Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son.
(John 3:18, NIV)

1 CORINTHIANS 16 : 19 - 24

19 The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 20 All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

21 I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand.

22 If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

24 My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

COMMENTARY

Paul's letter to the Corinthians starts with a greeting and ends with a greeting. In the opening chapter, Paul penned these words in his opening **(1 Corinthians 1:9)**.

Now, as he closes this letter, he writes **(1 Corinthians 16:24)**.

When we look at these two verses, we see that the basis for the writing of the letter and the expression of Paul's love for the believer in Corinth is based on God's Son, Jesus Christ. This is no minor observation. For the believer, being in Christ is the foundation of Christian living. Being in Christ is what makes us Christian. Being in Christ is what sustains us as Christians. Access to the Father in prayer is available because we are in Christ. The sustaining power of the Holy Spirit is only available to those in Christ. And being in Christ is what provides hope for the believer. There is no salvation, fellowship, or hope if a person is not in Christ. Paul says it very pointedly in verse 22 **(1 Corinthians 16:22)**.

This sounds very harsh, doesn't it? It seems especially harsh coming from Paul, the same guy who wrote **(2 Timothy 2:3-4)**.

So, what is going on? Is Paul speaking out of both sides of his mouth? How can a person who writes that God desires all people to be saved declare that if someone has no love for the Lord, he should be cursed? The answer is that Paul is not condemning someone but stating the truth. A person who has no love for the Lord will be cursed. They will be separated from Christ because they are not in Christ. Many are familiar with Jesus' words in **(John 3:16-17)**.

Fewer people are familiar with John 3:18, which, I believe, sheds some light on Paul's statement **(John 3:18)**.

A person who has come to a saving faith in Jesus loves the Lord. A person

who does not have a saving faith does not love the Lord. It is also worth noting that the love Paul mentions is phileō love. Brotherly love. It is not agapaō, sacrificial love. Phileō love is the same love that Jesus settled for when restoring Peter after his denial (John 21:15-19). Jesus asked Peter twice if he agapaō Him. Peter replied that Jesus knew he phileō Him. Finally, Jesus asked Peter if he loved Him with a phileō love.

In verse 22, Paul sets the bar at the same level that Peter loved Jesus. This type of love produces saving faith and is also the bar for fellowship. Peter, it seems to me, is saying that if someone doesn't love the Lord, they will be cursed. And someone who doesn't have brotherly love for the Lord cannot have brotherly love for His people.

S.P.E.C. — (Review today's passage and respond to the questions below)

Is there a sin to avoid?

Is there a promise to claim?

Is there an example to follow?

Is there a command to obey?

PRAYER OF THE DAY

Heavenly Father, thank You for the many blessings in Christ Jesus. Remind me often of how good You are to me. Let me, because of Your agape love for me, love others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

REMEMBER THIS

Because we are in Christ, we have many benefits. The person who is not in Christ has no eternal benefits. They are not saved. Brotherly love between believers in Jesus is expected in the church.

REFLECTION

Read Chapter 16 again and then reflect on and answer these questions.

1. How have you made significant decisions in the past? What role did God's will play in determining what you would do? Is God's will important in lesser decisions? Why or why not? Give some examples of decisions in which you should consider God's will.

2. Review the Day 5 material. Which of the five imperatives would you like to see God grow in your life? Why? What do you need to do to allow God the opportunity in your life to grow you in this area?

3. Go to a mentor or a trusted mature believer in Jesus and share what you have learned this week.

REFLECTION

LOOK BACK

How have you obeyed what you learned this week?

YOUR PRAYER LIST

For the past 16 weeks you've been praying over six names. Maybe you've prayed with deep hope. Maybe you've prayed with quiet faith. Maybe you've prayed even when it felt like nothing was changing. But week after week, you showed up. You lifted those names to God. You trusted Him to work.

Now that we've come to the end of this journey, take time to reflect:

- Have you seen a conversation open, a heart soften, or a next step taken?
- How has your heart changed through praying for them?
- How can you keep praying for them today?

Use the space below to update your list, celebrate any victories, and recommit to praying with expectation.

CONCLUSION

The goal wasn't to finish the reading - it was to meet God and be changed by Him.

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.
(1 Corinthians 2:12-13, NIV)

YOU MADE IT!

Congratulations on finishing this walk through 1 Corinthians! Whether you've read every word or picked it up occasionally, we're so glad you committed to this journey.

This letter from Paul is rich with truth, challenge, and encouragement for the church - then and now. Along the way, we've learned:

- Unity matters in the body of Christ.
- Love must lead in everything we do.
- Maturity in faith doesn't just happen - it's chosen.
- God gives spiritual gifts for the good of others.
- Jesus is the only true foundation for our lives.
- And the resurrection gives us real, eternal hope.

But the goal wasn't just to finish the reading. The goal was to meet God here - and let His Word reshape us. **(1 Corinthians 2:12-13)**

WHAT'S NEXT?

You've just finished studying an entire book of the Bible - and that's no small thing. But more than checking off a box, you've spent the last 16 weeks building a habit, deepening your faith, and opening yourself up to God's voice.

So... don't stop now! This might be the end of 1 Corinthians, but it's not the end of what God is doing in you.

Here's what's next:

- **Keep showing up.** Stay connected with your church family. Keep leaning into services, life groups, and spiritual conversations.
- **Keep studying the Word.** Let this be the beginning of a lifelong rhythm. Open the Bible with the same expectation you brought to this journey. God still has more to show you.
- **Keep praying.** Don't give up on the names you've been lifting up - or on the transformation God is doing in you. Prayer is not a side habit; it's the fuel of your spiritual life.
- **Keep writing it down.** You now have a tool - a booklet full of what God's been teaching you. Keep that practice going. Grab a new journal. Keep capturing what God says.
- **Keep inviting others in.** The growth God is doing in you isn't just for you. Share it! Encourage someone else. Maybe even start your own life group and bring someone along.

CONCLUSION

REFLECT: HOW HAS GOD MOVED?

Take a few moments to look back and reflect. This space is for you - to celebrate, remember, and mark what God has done over the last 16 weeks, and in your life.

- What did God teach you about Himself?
- What convictions or changes did He stir in your heart?
- What was the hardest truth for you to wrestle with?
- What was the most encouraging moment?
- How have you seen growth in your own faith?

Write your reflections here: