



DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

A photograph of several bright yellow daisy flowers with dark centers, growing from a crack in a grey stone surface. The background is a blurred, textured grey stone.

1,2 Corinthians

Clint Pressley, General Editor



JESUS

Jesus changes lives. And everyone needs the opportunity to hear the life-changing message of the gospel of Christ.

That conviction led Paul to Corinth, a city famous for its immorality and religious pluralism. He was Christ's ambassador bringing a life-changing message from God to the Corinthians: "If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has passed away, and see, the new has come!" (2 Cor. 5:17).

The same gospel message Paul introduced in Corinth is good news for us too. Christ was with God the Father before the world was created. He became human and lived among humanity as Jesus of Nazareth. He came to show us what God the Father is like. He lived a sinless life, showing us how to live; and He died upon a cross to pay for our sins. God raised Him from the dead.

Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me" (John 14:6). He is waiting for you now.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

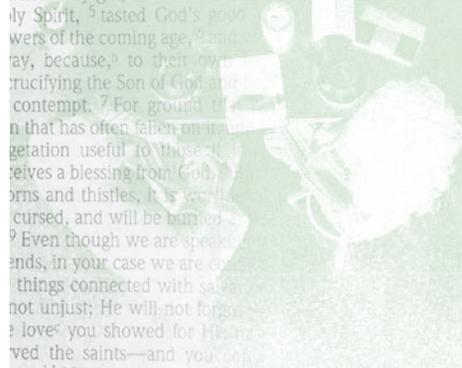
You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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» MEET THE WRITER



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Explore
the Bible®

DEAF PERSONAL STUDY GUIDE

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A WORD FROM THE GENERAL EDITOR



The church has never been perfect. Only the Lord of the church is perfect, a truth that is abundantly clear in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Here we find the gospel in all its glory and life with all its complexities. The Book of Ecclesiastes says, “there is nothing new under the sun,” and Paul’s letters to the church at Corinth prove the truism. Paul wrote to a people who loved Christ but struggled with division of all kinds, manifold rebellion, and downright immorality.

When you read and study these two books, you are reminded that although Jesus is Lord of the church, there is no perfect church.

Even still, in these two books we learn the centrality of the cross, the meaning of marriage, the danger of lust, and how a church should be structured. We learn the importance of spiritual gifts, the value of diversity, and the joy of taking the Lord’s Supper.

Paul’s letters to the church ground us in the gospel of Christ and fill us with resurrection hope. And this hope does not disappoint. This hope gives us strength for endurance so that in our struggle, we do not lose heart.

These two books serve as a banquet table of gospel truth, served up for the strength and health of God’s people. At this critical hour, an intense and thorough study of these two books is sure to bring nourishment to the famished soul and strength to any gospel-centered church.

As you study 1 and 2 Corinthians, may the Spirit of God use the Word of God to anchor your confidence and hope in the Son of God.

Clint Pressley

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INTRODUCTION TO THE BOOKS OF 1,2 CORINTHIANS

»» WRITER

Paul wrote 1 and 2 Corinthians. He was called Saul before he became a believer. His Hebrew name is Saul and his Greek name is Paul. He is not King Saul from the Old Testament. It is a different person with the same name. He came from Tarsus in Cilicia which is Turkey today. Paul was well known as a great Christian missionary. Paul visited Corinth during his 2nd missionary trip. He stayed there for one and half years. Paul sent Timothy to deliver the letter of 1 Corinthians to the church.

»» DATE

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians while he was in Ephesus around AD 54 or 55 (see Acts 19). Paul seems to have written 2 Corinthians after he left Ephesus to go to Macedonia (see Acts 20). Paul mentioned Macedonia in 2 Corinthians 7:5. Bible teachers agree that this letter, 2 Corinthians, was written about AD 56 while Paul was on his way to Corinth.

»» AUDIENCE

Paul wrote the letters to believers who lived in Corinth. The Corinthian believers were mostly Greek people who lived in the worldly city of Corinth. Corinth is in the southern part of Greece right on the narrow piece of land that joins the mainland of Greece to the Peloponnese southern part of Greece. See a map of Greece for help with this location. Corinth was an important city in Greece and it was well known for its temples especially the temple to the Greek goddess Aphrodite. It was also a city with a great deal of shipping business since it set on the narrow land bridge separating two large parts of the Mediterranean Sea.

»» THEMES

Church members in Corinth were divided and they were acting immorally. Paul wrote to correct and teach them how to live right. Paul wrote another letter between 1 and 2 Corinthians (see 2 Corinthians 2:4). The church responded well to that letter so Paul wrote 2 Corinthians to tell them he was happy with their response. In the letter he showed his own heart for the Corinthians and his ministry in general. He shared about the challenges and joys of ministry. He also addressed opposition in the church.

OUTLINE OF 1,2 CORINTHIANS

1 CORINTHIANS

I. Greetings and Thanksgiving (1:1-9)

II. Problems in the Church (1:10–6:20)

- A. Disunity (1:10–4:21)
- B. Immorality Tolerated (5:1–6:20)

III. Answers to Questions from the Corinthians (7:1–14:40)

- A. Questions About Marriage (7:1-40)
- B. Limitations of Christian Liberty (8:1–11:1)
- C. Practices in Public Worship (11:2-16)
- D. Behavior at the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
- E. Exercise of Spiritual Gifts (12:1–14:40)

IV. The Resurrection of the Body (15:1-58)

V. Conclusion (16:1-24)

2 CORINTHIANS

I. Special Greetings (1:1-11)

II. Paul's Ministry (1:12–7:16)

- A. Paul's Itinerary (1:12–2:13)
- B. Paul's Message (2:14–5:10)
- C. Paul's Purpose (5:11–7:16)

III. A Collection for Needy Christians (8:1–9:15)

IV. The Case Against False Apostles (10:1–13:10)

V. Final Greetings (13:11-13)

WORD LIST

Accountability—to be held responsible for what you do

Affliction—pain or suffering

Ancient world—the world as it was thousands of years ago

Arabia—the area of the Arabian Peninsula today including the countries of Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Oman, and the UAE

Commitment—promise

Conscience—know what is right or wrong

Contribution—a gift or payment

Conversation—chatting, talking between people

Covenant—agreement

Debate—to argue about an issue

Defense—protection

Deliverance—give salvation, give freedom

Discipline—train someone to obey rules or behave right

Division—separate or divide

Doomed—most likely to have a bad outcome

Ecstatic—feeling overwhelming happiness or excitement

Enormous—huge or big

Examine—test, study

Exhort—to give urgent advice, recommendations, or warnings

Famine—when there is no food in the land for a long time

Gamaliel—Paul's former Jewish teacher

Hypocritical—to do things like a hypocrite

Idols—false gods

Immoral—wrong, sinful

Impulse—a sudden strong desire to do something

Insisted—to demand something forcefully

Integrity—honest or telling the truth

Issues—important topic or problem

Malaria—a sickness carried by mosquitos

Moral—concerned with what is right and wrong
Motivation—having an interest to do something
Obligation—an act or a duty which one must do to meet an agreement
Offensive—insult or hurt someone’s feelings
Oppose—against someone or disagree with someone
Pagan—a person who has no religion
Passion—to feel strongly about something
Pentecost—a festival held fifty days after Passover
Persecute—torture or beat
Pharisees—Jewish leaders who strictly followed the Mosaic law
Pornography—sexual videos or pictures
Priority—that which must be done first
Proclaim—announce
Prophecy—a message about the future
Prostitute—a person that has sex for money
Quarreling—arguing or fussing together
Radical—when something is done in an extreme way
Rebuked—when one is sharply criticised
Reconcile—to connect together
Resurrection—come back to life from the dead
Reputation—good name or bad name
Sabbath—the seventh day of the week
Sanctification—to purify or free from sin
Sanhedrin—the high court for the Jews
Specialize—to become an expert in a certain subject
Spouse—husband or wife
Stewardship—managing something that belongs to someone else
Synagogue—a Jewish place of worship sort of like a church
Translations—the Bible in different languages
Treasure—something very valuable
Trumpet—a loud horn
Unconditional—not limited
Unity—to connect together
Versions—a particular edition or translation

BIBLE READING PLAN

MONTH 1

- 1. 1 Corinthians 1:1-9
- 2. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17
- 3. 1 Corinthians 1:18-25
- 4. 1 Corinthians 1:26-31
- 5. 1 Corinthians 2:1-8
- 6. 1 Corinthians 2:9-16
- 7. 1 Corinthians 3:1-9
- 8. 1 Corinthians 3:10-17
- 9. 1 Corinthians 3:18-23
- 10. 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
- 11. 1 Corinthians 4:6-13
- 12. 1 Corinthians 4:14-21
- 13. 1 Corinthians 5:1-8
- 14. 1 Corinthians 5:9-13
- 15. 1 Corinthians 6:1-11
- 16. 1 Corinthians 6:12-20
- 17. 1 Corinthians 7:1-7
- 18. 1 Corinthians 7:8-16
- 19. 1 Corinthians 7:17-24
- 20. 1 Corinthians 7:25-31
- 21. 1 Corinthians 7:32-40
- 22. 1 Corinthians 8:1-6
- 23. 1 Corinthians 8:7-13
- 24. 1 Corinthians 9:1-7
- 25. 1 Corinthians 9:8-18
- 26. 1 Corinthians 9:19-27
- 27. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13
- 28. 1 Corinthians 10:14-22
- 29. 1 Corinthians 10:23-33
- 30. 1 Corinthians 11:1-6
- 31. 1 Corinthians 11:7-16

MONTH 2

- 1. 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- 2. 1 Corinthians 12:12-17
- 3. 1 Corinthians 12:18-26
- 4. 1 Corinthians 12:27-31
- 5. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13
- 6. 1 Corinthians 14:1-5
- 7. 1 Corinthians 14:6-12
- 8. 1 Corinthians 14:13-19
- 9. 1 Corinthians 14:20-25
- 10. 1 Corinthians 14:26-32
- 11. 1 Corinthians 14:33-40
- 12. 1 Corinthians 15:1-11
- 13. 1 Corinthians 15:12-19
- 14. 1 Corinthians 15:20-28
- 15. 1 Corinthians 15:29-34
- 16. 1 Corinthians 15:35-49
- 17. 1 Corinthians 15:50-58
- 18. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4
- 19. 1 Corinthians 16:5-12
- 20. 1 Corinthians 16:13-24
- 21. 2 Corinthians 1:1-7
- 22. 2 Corinthians 1:8-11
- 23. 2 Corinthians 1:12-22
- 24. 2 Corinthians 1:23–2:4
- 25. 2 Corinthians 2:5-11
- 26. 2 Corinthians 2:12-17
- 27. 2 Corinthians 3:1-6
- 28. 2 Corinthians 3:7-11
- 29. 2 Corinthians 3:12-18
- 30. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6

MONTH 3

- 1. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18
- 2. 2 Corinthians 5:1-5
- 3. 2 Corinthians 5:6-10
- 4. 2 Corinthians 5:11-15
- 5. 2 Corinthians 5:16-19
- 6. 2 Corinthians 5:20–6:2
- 7. 2 Corinthians 6:3-13
- 8. 2 Corinthians 6:14-18
- 9. 2 Corinthians 7:1-4
- 10. 2 Corinthians 7:5-9
- 11. 2 Corinthians 7:10-16
- 12. 2 Corinthians 8:1-6
- 13. 2 Corinthians 8:7-15
- 14. 2 Corinthians 8:16-24
- 15. 2 Corinthians 9:1-9
- 16. 2 Corinthians 9:10-15
- 17. 2 Corinthians 10:1-6
- 18. 2 Corinthians 10:7-11
- 19. 2 Corinthians 10:12-18
- 20. 2 Corinthians 11:1-4
- 21. 2 Corinthians 11:5-11
- 22. 2 Corinthians 11:12-15
- 23. 2 Corinthians 11:16-23
- 24. 2 Corinthians 11:24-33
- 25. 2 Corinthians 12:1-5
- 26. 2 Corinthians 12:6-10
- 27. 2 Corinthians 12:11-13
- 28. 2 Corinthians 12:14-18
- 29. 2 Corinthians 12:19-21
- 30. 2 Corinthians 13:1-4
- 31. 2 Corinthians 13:5-13



UNITED IN CHRIST

Believers can trust in God's strength even when they are weak.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-25

The New Testament church in Corinth had many problems. We may have the same problems in our churches today. Paul wrote to help the church in Corinth.

Paul went to Corinth for the first time on his second missionary journey (see Acts 18:1-18). He started a church and stayed there with them for a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Later, while he was in Ephesus, Paul heard from several people about problems in the church in Corinth.

The Corinthian church was doing wrong. The people were arguing about the Christian leaders, and moral issues, and about what they believed. They were causing division in the church. Paul decided to write a letter to the believers living in Corinth. Paul encouraged people to stay together in unity. Paul told the people to keep their focus on Christ and His crucifixion. The Corinthians would find answers in Christ, not in human wisdom.

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-25

10 I beg you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that all of you agree with each other and not be **split into groups**. **A** I beg that you be completely joined together by having the same kind of thinking and the same purpose. **11** My brothers and sisters, some **people from Chloe's family have told me** **B** quite plainly that there are quarrels among you. **12** This is what I mean: One of you says, "**I follow Paul**"; **C** another says, "**I follow Apollos**"; **D** another says, "I follow Peter"; and another says, "I follow Christ." **13** Christ has been divided up into different groups! Did Paul die on the cross for you? No! Were you baptized in the name of Paul? No! **14** I thank God I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius **15** so that now no one can say you were baptized in my name. **16** (I also baptized the family of Stephanas, but I do not remember that I baptized anyone else.) **17** Christ did not send me to baptize people but to preach the Good News. And he sent me to preach the Good News **without using words of human wisdom** **E** so that the cross of Christ would not lose its power. **18** The teaching about the cross is foolishness to those who are being lost, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** It is written **in the Scriptures**: **F** "I will cause the wise to lose their wisdom; I will make the wise unable to understand." **20** Where is the wise person? Where is the educated person? Where is the skilled talker of this world? God has made the wisdom of the world foolish. **21** In the wisdom of God **the world did not know God** **G** through its own wisdom. So God chose to use the message that sounds foolish to save those who believe. **22** The Jews ask for miracles, and the Greeks want wisdom. **23** But we preach a crucified Christ. This causes the Jews to stumble and is foolishness to non-Jews. **24** But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God to those people God has called—Jews and Greeks. **25** Even the foolishness of God is **wiser than human wisdom**, **H** and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

- a. Several groups were in the church, each group following a different leader.
- b. The many groups were arguing with each other. Paul knew this because of the report brought to him.
- c. Paul was the person who started the Corinthian church.
- d. Apollos was a skilled Christian speaker.
- e. Paul's work in Corinth had been to preach the gospel in simple words that people could understand and believe.
- f. Paul quoted Isaiah 29:14 to help him make his point.
- g. God cannot be known through worldly wisdom but through the message that seems foolish. That message is the crucifixion of Jesus Christ.
- h. God in His ways is wiser and stronger than all human wisdom and strength.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What are some things that believers do together?

What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? What purposes do Christians share?

What problem did the Corinthian church have?

Can a body be divided and still work well?

What does unity mean? Why would people follow various leaders with more passion than they follow Christ?

What did Paul mean when he said, "God has made the wisdom of the world foolish"?

Why is the cross foolishness to so many people? How is the cross the power of God for believers?

Do you know people who seem very smart but do not believe in God? How do these verses help you understand them?

What is the right way to think about human wisdom and human strength?

How can Christians understand the things of God? How do we have "the mind of Christ"?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read and explain Bible verses.*

Read the verses below. Then write a couple of sentences that explain what they teach about the church.

John 17: 23 _____

Galatians 3:26-28 _____

Colossians 3:13-14 _____

1 Peter 3:8 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Christians believe in Jesus Christ as their savior. This belief should give us unity.
- If we choose sides and follow our favorite leaders in church, we can expect to see pride and divisions.
- There is a line that divides people who are saved and people who are not saved. But there should not be lines of division among believers.

Discuss as a group ways we can show love to each other.

What can you do to make sure you are not causing a division in your church? How can you help others keep from causing a division in your church?

How can Jews, Greeks, and all the peoples of the world come to know the power and wisdom of God? What can the members of your class do to help the world know this power and wisdom?

MEMORY VERSE

But we preach a crucified Christ. This causes the Jews to stumble and is foolishness to non-Jews.

-1 Corinthians 1:23

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10.

It is interesting to look in different translations of the Bible. In the New Century Version, verse 10 begins with “I beg you.” The Holman Christian Standard Bible says “I urge you;” the New Living Translation says “I appeal to you.” The New American Standard Bible says “I exhort you,” and the New Life Version says “I ask you.” All these translations have the same meaning. Paul begged the believers to stay together in unity with God.

Believers must be completely joined together with one hope, one faith, and one God. Paul DID NOT teach anyone to split into opposing groups in the church. He wanted brothers and sisters in Christ to stay together and worship the one true God. There is one God and Father of everything. He rules everything and is everywhere and is in everything (Ephesians 4:6).

Paul did not mean that Christians cannot have different opinions about things. Paul did mean that Christians should be in unity about the basic Christian truths and should agree on our work in the world.

What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? What purposes do Christians share?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 1:11.

When Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians, he was in Ephesus. Some people told Paul what happened in the city of Corinth. Today we keep up with the news in the Deaf community through social media. We get good news or bad news from our friends, leaders, and others in the community. When there is bad news, we become concerned. We check on people to make sure they are all right. We are responsible to help people. We care about the people who are in serious situations. That is how Paul felt when he wrote the letter to the Corinthians. He encouraged them to stay in unity with each other and with God.

You can share Bible verses with friends through the videophone. You could get in touch with the person on Facebook messenger or send an email. You could even sign a message on video and send it to your friend. Paul wrote a letter because it was the best way to reach friends during his time. He wrote his letter to try to stop the quarreling in Corinth. It would be so good if Deaf Christians would use VP to encourage each other to live in Christian unity.

What can you do to bring unity in your church today?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 1:12-16.

In Acts 18:24-26 we learn Apollos was a Jew and was born in Alexandria. He knew the Scripture very well and taught the truth about Jesus. He was a strong speaker in the synagogue. That is how people from the church knew Apollos. It seems some people followed him. Others followed Paul. The people were divided. Paul said Christ was not divided. Christ died on the cross for us. We are all baptized in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19).

We experience problems in churches today like the people in Corinth did. When someone says that a person is wrong, sometimes people believe him without checking the facts. They follow the wrong people. Following people divides us. Keep in mind, Jesus died on the cross for us. Our belief in Him unites us.

Acts 18:8 tells us about Paul's time in Corinth. He taught many people about Christ. Crispus was the leader in a synagogue. People who lived in Crispus' house accepted Jesus. There were others in Corinth that believed in Jesus, too. Paul baptized some of them. However, Paul did not want the people to say they were baptized in his name.

How does the death of Christ on the cross lead us to unity as believers?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Church*

In the Bible we learn about the New Testament church. A church is made up of people who have been baptized and who help each other to faithfully follow Christ. Many things unite believers in a church. Two of the most important things are faith in Jesus and a strong commitment to share Jesus with other people.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 1: 17-19.

In Acts 9:3-6 Paul (at that time his name was Saul) was on the way to the city of Damascus. Jesus sent a bright light from heaven that blinded him. Saul's life changed forever. Jesus told him to go on to Damascus and there he would meet someone. This person would tell him what to do. Saul became Paul. He became a great missionary for Christ. He went to different cities to preach and teach about Jesus. This was the most important job to Paul. Paul believed it was important to be baptized, but the heart of his call was to preach about Jesus and to lead people to faith. Baptism was of secondary importance.

Paul used the Scripture from Isaiah to teach people in Corinth that godly wisdom had always been different from worldly wisdom. He explained that worldly thinking caused division in the church. The wisdom of God is very different from the wisdom of the world. Paul said worldly people look at the message of the cross and think it is foolish. However, people who believe in God are blessed. They believe Jesus died on the cross and have wisdom from God.

What is the difference between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom? How do you show godly wisdom in your life?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 1: 20-25.

In earlier verses Paul begged the Corinthian believers to be united. There should be no division in the church. But in these verses we see there is a division between believers and unbelievers. What they believe about Jesus and His death on the cross divides the two groups.

In the world today people believe ideas that are opposite of what the Bible teaches. They think they are smarter than God. But God's ways and His wisdom are higher and better than anything in the world. Some unbelievers make fun of Christian beliefs. They do not understand that God's plan gives salvation.

How are the ways of the world (unbelievers) different from the ways of Christians?

Why do unbelievers have a hard time understanding spiritual things?

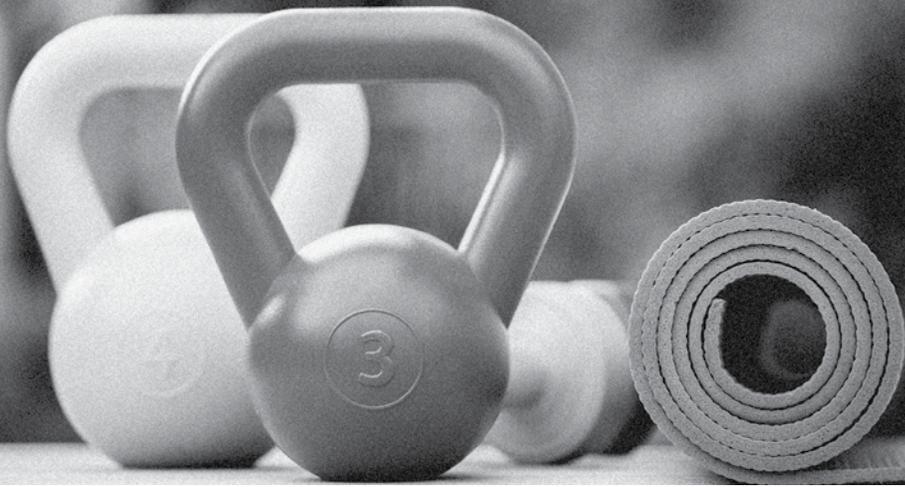
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 1. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

**How have you added to the divisions in your church in the past?
How have you helped make unity this week?**

What has God been sending you to do this past week? How have you been obeying Him?

Has the crucified Christ been the center of your life this week? How has belief in the cross of Christ made you wise?



GLORIFYING GOD

Believers honor God through holy living.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

When I became a Christian, I began to learn about Jesus. Over the years I have learned how to be like Christ. In the Bible, I have seen how Jesus lived a life given fully to God. When He died on the cross, Jesus asked His Father to forgive the people. That is what holy living looks like. When a person lives a holy life they live different from the world. That is the life we are called to live.

In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul answered several of the questions the Corinthians had. He wrote about taking believers to court. He listed behaviors that were sins for believers. But his main focus was on living a sexually holy life. Some of the people thought that since they were no longer under the law they could live sexually like their unbelieving neighbors. The people seemed proud about what they were doing. Paul made it clear that Christians were different. They had been made holy and clean through Jesus Christ. In Christ their bodies belonged to the Lord. In today's lesson we learn Paul's arguments against sexual sin and his explanation of a holy life.

1 CORINTHIANS 6:12-20

12 “I am allowed to do all things,” [Ⓐ] but not all things are good for me to do. “I am allowed to do all things,” but I will not let anything make me its slave. **13** “**Food is for the stomach, and the stomach for food,**” [Ⓑ] but God will destroy them both. The body is not for sexual sin but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body. **14** By his power God has raised the Lord from the dead and will also raise us from the dead. **15** Surely you know that **your bodies are parts of Christ himself.** [Ⓒ] So I must never take the parts of Christ and join them to a **prostitute!** [Ⓓ] **16** It is written in the Scriptures, “**The two will become one body.**” [Ⓔ] So you should know that anyone who joins with a prostitute becomes one body with the prostitute. **17** But the one who joins with the Lord is one spirit with the Lord. **18** So run away from sexual sin. Every other sin people do is outside their bodies, but those who sin sexually **sin against their own bodies.** [Ⓕ] **19** You should know that **your body is a temple** [Ⓖ] for the Holy Spirit who is in you. You have received the Holy Spirit from God. So you do not belong to yourselves, **20** because you were **bought by God for a price.** [Ⓖ] So honor God with your bodies.

- a. Paul may have said these words when he taught the Corinthians. They may have quoted this in their letter to Paul as support for their wrong behavior.
- b. Likely this was in their letter to Paul and part of their argument to support their wrong behaviors.
- c. When we become believers there is such a powerful joining of our lives with Christ that we are His body in the world.
- d. Paul likely has a temple prostitute in mind. In Corinth there were hundreds of temple prostitutes who worked for the temple of the Greek goddess Aphrodite.
- e. Paul quotes Genesis 2:24.
- f. Because the Holy Spirit lives in our bodies, sexual sin is against God’s temple.
- g. This is related to the idea of sexual sin being against one’s own body.
- h. Through the death of Jesus on the cross God has bought us out of sin.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What does it mean to live a holy life?

What are some things that I might be allowed to do but would still not be good for me?

Why is it so hard to stay away from sinful things?

What did Paul mean when he said our bodies are a part of Christ?

Where does the sentence “the two will become one body” come from? Why is that idea important for Christians?

How does a person become “one spirit with the Lord” and how does being one spirit with Him change the way we live?

What kind of things can Christians do to help them run away from sexual sin?

Who is the Holy Spirit? How can He live in a person? How can a person’s body be a temple for the Holy Spirit?

What was the price paid for our salvation? How does this “price” make you want to honor God with your body? If you honor God with your body how will you live?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read and explain Bible verses.*

Read the following verses. Then write a few words about why we need to keep our bodies holy.

Leviticus 19:2 _____

Ephesians 5:3 _____

Romans 8:10 _____

Daniel 1:8 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers focus on the Lord and not on the things of the world they can truly live holy lives.
- Believers can have a deep relationship with God the Father through faith in Jesus Christ.
- When believers care for their bodies and use their bodies in right ways they bring glory to God.

Discuss as a group how believers can focus on the Lord and not focus on the things of the world.

How does sexual sin lead members of your class away from a strong relationship with God? How can union with Christ lead you to sexual purity?

How can members of your class live in a way that honors the Lord and shows that their bodies are places in which the Holy Spirit lives?

MEMORY VERSE

By His power God has raised the Lord from the dead and will also raise us from the dead.

- 1 Corinthians 6:14

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12.

Paul answered some things the Corinthian believers said. They thought they were free to do whatever they wanted. However, they needed to be very careful about what they decided to do. Not all things were good for them to do. Some of the people ate food offered to idols. This was not a good thing.

There is a story in the Old Testament (Daniel 1:7-15) about a young man named Daniel. He was taken to Babylon where he became a slave along with other Israelites. Daniel refused to eat the king's food or drink his wine. He could have eaten the food, but he did not want to become unclean by eating food offered to idols. So he asked for permission to eat vegetables and drink only water. He stood firm with God. Daniel became stronger than the other slaves. Like Daniel, we must learn there are many things in life that we could actually do. However, we must be wise and let God's Spirit lead us to know what things are good for us to do and what things are not.

How can Christians know what is good to do and what is not good to do?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 6:13-14.

Some of the Corinthian believers thought it did not matter what they did with their bodies. They reasoned that stomachs and food went together, thus it was logical that bodies and sex went together. But Paul explained how the believer's body is for the Lord. Our bodies have a greater purpose than just food or sex. Christians' bodies are made to be holy. Our bodies are a temple. (See verse 19.) We do eat but must do it rightly. Sex too is a part of life. But it must be under the control of the Lord.

Someone might ask how we can control our desire for food or for sexual relationship. The answer is in God. God is very powerful. He created heaven and the earth. God raised Jesus from the dead. That kind of power can help believers control our desires.

Why should Christians avoid sexual sin? In what other ways can Christians take care of their bodies?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 6:15-17.

Paul explained that Jesus and a believer become one body. This is not an easy idea. In a spiritual way, the believer is a part of the body of Christ. We understand the idea that we are part of the church and the church is the body of Christ. But in this passage Paul goes a little beyond that idea. We have a strong connection with Christ. It is so strong that Paul explained it with these words: “your bodies are parts of Christ Himself.”
Wow!

A husband and wife become one body in a sexual union. It is a holy union. But in this passage Paul argues for sexual purity. So just as a oneness happens between a husband and a wife, a oneness happens between anyone having sex with a prostitute. Such a union is wrong.

We must remember our bodies are God’s temple. God created the body so we must honor God with our bodies. If we believe in Christ, then the Holy Spirit is already in us. We obey God with the help of the Holy Spirit.

How can we resist sexual temptation? How does the Holy Spirit help Christians?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Marriage and Sexuality*

God’s plan for marriage is that one man and one woman will be freely and totally committed to each other for life. God made humans male and female so our sexuality is as deep in us as God’s creation. God made us to be sexual, but He also made marriage to be the place where our sexuality is freely and fully shared. This is His gift to married people. According to the Bible, marriage makes a place where sexual relationship is blessed and where children can be a product of that relationship. In a powerful way marriage shows the world a picture of the union that Christ has with His church.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 6:18.

Paul warned people to stay away from sexual sin. In this verse he even said to “run away” from sexual sin. It is true that God made sex. It is His gift to husbands and wives. People who are not married need to wait until they do get married. This is opposite from how our culture thinks. Sexual sin is so common in our Deaf culture.

But Paul warned that sexual sin is unique. Bible teachers do not all agree on what Paul meant by sexual sin being against our own bodies. It seems to be related to the idea that the bodies of believers are a temple for the Holy Spirit. So when we sin sexually we do something against the place where God lives—our bodies. However we interpret verse 18, sexual sin is serious and we must run from it and not, like our culture, run to it.

What can we do to run away from sexual sin?

How do we sin against our own bodies when we sin sexually?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19-20.

So now we reach verse 19 and see that our body is God's temple. This is a very strong picture. With the temple idea, Paul reminded believers they were saved by Christ and lived in by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's final argument against sexual sin is connected to the death of Christ on the cross to pay for our sin. By His death Christ became the owner of our lives and our bodies. He bought us at the price of His own death. So, we must remember our bodies belong to God. Some of the Corinthians thought it was okay to use their bodies to do sexual acts in idol worship. Paul warned them this was wrong. It is against God's plan. It does not honor God.

What does it mean that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit? How can you honor God with your body?

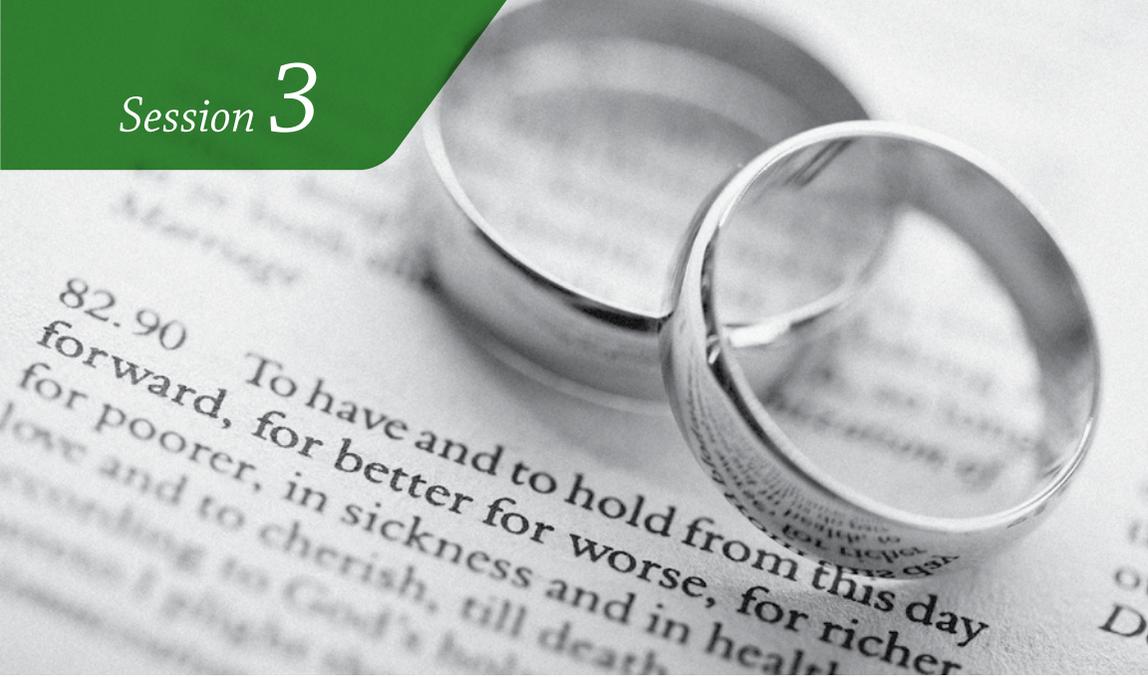
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 6. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What are some ways your body has been used for God this week? Has it been hard? Why were you successful living for God?

What has God been teaching you about the sexual life of a believer? How have you felt the Holy Spirit helping you to live a sexually pure life?

How has being a temple, the place where God lives, changed your life this week? Do you think other people know that you belong to Christ? What can you do so others will see Christ in you?



KEEPING COMMITMENTS

Believers honor God by keeping the promises they make in marriage and by staying sexually pure.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-13

What is a commitment? It is a promise or an agreement to do something. Marriage is an example of a commitment. Two people promise to love each other and stay together for as long as they live. They promise not to be with other people in a sexual way. Any kind of commitment is hard to keep. Commitments related to sex and marriage are especially hard to keep because, like Corinth, our culture is obsessed with sexual matters. When Christians keep their promises, they honor God.

The believers in Corinth wrote to Paul asking several questions. Some of their questions were about sex and marriage. In the Corinthian church, some of the members had spouses that were not believers. They wondered if they should stay married or get a divorce. Also, some believers were not married. In Corinthians 7 Paul taught them about marriage, divorce, and being single. Paul helped them and us understand God's plan in sex and marriage.

1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-13

1 Now I will discuss the things **you wrote me about.** **A** It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman. **2** But because sexual sin is a danger, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband. **3** The husband should give his wife all that he owes her as his wife. And the wife should give her husband all that she owes him as her husband. **4** The wife does not have full rights over her own body; her husband shares them. And the husband does not have full rights over his own body; his wife shares them. **5** Do not refuse to **give your bodies to each other,** **B** unless you both agree to stay away from sexual relations for a time so you can **give your time to prayer.** **C** Then come together again so Satan cannot tempt you because of a lack of self-control. **6** I say this to give you permission to stay away from sexual relations for a time. It is not a command to do so. **7** I wish that everyone were like me, but **each person has his own gift** **D** from God. One has one gift, another has another gift. **8** Now for those who are not married and for the widows I say this: It is good for them to stay unmarried as I am. **9** But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry. It is better to marry than to burn with sexual desire. **10 Now I give this command** **E** for the married people. (The command is not from me; it is from the Lord.) A wife should not leave her husband. **11** But if she does leave, she must not marry again, or she should make up with her husband. Also the husband should not divorce his wife. **12** For all the others I say this (I am saying this, not the Lord): If a Christian man has a wife who is not a believer, and she is happy to live with him, **he must not divorce her.** **F** **13** And if a Christian woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is happy to live with her, she must not divorce him.

- a. Not only had a report come from Chloe's family; apparently the Corinthians had also sent a letter to Paul asking him several questions.
- b. Husbands and wives have a sexual obligation to one another.
- c. Married believers may want to suspend sexual relationship at times to devote themselves to prayer.
- d. We do not all have the same gift from God as relates to marriage. Singleness is a gift. So is being married. Both singles and marrieds should celebrate the gift they have from God.
- e. Throughout this text Paul moves between instruction from him and commands from the Lord. Commands from the Lord refer to clear Old Testament instruction.
- f. If a believer was married to an unbeliever the believer needed to work to preserve the marriage.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What are the challenges that Christian marriages face?

What questions did the Corinthian Christians have for Paul?

Why is it important for a married couple to have a good sexual relationship?

What is the one reason Paul gave for married couples to stop having sexual relations? Why is it just for a limited time?

Why it is good to be single like Paul was?

How does a Christian know his or her gift whether it is to be married or to stay single?

Why should a Christian stay with their non-believing spouse? (See 1 Corinthians 7:14-16.)

Read Malachi 2:10-16. Why does God want Christians to honor their promises?

BIBLE SKILL: *Find and connect Bible verses.*

Draw a line from each reference to the correct verse.

Genesis 2:24	Marriage should be honored by everyone, and husband and wife should keep their marriage pure. God will judge as guilty
Matthew 19:5	For example, a woman must stay married to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from the law of marriage
Romans 7:2	And God said, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.'
Hebrews 13:4	So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.

IN MY CONTEXT

- God created marriage, and He commanded that sex should only happen inside of a marriage relationship.
- It does not matter if believers are married or single: believers should be satisfied in Christ.
- Believers know that God has made marriage to be between a man and a woman and that this relationship is holy.

Discuss as a group God's plan for sexual relationship.

What are the different marital gifts God has for people? Is one gift better than the other? Can one gift be right at one time of life and another gift right at a different time of life?

What does a holy marriage look like? What would you say to your Deaf friends if you wanted to describe a holy marriage to them?

MEMORY VERSE

But in any case each one of you should continue to live the way God has given you to live—the way you were when God called you. This is a rule I make in all the churches.

- 1 Corinthians 7:17

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-2.

There are not many challenges for Christians like the challenge of staying holy concerning sexual things. Our world is much like the world at Paul's time—people follow the sexual ideas of the culture, not the sexual ideals of God.

To learn about godly sexuality, the church in Corinth wrote a letter to Paul asking for guidance. They needed guidance because the city of Corinth had several temples for idol worship. Some of their pagan worship included sexual acts with temple prostitutes. This evil practice was a strong influence on the people in Corinth.

Paul helped them see that God made sex for marriage. When God made Adam and Eve, He told them to have children (Genesis 1:28). So sex was God's creation. Sex in marriage is a blessing for the couple. However, believers need to be faithful to their spouses. Hebrews 13:4 tells us, "Marriage should be honored by everyone, and husband and wife should keep their marriage pure. God will judge as guilty those who take part in sexual sins."

Our sexual impulse is very strong. Paul knew this. Paul knew that marriage helps the Christian husband and wife to resist sexual temptation. Jesus taught about this in Matthew 5:28. He said, "But I tell you that if anyone looks at a woman and wants to sin sexually with her, in his mind he has already done that sin with the woman."

Paul said that sexual sin is a danger. Do you think he is right? How have you seen sexual sin to be dangerous?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

Paul encouraged married couples to keep their sexual relationship active. They should be willing to give themselves physically to each other. Yet, there are spiritual duties that are more important than marital duties. By agreement, prayer can take priority over all other activities.

It is important for husbands and wives to be tender and caring for each other as they obey Christ. The wife needs to yield to her husband in the same way the husband yields to his wife. The husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body. This does not give a Christian husband power to abuse his wife in any way. Sexual relationship is a mutual giving. Even still, the Bible teaches that Christian people yield to Christ as wives yield to their husbands. You can find more information about the marriage relationship in Ephesian 5:21-33.

Paul explained that he wished everyone could stay single as he was single. Single people are able to spend more time with God than those who are married. Married people have responsibility to take care of their spouse, children, and household. Single people do not have these responsibilities. Paul called being single or being married a gift. Some are able to stay single and still feel fulfilled in Christ. Some feel God wants them to be married. Both are good. Paul was not against marriage. He was about living out one's calling.

How can a person find happiness regardless of their marital status?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Husbands and Wives*

In our world today pornography and adultery are big problems. It is important for the church to understand again God's plan for husbands and wives. Both are equal in God's eyes because both are made in God's image. A husband loves his wife the way Christ loved the church. A wife respects her husband and submits to his spiritual servant leadership as the church submits to Christ. In the safety and security of a relationship like this, sexuality can be fully shared and blessed by God.

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 7:8-9.

Many Bible teachers believe Paul was a widower. Paul apparently was a member of the Sanhedrin (the Jewish high court), and Sanhedrin members were normally married men. If this is so, then Paul's wife died at some time before he became a Christian. As a Christian and an apostle, Paul felt strongly he could do more for the ministry as a single person. He encouraged other Christians to stay single too.

Paul knew some single people would be tempted to have wrong sexual relationships. He encouraged them to get married if they could not resist temptation. Paul seemed to have known the strong sexual impulse that many people have. Paul knew that impulse could feel like an inner burning or longing. Paul recognized that marriage was, among other things, God's response to our sexual impulses.

What are the benefits of Christian marriage? What are the benefits of Christians remaining single? Discuss this with your Bible study group.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-13.

Divorce has become a large problem in the church. Some researchers say that the divorce rate for Christians is the same as it is for non-Christians. That is a very sad statistic. We need to be reminded of the value that God puts on marriage.

Paul gave these instructions about marriage. He made a strong declaration that married people should stay together. Jesus taught about divorce in Matthew 19:1-10. Jesus said, "Surely you have read in the Scriptures: When God made the world, 'He made them male and female.' And God said, 'So a man will leave his father and mother and be united with his wife, and the two will become one body.' So there are not two, but one. God has joined the two together, so no one should separate them" (Matthew 19:4-6).

This text does not teach Christians to live in danger and abuse. There are times when divorce is the only safe option. However, Christians need to learn anew the holy nature of marriage.

What do you think God's plan is for marriage and divorce?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-13.

There is an odd part in this text. Here it is: Paul said he was “saying this not the Lord.” How should we interpret this kind of phrase? It seems clear to me that Paul did not have an Old Testament command concerning this matter. There could be no Old Testament command concerning the marriage of Christians to non-Christians. Therefore Paul could not quote an Old Testament passage. So in this case Paul gave us his godly opinion. Jesus did not talk about this issue, so Paul answered as God led him. Paul said if the unbeliever was willing to stay married, the Christian spouse should stay married. Believers should not easily divorce their spouses even if their spouse is not a Christian.

If you have an unbelieving spouse, why should you stay in your marriage? (See 1 Corinthians 7:14-16.)

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 7. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How do we know that our sexuality is a gift from God? How can we honor God in all we do, especially in our sexual lives?

What gift has God given to you—is it to be single or to be married? How can you honor God whatever your gift is?

How should we Christians think about marriage and divorce? How have you honored God this week with your marriage or with your singleness?



INFLUENCING FOR CHRIST

Believers represent God by using their influence to bring others to Him.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27;10:31-33;11:1

In our world today many people are interested in their rights. They feel they have the right to good health care. They have the right to have a good job. They have the right to say or do anything they want. Some people do not care about how their life affects other people. They only care about their desires and getting what they think they deserve. What about Christians? Do we have the right to do whatever we want?

This is a pastoral letter from Paul to the church of Corinth. Some believers in Corinth decided they could eat food that was offered to idols. Other believers got upset because that food was used in idol worship. The two groups argued about what to do and asked Paul for his advice. Paul answered their question in 1 Corinthians 8. In chapter 9 Paul taught more about the influence Christians can have on others. He believed reaching others for Christ was the most important thing he could do. In today's session we will focus on the influence Christians can have on others.

1 CORINTHIANS

9:19-27;10:31-33;11:1

19 I am free Ⓐ and belong to no one. But I make myself a slave to all people to win as many as I can. **20** To the Jews I became like a Jew to win the Jews. I myself am not ruled by the law. But to those who are ruled by the law I became like a person who is ruled by the law. I did this to win those who are ruled by the law. **21** To those who are without the law I became like a person who is without the law. I did this to win those people who are without the law. (But really, I am not without God's law—I am ruled by Christ's law.) **22** To those who are weak, I became weak so I could win the weak. **I have become all things to all people** Ⓞ so I could save some of them in any way possible. **23** I do all this because of the Good News and so I can share in its blessings. **24** You know that **in a race** Ⓞ all the runners run, but only one gets the prize. So run to win! **25** All those who compete in the games use self-control so they can win a crown. That crown is an earthly thing that lasts only a short time, but our crown will never be destroyed. **26** So **I do not run without a goal**. Ⓞ I fight like a boxer who is hitting something—not just the air. **27** I treat my body hard and make it my slave so that **I myself will not be disqualified** Ⓞ after I have preached to others.

10:31 The answer is, **if you eat or drink**, Ⓞ or if you do anything, do it all for the glory of God. **32** Never do anything that might hurt others—Jews, Greeks, or God's church— **33** just as I, also, try to please everybody in every way. I am not trying to do what is good for me but what is good for most people so they can be saved.

11:1 **Follow my example**, Ⓞ as I follow the example of Christ.

- a. Paul had the freedom in Christ to live as he chose, but he determined to only live in ways that would attract people to Jesus.
- b. Paul did not mean that he compromised the gospel. He lived in ways that showed sensitivity to the many different cultures in which he worked.
- c. Reference to athletic events of the ancient world (similar to today's Olympic Games); the winner received a crown of flowers for his efforts.
- d. Paul's goal is the salvation of people from every people and nation.
- e. To be "disqualified" was not to lose salvation but to not accomplish the goal, which was to win people to Christ.
- f. The Corinthians were arguing about what they could eat and what they could not eat. The answer for their argument was to do everything for God's glory, not for self-serving purposes.
- g. Paul did not mean that we follow him. Paul meant that we follow his example in how he followed Christ. The one we follow is Christ.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Why must believers be willing to give up even their personal freedoms to draw others to Christ?

What is the difference between the Old Testament Law and the Law of Christ?

What are some things we can do to win people to Christ?

What is the “good news” that we share with people everywhere?

What was the goal that Paul worked so hard to achieve?

How can we honor God by what we eat and drink?

Is it possible to “please everyone in every way”? What did Paul mean by this statement?

When we follow the example of Christ, how do we live?

BIBLE SKILL: *Reflect on Scripture.*

Each of the Bible verses below mentions the word race. Write a few words about what race means in each verse.

Hebrews 12:1 _____

2 Timothy 4:7 _____

Philippians 2:16 _____

Galatians 5:7 _____

1 Corinthians 9:24 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers need to do all they can to win other people to Christ, but at the same time they should not compromise the gospel.
- Believers need to live their lives with godly discipline, working hard to receive God's approval.
- Believers need to live as an example to other people of what it means to follow Christ.

Discuss as a group how we can win other people to Christ and at the same time not compromise the gospel.

What is the prize we Christians are working for? How are members of your class running this race to share Christ?

Discuss with the class how you can apply the rule of eating and drinking everything to the glory of God. What can members of your class do to personally live so that others could follow Jesus? Your example?

MEMORY VERSE

The answer is, if you eat or drink, or if you do anything, do it all for the glory of God.

- 1 Corinthians 10:31

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-21.

In the first part of chapter 9, Paul talked about his right to earn pay for his work of sharing the gospel. He decided not to accept pay because he had a more important goal. He did not want pay to prevent anyone from learning about Jesus. Paul wanted all people to know about Jesus. That goal was more important to him than his freedom or his rights. He gave up his rights in order to serve others.

Paul was not under the Law of Moses anymore. He was free in Christ. Nevertheless, Paul followed the Jewish law to be able to share with the Jewish people about Jesus. Paul knew if he did not follow the Jewish law then the Jews would not listen to him when he talked about Jesus.

However, when Paul was with people who were not Jews he changed. Paul knew the Jewish law did not make a person right with God. So with Gentiles, Paul lived in their cultural ways and not according to the Jewish law. The reason for this was to win people to Christ who were not Jews.

Paul followed God's law, not the Jewish law. He did what he had to do to find people who needed Jesus. There are many non-Christians who do not know about Jesus. As Christians, Jesus asks us to share the gospel with them.

How do you share Jesus with Deaf people?

How do you share Jesus with hearing people?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 9:22-23.

Paul explained that people who are strong in their faith should not criticize those who are weak. In Romans 14:1, the writer said, “Accept into your group someone who is weak in faith, and do not argue about opinions.” What is weak faith? Keep in mind when people become new Christians, they always need help from other Christian people who are strong in faith. Paul meant people who are weak in faith have an immature faith that has not developed yet. For example, when you were a baby, you did not eat meat until you had your teeth. In the same way, as Christians, we need to feed on milk until we are ready to eat meat.

The stronger Christians are responsible to help the new Christians who are learning. They can help the ‘weaker’ Christians gain more faith with God.

Again we see Paul giving up his rights for the sake of the gospel. Reaching people for Christ was more important than living according to his rights.

How have you given up some of your Christian rights so that you may share the gospel of Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Stewardship*

Stewardship is a Biblical doctrine. It is about a Christian’s relationship to God. A steward is a person that manages things for an owner. For the Christian it means God owns everything, even the Christian’s life. The Christian is responsible to manage the things God gives him. We must manage our time, our talents, and our possessions in a way that honors God.

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27.

Ministry is very challenging. Paul compared it to being an athlete and exercising self-control. Paul wanted to avoid being disqualified in the race because he would lose the reward. He needed to run to win the prize. How do we win a game? We must have purpose and discipline if we want to win.

Self-control means that we discipline ourselves through hard work to win the race. We must be serious about preparing to reach our goal. What did Paul mean about being in a race? Paul used this as an example of a Christian working to win people to Christ. As Christians, our goal is to win the race and the reward, too. We must discipline ourselves through prayer, Bible study, and worship. This will equip us to run with strength and energy. Paul became a slave to Jesus so he could win some for Christ.

What are you doing to prepare yourself to be a witness for Jesus? How do you discipline yourself?

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-33.

Paul stated the main goal for Christians in verse 31. Everything we do should be for the glory of God. That was Paul's goal. We should do what is best for others so they can be saved. The stronger Christian should not make things hard for the weaker person. We should never hurt others. Some Christians change the kind of things they do so they will not hurt others. Many Christians give up drinking alcohol because they do not want to hurt someone.

Christian leaders and teachers should be very careful to teach about the freedom in Jesus Christ. We also need to be clear about what Scripture forbids.

The rule for behavior is not "I will do what I have the right to do." The Christian instead thinks about how he can influence someone toward Christ. So the Christian is willing to give up actions that are not wrong but would be hurtful for someone else. This is living a life of sacrifice.

What would your life look like if you gave up your rights to share Christ with someone different from you?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1.

Paul challenged the Corinthian believers to seek to use their influence to win others to Christ. Paul spent a lot of time teaching the people in Corinth about the Christian God. The people in Corinth knew Paul well. He asked them to follow his example. Paul was not acting in a proud way. Paul followed and depended on God. He wanted the Corinthians to do the same. He asked them to follow his example as he followed the example set by Christ. What this actually means is Paul asked the Corinthians to follow the way he followed.

Do you know someone who lives for Christ like Paul did? Maybe your Sunday School teacher or your Lifegroup leader is a person like this. Would you be a better witness for Christ if you followed the example of such a person?

Why do you need to follow Paul's example? How can you set an example for others to follow?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 9, 10, and 11. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What are some times in the past when you might have insisted on your rights and by doing so hurt one of your Christian brothers or sisters?

Who is God putting on your heart who needs to know about Jesus? How can you make time to share Christ with this person this week?

Think about the people who have been godly examples for you. Share with your study friends how you will be an example for others this week.



THE RESURRECTION

Believers find assurance for this life and the life to come through the resurrected Lord.

JOHN 20:3-9; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

The resurrection has been central to the gospel story for all of Christian history. Paul explained to believers the importance of Christ's resurrection. The gospel message explained the meaning of Jesus' death on the cross. He was buried and raised on the third day. Our salvation comes from His death and resurrection. If there is no resurrection, there is no salvation for us. All the blessings of His resurrection are lost. But there is proof Jesus was raised from the dead. One reason we believe in the resurrection is because many people saw Jesus after his resurrection. The disciples and the followers of Jesus saw Him alive after He died. For 2000 years believers have experienced the resurrected Jesus. Everyone who comes to Christ today comes believing that God has raised Him from the dead.

JOHN 20:3-9; 1 CORINTHIANS 15:20-28

3 So Peter and the **other follower** ④ started for the tomb. 4 They were both running, but the other follower ran faster than Peter and reached the tomb first. 5 He bent down and looked in and saw the strips of linen cloth lying there, but he did not go in. 6 Then following him, **Simon Peter arrived and went into the tomb** ⑤ and saw the strips of linen lying there. 7 He also saw the cloth that had been around Jesus' head, which was folded up and laid in a different place from the strips of linen. 8 Then the other follower, who had reached the tomb first, also went in. **He saw and believed.** ⑥ 9 (They did not yet understand from the Scriptures that Jesus must rise from the dead.)

15:20 But Christ has truly been raised from the dead—the first one and proof that **those who sleep** ⑦ in death will also be raised. 21 Death has come because of what one man did, but the rising from death also comes because of one man. 22 **In Adam** ⑧ all of us die. In the same way, **in Christ** ⑨ all of us will be made alive again. 23 But everyone **will be raised to life** ⑩ in the right order. Christ was first to be raised. When Christ comes again, those who belong to him **will be raised to life**, ⑪ 24 and then the **end will come.** ⑫ At that time Christ will destroy all rulers, authorities, and powers, and he will hand over the kingdom to God the Father. 25 Christ must rule until he puts all enemies under his control. 26 The last enemy to be destroyed will be death. 27 The Scripture says that God put all things under his control. When it says “all things” are under him, it is clear this does not include God himself. God is the One who put everything under his control. 28 After everything has been put under the Son, then he will put himself under God, who had put all things under him. Then **God will be the complete ruler** ⑬ over everything.

- a. The Bible does not identify the “other follower.” Many believe this person was John, one of the twelve disciples.
- b. Peter went in first and then John. They saw the tomb was empty.
- c. They believed what the women had said. They did not yet fully understand the truth of the resurrection.
- d. Paul sometimes uses the word “sleep” to mean the death of a believer.
- e. All who are “in Adam” die or will die. That includes every living person. All who are “in Christ” live. That includes only those who trust Christ for salvation.
- f. Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead. At the return of Christ all believers will also be raised.
- g. The return of Jesus and the resurrection of the dead will signal the end of all things when God wraps up time in His own way.
- h. God has always been the complete ruler. But in the end all things will once again be ordered correctly.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

How do we know that the resurrection really happened?

What does it mean that the disciples saw the empty tomb and believed?

What proof did Paul give that believers will be raised from the dead?

How is the sin of Adam related to the death of all people?

How is the resurrection of Jesus related to the salvation of all believers?

What will happen when Jesus comes again?

What is the last enemy that will be defeated by Jesus? Why is this important for believers?

Who is the final ruler over all things? What will His rule look like?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read and explain Bible verses.*

Look up the verses below. Write a few words about the resurrection of Jesus.

Luke 24:13-14 _____

Romans 10:9 _____

Matthew 16:21 _____

1 Corinthians 15:4-6 _____

Colossians 1:18 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Salvation comes through believing in the Christ who rose from the dead.
- Believers find true life through faith in Christ who rose from the dead.
- Believers can live knowing the resurrection is real and that the living Christ will rule as king forever.

Discuss as a group how a person can be saved and why the resurrection of Jesus is important for salvation.

What does it mean “in Adam all die”? How does that compare with the other sentence, “in Christ all of us will be made alive...”?

Discuss with the class what will happen when Christ comes again.

MEMORY VERSE

But Christ has truly been raised from the dead—the first one and proof that those who sleep in death will also be raised.

- 1 Corinthians 15:20

DAY ONE

Read John 20:3-5.

Mary Magdalene and Mary, Mother of James and Salome bought some sweet-smelling spices to prepare Jesus' body. They had to wait until after the Sabbath was over so they could go to the tomb early to anoint Jesus' body. They wanted to do this because of their love, devotion, and respect. They brought spices to the tomb like people take flowers to a grave today.

When the women arrived at the tomb they saw the stone was rolled away and the tomb was empty. They ran to inform the disciples. That is how Peter and the other disciples found out. They went to the tomb to see with their own eyes. Perhaps they thought the women went to the wrong tomb.

Most Bible teachers believe "the other follower" in verse 4 was John. John wrote the Gospel of John and usually did not name himself in his writing.

What do you think you would have done if you had been one of those who heard the women report that the tomb was empty?

DAY TWO

Read John 20:6-9.

Peter saw the empty tomb with his own eyes. He saw the white cloth that was wrapped around Jesus's body. It was lying on the stone. Peter and the other disciples could not understand what it meant.

You may remember the story in the Bible where Jesus was walking with Peter and His disciples. Jesus tried to teach His disciples that He would die soon. It was part of God's plan. In Matthew 16:21-23, Peter could not understand what Jesus was saying to them. Jesus said He had to go to Jerusalem because of God's plan. Peter knew that place was very dangerous for Him. Jesus explained He must go to Jerusalem where the Jewish elders, priests, leaders, and the teachers of law would make Him suffer. He told them that He must be killed and rise from the dead on the third day. Peter could not understand. He did not want to lose Jesus.

He asked Jesus to stop. He said, “God save you from those things, Lord! Those things will never happen to you!” Then Jesus said to Peter, “Go away from me, Satan! You are not helping me! You don’t care about the things of God, but only about the things people think are important” (Matthew 16:22-23).

When Peter saw the empty tomb, he should have remembered what Jesus told him when they were traveling down the road to Caesarea Philippi. Even still, Peter and John did not understand what was happening.

Why didn’t the disciples understand Jesus would rise from the dead?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-22.

Paul said that death entered the world through one man. That man was Adam. Genesis 3 tells the story about how Eve ate the fruit and gave it to Adam. God warned Adam and Eve not to eat from that tree, the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They chose to disobey God and sin began.

However, there is good news! Jesus came to earth just as God had planned. Jesus died on the cross and was raised from the dead. Romans 10:9 tells us, “If you declare with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved.” We believe in the Resurrected Christ.

Keep in mind what Paul said in verse 20. Paul will come back to the idea of the resurrection in verse 23.

What does it mean “in Adam all of us die”?

What will happen to a person who does not trust in Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Salvation*

Salvation is God's free gift to people who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior. There is no one else that can offer salvation—ONLY JESUS CHRIST. Nothing and no one can take away our salvation. Our faith in Christ gives us a new birth through the work of God's grace. Salvation is provided to us through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23-24.

Jesus died on the cross and rose from the dead. Christ went back home to His Father in Heaven. When the right time comes, Jesus will come back and meet us up in the air. We will live with Jesus after we die.

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18 to encourage Christians. He said when a Christian dies we should not be sad. God will raise Christians from the dead. When Jesus comes back, Christian people will hear a loud trumpet call of God. Those Christians who are dead will rise first from the ground. They will meet Jesus up in the sky. The Christian people alive on earth will gather up with them in the cloud to meet the Lord in the air. What wonderful news!

Christians have many different ideas about how these things will happen. One sure thing to keep in mind is when these things occur the end has come. God will wrap up things in exactly the way He has planned.

How do these verses give you encouragement to live daily for Jesus?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 15:25-28.

Paul explained to believers that they will experience the resurrection and the eternal reign of Christ. This was confirmed when Peter and the disciples saw the empty tomb. Jesus was not there. Jesus told the disciples the truth. He told them He would live again.

At the right time in God's plan, the dead will rise. There is more information about these things in Revelation 20:14. The writer, John, explained the final destruction of death. He used the words, "second death." People who did not believe in Jesus will experience the "second death." Whoever believed in Jesus will go to eternal life in heaven. Whoever didn't believe in Jesus will spend eternity in the lake of fire (hell).

What can you do to miss the second death and to experience eternal life in heaven?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from John 20 and 1 Corinthians 15. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

If you have never trusted in Jesus as your personal Savior, this week would be a great time to make that decision. Talk with your study friends and let them lead you to Christ.

If you know Jesus as your personal Savior, how can you and your study friends share the story of the resurrection of Jesus so that other people can come to faith in Jesus?

How does the resurrection of Jesus change life for you today?



REMEMBER THE SACRIFICE

Believers are to approach remembrances of Jesus' death with reverence and unity.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-29

As believers, it is our responsibility and our joy to meet together to worship God. When we meet for worship, we must remember our purpose. When we worship we are supposed to praise God. Also, we can have the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper is an important way to remember Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 11 Paul praised the Corinthian believers for the way they respected his authority. However, there was one thing that caused Paul to be unhappy. Apparently someone told Paul how the believers acted when they had the Lord's Supper. Paul rebuked the believers' in Corinth for their actions and attitudes. In the Bible verses from today's session, Paul explained that believers should approach the Lord's Supper with an attitude of worship and unity.

1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-29

17 In the things I tell you now I do not praise you, because **when you come together you do more harm than good.** **18** First, I hear that when you meet together as a church you are divided, and I believe some of this. **19 (It is necessary to have differences** **20** among you so that it may be clear which of you really have God's approval.) **20** When you come together, **you are not really eating the Lord's Supper.** **21** This is because when you eat, each person eats without waiting for the others. Some people do not get enough to eat, while others have too much to drink. **22** You can eat and drink **in your own homes!** You seem to think God's church is not important, and you embarrass those who are poor. What should I tell you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you for doing this. **23** The teaching I gave you is the same teaching **I received from the Lord:** On the night when the Lord Jesus was handed over to be killed, he took bread **24** and gave thanks for it. Then he broke the bread and said, "This is my body; it is for you. **Do this to remember me.**" **25** In the same way, after they ate, Jesus took the cup. He said, "This cup is the new agreement that is sealed with the blood of my death. When you drink this, do it to remember me." **26** Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are telling others about the Lord's death until he comes. **27** So a person who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in a way that is not worthy of it will be guilty of sinning against the body and the blood of the Lord. **28** Look into your own hearts before you eat the bread and drink the cup, **29** because all who eat the bread and drink the cup without recognizing the body **eat and drink judgment against themselves.**

- a. The Corinthians were creating a problem through their celebration of the Lord's Supper.
- b. Paul recognized that differences can point out true believers.
- c. The Lord's Supper had become a regular "love feast" for the Corinthians with large amounts of food and drink.
- d. This kind of eating was better done at home as it tended to show disrespect for the people of the church, especially the poor.
- e. Paul learned about the first Lord's Supper from the Lord Himself. Paul likely learned these things during his time in Arabia. (See Galatians 1:17.)
- f. The Lord's Supper does not give us salvation, but through it we honor the memory of Christ's death and we celebrate His presence with us.
- g. Sharing together in the Lord's Supper is a holy act of worship. Christians should seriously think about their lives and their personal holiness before participating in the supper.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Why should a church celebrate the Lord's Supper?

Why do churches become divided about the way to celebrate the Lord's Supper and about the meaning of the Lord's Supper?

What was wrong with the way the Corinthians were celebrating the Lord's Supper?

How did Paul describe the way Jesus did the first Lord's Supper?

What did Jesus mean when He said about the bread, "This is my body; it is for you. Do this to remember me"?

What did Jesus mean when He said about the cup, "This cup is the new agreement that is sealed with the blood of my death. When you drink this, do it to remember me"?

How does eating the bread and drinking the cup tell about the Lord's death?

Why is it important to look into your own heart before you eat and drink the Lord's Supper?

What is the right thing to do before participating in the Lord's Supper? How can people examine themselves?

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare and contrast.*

Four different men wrote about the Lord's Supper. Read the verses below and write your thoughts about the verses. Share your thoughts with your group.

Matthew 26:26-30 _____

Mark 14:22-26 _____

Luke 22:14-20 _____

John 6:35-36 _____

John 6:54-56 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers participate in the Lord's Supper they need to truly worship and be truly reverent.
- When believers participate in the Lord's Supper in the right ways, they show their true faith in Christ.
- Believers should have a humble heart when they join with other believers while taking the Lord's Supper.

Discuss as a group how a church should celebrate the Lord's Supper. Is there more than one way to do the Supper correctly? What makes it right or wrong?

What is the right way to think about the Lord's Supper? What does it really mean? Get your whole group to talk about this.

What do believers need to do before taking the Lord's Supper? How can your study group prepare themselves for the Lord's Supper?

MEMORY VERSE

Every time you eat this bread and drink this cup you are telling others about the Lord's death until He comes.

- 1 Corinthians 11:26

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-19.

Paul was very disappointed with some of the Corinthian believers because their church was divided. As you read 1 Corinthians you will see some of the reasons they were divided. In this part of 1 Corinthians the people were divided over the Lord's Supper. Their division was so bad Paul said their coming together as a church did "more harm than good."

Churches are like hospitals. They are full of wounded and sick people. Christians are not perfect. Only God is perfect. Often in churches there is a lack of forgiveness. Sometimes churches split because of pride. There are different opinions about music and worship style. Disagreements cause conflicts. No wonder churches in the first century and churches today are divided.

James discussed reasons for conflicts in his letter. He said, "Do you know where your fights and arguments come from? They come from the selfish desires that war within you. You want things, but you do not have them. So you are ready to kill and are jealous of other people, but you still cannot get what you want. So you argue and fight. You do not get what you want, because you do not ask God. Or when you ask, you do not receive because the reason you ask is wrong. You want things so you can use them for your own pleasures" (James 4:1-3). James was so right.

Think about the conflicts and divisions in your church or in some church that you know. What are Christians divided over today?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 11: 20-21.

Some Bible teachers believe the church celebrated another feast at the same time as the Lord's Supper. This feast has been called the "love feast." It was a regular meal that came before worship and before the Lord's Supper. From Paul's letter it seems that following the love feast the people did not respect the Lord's Supper. They did not respect each other. The people behaved in a selfish manner. They just thought about their own enjoyment. They did not have a time of worship. They did not think about Jesus and His sacrifice. They thought about food just like many people do at church today.

Paul was very blunt and rebuked the Christians for their behavior. Paul gave instructions to the people on how to use the Lord's Supper. He recommended they eat at home before coming together for the Lord's Supper. Their feasting caused the people to disrespect God's church. Their feasting was especially hurtful to those who were poor.

Paul didn't care what other people thought of him. He served God. He wanted the people to understand that the Lord's Supper is a serious event.

Why was Paul upset with the church in Corinth? Do you think we do the Lord's Supper in a better way today? Why do you think so?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Lord's Supper*

The Lord's Supper is one way that Christians worship Jesus Christ. The Supper includes the eating of bread and the drinking of the fruit of the grape. The Supper is a way to remember the death of Jesus who is the only Savior to those who believe. The Lord's Supper also helps us think that Jesus will come again.

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-24.

The story of Jesus' last supper with the disciples the night before He died on the cross is written in Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 14:22-26, and Luke 22:17-20. I encourage you to go and read these verses. The Lord's Supper was a special meal that Jesus connected to the Passover meal. You can find more information about the first Passover in Exodus 12.

In Exodus 12:12-13 God explained, "That night I will go through the land of Egypt and kill all the firstborn animals and people in the land of Egypt. I will also punish all the gods of Egypt. I am the LORD. But the blood will be a sign on the houses where you are. When I see the blood, I will pass over you. Nothing terrible will hurt you when I punish the land of Egypt." After this first Passover, Jews celebrated their deliverance from slavery in Egypt each year with the Passover meal. You can see why Jesus connected the Lord's Supper to the Passover. The first Passover was about freedom because of the blood. The Lord's Supper is about freedom from sin because of the blood of Jesus.

Paul reminded the Corinthian church about the purpose of the Lord's Supper. Jesus told his disciples the bread they ate represented His body. They were supposed to remember Him when they ate the bread. It is the same for us. The bread represents Jesus' body. His body was whipped and beaten by Roman soldiers. He carried His cross up to Calvary. His body was nailed to the cross. When we eat the bread, we remember Jesus' suffering and death on the cross.

How would you explain the bread part of the Lord's Supper to one of your Deaf friends?

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 11:25-26.

The wine represented Jesus' blood. It does not mean we must drink wine. Many churches use grape juice. The color reminds us of Jesus' blood. Jesus said, "This cup is the new agreement that God makes with His people. This new agreement begins with My blood which is poured out for you" (Luke 22:20).

The new agreement is the same as a new covenant. The new covenant means that people can have a new life with Jesus. Without Christ, we are hopeless and doomed. With Christ we have hope and new life. The old covenant of the Jews included animal sacrifices to cover the sins of the people. Under the new covenant Jesus Christ sacrificed His life as a payment for our sins forever. People can ask for forgiveness and invite Jesus in their heart. This is the beginning of a new life. "If you declare with your mouth, 'Jesus is Lord,' and if you believe in your heart that God raised Jesus from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9).

Paul explained that when we eat the bread and drink the cup we show that we remember Christ's death for us. It is our responsibility now to tell others about Jesus and His death. One way we tell about Jesus is by witnessing to our friends. Another way we tell about Jesus is by taking the Lord's Supper. The Supper is like a drama. It proclaims the Lord's death. In Matthew 28:18b-20 Jesus told us to make disciples. Part of our obedience to this command is to take the Lord's Supper and to do it until Jesus comes again.

How would you explain the cup part of the Lord's Supper? What does the bread and the drink mean to you?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-29.

In this passage Paul helps us understand how to do the Lord's Supper the proper way. We should remember Christ died for our sins. The supper represents His death. We should approach the supper thinking seriously about living holy lives. If we are not believers then we shouldn't take the Lord's Supper at all. If we are not living holy lives we might also decide to not take the Supper.

Paul wanted the people in the church to have the right attitude about the Lord's Supper. This is important today as well. If we eat the bread and drink the juice like it is a snack, what does that mean? Does it mean we don't understand how Jesus suffered? Does it mean we don't care about His sacrifice for us? If other people see us take the Lord's Supper in a playful way, what do they think of Jesus' sacrifice? Will they think it wasn't important? The Lord's Supper reminds us powerfully of what Jesus did to save us. We should always participate in this act of worship with respect and faith.

If you do not believe in Jesus Christ, should you join in the Lord's Supper? Why or why not? If you are not living a holy life what should you do about the Supper?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 11. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What has been your experience with the Lord's Supper in the past? When has it meant the most to you?

How do you interpret the words: "this is my body," and "this cup is the new agreement?" How would you explain these things to a Deaf friend?

How can you best prepare yourself for taking the Lord's Supper the next time you are in a worship service with this special meal?



SERVING GOD'S PEOPLE

Believers receive special gifts from God so they may service Him and His people.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-12,21-26

My two Deaf sons have different kinds of abilities. Daniel is a very athletic boy who loves sports. David is very smart and loves the challenge of learning. Daniel and David depend on each other for things they need. When Daniel needs help to understand his reading, David helps him. When David is unable to do something that requires physical strength, Daniel helps him. Both of them work together well and help each other. This picture of natural abilities can help us know how God gives and uses spiritual gifts in His people.

In today's verses, Paul answered the Corinthian's questions about spiritual gifts. He explained there are different kinds of spiritual gifts. All of the spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit. Each person has their own role in the body of Christ using those gifts. Paul used the example of a body to help believers understand how our gifts work together in the church. He wanted them to know each person is a part of a bigger picture.

1 CORINTHIANS 12:4-12,21-26

4 There are different kinds of gifts, but they are all from the same **Spirit**. **5** There are different ways to serve but the same Lord to serve. **6** And there are different ways that God works through people but the same God. God works in all of us in everything we do. **7** Something from the Spirit **can be seen in each person**, **8** for the common good. **8** The Spirit gives one person the ability to speak with wisdom, and the same Spirit gives another the ability to speak with knowledge. **9** The same Spirit gives faith to one person. And, to another, that one Spirit gives gifts of healing. **10** The Spirit gives to another person the power to do miracles, to another the ability to prophesy. And he gives to another the ability to know the difference between good and evil spirits. The Spirit gives one person the ability to speak in different kinds of languages and to another **the ability to interpret those languages**. **11** One Spirit, the same Spirit, does all these things, and the Spirit decides what to give each person. **12** A person's body is one thing, but it has many parts. Though there are **many parts to a body**, **13** all those parts make only one body. Christ is like that also.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the foot, "I don't need you!" **22** No! Those parts of the body that seem to be the weaker are really necessary. **23** And the parts of the body we think are less deserving are the parts to which we give the most honor. We give special respect to the parts we want to hide. **24** The more respectable parts of our body need no special care. But God put the body together and gave more honor to the parts that need it **25** so our body **would not be divided**. **26** God wanted the different parts to care the same for each other. **26** If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it. Or if one part of our body is honored, **all the other parts share its honor**.

- a. When Paul writes about the Spirit in this passage he is writing about the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity.
- b. Every believer receives a gift or gifts from the Holy Spirit to be used in the life of the church.
- c. In verses 8 – 10 Paul lists nine spiritual gifts. Many other spiritual gifts are listed in other places in the New Testament. See the Bible Skill for where they are listed.
- d. Paul used the idea of our physical body to help us understand how we function as a spiritual body in the church. In both cases there is one body but many different parts.
- e. Paul used every opportunity he could to remind the Corinthians that they should not be divided. As a body is united so should the church be united.
- f. The body of Christ is so strongly joined together that if one suffers all suffer. If one is honored all are honored. Every part of the body of Christ (His church) is joined to every other part.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Where do spiritual gifts come from and what is their purpose in the life of the church?

Three times in verses 4–6 Paul writes about what is different and what is the same. Look at these three verses. Why does Paul stress this idea of what is different and what is the same?

What are the nine spiritual gifts in verses 8–10 and how could each gift be used in the life of the church?

Who decides which person will receive which gift?

In what ways is the body of a person like the body of Christ—the church?

What did Paul mean when he said the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are necessary?

In what ways are the parts of the body that are less deserving given special honor?

What are things people do that divide the body of Christ? What are things that people do when led by the Spirit that unite the body of Christ?

How do we suffer with each other? How do we share each other's honor? Do these things really happen in your church?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read and explain Bible verses.*

Read the verses below. They teach something about the gifts from the Holy Spirit. Write a few words about what you learn from each verse.

Romans 12:6-8 _____

1 Corinthians 12:28-30 _____

Ephesians 4:11 _____

1 Peter 4:9-11 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- The Holy Spirit gives gifts to every believer. The purpose for this is so every believer will have a part in the ministry of the church.
- The Holy Spirit is the one who gives each person the specific gift that person has. This is a decision of the Spirit.
- When each believer uses his or her God-given spiritual gifts the church receives the benefit, and the work of the kingdom is done.

In your group talk about the importance of spiritual gifts and how the One Spirit gives different gifts to every believer.

What spiritual gift or gifts has the Holy Spirit given to you? How do you and your gifts fit into the life of the church?

How does the picture idea of a body help you to understand how the body of Christ, the church, works together to do God's work?

MEMORY VERSE

If one part of the body suffers, all the other parts suffer with it.
Or if one part of our body is honored, all the other parts share its honor.

- 1 Corinthians 12:26

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4-6.

Paul explained to the Corinthians there were different kinds of spiritual gifts. However, as Paul said, every gift comes from the same Holy Spirit. Spiritual gifts are not given so believers can feel good about themselves. Spiritual gifts are given so believers can use their gifts to serve each other for the Lord. God uses each of us as believers to be able to help others. This is God's plan for us.

Some people think that God just reaches into our lives and changes things. Sometimes God does do this. But many times God does His work through the hands-on ministry of other people. For example, someone may pray about his or her needs. God may then use a Christian brother or sister to meet those needs. This is how spiritual gifts in the church work.

It is important to know the Holy Spirit is in each believer as a gift from God. Jesus explained that He had to go back to heaven from earth so He could send the Holy Spirit. You can read this in John 16:7. God's plan was for Jesus to return to heaven, send the Holy Spirit on all believers, and then continue to do His work on earth through his followers.

Who has the Holy Spirit today? How did you receive the Holy Spirit? What is God doing in you through His Holy Spirit?

KEY DOCTRINE: *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God. He convicts us of sin, teaches us about righteousness, and judges. The Holy Spirit lives in each person who repents and accepts Jesus into his or her life. The Holy Spirit is our helper, counselor, and comforter, the One Jesus promised in John 14:16,26, and 15:26. The Holy Spirit is the One who gives spiritual gifts which empower believers to serve God through His church.

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 12:7-8.

Verse 7 makes it clear that every believer receives a gift or gifts from the Holy Spirit. Did you see the words, “In each person?” That means all of us have spiritual gifts. Again, the gifts are not for me to enjoy or to brag about. They are for the good of all.

The first gifts Paul wrote about are wisdom and knowledge. God uses people to teach or speak with wisdom and knowledge to other people that need to know more about God. You can see that in the Pentecost story in Acts 1:12-2:42. Luke wrote about the coming of the Holy Spirit. I encourage you to go read that story. On the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came on the believers. They were filled with the Holy Spirit. They began to speak different languages by the power of the Holy Spirit. People from about fifteen countries heard their own language. Peter shared the gospel. Three thousand people were saved that day. The point of the story is Peter’s life changed that day because of the Holy Spirit. People could see the change. Peter was able to speak with wisdom and knowledge far beyond his own wisdom and knowledge. God gave Peter and the others power to do His work through the Holy Spirit.

How can you use your spiritual gifts to serve God and His people?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 12:9-10.

People have different kinds of gifts to use for God’s purposes. Think of it like building a house. Different kinds of people with different skills work together to build a house. One person with just one skill alone would not be able to build the house. In the same way, the church needs people with different skills and gifts to work together for God. Together they can build a place to worship. They are able to teach or preach, sing praise songs, feed the poor, and give offerings.

Verses 9-10 list seven spiritual gifts. This is not a full list of all the spiritual gifts. See the “Bible Skills” section for verses with more of the spiritual gifts. Even the combined list from all the verses does not have all the spiritual gifts that Christians have. The Holy Spirit gives gifts in each generation that are needed to reach the world for Christ and to serve the needs of the kingdom.

Do you know what gift or gifts the Holy Spirit has given you? Do you use them? How are you using your spiritual gifts?

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 12:11-12.

The Corinthians may have been confused by the many spiritual gifts. Perhaps it seemed to them that the different gifts must come from different spirits. It was important for the Corinthians to see that all spiritual gifts came from the one true God. That is why the many gifts led to unity and not division; because all the gifts came from God.

So it is clear that God has a plan for each of us related to gifts. He gives different kinds of gifts because there are different kinds of service. And even though we know God as Father, Son (Jesus), and Holy Spirit there is still but one God and one source for all the gifts.

Paul used the idea of a body as a picture of the body of Christ. There are many parts in one body. If there were no parts then there would be no body. In the same way the body of Christ has many parts. Believers are the parts in the body of Christ. Jesus is the head of the body. We all work together as He leads us.

How does the body of Christ work together? How do you fit in the body of Christ?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-26.

Think about building a house again. Suppose the owner has no skills to build a house. The owner would need to call other people that have the specific skill to build a foundation. If the owner asked them to build the walls, they may not have the skills to do it. The owner would need to call a different company that specializes in building walls. Then he would need other people to do the roof. Finally the house is complete. There were many different skills needed to build the new house. He needed all the different skills to have a complete house. They were all important.

In the same way, believers who have their own skills and gifts should work together for God. God has a plan for His people. We need Him. God calls people to become pastors, leaders, Bible study leaders, administrators, maintenance workers, missionaries, and more. Without them, there would be no church at all.

How can church members care for each other? Why do we need each other?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 12. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How have you experienced the Holy Spirit in your life this week? How have you seen the Spirit working in your church? What are the spiritual gifts that God has given you? How have you used those gifts to serve the people around you and to build the kingdom of God?

Have you done your part in the body of Christ this week? Have you used your spiritual gifts to make unity in the church?



UNDERSTANDING LOVE

Believers should serve other people because of the love they have for them.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–13

First Corinthians 13 is sometimes called the “Love Chapter.” Couples often read this chapter at their wedding because of its great words. The Greek word for love here is “agape.” When Bible teachers explain agape they say the word includes the ideas of faithfulness, commitment, and an act of the will. This type of love is best thought of as godly love.

In last week’s session, we learned what Paul taught about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. He encouraged believers to help and serve each other. In today’s session we will see what motivates our service. Paul explained that without love the spiritual gifts have no value. He described what love should look like in action. He also showed how love is needed for true ministry. Chapter 13 gives us a picture of God’s love for us that now is in us. Because of God’s love which is in us, we can love others in the right way.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1–13

1 I may speak in **different languages** **A** of people or even angels. But if I do not have **love**, **B** I am only a noisy bell or a crashing cymbal. **2** I may have the gift of prophecy. I may understand all the secret things of God and have all knowledge, and I may have **faith so great I can move mountains**. **C** But even with all these things, if I do not have love, then I am nothing. **3** I may give away everything I have, and I may even give my body as an **offering to be burned**. **D** But I gain nothing if I do not have love. **4** Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud. **5** Love is not rude, is not selfish, and does not get upset with others. Love does not count up wrongs that have been done. **6** Love takes no pleasure in evil but rejoices over the truth. **7** Love patiently accepts all things. It always trusts, always hopes, **and always endures**. **E** **8** Love never ends. There are gifts of prophecy, but they will be ended. There are gifts of speaking in different languages, but those gifts will stop. There is the gift of knowledge, but it **will come to an end**. **F** **9** The reason is that our knowledge and our ability to prophesy are not perfect. **10** But when perfection comes, the things that are not perfect will end. **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 stopped those childish ways**. **G** **12** It is the same with us. Now we see a dim reflection, as if we were looking into a mirror, but then we shall see clearly. Now I know only a part, but then I will know fully, as God has known me. **13** So these three things continue forever: faith, hope, and love. And the **greatest of these is love**. **H**

- a. Most English Bibles translate this as “tongues.” The Greek word is “glossolalia” which can mean real human languages or unknown ecstatic sounds.
- b. from the Greek word “agape.” Agape is the highest form of love.
- c. Paul is quoting Jesus. (See Matthew 17:20.)
- d. Paul died in Rome during the persecution of Caesar Nero. He was likely beheaded.
- e. There are fifteen different ways that Paul explains what agape love is like.
- f. There will come a time when prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will end, but the spiritual gift of love will never end.
- g. The way the Corinthian Christians argued and fought each other showed that they were still living as immature Christians. The love described in chapter 13 shows what mature faith looks like.
- h. Paul gives love (godly love) the highest value.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What kind of love is Paul talking about in chapter 13?

In verses 1-3 Paul mentions several spiritual gifts. What are those spiritual gifts that Paul writes about? Why is love more important than these other spiritual gifts?

What does Paul say about love in verses 4-7? How well do people live up to Paul's description of love? How well do church people live up to Paul's description of love?

What does Paul mean when he says that the gifts of prophecy, speaking in other languages, and knowledge will stop or end?

What gift will never end? Why is this so important?

What is the difference between living like a child and living like an adult? How does love make a difference in the way people live?

When will we "see clearly," and when will we "know fully"?

What is "faith, hope, and love"? How well do people in your church show these things?

Why is love the greatest of faith, hope, and love?

BIBLE SKILL: *Fill in the blanks.*

Some of you know the word "agape" which is the Greek word for godly love. Find these verses in the New Testament that use the word agape. Write a short note about each verse to learn more about this special kind of love.

John 13:35 _____

John 15:13 _____

Romans 5:8 _____

1 Corinthians 16:14 _____

Ephesians 5:2 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers use their spiritual gifts because they love other people they will make a big and real difference.
- Believers should always be doing things that show godly love to other people.
- Believers should be doing things that make an eternal difference.

Discuss as a group why we must do Christian actions because of love and why without love even Christian actions are not done right.

What should love look like in the life of a Christian? How can you show love better in your life?

What would be different in the life of a church if people loved like Paul told us to love? Why is love eternally important?

MEMORY VERSE

Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous, it does not brag, and it is not proud.

- 1 Corinthians 13:4

DAY ONE

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.

Paul taught the Corinthians the importance of love. If people do not have love, their spiritual gifts and their service is worthless. Love is more than just a feeling. Love shows a lot of action. You can see the kinds of action love shows by reading verses 1-3. Keep in mind that even if you sacrifice your life it means nothing without love. Love and hate are very different. Love always wins. Hate always loses. When we see a person that is full of love, there are actions that show care and concern for others. John, one of Jesus' disciples, said, "Dear friends, we should love each other, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has become God's child and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love" (1 John 4:7-8).

How would you describe love?

What are some actions that show love?

DAY TWO

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-5.

Paul explained how love shows patience and kindness to others. If you love a person, you will be patient with that person. For example, suppose a child accidentally bumped into a 100 year old antique cabinet and it fell to the floor. The cabinet cracked. The cabinet belonged to the child's great grandfather. It could not be fixed. What do you think the father would do to the child? Would the father show his love to his child? Would he be happy the child was not hurt? What would patience look like in this situation?

What does it mean to be rude? Is texting or talking on their phone at a movie theater rude? What about people talking loudly in a library? Do you think cutting into the checkout line at grocery store is rude? These actions do not show God's love. They are rude.

Romans 1:29-30 describes more actions that do not show love: “They are filled with every kind of sin, evil, selfishness, and hatred. They are full of jealousy, murder, fighting, lying, and thinking the worst about each other. They gossip and say evil things about each other. They hate God. They are rude and conceited and brag about themselves. They invent ways of doing evil. They do not obey their parents.”

Are you guilty of being rude? What does it mean to “count up wrongs that have been done”?

DAY THREE

Read 1 Corinthians 13:6-7.

God showed His love to teach us to patiently accept all things. We must trust in God and keep our hope in Him. God loved us first. Our love for Him should continue always. When we understand God’s love, it helps us love each other.

Notice the “all” words in these two verses: “accepts ALL things,” and “ALWAYS trusts, ALWAYS hopes, and ALWAYS endures.” Perhaps one of the big differences that love make in the life of believers is that it does not end. In our Deaf world, marriages, friendships, Deaf communities, and Deaf churches all tend to divide and end in anger, fighting, gossip, and broken relationships. But God’s kind of love is not temporary. It goes on forever.

How can you show your love for others in the Deaf community? How can you show love to the bigger hearing community in which you live?

KEY DOCTRINE: *God the Father*

God rules over the whole universe, including all that He created and over all of time. He is all powerful. He knows all things. He is all wise. We also know God as all loving. He loves us with a love that never ends. Because of His great love for people God calls people to Himself and to salvation. As a loving Father, God leads His people to love the people around them with this same godly love.

DAY FOUR

Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-11.

The Corinthians thought prophecy and speaking in different languages were very important. They were impressed with knowledge. Paul made it clear those gifts would end someday, but love would continue forever. There is one very simple command for believers. It is this: love one another. Love comes from God. Paul compared love with other things that the Corinthians valued. God's love is much higher than the things people value on earth.

Paul compared the imperfection of knowledge and prophecy to the experience of children. Children have limited knowledge of what is going on in the world. They go to school to learn many things like history, culture, math, and science. They learn from their parents. Their minds and knowledge grow. As they become adults they mature. Their actions change. They stop acting like children.

In the same way, before a person believes in God, he or she does not understand the things of God. Their knowledge of Him is limited. A person does not understand what true love is until he or she believes in Jesus. God teaches us what true love is.

What is true love?

How well does your church show true love?

How well do you show true love?

DAY FIVE

Read 1 Corinthians 13:12-13.

In the Book of James, the writer explains how some people hear God's teaching and do not do anything. He compares it to people who look at themselves in a mirror and later forget what they look like. But believers carefully study and know God's perfect law that makes people free. They do not forget what they learn and they obey God's teaching. If they continue in this way they will be happy (see Jam. 1:23-25).

Paul said there are three things that continue forever; faith, hope and love. They are all awesome words. However, Paul clearly said the greatest is LOVE. Keep in mind that Paul has used the Greek word "agape" through this whole chapter. The love that is greatest is not the love that most of your Deaf friends think about when they see the sign for love. Agape love is godly love. Agape love continues to give love to others no matter what is given back. Of course, this is the way God loves us so it is the way we should love others.

Do you know any mature Christians? How do you know they are mature? What will your life be like when you live as a mature believer?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 1 Corinthians 13. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

In the past, how did you think about love? Now that you have studied 1 Corinthians 13, how do you think about love today?

How can you best show the world what God's love is like? Are you living with this kind of love in your life?

What would your friends say is the most important part of your life? Do you think they would say godly love is the most important to you? What can you do differently this week to show godly love?



ENJOYING GOD'S COMFORT

Believers find comfort in knowing that others benefit from and God is honored through their trials.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-14

Every day we face challenges and troubles in life. Those challenges may be physical or spiritual. In today's session, we will learn how we can make it through situations with God's help, no matter what happens in our life.

The Corinthians were having experiences with suffering. They thought they were alone in facing difficulties in their lives. Paul too had been facing great trials and challenges. Paul wrote to help the Corinthians see that God was working in their lives to meet their needs. There was meaning in their suffering. Today we face challenges and suffering, but we still need to understand what God is doing. We may never understand all the reasons that we suffer, but we can believe that God uses our trials and challenges for our good and for His glory.

2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-14

3 Praise be to the God **A** and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is the Father who is full of mercy and all **comfort**. **B** **4** He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us. **5** We share in the many sufferings of Christ. In the same way, much comfort comes to us through Christ. **6** If we have troubles, it is for your comfort and salvation, and if we have comfort, you also have comfort. This helps you to **accept patiently the same sufferings** **C** we have. **7** Our hope for you is strong, knowing that you share in our sufferings and also in the comfort we receive. **8** Brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the trouble we **suffered in Asia**. **D** We had great burdens there that were beyond our own strength. We even gave up hope of living. **9** Truly, in our own hearts we believed we would die. **But this happened** **E** so we would not trust in ourselves but in God, who raises people from the dead. **10** God saved us from these great dangers of death, and he will continue to save us. We have put our hope in him, and he will save us again. **11** And you can **help us with your prayers**. **F** Then many people will give thanks for us—that God blessed us because of their many prayers. **12** This is what we are proud of, and I can say it with a clear conscience: In everything we have done in the world, and especially with you, we have had an honest and sincere heart from God. We did this by God’s grace, not by the kind of wisdom the world has. **13-14 We write to you** **G** only what you can read and understand. And I hope that as you have understood some things about us, you may come to know everything about us. Then you can be proud of us, as we will be proud of you on **the day our Lord Jesus Christ comes again**. **H**

- a. Even though he has experienced great hardship, Paul is still full of praise to God.
- b. The English translation of the Greek word “paraklesis.” It means to come along side of another person.
- c. Paul describes his suffering and their suffering as being the same. What they suffered was different, but the same lessons could be learned from the hardship.
- d. In Paul’s day Asia was the Roman name for what today is western Turkey.
- e. Paul is probably writing about some terrible experience he had like the one described in Acts 19 in Ephesus.
- f. Paul did not explain a theology of prayer, but asked for prayer as we ask our friends to pray for us.
- g. Paul wrote from Macedonia (see 2 Corinthians 2:12-13).
- h. Paul often looked forward to the day when Jesus would return. That day would put all things right again.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What kinds of suffering and trouble do Christians face?

What were the problems that Paul faced? What were the problems the Corinthians faced?

Where do Christians find comfort and encouragement?

How can the hard experiences of life help us to trust God? What are some experiences you have had that helped you to trust in God?

How can our prayers help people who are in need? Why does God want us to pray?

What is the difference between doing things by God's grace and doing things in worldly wisdom?

What is the difference between pride that is sinful and the kind of pride that Paul writes about in verse 14?

How can thinking about the return of Jesus help us to live better Christian lives?

BIBLE SKILL: *Read and explain Bible verses.*

Read the verses below. What do the verses teach about suffering? Write a few words about suffering on the blank lines. Please discuss these ideas with your group or friends.

John 15:18-19 _____

Romans 5:3-4 _____

Romans 8:18 _____

Ephesians 3:13 _____

2 Thessalonians 1:4 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- When believers face suffering they can also find comfort because God is with them and God will use their experience to change the lives of other people.
- When believers face testing of their faith they can celebrate because they know God will give them strength and He will show His power.
- Believers can see God working in and through other people and they can accept them as true co-workers for Christ.

Discuss as a group how we find comfort from God and how our experiences with suffering can change our lives and the lives of other people.

How does God test our faith? What Bible examples can you think of when God tested the faith of believers? How did God show his power in those times?

When have you seen God working through the lives of other people? If you see God working through others do you accept them as true co-workers? What if they were believers in a denomination different from yours?

MEMORY VERSE

He comforts us every time we have trouble, so when others have trouble, we can comfort them with the same comfort God gives us.
- 2 Corinthians 1:4

DAY ONE

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4.

We should praise God no matter what happens in our lives. God is the Father who gave us a new life with Jesus Christ. God is the one who gives us His comfort. He is with us all the time, no matter what happens.

Have you ever wondered how God can use your suffering? This verse gives a wonderful answer. When we suffer, God is ready to give us His comfort. His Word helps us understand our experiences. We can tell God anything. We can cry to Him and share our emotions with Him. Being close to God gives us comfort. Because of our experience with God's comfort, we are able to help others. When our friends and family members suffer, we can be with them. We can share God's Word with them and help them. We comfort them in the same way God comforts us. If we did not have experience with suffering, we would not know how to help others in their suffering.

When have you given praise to God even when you were in a hard situation? How did you experience God's comfort?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Purpose of Suffering*

In this lesson, Paul shared his experiences of suffering for Jesus Christ. Suffering is tough to understand. We have many questions about why God allows people to suffer in life. God has His purpose for us. Philippians 1:29 says, "God gave you the honor not only of believing in Christ but also of suffering for Him, both of which bring glory to Christ." There are great examples of men and women who suffered for God. They are Job, Ruth, Joseph, Esther, Abraham, Noah, Jacob, Moses, Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets. Their stories can encourage us. Suffering helps us to grow. It makes our faith stronger. Jesus experienced suffering, too.

DAY TWO

Read 2 Corinthians 1:6-7.

Paul was thankful to God for his experiences in his life and ministry. He told the Corinthian people God is the one who brings comfort out of affliction. God comforted one to be a comfort to others. Christian people ask God to help them stay strong in their faith. With strong faith, they show what a TRUE Christian is.

God gives us comfort to meet our needs. This begins at salvation, which comes to us because of our belief in Jesus Christ. Our lives change. We have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus died on the cross for our sin. He rose from the dead and came out of the tomb. Jesus said, "They are blessed who grieve, for God will comfort them" (Matthew 5:4).

The word hope does not mean a hope for money or a miracle to make our troubles go away. We tend to cross our fingers and say we hope something will happen. In verse 7, hope has a different meaning. Hope means a goal, or trust in God. Our goal is to keep our faith on Jesus Christ. We have faith and trust in our salvation. Christian people keep their goal to continue and face troubles and struggles with the help of God.

When you are lonely or need help, who do you ask for strength and encouragement?

DAY THREE

Read 2 Corinthians 1:8-9.

Paul shared his testimony about what happened in Asia (north west Turkey today.) He almost died because of the gospel. The hardship Paul and his friends suffered there was more than they could bear. In fact, Paul thought they would die from their problems.

But Paul came to see that God had other plans. Paul and his companions did not die in Asia. God saved them. And in so doing, God showed Paul that through the hardest of times a Christian must trust in God and not in himself or herself.

This is a lesson we must learn today. We have hard experiences. We are tempted to do bad things. We want to give up. BUT we must keep our faith in God no matter what happens. In our hearts we know this is the right thing to do. It is what God wants us to do.

Think about your greatest trial or temptation. How did this push you to trust God and not yourself?

DAY FOUR

Read 2 Corinthians 1:10-11.

Paul rejoiced that God saved him and his friends from the great danger they faced. Because they had experienced God's help, Paul knew that he could depend on God to help them in the future. It is our past experience with God that helps us face the problems of tomorrow. Always remember this – God saved us from sin and, in the end, from hell. If God has helped us do this, He will help us do all things (Phil. 4:13).

Yes, it was God who provided all that Paul and his friends needed to escape from danger. But the Corinthian believers helped Paul in his hardship. How did they help? Verse 11 says they helped through their prayers. We do not know all the ways that prayer works in situations. But it at least does this, when we pray others are blessed. This results in thanksgiving.

How can you share your testimony with others?

How should Christians pray for each other?

DAY FIVE

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12-14.

Integrity means to live in truth. It means to do the same as you speak. It is hard to find a person with true integrity. There was one thing for which Paul was proud. He was proud that he and his co-workers had worked with “an honest and sincere heart from God.” In all his dealings with the Corinthians, he had never acted out of selfish reasons. He had acted only for their good.

But even acting for their good and living with integrity had not been because of Paul’s goodness or strength. This too had come from God’s grace and wisdom. Because Paul had lived with integrity, he knew the Corinthians could be proud of him and his fellow missionaries when Jesus returned just as Paul knew he would be proud of them at the return of Christ.

What will the return of Christ bring for you? Will you be happy with the life you have lived?

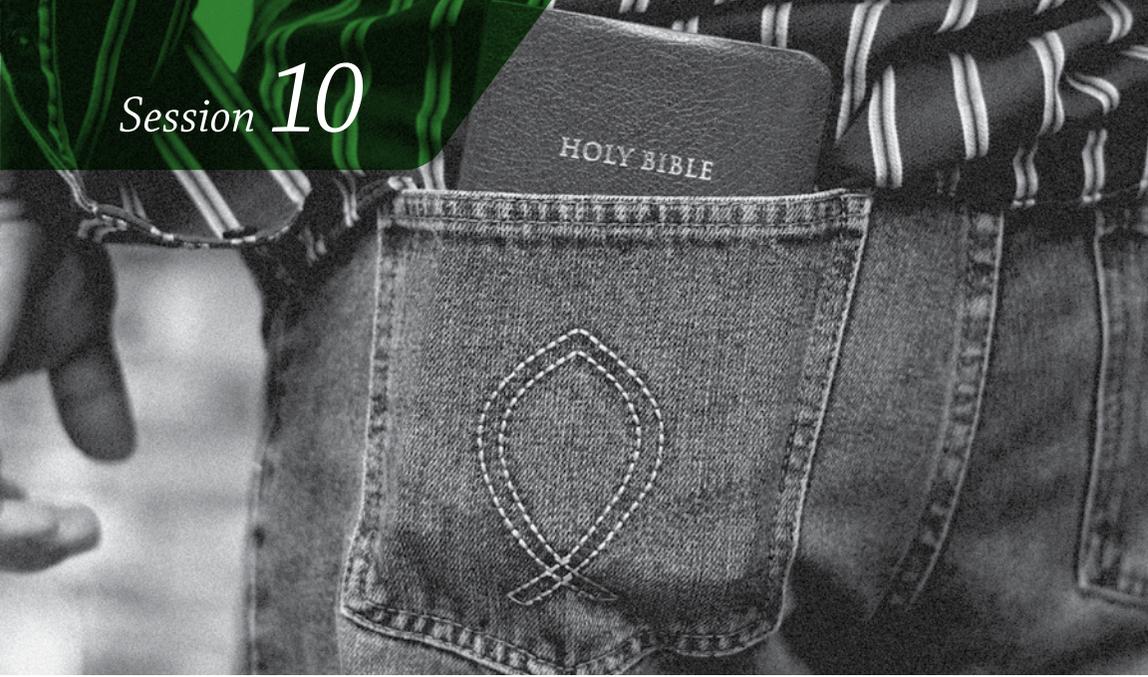
CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 2 Corinthians 1. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

**How have you known God’s comfort in times of suffering?
How have you seen God use your experiences for your good
and His glory?**

**What past hardships helped you trust God more today?
How has prayer helped you trust God?**

**What does it mean to live as a believer with integrity? How can you
help others have great integrity as you wait for Jesus to return?**



DISPLAYING THE GOSPEL

Believers can face life with confidence. They know God will show His power through the gospel.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-18

I believe Paul was a visual person. He used picture type examples to make ideas clear for his readers. For example, he compared our preparation for the Christian life to wearing armor in Ephesians 6:10-20. He compared the Christian life to running a race in 1 Corinthians 9:24. He also used examples of athletes, farmers and soldiers in 2 Timothy 2. In today's session Paul compared the Christian to a clay jar holding a treasure. All of these pictures help us understand what the Christian life is like.

Paul emphasized in today's study how important it is we show Christ to others in our lives. Christ is the only message that is important. Paul did not preach about himself. He preached about Jesus Christ as Lord. He accepted that his weakness gave him opportunities to share the gospel. His weakness showed the glory of the new covenant and showed off the power of God. Therefore, Paul did not focus on his own weakness but on God's power.

2 CORINTHIANS 4:5-18

5 We do not preach about ourselves, but we preach that Jesus Christ is Lord and that we are your servants for Jesus. 6 God once said, “**Let the light shine out of the darkness!**” **A** This is the same God who made **his light shine in our hearts** **B** by letting us know the glory of God that is in the face of Christ. 7 We have this **treasure from God**, **C** but we are like **clay jars** **D** that hold the treasure. This shows that the great power is from God, not from us. 8 We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We do not know what to do, but we do not give up the hope of living. 9 We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed. 10 We carry the death of Jesus in our own bodies so that the life of Jesus can also be seen in our bodies. 11 We are alive, but for Jesus we are always **in danger of death** **E** so that the life of Jesus can be seen in our bodies that die. 12 So death is working in us, but life is working in you. 13 It is written in the Scriptures, “**I believed, so I spoke.**” **F** Our faith is like this, too. We believe, and so we speak. 14 God raised the Lord Jesus from the dead, and we know that God will also **raise us with Jesus**. **G** God will bring us together with you, and we will stand before him. 15 All these things are for you. And so the grace of God that is being given to more and more people will bring increasing thanks to God for his glory. 16 **So we do not give up.** **H** Our physical body is becoming older and weaker, but our spirit inside us is made new every day. 17 We have small troubles for a while now, but they are helping us gain an eternal glory that is much greater than the troubles. 18 We set our eyes not on what we see but on what we cannot see. What we see will last only a short time, but what we **cannot see will last forever.** **I**

- a. A reference to Genesis 1:3 when God called for light and there was light.
- b. Paul probably has his own Damascus road experience in mind when light shown around. (See Acts 9:3 and following verses.)
- c. The treasure we have from God is our salvation relationship. He lives in us because we are saved.
- d. In Paul’s time, pottery jars were used for everything. They were cheap and easy to break. Paul compared our lives to these jars. Yet Christ lives in us!
- e. As a missionary, Paul was in constant danger. He was willing to live this way to bring the gospel to people in many places.
- f. Paul quotes Psalm 116:10.
- g. Paul used many ways to connect his thoughts to the resurrection of Jesus and to our own resurrection.
- h. No matter what hardship might come Paul was not going to quit the work of sharing the gospel.
- i. Paul has in mind our eternal life with God in heaven.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

How do our lives show the gospel of Jesus Christ to the people around us?

What is the light that God shined in the life of Paul? How did God shine His light into your life?

What is the treasure we have from God?

In what ways can our lives be compared to clay jars?

There are seven short sentences in verses 8-12 that show how it is God's power that is in Paul and not his own power. Find those short sentences. How do these statements help us understand the kind of life that believers often face?

How does God's grace being given to more and more people result in glory for God?

What is it like for our physical bodies to become weaker as we grow older? What is it like for our spirit to be made new every day?

Do the troubles of life really make us stronger and better Christians? How?

How can believers move their focus from the troubles of life to the glories and purposes of God?

BIBLE SKILL: *Match verses and words.*

Read the verses and match them with the correct word.

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| 1. John 8:12 | The Potter |
| 2. 1 John 1:5 | Cornerstone |
| 3. Isaiah 64:8 | Life |
| 4. Matthew 13:44-46 | Treasure |
| 5. Acts 4:11 | Light |

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers should have only one all-important story to tell and that is the story of Jesus.
- All people can have a life of victory through faith in Jesus who rose from the dead.
- Believers are to put their focus on those things that are eternally important.

Discuss in your group the story of Jesus and find a good way to share this story with people who do not know Jesus.

How can your weaknesses give an opportunity for the power of God to show the gospel in your life? Ask God to help you.

Are you focussing on Jesus? What things sometimes cause you to focus on them instead of Jesus? How can you keep your focus on Him?

MEMORY VERSE

“Our only goal is to please God whether we live here or there.”
- 2 Corinthians 5:9

DAY ONE

Read 2 Corinthians 4:5-6.

It is all about Jesus Christ. We share our life experiences as they relate to Jesus. Jesus is the important message we need to share. Jesus explained that His teaching came from God. When people did God's will, they recognized Jesus' teaching was from God. He warned about people who teach their own ideas. They just want honor for themselves (see John 7:16-18). Therefore, our message should be about Christ alone.

One reason for this is that Jesus is the light. John 8:12 says, "Later, Jesus talked to the people again, saying, 'I am the light of the world. The person who follows me will never live in darkness but will have the light that gives life.'" That means if you let Jesus into your heart and change your life for God, your life will have His light and show His light to people in the dark. What does dark mean? People who are without Jesus are in the dark.

Paul may have had his own experience in Acts 9 in mind. Paul saw a great light on his way to Damascus. In that light, Paul met Jesus. His life was never the same. So light made Paul think of his own testimony. At the same time, light was also the idea of the gospel of Jesus shining into the darkness in which people live. Only the light of Jesus can break the darkness of sinful life.

Who is the light of the world? Why did Paul use the idea of light? Who lives in the dark and how can they move into the light?

DAY TWO

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7.

Paul talked about a treasure. The treasure is Jesus. We believe Jesus and take Him into our heart. We are like clay jars with treasure inside. When Paul lived clay jars were everywhere. People used them to hold everything from water to wine. They were cheap to buy but also easy to break. The unseen potter is our Father, God. God made humans from the dirt just like a potter makes jars from dirt. It is a great example. Isaiah also used the example of a potter. He said, "But LORD, You are our father. We are like clay, and You are the potter; Your hands made us all" (Isaiah 64:8).

Matthew told a story about a treasure hidden in a field (Matthew 13:44-46). A man walked down to the field. He found the treasure. He hid it in the field again. He decided to sell everything he owned to buy that field. Jesus is like the treasure hidden in the field. Selling everything is a picture of giving up one's life and desires. Believers give up their life and their desires in order to get Jesus into their lives. Jesus changes our lives. We are like clay that holds the treasure, Jesus.

What must you do to get the treasure, Jesus, into your life? Why would He want to live in you when we are cheap like clay pots?

DAY THREE

Read 2 Corinthians 4:8-12.

Paul was willing to do whatever was needed to share the story about Jesus to anyone who needed to know Him. Paul suffered doing this, but the Corinthians and many others became believers because of Paul's suffering. If we are faithful witnesses this could be true of us as well. We may have no idea where we are going or what we are supposed to do. Yet, we can ask God for wisdom to know the right path and God, the only one who has the right plan for us, will lead us. We do not make plans for God. Our only plan is to follow God's path even if it is hard. Keep in mind we do have life with Jesus. Without Jesus, we would be doomed and hopeless.

Christians will experience physical death. But after we die we will meet Jesus. Those who do not believe in Jesus will face a second death in hell. Do you see how important it is that we share Jesus with others?

What are you doing now to share Jesus with your Deaf friends? How do you share Jesus with your hearing friends?

DAY FOUR

Read 2 Corinthians 4:13-15.

Bible teachers believe Paul used the Scripture from Psalm 116:10: “I believed, so I said, ‘I am completely ruined.’” Paul used only the first part of this verse. If the Psalm writer “spoke” then so should we. Paul felt it was important to speak about our faith. So what is our faith? What do we believe? It is this: Jesus died, and we believe God raised Jesus from the dead. Faith comes from knowing this good news. Now we tell other people about Jesus and His death on the cross because it saves us. We live everyday by faith. Without Jesus, we would not be able to have faith with God, period!

Do you speak up about the Jesus story? Do you sign it to your friends? How can you be a better witness for Christ?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Evangelism and Missions*

All believers should be witnesses for Christ. We do this to make disciples as Jesus commanded. The Bible makes it clear that Christians are in a real relationship with God by salvation. Jesus sacrificed His life for us. We believe that God loves us. He saved us. We know Him. Now we should give a witness for God because we love Him. We cannot stop with this witness until all the world has a chance to know and follow Christ.

DAY FIVE

Read 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

We are born on earth as babies. Over time we grow older and weaker. We might need someone to help us in the future. This is our physical life.

But our spiritual life with Jesus is different. We might sign it like this: our life in Christ “is CHAMP!” Our faith and spirit are awesome. Our spirit grows stronger and stronger while our bodies become older. That is the reason the man in Matthew 13 sold everything to get the treasure. Jesus is worth more than anything else.

We do not see God here on earth. We will see God after we die. We see people and things on earth. These things will not last. But when we see God in heaven that will be forever. How do we know this will happen? We know because of our faith. Faith means being sure of the things we hope for and knowing that something is real even if we do not see it (Hebrews 11:1).

How is our physical life and our spiritual life different? Why is the spiritual life so much more important than our physical lives?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 2 Corinthians 4. Meet with one or two members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

How has the light of Jesus shown into your life? Do others see His light in you?

In what ways is Jesus like a treasure to you? How are you showing your friends that Jesus is the most important thing in your life?

Where is the focus of your life? How can you move the focus from this world to the life of the Spirit?



BECOMING NEW

As believers we were made new when we were reconciled to Him; therefore we live this new life faithfully.

2 CORINTHIANS 5:16-21;6:1-2

I remember when I first become saved, I started a relationship with God. Now I can't image my life without this relationship. Without Christ I would be LOST and hopeless. I would be DOOMED! You can see how important it is to have a relationship with God in Christ Jesus.

Last week, we learned Jesus is the light of the world. When we believe in Christ we receive His light. Then we learn to share His light with other people. Those are the two points that Paul makes again and again: we have come to Christ, now it is our job to bring others to Christ.

These ideas drive our lives now. The idea that we have peace with God is amazing. That reshapes everything about us. This new life is so radical that Paul called the new life "a new creation." No wonder Paul shared his experiences. No wonder we do too. It is important to share Christ, no matter the cost.

2 CORINTHIANS

5:16-21, 6:1-2

16 From this time on we do not think of anyone as the world does. **In the past we thought of Christ** Ⓞ as the world thinks, but we no longer think of him in that way.

17 If anyone belongs to Christ, there is a **new creation**. Ⓞ The old things have gone; everything is made new! **18** All this is from God. Through Christ, **God made peace** Ⓞ between us and himself, and God gave us the work of telling everyone about the peace we can have with him. **19** God was in Christ, making peace between the world and himself. In Christ, God did not hold the world guilty of its sins. And he gave us **this message of peace**. Ⓞ **20** So we have been sent to speak for Christ. It is as if God is calling to you through us. We speak for Christ when we beg you to be at peace with God. **21** Christ had no sin, but **God made him become sin** Ⓞ so that in Christ we could become right with God.

6:1 We are **workers together with God**, Ⓞ so we beg you: Do not let the grace that you received from God be for nothing. **2** God says, **“At the right time** Ⓞ I heard your prayers. On the day of salvation I helped you.” I tell you that the “right time” is now, and the **“day of salvation” is now**. Ⓞ

- a. Paul could never get away from his memories of how he treated Christ before Paul became a believer.
- b. Our old life without Christ is gone. We are so radically different that the new life is best called “a new creation.”
- c. Many English Bibles use the word “reconciled” here. One way to explain salvation is God healed the break in the God/man relationship. We are reconciled through Christ.
- d. The “message of peace” is the gospel. The gospel is the good news we have about Jesus as the savior of the world.
- e. When Jesus was on the cross He somehow took our sin into His own life. The sinless Jesus became the sin sacrifice.
- f. We now partner with God in His great work of winning the people of the world to Christ.
- g. This is a quote from Isaiah 49:8.
- h. Paul saw that the prophecy of Isaiah had come true because of the work of Christ and the telling of the gospel message.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

What does our new life in Christ look like?

How does the world think about Christ?

What did God do to make peace between Himself and people? How does this action of God make peace?

Why did Paul call our Christian life “a new creation”?

What is the message of peace that we have to give to the world?

For what reason did Jesus become sin for us? How did Jesus becoming sin change our lives?

What is it like to work together with God? What is God’s role in this partnership? What is our role in this partnership?

When is the day of salvation? Why is this important?

BIBLE SKILL: *Reflect on Scripture.*

Read the verses below and write a few words about what a relationship with God means.

Romans 5:10 _____

2 Corinthians 5:18 _____

Colossians 1:20-21 _____

John 15:15 _____

John 6:37 _____

IN MY CONTEXT

- Only through faith in Christ can a person become a new creation and leave the old life he or she once had.
- Only through faith in Christ can a person have peace with God.
- God offers salvation to people. People must make a decision to trust Christ when they have the opportunity from God's offer.

Discuss with a group what it means to belong to Christ and to be a new creation.

**What did God do to make peace between Himself and believing people?
What can you do now that you have experienced this peace with God?**

When is the day of salvation? What does this mean for the people of the world? What should members of your class do since this is the day of salvation?

MEMORY VERSE

“Christ had no sin, but God made him become sin so that in Christ we could become right with God.”

- 2 Corinthians 5:21

DAY ONE

Read 2 Corinthians 5:16-17.

Before you were saved (accepted Jesus in your heart), you thought differently. You were in the dark. You may have thought you would go to heaven if you were a good person. Maybe you thought God allows everyone into heaven. Maybe you didn't believe in heaven or hell at all. When you believed in Jesus, your life changed. Your mind became clear. You understood who God really is!

Now you are in Christ. You belong to Him like a pet belongs to its owner. Paul clearly says that since we belong to Christ everything in our life is different. The old life you had before Christ is gone out the window. You are new and your life is new. Do you see how radical this is? We cannot live like we did before we believed. We don't have that life anymore.

What was your life like before you became a Christian?

What is your life like now? Are you living the "new creation" life fully?

DAY TWO

Read 2 Corinthians 5:18-19.

Peace is a great feeling! For the world, peace means freedom from war, stress, and worry. For Christians, peace has a bigger meaning. Peace for the Christian means salvation from sin and a new life in Christ. The Christian lives in a relationship with God that is joyful. In addition, the Christian is free from hell and the second death. Peace comes from this saving relationship with God. Remember Jesus said, "I told you these things so that you can have peace in Me. In this world you will have trouble, but be brave! I have defeated the world" (John 16:33).

We can have peace with Jesus, no matter what happens in life. Even if bad things happen to us, we still feel blessed because we have peace from God. God had a relationship with Adam and Eve on earth.

When Adam and Eve sinned, their relationship was broken. Jesus came to earth to make peace between the world and Himself. To fix what Adam and Eve first broke, if you are a Christian, you have the responsibility to tell other people about the peace they too can have with God.

Verses 18 and 19 basically say the same thing twice. What do these verses say and what duty do they put on us?

DAY THREE

Read 2 Corinthians 5:20.

Many times you might have studied Matthew 28:16-20, the Great Commission. Verse 20 reminds us so much of the Great Commission. In Matthew 28 Jesus went to Galilee after His resurrection. He met the disciples there. They saw Jesus and worshiped Him. Jesus said to them at that time, "All power in heaven and on earth is given to me. So go and make followers of all people in the world. Baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit." Jesus has the authority to send out His disciples to share the story about Him. We still have the responsibility to share today. Paul even said "we beg you." There are few things in the Christian life more important than sharing the gospel story with people who need to trust in Jesus.

When was the last time you shared about Jesus with one of your Deaf friends? Make a plan now to share Christ with someone who needs to know Christ.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Born Again*

Some Bible teachers use a big English word "regeneration" when they explain the idea of being born again. "Born again" was first mentioned in John 3:1-21. Jesus created the words in His talk with Nicodemus. Being born again is what happens to people who believe in Jesus Christ. They become new like a new born baby. One who is born again (experienced regeneration) is one whose heart is changed by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, who responds in repentance to God, and who places faith in Jesus the Christ. Paul explained in Ephesians 2:4-5, "But God's mercy is great, and He loved us very much. Though we were spiritually dead because of the things we did against God, He gave us new life with Christ. You have been saved by God's grace."

DAY FOUR

Read 2 Corinthians 5:21.

This is a very powerful verse and explains much about the purpose of Jesus in the world and the success of His death on the cross. We know that Jesus came to earth as a human. He was like us in every way except that He never sinned. He never once rebelled against God.

However, something horrible and wonderful happened on the cross. Somehow the sin of all the people of the world from all time came into the life of Jesus. The One who knew no sin became sin in every way. He took our sin. That is the horrible thing. The wonderful thing is that by doing this God made a way for you and me to be free from sin. Paul used the words “in Christ.” He was talking about where we are when we trust Jesus to be our savior. We are no longer in sin but we are in Christ. Only when we are in Christ can we have peace with God. By becoming sin for us Jesus made it possible for us to be right with God.

What does it mean that “Jesus became sin”?

What does it mean for you to be “in Christ”?

DAY FIVE

Read 2 Corinthians 6:1-2.

We Christians work together for God. We are able to serve together because of God’s grace. Many Christians think it is a waste of their time because worldly people reject God. But our work for God is never wasted. When we become saved, we can ask God for strength to work together for God.

But here is an amazing thought. We also work together WITH God. God invites us into a partnership with Him. He does the work of salvation. We do the work of telling the story of salvation. What God has done in Christ and what we do by telling the story presses the message of salvation onto our friends and onto the world. So now is the day for salvation. It is right for us to work to spread the story and also right for us to pray that God will draw millions of people to Himself.

When you became a Christian, how did you feel? When you serve with other Christians, how do you feel? When you tell the story of Jesus and your friend becomes a believer, how do you feel? Do you think this is what it means to be a partner with God?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 2 Corinthians 5 and 6. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

**How do you think about Jesus now that you are a believer?
Have you lived your life this week as a new creation? How?**

As a partner together with God, will you make a list of people you know who need to learn about Jesus and pray for them? Ask God for an opportunity to share with them.

How would you explain to a Deaf friend what it means to have peace with God? What can you do this week to tell a friend about the salvation we have in Christ?



GIVING FAITHFULLY

When believers give to meet the needs of others, they show their trust in God.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

How do you feel about the things you own? Are you willing to give things you have to others? Perhaps you have things you don't use anymore. Someone else may need those things. We know God is taking care of people with needs. We know God is taking care of us, too.

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul answered a question about an offering for the believers in Jerusalem. The Jerusalem believers were facing hard time due to a famine in the area. Many of the Gentile Christians in the churches Paul started were giving money to help. The Macedonians had many troubles but they were happy to give what they had to help the people in Jerusalem. The Corinthians had said they wanted to help also. Paul explained how Titus and some other men would come to Corinth to collect their gifts. He encouraged the Corinthian church to follow through on their commitment to give.

2 CORINTHIANS 9:1-15

1 I really do not need to write you about this **help for God's people**. **2** I know you want to help. I have been bragging about this to the **people in Macedonia**, **3** telling them that you in Southern Greece have been ready to give since last year. And your desire to give has made most of them ready to give also. **3** But I am **sending the brothers** **4** to you so that our bragging about you in this will not be empty words. I want you to be ready, as I said you would be. **4** If any of the people from Macedonia come with me and find that you are not ready, we will be ashamed that we were so sure of you. (And you will be ashamed, too!) **5** So I thought I should ask these brothers to go to you before we do. They will finish getting in order the generous **gift you promised** **6** so it will be ready when we come. And it will be a generous gift—not one that you did not want to give. **6** **Remember this:** **7** The person who plants a little will have a small harvest, but the person who plants a lot will have a big harvest. **7** Each of you should give as you have decided in your heart to give. You should not be sad when you give, and you should not give because you feel forced to give. **God loves the person who gives happily.** **8** And God can give you more blessings than you need. Then you will always have plenty of everything—enough to give to every good work. **9** It is written in the Scriptures: **“He gives freely to the poor.”** **10** The things he does are right and will continue forever.” **10** God is the One who gives seed to the farmer and bread for food. He will give you all the seed you need and make it grow so there will be a great harvest from your goodness. **11** **He will make you rich in every way** **12** so that you can always give freely. And your giving through us will cause many to give thanks to God. **12** This service you do not only helps the needs of God's people, it also brings many more thanks to God. **13** It is a proof of your faith. Many people will praise God because you obey the Good News of Christ—the gospel you say you believe—and because you freely share with them and with all others. **14** And when they pray, they will wish they could be with you because of the great grace that God has given you. **15** **Thanks be to God** **16** for his gift that is too wonderful for words.

- a. Christians in Jerusalem were living through a famine. The Gentile churches in Greece and Macedonia were taking up and offering to send to Jerusalem to help.
- b. When Paul lived, Macedonia was northern Greece and included Philippi and Thessalonica.
- c. Paul was writing from Macedonia but was sending a small number of men to Corinth ahead of him.
- d. The Corinthians had decided to participate in this offering long before. (See 1 Corinthians 16.)
- e. This was just a wise saying that people would have known.
- f. God wants us to give not with a bad attitude but with a happy heart.
- g. Paul quotes Psalm 112:9.
- h. This verse does not promise Christians wealth. The promise is all we need that we may give to others freely.
- i. The final joy for giving is thanks to God. We are thankful to God especially for His greatest gift, Christ Jesus our Lord and Savior.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

How can we use all that we have for God so that what we have blesses other people?

Why was Paul taking up a special offering?

What was the problem the Corinthian Christians were having with the offering?

What was Paul doing to encourage the Corinthians to go ahead and finish taking up their offering?

Why was it important for the Corinthians to participate in this special offering?

What does God think about our giving?

What is the result that comes when Christians give?

How is giving and prayer connected?

What is the gift that we have that is too wonderful for words?

BIBLE SKILL: *Fill in the blanks.*

Find the missing words in 2 Corinthians 9:7-8 and fill in the blanks.

7. Each of you should give as you have decided in your _____
_____ to give. You should not be
_____ when you give, and you should not _____
because you feel _____
to give. God loves the person who gives _____

8. And God can give you more _____
_____ than you need. Then you will always have _____
_____ enough to give to every good work.

IN MY CONTEXT

- It is necessary for believers to provide for the needs of others. It is the right thing to do and God expects it.
- Believers show they trust God to provide for them when they freely give to meet the needs of other people.
- When believers give they honor God and they give an opportunity for the person who received the gift to honor God as well.

Discuss as a group why giving to meet the needs of others is the right thing to do and it is the thing that God expects from us.

**What is the right way to give, and in what ways does God make us rich?
What is your reason for helping others?**

How can your giving both help people and bring thanks to God? How does giving prove your faith?

MEMORY VERSE

Each of you should give as you have decided in your heart to give. You should not be sad when you give, and you should not give because you feel forced to give. God loves the person who gives happily.

- 2 Corinthians 9:7

DAY ONE

Read 2 Corinthians 9:1-2.

Paul was in Macedonia when he wrote 2 Corinthians. He wrote to the Corinthian Christians to remind them about their promise to give. The Corinthian people knew about the offering Paul was collecting for the needy Christians in Israel. Paul knew the Corinthians wanted to help with the offering. When the Macedonian believers learned about the willingness of Corinth, they felt encouraged to give as well. This happens today. Perhaps you have seen Christians excited to give their money to help people with problems. When you see others excited to give, you feel you want to give too. We can start the giving and our actions will encourage others to give.

How can Christians encourage one another to give to the work of the Lord?

DAY TWO

Read 2 Corinthians 9:3-5.

Paul thought one or more of the Christians from Macedonia may visit Corinth to help collect the gifts for Jerusalem. He wanted the believers in Corinth to have their gifts ready. Paul was pleased with their desire to help. He even bragged about the Corinthians to the Macedonian believers. If the Corinthian believers did not do what they promised (have their gifts prepared) Paul would be embarrassed.

Rev. Dave taught at his church in the United States. He trained people for about five years. Then God called Dave to become a missionary in Asia. Dave gave his position to one of the leaders at his church and he left to become a missionary.

Dave told the people in Asia about his former church. The stories of the American church inspired the new Asian leaders. The leaders made promises to Christ and did a good job. Some of the Asian people became students in the United States. They visited Dave's former church.

Sadly, the American leaders did not follow Dave's example. They were not Christ-like. The Asian people told Dave about his former church. Dave was very embarrassed and disappointed. Paul did not want to be embarrassed, so he encouraged the Corinthians to be prepared.

What are the right reasons for helping others? How can we be right examples to others?

DAY THREE

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-9.

Sometimes it seems Bible teachings do not make sense. For example: in these verses Paul said if we give, God can give us more than we need. We may feel we don't have enough to share. Does it make sense to give? But here is a great spiritual truth: when we give we show our trust in God to take care of us.

Paul explained to the Corinthian people they should give what they wanted to give. Paul did not want them to feel forced or that they **MUST** give their money. If they really wanted to give, they would be blessed. Read verse 7 again. What kind of attitude should we have when we give? God loves the person who gives with a happy heart. Trust me, I have been there. I have learned that lesson.

Do you remember the story about the rich man who came to Jesus in Luke 18:18-23? He asked, "Good Teacher, what must I do to have life forever?" Jesus answered, "Sell everything you have and give it to the poor... then come and follow Me." Do you know what the rich man did? He walked away! He asked, but he did not accept Jesus' advice! We should obey God no matter what. If God asks us to give something to help another person, we need to obey. God will take care of us.

What attitude should believers have when they give? If believers have the right attitude, will they become tithers?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Stewardship*

All we have comes from God and we owe all we have back to Him. The Bible shows us what our motivation for giving should be. God does not force us to give to Him or to others. It is our decision to give. Therefore, Christians should be happy to give. They should give regularly as God leads them to give. They should give so the work of God's Kingdom can continue on earth.

DAY FOUR

Read 2 Corinthians 2:10-11.

Paul reminded the believers that God takes care of our physical needs (the seed for the farmer) and our spiritual needs. God does this so we will have enough to give to others. The word seed can mean the things farmers plant that grow to crops. It is God who gives this seed. But sometimes seed means something else. In John 12 Jesus was talking about His own life when He spoke about seed. Plus He used the word seed to mean all people who would believe on Him. Jesus said, "The time has come for the Son of Man to receive His glory. I tell you the truth, a grain of wheat must fall to the ground and die to make many seeds."

Jesus had to go back to heaven to send the Holy Spirit down to live in Christians. If Jesus did not die and go back to the Father, the Holy Spirit could not come. But now we have the Holy Spirit. Having the Holy Spirit makes us "rich in every way." Having money cannot compare to having the Spirit.

What does it mean for God to make you rich? How do your riches lead people to give thanks to God?

DAY FIVE

Read 2 Corinthians 9:12-15.

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers that their giving would bring honor and glory to God. God would use their gifts to show His faithfulness. This is why we, as Christians, help meet the needs of people. We do not help so we can get something back from them. When we give, we show how much we are thankful to God. We also show our true faith and trust in Him. When people see us obey and honor God, they will want to join us.

A few years ago, a Deaf friend asked me to help clean out their house. I picked up one of my Christian friends that was willing to help me. We worked hard. Afterward, the person asked me how much money they should give us. I told the person we only needed water. I felt I could serve for God and help meet needs. Our service was our way to honor God.

Once you give, you will experience even more blessings. Remember that the greatest gift we have is eternal life (see John 3:16). We can never give back enough to God for this gift. His gift to us is so great!

What are your reasons for serving others? How can we honor God through giving and serving?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 2 Corinthians 9. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

What have you given this week to meet the needs of others? How have you given through your church?

What is your attitude like when you give? How does your giving to others show that you are trusting God to take care of you?

How has God given to you to meet your needs? When you give to God and to others how does your giving show honor to God?



FINDING STRENGTH

When believers are weak, they can trust in God's strength.

2 CORINTHIANS 12:7B-10; 13:2-8

One of the best ways to encourage others is to share experiences through a testimony. What is a testimony? A Christian testimony is sharing how you came to know Jesus. A testimony can also be sharing what God is doing in your life now that you follow Him. A testimony is a great tool for sharing the gospel and for helping weak Christians grow in strength.

In our lesson today we see Paul sharing some of his testimony. He did this because some people in Corinth opposed him. They said he was bold when away from them but weak when with them. They did not respect his authority as an apostle. So Paul shared with them his experiences of suffering. Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand even though he suffered and knew much weakness he still had authority from God to do the work of ministry and teach them about the Christian life. By sharing his testimony of suffering and weakness Paul helped the Corinthians to follow Jesus better.

2 CORINTHIANS

12:7b-10; 13:2-8

7b This problem ④ was a messenger from Satan, sent to beat me and keep me from being too proud. **8 I begged the Lord three times** ⑤ to take this problem away from me. **9** But he said to me, “My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, my power is made perfect in you.” So I am very happy to brag about **my weaknesses**. ⑥ Then Christ’s power can live in me. **10** For this reason I am happy when I have weaknesses, insults, hard times, sufferings, and all kinds of troubles for Christ. Because when I am weak, then I am truly strong.

2 When I was with you **the second time**, ⑦ I gave a warning to those who had sinned. Now I am away from you, and I give a warning to all the others. **When I come to you again**, ⑧ I will not be easy with them. **3** You want proof that Christ is speaking through me. My proof is that he is not weak among you, but he is powerful. **4** It is true that he was weak when he was killed on the cross, but he lives now **by God’s power**. ⑨ It is true that we are weak in Christ, but for you we will be alive in Christ by God’s power. **5 Look closely at yourselves**. ⑩ Test yourselves to see if you are living in the faith. You know that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you fail the test. **6** But I hope you will see that we ourselves have not failed the test. **7** We pray to God that you will not do anything wrong. It is not important to see that we have passed the test, but it is important that you **do what is right**, ⑪ even if it seems we have failed. **8** We cannot do anything against the truth, but only for the truth.

- a. Most English Bibles have the words “thorn in the flesh.” This was perhaps a physical problem or some other problem.
- b. Paul begged to be free of the problem, but God would not take it away.
- c. Paul did not enjoy suffering, but he learned God is strong when we are weak.
- d. Paul made a second trip to Corinth that is not written down in the book of Acts.
- e. This will make the third trip to Corinth for Paul.
- f. The death of Jesus showed physical weakness, but the resurrection of Jesus showed God’s great power – even power over death.
- g. If the Corinthians were true believers, their lives would show that they follow Jesus. If they were not following Jesus, they showed they were not true believers. This verse does not teach saved people can become lost again after they become Christians.
- h. It is not enough to know or believe the truth. Faith always shows that it is true by living the godly way.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Can believers really trust God even when they have problems, face great trials, or experience weakness?

Was Paul right when he interpreted his problem as a messenger from Satan?

Why did God not take Paul's problem away from him when Paul begged to be free from it three different times?

How can a Christian be happy even when he or she suffers in physical or spiritual weakness?

Paul showed he had authority to correct the wrong actions of the Corinthians. Where does authority come from in the church? Is it right for one Christian like Paul to correct wrong actions in other Christians? Why?

What kind of test should we use on our own lives? What does it mean if we fail this test?

Why do Christians sometimes do what is wrong? Why is it important that we always work hard to do what is right in Jesus?

How do we know God's power when we see it?

BIBLE SKILL: *Fill in the blanks.*

Fill in the blanks below to learn about God's strength during weakness

Matthew 26:41: Stay awake and pray for _____ against temptation. The spirit wants to do what is right, but the body is weak."

Luke 22:46: Jesus said to them, "Why are you sleeping? Get up and pray for _____ against temptation."

Philippians 4:13: I can do all things through Christ, because He gives me _____

Colossians 1:11: God will _____ you with His own great power so that you will not give up when troubles come, but you will be patient.

Colossians 1:29: To do this, I work and struggle, using Christ's great _____ that works so powerfully in me.

IN MY CONTEXT

- Believers can find comfort and strength in the grace that God gives us through His Son, Jesus Christ.
- When God disciplines His people we can see the power of God at work.
- All people must carefully look at their lives. We must look for the proof that we are truly saved.

Discuss as a group how the weaknesses we have are an opportunity for God to show His strength.

What should you do when you find that you have been living in wrong ways? How can you submit to the correction of the gospel?

What test can you take to make sure you are truly saved? What should you do if you find that you are not really a follower of Christ? Who will you talk to?

MEMORY VERSE

“But He said to me, ‘My grace is enough for you. When you are weak, My power is made perfect in you.’ So I am very happy to brag about my weaknesses. Then Christ’s power can live in me.”
- 2 Corinthians 12:9

DAY ONE

Read 2 Corinthians 12:7b-8.

We do not know what Paul's physical problem was. Some versions of the Bible call it a "thorn in the flesh." Bible teachers have different opinions about Paul's problem. Many think it was a physical weakness in his body such as an eye problem. Others say it might have been Malaria. Another set of Bible teachers think Paul's problem was more in his spirit or in his mind. We simply do not know exactly what was wrong. We do know God did not take the problem away even though Paul asked God three times to take it away. In the end, Paul believed the problem helped him to be humble.

It is important that we go to God in prayer with every problem, trial, or weakness that we have. It is also important that we learn that God will not "fix" every problem we have. Often God is using our weaknesses to build our Christian life. His final goal is to make us like Jesus, not to make us comfortable.

What kind of problems do you have that God can use to make you more like Jesus?

KEY DOCTRINE: *Prayer*

What is prayer? The very simple definition of prayer is, "talking to God." It is communicating directly with God. Prayer is a way to fellowship with God. When you fellowship with God, you share your heart with Him. We pray to praise God and thank Him. We also ask Him for our needs and share our fears. God hears and answers prayer.

DAY TWO

Read 2 Corinthians 12:9-10.

Paul knew God's answer about his "thorn in the flesh." God's grace was what Paul really needed. Paul experienced God's goodness and grace but not by having the "thorn" removed. Instead, Paul felt God's strength to live with the problem.

However, keep in mind, God knows our limits. He will not let our burden become more than we can handle because we will have God's help. God had a plan for Paul. The physical problem was a part of the plan. God would get glory from this situation. He gave Paul strength to get through it.

Paul felt people tried to discourage him in his ministry. Paul stayed firm and defended his work and God's glory. God allowed Paul to have a physical problem as a reminder to always depend on God. Believers can have comfort and security even when God allows us to have problems. His grace will be enough for us. His strength will help us continue in our faithful work.

Why doesn't God remove all suffering from people? Do you know of other Christians who have suffered? How did God use their experience?

DAY THREE

Read 2 Corinthians 13:2.

In 2 Corinthians 12:20-21 Paul expressed his fear about what he would find in Corinth. He was concerned some of the Christians were still involved in sinful acts. He was afraid he would see "arguing, jealousy, anger, selfish fighting, evil talk, gossip, pride, and confusion." He thought some of the believers had not repented of their sexual sins. He warned them he would be firm with them. Paul felt like he was their spiritual father, and a father disciplines his children. Paul was ready to firmly discipline the Corinthian believers who were not following Christ. Sometimes Christians need correction. We should especially be ready to learn from our teachers and leaders who are our spiritual "fathers" and "mothers" like Paul was for the Corinthians.

Why is it hard for believers to turn away from wrong actions even when we know we should? Are people in your church ready to accept correction from trusted spiritual leaders?

DAY FOUR

Read 2 Corinthians 13:3-4.

Some of the people thought Paul's letters were strong, but in person his speaking was weak (see 2 Corinthians 10:10). Paul told the people there was proof Christ spoke through him to share God's message. His proof was the strength of Christ. How did Christ show strength in the church? Some of the believers were faithful. Some of them were happy to give to others as we learned last week. When we see people following God and obeying Him, we know God is working. He shows His power in the lives of His followers.

Paul said Jesus was weak on the cross. We need to remember Jesus chose to become a servant. He chose to humble Himself and become obedient to the Father (Philippians 2:5-11). This looked like weakness. But Christ was raised to the highest place. Everyone will bow to Him one day. He is all-powerful. He turned weakness into victory.

Like Paul, we Deaf believers are weak. We are human. We have temptations. Christ lives in us and makes us strong. He helps us do the things we should do.

How do you see the power of Christ in your church?

What things do you see people do that are like Christ?

How can you show God's strength to others?

DAY FIVE

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

Paul encouraged the people to check their lives. He likely believed most of his readers were true believers. But there were false teachers in Corinth. These teachers needed to believe in Christ. What about you? If you believe in Jesus, you have passed the test. You know that you will go to heaven. But know this, your godly actions show your genuine faith.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to live in a way that honored God. He prayed about this. If the Corinthian church did well, it would make Paul happy and proud. But it was even more important to him for them to honor God and give Him glory.

Paul did not want to discipline the Corinthians. He hoped they would show obedience to God and honor Him. If you are a parent, do you enjoy disciplining your children? Parents do not enjoy punishing a child but sometimes they must. As a spiritual father, Paul did not want to discipline the Corinthians but he would if he must.

Where do you see Christ working in your life? What actions do you do that show you are a believer? How can you help others know more about the Christian life?

CONNECT AND SHARE

Think about what you have learned from 2 Corinthians 12 and 13. Meet with one or two other members of your study group to find ways to live what you have learned.

Think about the problems, trials, and weaknesses you have in your life. How can these things show the power of God?

Why do Christians stray away from Christ? Are there ways that you have strayed? Why is it important for believers to help each other stay faithful to Jesus?

What test can you and your accountability partners use this week to see that you are true followers of Jesus? How did you do when you took the test? How can you serve Christ more faithfully in the future?



LEADER HELPS

As the leader of the group, you can build disciples through the group Bible study time, encouraging daily Bible engagement, and by facilitating smaller groups.

Building Disciples through the Group Time

Each week, you will introduce the group to the Bible passage, examine the key message in that passage, and challenge the group to act on that passage. Doing so requires preparation. Here is a way to prepare that gives you adequate time to study the lesson and will make the session fresh in your own life.

Early in the Week (Sunday or Monday)

- Ask God to open your mind and heart to His Word as you study.
- Study the Bible passage.
- Pay careful attention to the Apply the Text section for that session, looking for ways you need to apply the Bible in your own life.

Through the Week

- Ask God to direct your creation of the group plan.

- Create a group plan, adapting the group plans to fit the needs of your group.
- Complete the Daily Exploration activities in the days leading up to the group time.
- Meet with a group of three to four other teachers to share and pray for each other. Use Talk It Out to start your conversation.
- Create your own using Visual Ideas on pages 160–161.

The Day of the Group Study Time

- Arrive early.
- Pray for the study and the group members.
- Lead the study, adjusting as you go.

After the Group Study Time

- Consider the After the Session idea at the end of the group plans.
- Contact all group members, encouraging them to complete the Daily Exploration section and sharing gathered prayer requests.
- Record insights gained about teaching, group members, and Scripture.
- Do it all again.

Building Disciples by Encouraging Daily Bible Engagement

- Encourage everyone on your ministry list (class roll, membership list, etc.) to engage daily in Bible study. Here are some ways to encourage your group to engage with the Bible daily.
- Ask them. Learn to comfortably ask if group members are studying the Bible. You may want to use a statement such as, “I hope you took a look at the Day 3 activity for this week.”
- Tell them. Let them know that you are using the Daily Exploration section as well. Set the standard.
- Show them. Point to the Daily Exploration section at the conclusion of the group study. From time to time, demonstrate how to use the section, guiding them through Day 1 as a group.
- Invite them. Call on volunteers to share with the group what they are learning and how they use the Daily Exploration section.

Building Disciples through Smaller Groups

At the end of every session, you will find a section entitled Connect and Share. This section is designed for smaller groups of three to four people to meet weekly, holding each other accountable for living a Christ-honoring life.

Create smaller groups:

- Allow group members to form their own initial groups of three by gender (men's smaller groups and women's smaller groups)
- Allow groups to add one person from the names on the ministry list of people who are not present.
- You may want to encourage the groups to form based on neighborhoods or proximity to work.
- Make sure some of the groups have extra space for new group members and guests.
- As the Bible study group grows, you may need to reorganize the smaller groups, but try not to regroup too often so that trust can be built within each smaller group.

Support the smaller groups:

- Provide opportunities for the members of the smaller groups to pray with each other during the group time.
- Make study assignments in the weekly group time based on the smaller groups.
- Pre-enlist a volunteer to share with the larger group how participation in the smaller group is impacting his or her life.
- Periodically organize fellowship events built around the smaller groups. The smaller groups could be the basis for teams during the event.
- Be in a smaller group as well. You may even want to host a smaller group for guests and new group members.



UNITED IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:10-25

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will desire unity in the body of Christ.

Ask a member to study the Introduction to the Books of 1 and 2 Corinthians and summarize it for the class.

Make the lesson come alive! Find pictures of the following: 1) a group of people studying the Bible together, 2) a baptism, 3) people praying together, and 4) people eating together. Post them in the meeting room.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 and prepare to discuss how the body of Christ needs to work together.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Call attention to the pictures of activities you have posted on the wall.

ASK: *What are the people doing? Why are these things important? What are some other things believers do together?*

Jesus prayed to the Father in John 17. Read verses 20-21. **ASK:** *What does it mean to “be one”? Why is it important (see verse 21)?*

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Call for Unity (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Ask the volunteer to share the introduction to 1 and 2 Corinthians.

Sign 1 Corinthians 1:10. **ASK:** *What kind of thinking do Christians have in common? (We all agree that Jesus is the Son of God, He is our Savior.) What purpose do Christians share? (We all have a purpose to share Jesus with others, we want to give God glory in our lives.)*

2. Contempt for Divisions (1 Corinthians 1:11-16)

Sign 1 Corinthians 1:11-16. **ASK:** *What problem did the Corinthian church have?*

Following people instead of Christ hurts the church. It also causes pride and boasting. In 1 Corinthians 1:31 Paul told the Corinthians they should only boast about God.

EXPLAIN: In 1 Corinthians 12:12-20 Paul used the picture of a body and its parts. We understand this is about the body of Christ. **ASK:** *Can a body be divided? Does a body work well if the parts do not cooperate together?*

In the same way, church members should work together. Paul explained how he and Apollos did the work God gave them to do. Sign 1 Corinthians 3:5-8. **ASK:** *Who is important? Who gives growth?*

3. The Cross that Divides (1 Corinthians 1:17-25)

Paul emphasized the cross in these verses. Belief in Jesus' death on the cross for our sins brings Christians together. For other people, the cross does not make sense. Many of the Jews did not believe the Messiah would suffer. They did not believe Jesus was the Messiah. Paul said the cross was foolishness to the non-Jews.

Sign 1 Corinthians 1:17-25. **ASK:** *Do you know people who seem very smart but do not believe in God? How do these verses help you understand them?*

EXPLAIN: In 1 Corinthians 2:14, Paul explained more about the problem unbelievers have. People who are not Christians do not have the Holy Spirit. Without the Holy Spirit, a person cannot understand the truths of God. **ASK:** *How can Christians understand the things of God? How do we have "the mind of Christ"?*

IN MY CONTEXT

Ask members to find John 13:34-35 in their Bibles. After they have time to read it, ask one member to sign the verses. **ASK:** *What are some ways we can show love to each other? Discuss.*

Spend a few minutes in quiet prayer. Encourage members to ask God to show them what they need to do to keep unity in the church.

Remind members to do the readings for the week in the personal study guide.

GLORIFYING GOD

1 Corinthians 5:1-6:20

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray that they will develop a desire to glorify God in their lives.

Ask _____ to study the story of Joseph in Genesis 39:4-12 and be prepared to sign the story for the group.

Ask three volunteers to be prepared to sign the following verses: 1 Corinthians 10:31, Philippians 4:8, Psalm 1:1-3.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

The title for today's session is "Glorifying God." **ASK:** *What does glorifying God mean?* Discuss the concept. Glorifying means to act in a way that shows other people how great God is. It means to feel and think in ways that focus on God. Our lives show God's character and what He is like so other people can know Him. God wants people to know Him!

Remind the group Paul wrote the letter to the Corinthians to help them. He knew about problems in the church. Some of the Christians had questions. Paul wrote to answer these questions and teach them the right way to live and glorify God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Focused on Christ's Lordship (1 Corinthians 6:12-14)

Some people believe life ends with our physical death. The body is buried and that is the end. **ASK:** *Do you believe Christians will rise from the dead? Sign verses 12-14.* **EXPLAIN:** *Some of the Corinthian believers thought they had a right to do anything they wanted. They did not believe their bodies would be raised after death. They thought it did not matter what they did to their bodies. Paul made it clear believers will rise (see verse 14) in the same way Jesus did. Our choices and actions are important. Our bodies should honor the Lord.*

Sign Paul's prayer for the Philippians in Philippians 1:9-11.

ASK: *How can we live lives that are holy?* (We can remember Jesus is our Lord, our boss. Our relationship with God is forever. It is worth it to make good decisions.)

2. Joined with Christ (1 Corinthians 6:15-17)

Sign verses 15-17. **EXPLAIN:** *The people of Corinth were immoral (very sinful). They worshiped the goddess Aphrodite. Their 'worship' included sexual acts with prostitutes in the goddess' temple. It seems some of the Corinthian Christians were influenced by the culture around them. They did sinful sexual acts, too.* **ASK:** *Are the churches in America influenced by the culture around them? What kinds of influence do you notice in churches?*

ASK: *How are we joined with Christ?* **EXPLAIN:** *Because we belong to Christ, He is always with us. We are one with Him.*

Deaf people are good at visualizing. We can practice making a picture in our minds of Jesus with us. When we drive to work, we can visualize Jesus with us in the car. Does that change what we do in the car? Will it help us to be more patient in our driving? If we understand and see Jesus with us, will we sin with our bodies? How can this make a difference in what we do?

3. Bought with a Price (1 Corinthians 6:18-20)

Sign verses 18-20. **ASK:** *What does it mean that we were bought with a price?* (Jesus died to save us. It cost Jesus His life.) **ASK:** *What does Paul suggest to help us keep our bodies holy?* (Run away from sexual sin.) Invite the volunteer to sign the story of Joseph as an example.

IN MY CONTEXT

EXPLAIN: *Our world is full of temptations. How can we prepare to face and fight temptation?* Sign Psalm 119:11. Remind members how Jesus responded to Satan with Scripture when He was tempted. Ask the volunteers to sign 1 Corinthians 10:31, Philippians 4:8, and Psalm 1:1-3. Discuss the concepts in each verse and how they can help us live in a way that glorifies God.

Encourage members to do the daily reading in the personal study guide for the week. Close with prayer.

KEEPING COMMITMENTS

1 Corinthians 7:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will learn to keep their promises.

Read Ephesians 5:22-31 and be ready to discuss the relationship between Christ and the church and the relationship between husbands and wives.

Ask a volunteer to be ready to sign Malachi 2:15.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Sign Ephesians 5:22-31 or summarize the information from the verses. Emphasize how husbands should love their wives in the same way Jesus loves the church. **ASK:** *How did Jesus show His love for the church? How can a husband show love to his wife?* Discuss. Explain that wives should yield to their husbands and respect them in the same way the church yields to Christ. **ASK:** *How does the church yield to Christ? How can wives yield to their husbands? How can wives show respect to their husbands?* Discuss.

Ask members to keep in their minds the idea of marriage as a picture of Christ and the church. It will be helpful as we discuss the questions the believers in Corinth had about marriage.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Marriage and Intimacy (1 Corinthians 7:1-7)

Last week we learned about honoring God with our bodies and keeping them pure. In the Scripture for today, Paul made it clear that married couples should have a good sexual relationship. Sign 1 Corinthians 7:1-7.

ASK: *Why is it important for Christian couples to have a good sexual relationship?*

2. Marriage and Singleness (1 Corinthians 7:8-9)

Sign verses 8-9. **EXPLAIN:** *Many Bible teachers believe Paul was a widower. He was a Pharisee and most Pharisees were married men. Whether he was a widower or never married, Paul believed being single was a good thing.* **ASK:** *What reason did Paul give for getting married? (If sexual desire is too strong a temptation, getting married is a good thing. Otherwise, Paul felt it best to remain single.)*

3. Marriage and Divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-13)

Remember the believers in Corinth had questions about the Christian life. Some of the believers were married. Their spouses were not believers. They wanted to know how to handle this situation. Sign verses 10-13. **ASK:** *Why do you think God wants married couples to stay together even if one of them is not a believer? Discuss. Then ask the volunteer to sign Malachi 2:15.*

Remember the discussion of Christ and the church. **ASK:** *As Christians, can we trust God to do what He has promised? How can we follow His example? (Keep our promises, follow through with our commitments.)*

IN MY CONTEXT

From today's lesson we know it is good to be married and it is good to be single. **ASK:** *In what ways is it good for Christians to be married? Why is it good for Christians to be single? Discuss. To add interest, divide the group into two smaller groups. Ask one group to discuss the benefits of being married. Ask the other group to discuss the benefits of being single. After a few minutes, bring the groups back together to report their lists of benefits.*

Close with this thought: All of us know someone who has experienced divorce. There may be members of your group who are divorced and some who have married again. It is important to remember God forgives us. Ask members to find 1 John 1:9 in their Bibles. Pray together thanking God for His gift of forgiveness.

Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.



INFLUENCING FOR CHRIST

1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 10:31-33; 11:1

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray that they will become strong influences for Christ.

Ask a volunteer to be prepared to tell about Paul's experience in Acts 21:18-26. Ask another volunteer to sign Acts 16:3.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

In chapters 8 and 9 Paul addressed some important issues. In chapter 8 he answered the question about eating meat that was offered to idols. Paul's main concern was to reach others for Christ. In 1 Corinthians 8:13 Paul said, "So if the food I eat causes them to sin, I will never eat meat again so that I will not cause any of them to sin." He did not want the issue of meat to distract from the message of Christ.

In chapter 9 Paul explained how he gave up his right to earn pay as a minister. Again, he did not want the issue of pay to distract from the message. In today's session, we will see more about Paul's goal to keep the good news as the focus in his ministry.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. **Walking in Their Shoes** (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

ASK: *Is anyone familiar with the phrase 'walking in their shoes'? What does it mean? (It means to really understand another person's experience, to see things from their view/perspective.) How does this relate to our study? Paul tried to relate to others and understand them. He did this so he could share Christ with them.*

Sign 1 Corinthians 9:19-23. Explain how Paul showed respect for the Jews and the law. Ask the volunteer to share the story from Acts 21:18-26. Ask the other volunteer to sign Acts 16:3. In both examples, Paul showed respect for the law so the Jews might listen to the message he shared about Christ. **ASK:** *What are some ways Christians can build relationships with others in order to earn an opportunity to share the good news?* Allow time for members to share examples.

2. Running in the Race (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

Sign 1 Corinthians 9:24-27. **EXPLAIN:** *Sports were an important part of Corinthian culture. Paul used a picture the people would understand.* **ASK:** *If you were preparing to run a marathon, what would you need to do?* (Answers could include: exercise, eat right, get enough sleep, practice running long distances.)

Training requires discipline. Paul said he trained hard. He was not just playing around in the Christian life. He was looking forward to his reward in heaven. **ASK:** *How should Christians prepare for the 'race' of the Christian life?* (Answers could include: study the Bible, practice telling others about Jesus, pray often, fellowship with Christians, etc.)

3. Following Our Leader (1 Corinthians 10:31-33;11:1)

Paul addressed several problems in this letter to the Corinthians. He summed up the answer for all the issues in this passage. Sign 1 Corinthians 10:31-33;11:1. **ASK:** *Do you know of some activities that are not specifically mentioned in the Bible? Give some examples (Smoking, playing video games, etc.). When making decisions about these issues we can always ask ourselves, "Will this activity bring glory to God? Would I want people to copy my behavior?"* **ASK:** *Who did Paul follow? Why did Paul encourage others to follow himself?*

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage members to look at the Key Doctrine for this session in their personal study guide. The topic is stewardship. We usually think of stewardship in relation to money and giving a tithe to the church. But stewardship includes much more. **ASK:** *What belongs to God? How can we manage God's things better?* Encourage members to become good stewards of their influence on others. We can be like Paul and keep focused on living in a way that brings others to Christ. Close with prayer.

THE RESURRECTION

John 20:3-9; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will make a decision to follow Christ if they are not believers.

Ask _____ to be prepared to sign the story of Mary, Peter, and John's visit to Jesus' tomb (John 20:1-9). They should be able to sign the story without looking at the text.

Review the story of the crucifixion from John 19. Be ready to summarize the story during the session.

Look up the verses from In Your Context in the personal study guide. Be prepared to share the plan of salvation to the group.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

Ask one or two members to be ready to share their testimonies of how they learned about Jesus and how they decided to follow Christ.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Each year people all over the world celebrate Easter. For many it is a time to gather eggs, eat candy, and think about spring. But for Christians Easter is a celebration of Jesus' victory over death.

Briefly share the story of the crucifixion. **ASK:** *How do we know Jesus was dead?* One of the soldiers put his spear into Jesus' side and blood and water came out. The soldiers did not break His legs because they knew He was dead (John 19:33-34). Two men took Jesus' body and placed it in a tomb.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Believing in the Resurrection (John 20:3-9)

Ask the volunteer to sign the story from John 20:1-9.

ASK: *How do you think Mary, Peter, and John felt when they saw the tomb was empty?*

Invite the group to find 1 Corinthians 15:3-8. Ask them to list the people that saw Jesus after He rose from the dead. Write them on the board as they are mentioned. The two men on the way to Emmaus also saw Jesus (Luke 24:13-32). **ASK:** *Why is it important to know these people saw Jesus?*

2. Made Alive through the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:20-22)

Sign 1 Corinthians 15:20-22. **ASK:** *How did death come to all people through Adam? (See Genesis 3.) What is the good news in these verses? (Christ makes us all alive again.)*

3. Future Found in the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:23-28)

Sign 1 Corinthians 15:23-28. Use information from the personal study guide to discuss Jesus' return. **EXPLAIN:** *We do not know when Jesus will come back. Some people try to figure out the date Jesus will return. Do not let these people fool you. It will be a surprise. But we do know Jesus WILL come back and take us all to be with Him (see John 14:1-4).*

There was a preacher who taught his church about the Book of Revelation. He explained many difficult things. He said there are different interpretations about how the end will happen. But everyone agrees on one thing: Jesus Christ wins! We will be with Him forever.

IN MY CONTEXT

The story of Jesus' death and resurrection demands a decision. We must choose to believe and follow Jesus, or choose to reject Him. It is more than an interesting story. It means life in heaven with Jesus or an eternity of suffering. Sign the verses from In Your Context. Invite members to share their testimonies. Encourage members who would like to make a decision to follow Christ to meet with you after the session.

Close in prayer. Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.



REMEMBERING THE SACRIFICE

1 Corinthians 11:17-29

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will grow in love for their Christian brothers and sisters.

Ask three volunteers to prepare to sign the three sections of Scripture.

FOCUS ATTENTION

The members of the New Testament churches often came together to enjoy a meal. They called this an ‘agape (love) feast.’ The reason for the feast was to show brotherly love for each other and to worship through sharing the Lord’s Supper.

In the Corinthian church, some of the people did not have the right attitudes. They were not showing love and respect for others or for God. Paul warned the church about God’s discipline. As we study today, we should check our attitudes. Do we please God with our thoughts and actions?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. With Worship (1 Corinthians 11:17-22)

EXPLAIN: *Jesus gave His disciples a command in John 13:34-35. He said, “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.”* As the volunteer signs 1 Corinthians 11:17-22, look for ways the Corinthians showed love for each other.

Ask the volunteer to sign the passage. **ASK:** *How did the Corinthians show love?* They didn’t. They were divided. Some of the believers embarrassed others. They looked down on the poorer members. The meal was supposed to be a ‘love feast’ but the people were acting selfishly.

Ask members to find the following verses in their Bibles: Romans 10:11-13, Galatians 3:26-28, and Acts 10:34-35. These verses emphasize God's love for all people. Discuss how Christians can show love and respect for all people as well.

2. With Remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:23-26)

Ask the second volunteer to sign 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. Paul reminded the Corinthians how the Lord's Supper started. Jesus and the disciples ate the Passover meal together. After the meal, Jesus explained how the disciples were to remember His sacrifice for their sins.

ASK: *What does the bread represent? What does the cup represent? What did Jesus mean by the 'new covenant'? What was the old covenant?*

Jesus intended the Lord's Supper to help the church remember His death. Ask members to think about Jesus' death. Be silent for a minute to allow them to visualize Him on the cross. **ASK:** *How do you feel about Jesus dying on the cross for you? Some may feel sad, others may feel thankful. The point is when we have the Lord's Supper, we show our belief and faith in Him. It is a serious time.*

3. With Examination (1 Corinthians 11:27-29)

Ask the third volunteer to sign 1 Corinthians 11:27-29. **ASK:** *What did Paul mean by unworthy manner? Remember, the Corinthians behaved in an unloving manner. They acted selfishly. Paul encouraged them to examine themselves.*

Often in our churches today pastors have a time of prayer before having the Lord's Supper. This is a time to examine our hearts. If we hold on to our sins or attitudes of hate toward our Christian brothers and sisters, we are not ready to take the Lord's Supper. We need to look to Christ and remember His death that paid for our sins. We can take the time to confess and accept His forgiveness. Then as we take the Lord's Supper we will honestly declare our faith in Him.

IN MY CONTEXT

Encourage members to think about their experience with the Lord's Supper. **ASK:** *Do you use the Lord's Supper as a time to worship and examine your hearts? Is it just a motion to go through? Close with prayer asking God to help us worship when we have the Lord's Supper.*

SERVING GOD'S PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 12:4-12, 21-26

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will use their gifts to serve others in the church.

Do a Google search for a picture (look for images) of the body of Christ. Choose one that demonstrates the idea of His body having many members. Bring it to show the group.

Spend time thinking about the different members of the group. Try to notice the gift each member has or uses. Be ready to share these during the session.

FOCUS ATTENTION

ASK: *What is a spiritual gift? What are some examples of spiritual gifts? Allow for some discussion. EXPLAIN:* *A simple definition of a spiritual gift is: an ability God gives to a Christian so they can serve in the church.*

Some of the believers in the Corinthian church did not understand spiritual gifts. They felt some were very important and other gifts were less important. Some of their attitudes were not right. Paul wrote to explain how they should use their spiritual gifts.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Diverse (1 Corinthians 12:4-6)

Before you sign the verses, ask members to watch for the sign different and the sign same. Sign 1 Corinthians 12:4-6. **ASK:** *How many times did you see the sign different? What was different? (Kinds of gifts, ways to serve, and different ways God works through people.) How many times did you see the sign same? What was the same? (The Spirit, the Lord, and God.)*

EXPLAIN: *It is interesting to notice the three persons of the Trinity mentioned here. There are different gifts but all united in purpose. Similarly, the three persons of the Trinity are one: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.*

2. Specific (1 Corinthians 12:7-10)

Sign 1 Corinthians 12:7. Also sign Ephesians 4:12. Explain: These verses emphasize the purpose of the gifts of the Spirit. The gifts are to help all the church, the body of Christ. Believers have individual gifts, but the gifts are to help the whole body—not the individual.

Sign verses 8-11. **ASK:** *How do believers get a gift? Who decides which gift a believer will have?* **EXPLAIN:** *It is important to remember the Holy Spirit chooses which gift each person will have. Believers have no reason to be proud or brag about their gifts. In Ephesians 4:2-3 Paul said, “Always be humble, gentle and patient, accepting each other in love. You are joined together with peace through the Spirit, so make every effort to continue together in this way.”*

3. Intentional (1 Corinthians 12:11-12,21-26)

Sign 1 Corinthians 12:12 and 21-26. **ASK:** *Which gifts do people tend to think are most important? Why do they think that?* **EXPLAIN:** *Paul used the picture of the human body to help the Corinthians understand an important point. Each part of the body is important. Each part needs the other parts. They must work together. In the same way, each believer’s gift is important. We all need each other. As we serve together, the body of Christ becomes stronger. As a church body, we can do more as each believer uses gifts of service. **ASK:** *Which areas of ministry do we sometimes overlook? What would happen if no one chose to serve in those ministries?**

IN MY CONTEXT

If your group members are comfortable with each other, ask them to tell each other what gifts they see in each other. If you feel it is better, you could share what gifts you notice in the members. You could also ask them which gift they feel they have.

Some members may have never thought about how they can serve the church body. **EXPLAIN:** *Here is a way to find your gift: 1) Pray, asking God to show you what gift you have. 2) Talk with a strong Christian who knows you well. Ask them what strengths they see in you. 3) Watch for opportunities where you can serve and experience different types of service. See which areas seem to fit your desires. Close with prayer. Ask God to give each member clear understanding of how they can serve the body with their gifts.*

UNDERSTANDING LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will serve because of their love for others.

Ask three volunteers to sign the three sections of the Scripture.

Make the lesson come alive! Bring a bell to class. You will use this during the session.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Last week we discussed spiritual gifts. Paul wrote the Corinthians to scold them. Some of them were proud of their spiritual gifts. Some thought their spiritual gifts were more important than others. Paul emphasized the purpose of the gifts was to serve and build up the body of Christ.

In today's session we will learn about love. It should be the reason for our service and the use of our spiritual gifts. Remind the group what Jesus said in John 13:34-35: "I give you a new command: Love each other. You must love each other as I have loved you. All people will know that you are my followers if you love each other."

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Necessity of Love (1 Corinthians 13:1-3)

Show the group the bell you brought to class. **ASK:** *How do we use this? Shake the bell. ASK: Did that help you? Did you feel a blessing from seeing the bell (some may be able to hear it too)?*

EXPLAIN: *Paul said this is what it is like if we do things without love. Ask the volunteer to sign verses 1 Corinthians 13:1-3.*

ASK: *What gifts and actions did Paul mention in these verses? They are important acts of service but they are worthless if we do them for the wrong reason.*

ASK: *What are some wrong reasons people serve in the church? We need to check our hearts for our reasons for serving.*

2. Nature of Love (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

ASK: *How would you describe love? Write some of the answers on the board. Ask the volunteer to sign verses 4-7. **ASK:** How did Paul describe love? Write the answers on the board. Compare the answers.*

Discuss the descriptions of love from the verses. Ask members to give examples of the different characteristics. For example, what does rude look like? What does it mean to count up wrongs or to rejoice in truth?

3. Permanence of Love (1 Corinthians 13:8-13)

Ask the third volunteer to sign verses 8-13. **ASK:** *Why is love more important than gifts? (It will never stop.) **EXPLAIN:** The gifts of the Spirit will go away at some time. We will not need them anymore. But love will always be with us. We should practice showing love because we will be doing it forever.*

IN MY CONTEXT

Sometimes we forget love is an action, it is something we do. We can make a decision to love. Love does not depend on feelings. Ask members to sign John 3:16 together. **ASK:** *God loved so much, what did He do? (He GAVE.) **EXPLAIN:** Sometimes we love another person because of what that person does for us. We love them because we feel good when we are with them.*

God's love is different. His love is a giving love. His love inspires us to give. Ask members to share examples they have seen of Christians who show God's love.

Close with prayer. Ask God to help us love others in the same way He loves them. Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.

ENJOYING GOD'S COMFORT

2 Corinthians 1:3-14

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will experience God's comfort.

Ask three volunteers to sign the three sections of Scripture during the session.

Get a list of missionaries working with the Deaf Affinity through the International Mission Board. You can access information and find pictures at www.imb.org/deaf. Choose a country or some missionaries for your group to adopt and keep in prayer.

FOCUS ATTENTION

EXPLAIN: For the next few weeks we will study 2 Corinthians. Most Bible teachers agree 2 Corinthians is actually Paul's fourth letter to the believers in Corinth. Some teachers call his third letter a 'severe' letter. In the letter he had to correct the Christians. Paul said, "When I wrote to you before, I was very troubled and unhappy in my heart, and I wrote with many tears. I did not write to make you sad, but to let you know how much I love you" (2 Corinthians 2:4). Paul then wrote 2 Corinthians, a more encouraging letter for the believers.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Comforted (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)

EXPLAIN: Some of you may remember how Paul suffered. Some people were angry because he preached about Jesus. **Ask the group** to find 2 Corinthians 11:24-28 and read the passage. **ASK:** How did Paul suffer? List their answers on the board.

So, clearly Paul had much experience with suffering. He knew what it was like. Ask the volunteer to sign 2 Corinthians 1:3-7. **ASK:** What did Paul learn through suffering? How did God comfort him? Paul had a positive view of suffering. He experienced God's comfort during his suffering.

Because he experienced God's comfort, he was able to comfort other believers who suffered in the same way.

2. Tested (2 Corinthians 1:8-11)

Ask the volunteer to sign verses 8-11. **EXPLAIN:** *Paul told the Corinthian believers about the troubles he experienced in Asia. Paul said he felt he did not have the strength to continue. He thought he would die.* **ASK:** *What did he believe was the reason for this experience? (See verse 9.)*

Paul's faith grew because of his experience. He trusted God to continue to take care of him. In his letter to the Philippians Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, because He gives me strength" (Philippians 4:13).

3. Accepted (2 Corinthians 1:12-14)

It seems Paul heard reports that some people were talking against him. He answered these reports with the next verses. Ask the volunteer to sign 2 Corinthians 1:12-14. **ASK:** *What does it mean to have a clear conscience? Remember, Paul lived in Corinth for eighteen months. The people surely knew Paul acted honestly.*

ASK: *How can we live with integrity today? What kinds of actions show we are honest and have a clear conscience? Discuss and encourage members to think of people who are good examples of integrity.*

IN MY CONTEXT

In 2 Corinthians 1:11 Paul talked about the prayers of the people for him. As God blessed Paul, the people were thankful. **ASK:** *How do you feel when God answers your prayers?*

The International Mission Board (IMB) of the Southern Baptist Convention has missionaries working with Deaf people in other countries. They are sharing the good news like Paul did. When you get reports of their work and the people they reach, you will be able to express your thankfulness to God.

Take some time today to pray for the missionaries. Pray that God will give the missionaries the strength and comfort to continue in their work.

DISPLAYING THE GOSPEL

2 Corinthians 4:5-18

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will understand the power of the good news more each day.

Ask a volunteer to practice signing the story in Matthew 13:44-46. They will sign the story for the group during the session.

Make the lesson come alive! Find an empty mayonnaise jar. Paint the inside white. Put something valuable inside. You could use money or jewelry.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Use information from the Understand the Context section of the personal study guide to introduce the passage for today's session.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Proclaim (2 Corinthians 4:5-6)

Remind the group that in Corinth there were problems with false teachers. **ASK:** *Why do you think false teachers do not tell the truth?* Perhaps they want to appear important or want attention. So they make up stories to make themselves seem smart and clever. Children do this sometimes. A child might make up some big story because they want attention. Paul told the Corinthian believers the truth always.

Sign 2 Corinthians 4:5-6. **EXPLAIN:** *The good news is not about our own ideas or our own interpretations. We have a clear message to share.*

Sign John 1:14. Encourage members to read all of John 1 at home.

Verse 6 refers back to God's creation of the earth when He created the light. Now His light shines in His new creation, a new life in believers.

2. Live (2 Corinthians 4:7-15)

Show the mayonnaise jar to the group. **ASK:** *What is in this jar?* Then open the jar to show what is inside. Sign 2 Corinthians 4:7. **EXPLAIN:** *We have Jesus in us. He is the treasure. He is most important in our lives.*

Ask the volunteer to sign the story in Matthew 13:44-46. Use the information about this story from the personal study guide to discuss this story.

Sign verses 8-12. **ASK:** *Why did Paul talk so much about his physical weakness? (He did this to emphasize the power of God living in him.)* Ask members to share times they felt God's power helping them.

Sign verses 13-15. **EXPLAIN:** *To Paul it was a natural thing to share the good news. His faith led him to share.* **ASK:** *What things do we like to talk about? How can we be more excited about sharing the good news?*

3. Focus (2 Corinthians 4:16-18)

Sign verses 16-18. **ASK:** *What do you think Paul wanted the believers to remember from this message? What did Paul mean by things we can see? What did he mean by things we cannot see?*

EXPLAIN: *In our world today people want rewards for their actions. They want praise and attention for their work. Paul encouraged believers to keep a focus on eternal things. We serve because we will spend eternity with Jesus. It does not matter if we get a reward on earth or not.*

IN MY CONTEXT

In 2 Corinthians 4:1 and 16 Paul said, "We don't give up." Some Bible versions say, "We don't lose heart." Even with all his frustrations and sufferings, Paul kept his focus on God and eternal things. As believers, we can encourage each other to do the same thing. We need to remember God will give us the strength to do what He wants us to do.

Close in prayer. Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.



BECOMING NEW

2 Corinthians 5:16-21; 6:1-2

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will understand their role as ambassadors.

Ask three members to be prepared to sign the following verses: John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and Ephesians 2:8-10.

FOCUS ATTENTION

In last week's session we read about the treasure we have in our bodies that are like clay jars. Paul began chapter 5 with the reminder of how some day our weak bodies—our clay jars—will be destroyed and we will go to our heavenly home. Even though we often feel ready to be in that heavenly home, God has work for us to do while we are still in our bodies. Second Corinthians 5:15 says, "Christ died for all so that those who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from the dead so that they would live for Him." In the rest of chapter 5, Paul explained more about how believers can live for God.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. **Reborn** (2 Corinthians 5:16-17)

Sign 2 Corinthians 5:16-17. Paul said he thought of Christ as the world thought of Him. **ASK:** *What does this mean? What was Paul's life like before he met Christ? How did it change?*

ASK: *Have you ever seen pictures or a video of a caterpillar changing into a butterfly? Sometimes this example is used to show how something can totally change. Paul said believers are new. **ASK:** *How is your life as a Christian different from your life before you decided to follow Christ? Allow time for members to share.**

Invite members to find Romans 6:11 and Philippians 2:1-2 in their Bibles. Discuss how the ideas in these verses support the verses in this section.

2. Reconciled (2 Corinthians 5:18-21)

Sign the first sentence of verse 18: “All this is from God.” **EXPLAIN:** *This means our salvation was all God’s idea. He took the initiative—He started the process. Ask the volunteers to sign John 3:16, Romans 5:8, and Ephesians 2:8-10. Discuss how God started this work in us.*

Sign 2 Corinthians 5:18-21. **ASK:** *Why did we need peace with God? All of us were enemies of God. We were sinners and did not have Christ in us. When we believed in Jesus and made the decision to follow Him, we became God’s children. We were not enemies anymore. We are now at peace with Him. ASK: What is our job now? (To bring others to Christ so they also can be at peace with Him.)*

EXPLAIN: *Verse 20 says, “We have been sent to speak for Christ.” Some versions of the Bible use the word ambassadors for this idea. Paul said this about himself, but it applies to us as well. We are Christ’s representatives or ambassadors on earth. Our actions and words can help others want to know Christ. It is an important job.*

Verse 21 is a great summary of the gospel. Sign it again. Discuss.

3. Ready (2 Corinthians 6:1-2)

Sign 2 Corinthians 6:1-2. **EXPLAIN:** *Paul urged the Corinthian believers to work together with him. In chapter 5, verse 15, he explained how believers should live: “Christ died for all so that those who live would not continue to live for themselves. He died for them and was raised from the dead so that they would live for Him.”*

ASK: *Why do you think Paul talked about the right time and the day of salvation? He said for both that the time was now. This is important. We do not know how much longer we have. Jesus could return at any time. When He comes back there will be no more time to make a decision to follow Him. We must share the gospel now. And people must make a decision while there is still time.*

IN MY CONTEXT

Today we discussed how God started the work in us. Philippians 1:6 says He will also complete the work He started. Ask members to find the verse in their Bibles. **ASK:** *How does God work in our lives? When will He stop working in us?*

Close in prayer. Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.

DONATE
BOX
THANKS.

GIVING FAITHFULLY

2 Corinthians 9:1-15

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they will choose to become happy givers.

Ask a volunteer to share their experience of giving. If you cannot find someone, prepare to share your experience of giving and the blessing you had from it.

Ask three members to be prepared to sign the following verses: Luke 6:38, Galatians 6:7, and Proverbs 22:9.

Make the lesson come alive! Find a family or a person who needs help. Make a plan to collect the money or the things the person needs.

FOCUS ATTENTION

Ask the volunteer to give their testimony about giving. Ask if others have an experience they would like to share. Explain today's Scripture will emphasize our need to give and the attitude we should have.

Use the information from Understand the Context in the personal study guide to begin the session. This will help members understand the purpose of the offering discussed in the passage for today.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Confidence Shown (2 Corinthians 9:1-5)

Sign 2 Corinthians 9:1-5. **EXPLAIN:** *The Corinthians already promised to give an offering to help the believers in Jerusalem. Paul wrote to remind them of their promise and to encourage them.* **ASK:** *Why do you think Paul needed to remind them?* List some reasons.

ASK: *Have you ever forgotten your promise to help someone? Or maybe you changed your mind and decided to spend your money or time somewhere else? We need to remember to do what we say we will do. Sometimes we need a reminder.*

2. God's Blessing (2 Corinthians 9:6-11)

Sign 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. Paul shared a principle found in other verses in the Bible. Ask the three volunteers to sign the following verses: Luke 6:38, Galatians 6:7, and Proverbs 22:9. Discuss the verses.

ASK: *Why should we give? Do we give so we will get something in return? Invite members to read verses 6-11 again. ASK: What kind of attitude should we have? (We should give with a happy heart—not because we feel it is a duty.) When we give happily, God is pleased. He will provide for us, and we will be able to continue giving.*

3. Honoring God (2 Corinthians 9:12-15)

Sign 2 Corinthians 9:12-15. **ASK:** *When we give, what does it prove? (See verse 13.) A gift to others meets a need. What else does the gift do? (See verses 12-14.) This is a different way to think of our giving. We may think giving only meets a need. But Paul encouraged giving because people will thank God. It is all about Him. Our giving helps others honor Him.*

Invite members to read verse 15. **ASK:** *What is the gift in this verse? God is the best model for giving. All good things come from Him (James 1:17). His best gift to us is salvation through His Son. We can never give back enough. God gives us everything.*

IN MY CONTEXT

EXPLAIN: *Think of giving as a form of worship. ASK: What are the parts of our worship service? (Singing, offering, prayer, and preaching/teaching.) How is giving an offering a form of worship? What does it tell God? (It means we trust Him to provide, it shows our love for Him and for others, it is a way to show thankfulness for all He does for us.)*

Giving at other times is a way to serve others and worship also. Tell the group about the plan you have to help the family or person. Discuss how you as a group can prepare the gift and get it to those who need it.

Close with prayer. Encourage members to read the daily readings in the personal study guide.



FINDING STRENGTH

2 Corinthians 12:7b-10; 13:2-8

PLAN AHEAD

Pray for group members. Pray they feel confident in their relationship with God.

Ask two or three members to help lead the small group discussions at the end of the session.

Review the material from the personal study guide. Be prepared to discuss if members have comments or questions from last week's reading.

FOCUS ATTENTION

When we pray and talk with God we should spend time praising Him and confessing our sin. We also should thank Him for providing for us, thank Him for who He is, and for answering our prayers. In addition, we ask God for the things we need and we pray for others. **ASK:** *When God answers our prayers in the way we want, how do we feel?* Allow for discussion. **ASK:** *When God says 'No' to our prayer, how do we feel?* (We may be surprised or puzzled or sad or wonder why.) In today's session we will see Paul had an experience when God said 'No' to his request.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

1. Paul's Weakness (2 Corinthians 12:7b-10)

False teachers in Corinth caused problems for Paul. There were some people that spoke badly about him. In chapter 11 of 2 Corinthians, Paul defended himself and explained why the Christians should trust him. He told them of the suffering he experienced for the good news. He also experienced wonderful visions. He was qualified to be an apostle and he had always been honest with the Corinthians.

Several times in his letters, Paul talked about his physical weakness and God's power. In today's Scripture, he is even more personal. Sign 2 Corinthians 12:7b-10. **EXPLAIN:** *Paul had a physical problem* (some Bible

versions call it a thorn in the flesh). **ASK:** *Why did he have the problem? (See verse 7.) How many times did he ask God to remove the problem? What was God's answer? How did Paul feel about his weakness?*

Based on Paul's experience, perhaps we can understand God has reasons for His answers to our prayers. We can trust that He knows best.

2. Christ's Strength (2 Corinthians 13:2-4)

EXPLAIN: *Paul felt like a father to the Corinthian believers (see 2 Corinthians 12:14). In this passage he talks to them like a father. He is serious and warns of discipline. Sign 2 Corinthians 13:2-4. **ASK:** How do you know Paul is being stern with the people? (He warns them of God's power to deal with them. He says he will not be easy with those who are sinning.)*

3. Our Choice (2 Corinthians 13:5-8)

Sign 2 Corinthians 13:5-8. **ASK: Why did Paul want the people to examine themselves?** Perhaps their actions and attitudes did not look like those Christians should show. He did not doubt their salvation, but wanted them to test their hearts. Peter listed some characteristics Christians should have. At the end of the list he said, "But anyone who does not have these things cannot see clearly. He is blind and has forgotten that he was made clean from his past sins" (2 Peter 1:9).

Paul also wanted the people to know he did not fail the test. He assured them again that he had been honest with them all the time.

IN MY CONTEXT

Divide the group into smaller groups of three or four. Ask them to find the following verses and make a list of characteristics Christians should have: Galatians 5:22-23; 2 Peter 1:5-8; 1 John 2:9-10. After about ten minutes (sooner if they finish quicker) come back together and let them share what they found. Encourage them to think about these characteristics and practice them.

LEADER PACK

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 1** *Map: Paul's Second Missionary Journey*

Sessions 1,9 Locate a map in a Bible atlas that shows the missionary journeys of Paul.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 2** *Outline: 1,2 Corinthians*

Sessions 1,2,8,9,13 Refer to the outline printed on page 12.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 3** *Key Verse: 2 Corinthians 5:20*

Sessions 4,7,8,11 Display 2 Corinthians 5:20 on a whiteboard or large sheet of paper.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 4** *Poster: Problems in Corinth*

Sessions 1,3,4,6 Create a poster that lists the following information:

- Those Who Bring Division in the Church
- The Treatment of Fellow Christians Living in Sin
- Matters of Sexuality in Marriage and Divorce
- Disputes About Food
- Propriety in Church Worship
- Spiritual Gifts
- The Resurrection

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 5** *Map: Reconstruction of Corinth*

Sessions 2,10 Use a Bible atlas to locate the primary locations inside ancient Corinth, paying particular attention to the locations of the temples.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 6** *Poster: Plan of Salvation*

Session 5 Create a poster that lists the following information from page 2:

- Admit to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- By faith receive Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept Jesus' gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for sin by dying on the cross.
- Confess your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 7** *Handout: Corinthians Time Line*

Sessions 2,9,13 Locate a study Bible with a time line of the major people and events in 1 and 2 Corinthians (from 1,000 BC–AD 57). Use it as a reference during this study.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 8** *Handout: Paul's List of Spiritual Gifts*

Sessions 7,8,12 Create a poster of each of the spiritual gifts, as listed in the following Scriptures: Romans 12:6-8; 1 Corinthians 12:8-10; 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; and Ephesians 4:11.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 9** *Handout: References to the Lord's Supper*

Session 6 Use a Bible dictionary to explain the meaning of these terms:

- Lord's Supper • Eucharist • Communion • Fellowship

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 10** *Handout: Resurrection Appearances in Scripture*

Sessions 5,6 Create a handout of the following people who encountered the risen Jesus and the related Scripture references.

- Cephas (Luke 24:34) • The Twelve (Luke 24:36-43) • The 500 (Acts 1:9-11) • James (Acts 15:13)
- Apostles (John 20:24-29)
- Paul (Acts 9:1-9)

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 11** *Handout: Key Idols in Corinth*

Sessions 3,10

Use a Bible dictionary or handbook to provide information on some of the gods worshiped in Corinth:

- Apollo • Aphrodite • Poseidon • Serapis • Asclepius

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 12** *Handout: Problems in Corinth*

Sessions 1,4,6

See Pack Item 4 for list, consult a Bible dictionary for more details on each issue.

➤➤ **PACK ITEM 13** *Bookmark: Memory Verses*

Sessions 1-13

Make a list of the suggested memory verses found on the In My Context page for each session.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey



Paul establishes churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea

Paul imprisoned in Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea

Paul receives vision that encourages him to travel to Macedonia

Paul begins on charges before Gallio

Paul speaks to the Aetopagus the Aetopagus

Paul asks Timothy to join him in his work

Paul returned from Jerusalem to plan his next venture

Jerusalem Conference, A.D. 49, (Acts 15:1-30; Gal 2:1-21)

Paul returns from Jerusalem to plan his next venture

Jerusalem Conference, A.D. 49, (Acts 15:1-30; Gal 2:1-21)

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1,2 Corinthians

Disunity threatened to tear the church apart. That was just the tip of the iceberg. A church member was engaging in immoral practices—the kind of immorality that was not even tolerated among the unbelievers—while the church tolerated it. Things were taking place during worship that were destructive and harmful. There was confusion about spiritual gifts, with members claiming their gifts were proof of spiritual superiority. Welcome to the church at Corinth. If you're the apostle Paul, what do you say to such a church? Like a father, you sternly correct them. But first you remind them of who they are in Christ, and who Christ is. You call them back to the gospel. Therein lies the answer to the moral, relational, and theological problems that plagued the Corinthian church—or any church.

 **Explore**
the Bible.

Let the Word dwell in you.

The Promise of a

18 But with thee
enant; and thou sh
thou, and thy sons, ar
wives with thee.

19 And of every livin
of every sort shalt tho
keep them alive with
and female.

20 Of fowls after the
ter their kind, of ever
earth after his kind,
come unto thee, to ke

here, and its meaning is
tions include "roof" or "t
then the text probably in
inches over the sides of
dow," then it refers to a
four sides of the boat fro

6:17 Only after He com
did God tell him why it
a flood—a term used onl
all-destroying flood in No
earth shall die. The bibli
in Genesis 6–8 most nat
covered the entire globe.
this (2 Pet. 2:5, 3:6). The
dominant Christian view
remains so today. To pla
explain the flood, some
also tackle questions r
quired to flood the entire
preflood geography, so
have needed four times
the flood to cover the l
in that light, some defen
geology that pre-flood ge
ology. Specifically, the
the water in the preflo
is to be so and that the vo
geographical and geolog
ical approach, suggestin
this is largely the same
water quantity of water
lost by an unknown me
has been diminished a
fold. The term *covenant*
work between two parti

female