

A SERIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS



GRACE TOGETHER

LEARNING TO LIVE BY GRACE AS A CHURCH FAMILY

LEADERS NOTES



SERIES INTRODUCTION



From the cross of Jesus to the church today, 1 Corinthians teaches us that God's grace surpasses human expectations. Each week we will see how grace shapes us as the church of Jesus, and how God's community is grounded in Christ's gracious work, calling us to be empowered by that same grace in our relationships and witness.

Across the letter, Paul shows us what a church shaped by grace looks like. We are a church family called by Christ, grounded in him, freed from the world's values, kept by God's faithfulness, united despite our differences, equipped by the Spirit, built up together, and raised with Christ in hope.

**CALLED → GROUNDED → FREED → KEPT → UNITED →
EQUIPPED → BUILT → RAISED**

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

1 CORINTHIANS 1:18

A NOTE TO LEADERS



We are deeply thankful for you and the vital ministry you lead. Small Groups are central to who we are as a church and how we live out God's calling for each of our lives.

In Small Groups we have the opportunity to open and explore God's word together, to serve and care for each other in prayer and practice, and to live out gospel-shaped community.

As you do this, you come to know your group deeply and personally. Please treat these studies as a starting point, not a finished product. Feel encouraged to edit the questions, tailor them to your group and approach each week in the way that best serves your members. Each group may take a slightly different path to the same key teaching point.

*The leaders note after each question are not there to provide answers that end the group's discussion, but to support you as you guide the conversation. **Leaders' notes become detrimental to group engagement and growth if they are read out as answers.***

If at any point you would like support or prayer, please feel free to contact your Small Group Coach. If you need support from the staff team, contact Pat Jones for pastoral care or Emma Wynn-Jones for Small Group coordination and administration. We will be happy to serve however we can.

PRAYER

Prayer is one of the ways we express our dependence on God and participate in the life of a small group. At St Paul's we want all small groups to be praying for each other, their adopted mission partner(s), for the church and for all the ministries happening each week. To support this, we've included a "what's on this week" at the end of each study. This helps keep everyone informed and shapes what we pray for together.

WHAT'S COMING UP

TERM 4 – 2026, ST PAUL'S SCHEDULE

WEEK #1 OCTOBER 18TH - 24TH

- October 16th **ImpaKCt registrations open / Crossfire T4 begins**
- October 18th The Commons
- October 24th Big Play Out

WEEK #2 OCTOBER 25TH - 31ST

- October 28th Prayer Night

WEEK #3 NOVEMBER 1ST - 7TH

- November 4th YA What's Next?
- November 7th Women's Morning

WEEK #4 NOVEMBER 8TH - 14TH

WEEK #5 NOVEMBER 15TH - 21ST

- November 15th The Commons
- November 16th Integration Team Night

WEEK #6 NOVEMBER 22ND - 28TH

WEEK #7 NOVEMBER 29TH - DECEMBER 5TH

- December 5th Christmas Cantata

WEEK #8 DECEMBER 6TH - 12TH

- December 6th Accessible Christmas Carols
- December 11th Final Crossfire for 2026
- December 13th **ImpaKCt registration closes***

**Please note, no registrations can be taken after 13/12/26. Please contact the church office before this if you have any issues.*



CHRISTMAS AT ST PAUL'S



As Term 4 comes to a close, we look forward to many end of year celebrations and events. Here are details on just some things happening in our church calendar...please keep an eye on social media and The Loop for more info!

CHRISTMAS LAUNCH/ TOYS & TUCKER

On **November 29th** we will officially mark the beginning of our Christmas season. We'll sing some carols during services, the tree will be up, and it will be opportunity to bring in donations for our annual Toys and Tucker appeal with Anglicare, supporting families in Lakemba.

ADVENT SERIES

After our current 1 Corinthians series, we will move to a short Advent series on **December 13th and December 20th**, opening up Matthew 25.

CHRISTMAS CANTATA

On **Saturday 5th December** our St Paul's Celebration Choir will present a beautiful afternoon of music at 2pm in the church - all are welcome! Afternoon tea to follow.

ACCESSIBLE CAROLS

On **Sunday 6th December** at 2pm we are trying something completely new, and hosting an accessible Carols service – there will be a big focus on making this somewhere comfortable for those who may not be able to usually attend carols for many accessibility reasons. The afternoon will include considerations for the elderly, adults and children with physical and intellectual disabilities, Auslan translation, and sensory spaces. Partnering with Jesus Club, we are looking forward to a joyful afternoon, and encourage everyone to join in the fun!

LIGHT IN THE DARKNESS SERVICE

On **Wednesday 16th December** we will hold a peaceful and reflective service designed as a moment to pause, recognise grief and loss, and find hope in Jesus.

CHRISTMAS SERVICES

Our **Christmas Eve 4pm service** is a family service with lots of singing, high energy, and a fun show for the kids. Followed by our fair with jumping castles, face painting, BBQ and heaps of activities. We then continue to celebrate with services at **7pm** and **9pm**.

On **Christmas Day** we start our morning with a prayer book service at **8am**. Our **10am service** is a wonderful way to spend your Christmas morning as we recognise the joy and hope that comes with the birth of our mighty saviour.

We encourage you to start thinking now about who you might invite to church this Christmas.

STPAULS.CHURCH/CHRISTMAS



AN INTRODUCTION TO 1 CORINTHIANS



CORINTH

Destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, Corinth was re-founded as a Roman colony by Julius Caesar in 44 BC, becoming the capital of the province of Achaia in 27BC. It was a city of commerce on two sea-fronts and quickly became wealthy. Located on the isthmus that connects the Peloponnese with the rest of Greece, it controlled north-south trade, but also linked the East and West because of the location of other ports.

Corinth was a strategic place for the gospel. It was thoroughly Hellenised, with Greek influence evident in religion, philosophy and culture, and it was also influenced by mystery cults from Asia and Egypt. There were significant social and economic divisions between the wealthy and the poor.

Old Corinth had a reputation for sexual immorality. “To Corinthianise” was used to mean “to fornicate” and a “Corinthians girl” was a way of referring to a “prostitute”. Corinth had a longstanding reputation for sexual immorality, but we should not assume that the reputation gives us a straightforward description of first-century Corinth.

The church met in various houses. Christians were not a publicly recognised religious movement at this time, and house gatherings appear to have been the normal setting for Christian meetings.

TIME AND PLACE

1 Corinthians was written during Paul’s ministry in Ephesus, probably in the mid-50s AD. Paul indicates that he intended to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (1 Cor 16:8), suggesting that the letter was written before Pentecost of that year.

ESTIMATING PAUL'S MOVEMENTS

- 49-51 AD**
- Paul's 2nd missionary journey from Antioch (Syria) to Galatia, Troas, Acts 16 – 18:22
 - Philippi, Thessalonica, Beroea, Athens, Corinth, Ephesus
 - Arrival of Priscilla and Aquila in Corinth (41/42 or 49/50).
 - Paul stays in Corinth at least 18 months.
 - Hearing before Gallio (51-52)

- 52-57AD**
- Paul's 3rd missionary journey from Antioch (Syria) to South Galatia, Acts 18:23 – 20:38, Ephesus, Macedonia.
 - Three months in Greece.**
 - Return to Troas.
 - Sails for Miletus → Jerusalem.

***1 Corinthians (from Ephesus); 2 Corinthians (from Macedonia)**

*Romans written from Corinth (early ad 57)

THE LETTERS

The founding of the Corinthian church is described in Acts 18:1-17. Over 18 months, Paul experienced great opposition from some Jews and was brought before the Proconsul Gallio. The charges could not be sustained and Paul sailed to Ephesus and then Syria. He left behind a sizeable congregation. While in Syria, Paul's friends Priscilla and Aquila ministered to Apollos. Apollos' subsequent ministry and his public engagement with the Jews were important for the ministry in Corinth (Acts 18:27-28).

Acts 19 – While Paul spent three years in Ephesus, he received concerning news from Corinth. Some appear to have continued to live according to the patterns of sexual immorality associated with the city.

1 Cor 5:9-11 – Paul mentions having already written a letter warning them not to associate with a “brother” who is guilty of immorality or greed, idolatry, reveller, drunkard or robber. This letter is probably now lost.

Paul later received news from Chloe’s people (1 Cor 1:11) members of a household in Corinth that there were divisions in the church in Corinth. This appears to revolve around some being attracted to the gifts and style of Apollos. Hence the arguing over “I belong to Paul”, “I belong to Apollos”, and “I belong to Cephas”. This seems to be about loyalty to one leader or another. Differing beliefs were possibly also happening, though it is not clear what these differences were.

During this same time, Paul received a letter in Ephesus from the Corinthians (1 Cor 7:1) seeking his guidance on particular issues.

Paul addresses their questions systematically, using the phrase “now concerning...”

7:1ff – marriage, etc.

8:1ff – food sacrificed to idols.

12:1ff – spiritual gifts

16:1ff – Collection for Christians in Jerusalem

He was also informed of certain practices in the church to which he responds:

5:1ff – illicit sexual relations

6:1ff – taking other Christians to pagan courts

11:17ff – unworthy conduct during the Lord’s Supper

15:12ff – disagreements over fundamental Christian doctrines, such as the resurrection of the dead.

ESTIMATED TIMELINE OF PAUL’S LETTERS TO THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Corinthians A

Corinthians B = 1 Corinthians 55 AD, written from Ephesus.

Corinthians C

Corinthians D = 2 Corinthians

The letters are often reconstructed as a series of communications between Paul and the Corinthian church. 1 Corinthians is generally understood to be the letter represented here as “Corinthians B”, while 2 Corinthians may preserve material from more than one Pauline letter. This reconstruction remains debated.

STRUCTURE

1:1-9	Greeting and thanksgiving	
1:10-4:21	Divisions in the church	
5:1-6:20	Problems of immorality	
	Incest(?)	
	A misunderstanding	5:9-13
	Litigation in pagan courts	6:1-11
	Sexual immorality	6:12-20
7:1-14:40	Answers to questions	
	Marriage and celibacy	7:1-40
	Food offered to idols & freedom	8:1-11:1
	Veiling of women	11:2-16
	The Lord's Supper	11:17-34
	Spiritual gifts in church	12:1-14:40
15:1-58	The resurrection	
16:1-9	The collection	
16:10-24	Final exhortations and greetings	

THEMES

Paul writes this letter to deal with particular issues that have been brought to his attention. Yet he grounds his answers in theological principles. Paul does not address these problems simply by giving practical instructions. He repeatedly reminds the Corinthians of who they are in Christ and of God's grace towards them. His concern is that their life together should increasingly reflect the gospel they have received.

Speaking, knowledge, spiritual gifts

The Corinthian Church was alive with Spiritual gifts. Prophecy and speaking in tongues were commonly practised. Each member had a contribution to make – a word, a vision, a teaching, a hymn, a lesson, tongue, interpretation... they ate a common meal together, sharing in this way in the Lord's Supper.

However, there were issues even in these practices. Some were eating and drinking at these meals without regard to the needs of others. Their gathering made relationships worse. He was again concerned for the welfare of the congregation. The heart of his concern is "the failure to discern the body" (11:29). The meal is a symbol of the fellowship they have. Paul calls them to recognise the significance of the body as they participate in the Lord's Supper.

Chapter 12 develops the theme of the body. Some were exaggerating the importance of speaking in tongues and were despising the gifts of others. Yet Paul reminds them that God gives all gifts for the common good (12:7). They are to be exercised in love (13:1-13). The whole body again is the emphasis. Prophecy is more desirable than tongues, therefore, since it benefits others, not just the speaker (14:1-25) Paul concludes by speaking about the order of their congregational meetings (14:26-40).

Believers are baptised into one body by one Spirit (12:12-13). They are to edify one another and love one another. These are the foundational principles for their life together. He wants them to identify as the Church of God at Corinth (1:2). Which leads to a discussion on...

ECCLESIOLOGY (THE CHURCH)

Attitudes and behaviour divided the Corinthians. Sexual matters, issues of Christian freedom, regard for each other during activities, and questions over the resurrection.

Beginning these issues is the concern over Christian leadership and attachment by some to particular teachers. Yet Paul argues that they do not “belong” to their teachers (3:21ff). They were “in Christ” and he is not an alternative leader, but the foundation for the whole church.

The divisions are a result of the fruit of the wisdom of the world. The cultural world of Corinth placed considerable value on human wisdom, eloquence and status. However, Paul reminds the Corinthians that the wisdom of God is found in the message of the cross, which is foolishness to the world. It contradicts human wisdom. God removed all possibility of boasting in human wisdom by making Christ our wisdom – being also our righteousness and sanctification and redemption. Hence Paul himself simply preached the message of the cross, depending not on a preacher’s skill, but on the message of God.

The Corinthians are described as immature in their faith and therefore not ready for “solid food” (3:1–2). Paul contrasts their spiritual immaturity with the wisdom that belongs to the mature (2:6–16). They are failing to recognise the implications of the gospel in their lives.

Paul describes himself, and Apollos, as fellow workers in the gospel, labouring in the field of God. Christ is the foundation (3:10–11) which has been laid, and God is erecting the building (3:5–9).

The congregation is God’s temple (3:16ff). Thus, Paul takes up the Jewish notion of the rebuilding of the temple of God and applies it to the people of God themselves. Attempting to destroy this temple by false teaching or ungodly behaviour will bring God’s judgement upon them. **This is a significant warning in the Epistle.**

Ministers, as workers of God, should therefore seek to please God and seek their praise from God, rather than from people (4:2–5). He encourages them to imitate him and his service to Christ and His people (4:14–21, 11:1)

ESCHATOLOGY (END TIMES)

The kingdom of God has already dawned, seen in the power of the resurrection of Christ, and the pouring out of the Spirit in the lives of believers (1 Cor 4:20). Yet the kingdom is not here in all its fullness. Therefore, one's ethical life is still to be controlled by the dawning of this age, with the power of the Spirit at work in us to enable us to follow God's laws (1 Cor 5:7-8, 6:1-6, 7:29-31, 10:11)

Paul seeks to call people to a faith that shows obedience, by drawing their attention to the framework of the cross (1:10-4:21) and the resurrection of Christ (chapter 15). Ecclesiology and Eschatology are both rooted in our understanding of the person and work of Christ (15:3-5)

GODLINESS

Immorality: Some appear to have treated sexual freedom as a badge of Christian freedom. Paul calls for discipline for the man committing incest (5:1-5), for the sake of his own salvation and for the welfare of the congregation. Personal morality is mixed with the health of the Church as a whole (See ecclesiology).

6:12 says "Everything is lawful". Paul agrees that the Christian life is not dependent on the observance of rules. However, he suggests that not all things are helpful, and it is possible to become enslaved to this freedom.

He outlines sins of a sexual nature as distinct from other sins (such as food regulations), since through sexual union, the two become one flesh. Since our bodies are members of Christ, sexual union with a prostitute is presented as an act against the holiness of Christ's body. Since we were bought at a price (6:20), we belong to Christ and

are not free to do as we please. Christian freedom is not freedom to do whatever we please. Rather, freedom is shaped by what is beneficial, what builds others up, and what honours Christ.

Food sacrificed to idols: Whilst an idol has no truth or reality, no existence, then the eating of meat sacrificed to pagan idols means nothing. And much of the meat available in Corinth may have been sacrificed to idols. However, again, Paul calls Christians to consider the effect of their freedom on other believers (see Ecclesiology). Not everyone is wise when it comes to idols.

Therefore, those who are weak in conscience could be led astray by seeing other brothers and sisters taking part in eating sacrificed food. The mature Christian could cause one with a weak conscience to act against his conscience and hence stumble in his relationship with Christ.

Paul's principle is that a Christian may choose to go without their rights for the sake of the weak, for the sake of the Christian community as a whole (9:4-6, 7-18) and in order to win others for Christ also (9:19-23).

Those exercising their Christian freedom are reminded of the example of the Israelites who fell in the desert. Several examples are given to remind them of the judgement of God that fell upon them for their acts against God and the leaders of the Church. These matters in which the Israelites gave in to immorality and idolatry, and tested God, are comparable to the sins the Corinthians are now committing.

Indulging their freedom to eat at idol feasts is one way of testing God's patience, and arousing his jealousy. They are partnering with demons who are behind all false idols and gods. So this is not just about the community and the weak in faith. It is also about their relationship with God and their distancing themselves from the demonic practices of Corinth.

OPPOSITION

1 and 2 Corinthians: Whilst in 2 Corinthians, Paul's opponents seem to be Jewish, they were familiar with Hellenistic thought and Sophist rhetoric but also relied on their Jewish heritage. In 1 Corinthians this is not necessarily the case. The food issues around idols and the sexual immorality seem to reflect the wider pagan environment rather than a specifically Jewish background.

Internal division: In 1 Corinthians, the church was divided among competing groups and loyalties. Some were also challenging Paul's authority. The division in the community (taking each other to court, etc) shows internal divisions as a primary concern.

The body and the resurrection: Some of their attitudes appear to reflect a low view of the significance of the physical body, which may help explain their approach to sexual morality and the resurrection. Paul strongly rejects this understanding, particularly in 1 Corinthians 15, where bodily resurrection is central to Christian hope.

STUDY #1

CALLED BY GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-31



Leader's note: *By the grace of Christ, God has called us to be his Church. He has chosen the weak and foolish to shame worldly wisdom. Our identity and redemption are found in Christ alone, so our boast is in him alone. This challenges our pride in ourselves, our status and our leaders, and calls us to humility and unity.*

WELCOME

1. Some people say they have “a calling on their life”, sometimes referring to their work, passions or ministry. If you had to describe the calling on your life, what would you say?

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul established the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey. After he left, divisions developed within the church, including competing loyalties to leaders such as Apollos and Cephas and Paul himself.

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to address these divisions and other issues, repeatedly bringing the Corinthians back to the gospel and the grace they have received.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-31

REFLECT

2. Paul's description of the Corinthians in v2 is quite detailed. What does each part tell us about who they are, and could you describe yourself in the same way?

Paul describes the Corinthians as people who have been made holy and set apart for God in Christ. Despite their differences and failures, they share the same identity and the same Lord. Paul begins by reminding them that they belong to Christ before addressing how they are living together as his Church.

3. What about the Corinthians does Paul thank God for?

Paul begins by recognising God's grace in the Corinthians before addressing their serious problems. They have been enriched in speech and knowledge, have received spiritual gifts, are eagerly awaiting Christ, and God has promised to sustain them to the end. Paul is reminding them that their failures do not erase the grace God has already given them.

4. What does it mean that the Corinthians do not lack any spiritual gift, and how does this fit with what Paul says about them waiting for Christ?

God has equipped them with every spiritual gift while they wait for Christ to return. Their spiritual gifts are evidence of God's grace in the present, but their hope ultimately rests in Christ's return.

5. What does Paul say God will do for the Corinthians, and what does this show us about God's faithfulness?

God's faithfulness is more than not abandoning us. He follows through on what he has promised. Paul's confidence is not in the Corinthians' ability to remain faithful, but in God's promise to strengthen them and keep them firm to the end.

6. What is causing division among the Corinthians in v10-16, and how is their thinking challenged? (Optional Extra: How does Paul's use of rhetorical questions drive this point home?)

Allegiance to human leaders is fracturing the unity of the church. Paul redirects their attention from the people who serve Christ to Christ himself. Paul, Apollos and Cephas are not competing alternatives. They belong to Christ and serve his Church.

7. What can we learn from how Paul shifts the focus from the divisions among the Corinthians to the message of the cross in v17-25? How might this shape the way we approach divisions in our own lives?

Paul does not resolve the Corinthians' division by arguing for one leader over another. He brings them back to the cross, where human wisdom, status and achievement are exposed as inadequate. The cross gives the Church a shared foundation and leaves no room for one person to place themselves above another.

8. What does Paul mean when he describes the message of the cross as both “foolishness” and “the power of God” (v18–25)?

How can the same message appear so differently to different people?

To the world, the message of a crucified Messiah appears foolish because it overturns human expectations about power, wisdom and success. But Paul says that what appears foolish to the world is actually the power and wisdom of God. The cross therefore challenges us to trust God’s wisdom rather than measuring truth by the standards of the world.

RESPOND

9. Looking back through the passage, what does each description of God’s calling tell us about who we are and what should shape our identity?

Encourage your group to consider whether they genuinely see themselves in the descriptions of those who are called.

v2 Called to be God’s holy people.

v9 Called to fellowship with Jesus Christ.

v24 Those who are called recognise Christ as the power and wisdom of God.

v26–28 God has not chosen according to worldly wisdom, influence or status.

Our identity is therefore not something we establish through wisdom, status or achievement. God has given us Christ, and in him we find our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

10. What do v26–31 teach us about what we have to boast about? What would it look like to genuinely boast in these things?

We cannot boast in our wisdom, influence, status or achievements. Our only true boast is in what God has done for us in Christ. Encourage the group to consider what it would look like for this to become visible in everyday life, particularly in how they speak about themselves, their achievements and their status.

11. How might your life change if you stopped measuring yourself by worldly wisdom, status, achievement or influence, and instead found your identity in Christ?

Encourage the group to slow down and genuinely consider this question. What effect might it have on stress, fear, work, relationships, decisions and ambitions if their identity was no longer dependent on worldly wisdom, status or achievement?

PRAYER

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

TERM 4 - WEEK ONE

- October 16th **ImpaKt registrations open / Crossfire T4 begins**
- October 18th The Commons
- October 24th Big Play Out

STUDY #2

GROUNDED IN GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-40



Leader's note: *The key teaching point of this study is recognising that your circumstances do not determine your identity or your faithfulness to God.*

WELCOME

1. Spend some time as a group reflecting on what stood out, encouraged, corrected or raised questions for you from Sunday's service.

The purpose of this question is to get everyone comfortable talking and on topic as much as it is to explore their responses to the services.

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul has been responding to questions from the Corinthian church about marriage, singleness and relationships. He addresses different circumstances people may find themselves in, including marriage, separation, singleness and engagement, while continuing to address the pressures facing the church.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:17-24

REFLECT

2. What are the "different situations" in v17, and how would they influence what it looks like to live as a believer in them?

Looking earlier in the passage, Paul addresses marriage and singleness. In this section, he then introduces circumcision and uncircumcision, bringing cultural background into the discussion, followed by slavery and freedom, before returning to marital status. Cultural background can have a large influence on how someone understands faithfulness to God and religious practice, as well as their sense of acceptance. Slavery and freedom influence how someone sees themselves and the freedom they have to practice their faith. Finally, marriage and singleness present different challenges and blessings for living a life of faithfulness.

3. What point is Paul making as he discusses circumcision, and why do you think he chose circumcision as the topic to make the point?

People were undergoing procedures to reverse circumcision for socio-political reasons. Circumcision, as a sign of Jewish identity, speaks to tensions about how Christian faith relates to Judaism and the sense of being culturally in or out.

4. The language of “remain a slave” may be striking to some of us. How do we understand and contend with what is said here?

Note v21. Paul is not demanding that people remain in slavery. He is also not attempting to settle the question of whether slavery is right or wrong here. Instead, he focuses on what it looks like to live faithfully before God, whether in slavery or freedom. While slavery in the ancient world took different forms, we should be careful not to minimise the reality of slavery simply because it was different from modern forms of slavery.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40

5. What is being taught about marriage in this passage? How does this challenge or expand the way we normally think about marriage?

Marriage is spoken about here as the secondary issue. In this context, what life situation better enables you to serve the Lord becomes the primary consideration. Paul isn't teaching that being married or being single is bad. He is encouraging people to see that faithfulness to God and freedom to serve him are the priority. This doesn't lessen the joy of marriage. Rather, it places marriage within the temporary circumstances of this life and the eternal calling of God.

6. There is a notable shift in the strength of Paul's language as he moves onto the topic of marriage. What do you see as the shift, and why is it important?

Paul explicitly distinguishes a command from the Lord from his own considered judgement. He presents his advice on marriage as wisdom rather than a command, while making clear that marriage itself is not sinful. This distinction is important because Paul is giving strong pastoral advice without presenting his judgement as a command from the Lord. This is why we see language like “I have no command from the Lord” v25, “I think” v26, “but if you do marry, you have not sinned” v28, “I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you” v35.

7. What advantages and challenges does Paul see for those who are unmarried, and for those who are married?

Those who are unmarried have the freedom to serve God without the concerns that come with marriage, yet may face the challenge of honouring God with purity. Those who are married face the challenge of caring for their spouse as they should, while also seeking to serve God with everything.

8. What does Paul mean by the “present crisis” in v26, and how does this help explain his emphasis on marriage, singleness and the fact that the present form of this world is passing away?

The sense of urgency is key to understanding this teaching. There are differing interpretations of what the “present crisis” refers to. Some argue it is persecution facing the church, others suggest it is another pressing issue we are unaware of, while others connect it with the urgency of Christ’s return. We cannot know exactly what Paul means, but the point is clear, the present form of this world is passing away, and this should shape how we prioritise our lives and our service of God.

9. In this chapter, Paul speaks about circumcision, slavery and marriage, each contributing to a central point. What do you see as the overall message of this passage?

Your circumstances do not determine your identity or your faithfulness to God. We are called from many different places and situations to live with faithfulness, contentment and urgency in gospel ministry.

RESPOND

10. Paul is not teaching us to remain in the exact situation we are in forever. Rather, he is teaching us to live faithfully before God in whatever circumstance we find ourselves. What does it look like for you to live in faithfulness, contentment and urgency in gospel ministry in the reality of the circumstances before you?

Help people to see how this can be lived out in the difficulties of life, but also push the group on how comfort can present a significant challenge to our discipleship. It is not only hard circumstances that put pressure on our faithfulness. In fact, the opposite is often true.

11. In this passage, cultural identity, social circumstances and marital status all become secondary to the bigger question of what it looks like to be faithful to God in the situation you are in. Take some time to reflect on the big decisions in your life. Does faithfulness and the urgency of having a life focused on sharing the good news play a role in those decisions?

This question is easy to skip over. It may be helpful to start by asking the group, "What are the biggest decisions we make in life?" and "What are the biggest decisions we will make this year?" Then ask what influence faith has had on those decisions.

PRAYER

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

TERM 4 - WEEK TWO

- October 28th Prayer Night

STUDY #3

FREED FOR GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13, 9:19-27



Leader's note: *The key teaching point of this study is that grace frees us from making our rights, knowledge, comfort or desires the centre of our lives. Instead, love for others and commitment to the gospel govern how we use our freedom.*

WELCOME

1. Spend some time as a group reflecting on what stood out, encouraged, corrected or raised questions for you from Sunday's service.

The purpose of this question is to get everyone comfortable talking and on topic as much as it is to explore their responses to the services.

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul as addressed the Corinthian church's questions around marriage, singleness and relationships. He now turns to another issue facing the church, the question of food sacrificed to idols. Corinth was a city filled with pagan temples and religious practices, making this a significant issue for the Christian community.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

REFLECT

2. There are a lot of quotation marks in this passage (NIV). Why?

Paul appears to be quoting the Corinthians back to themselves. These seem to be claims or slogans they were using to justify their understanding of Christian freedom.

3. What relationship does this passage encourage the Corinthian church to have with knowledge?

Knowledge is not the problem. Knowledge being applied without love is the issue Paul addresses. Knowledge can puff us up, while love builds others up. The choice isn't between being right and being loving. That is a false dichotomy and one Paul isn't making. Rather, the call is to be loving in how we live out the knowledge we have.

4. What are the differing views on food sacrificed to idols in this passage, and what does Paul affirm as true?

The passage affirms that "idols are nothing" and that "there is one God and one Lord", agreeing with what the Corinthians have said to be true. However, it also recognises that not everyone has the same understanding or conscience.

5. What attitude does this passage encourage those who understand their rights to have when deciding whether to exercise them?

Our rights are real and won for us in Christ. However, love for others should govern whether and how we use them. We should not use our freedom in a way that becomes a stumbling block to another believer or damages their conscience, even if we understand our theological right to that freedom.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 9:19-27

6. How does Paul's approach to freedom challenge the way we treat freedom?

Freedom can often be treated as a right, a source of identity, or even a good in itself. Christians can especially be guilty of this, elevating our freedoms above the people we are set free to serve in love. Paul does not reject freedom, but he refuses to make it ultimate. Freedom is a gift to be used in love and for the gospel, not a right that must always be exercised.

7. What is the goal of Paul's approach to freedom, and how does that speak into what we read in 1 Corinthians 8:1-13?

Paul doesn't surrender his freedom because freedom is bad. He surrenders the exercise of his freedom because the gospel and love for others are more important than exercising his rights. Paul sees freedom not simply as the right to participate in something or live a certain way, but as the freedom to become a servant of others for the sake of the gospel.

8. What does the running analogy aim to teach us about the Christian life?

Paul uses the athlete's discipline and self-control to describe the consistent discipline and self-control required to live for the gospel. The goal is not simply to run hard, but to exercise the self-control needed to remain faithful to the calling God has given us. The athlete's focus is the prize at the end of the event. Our focus is the eternal prize, the crown that will last forever.

9. Paul uses strong language in 9:27. What does he mean by disciplining his body, and why does he think such self-control is necessary?

Paul is describing deliberate self-control so that his desires do not control him, lead him away from God, or undermine his gospel ministry. His concern is not that the body itself is bad, but that he refuses to let his desires become more important than his calling.

RESPOND

10. Paul prioritises love and service to the point of laying down his rights and freedoms. This challenges how easily we can elevate our own rights and freedoms.

What rights, freedoms or comforts do you find difficult to surrender for the sake of loving others or serving the gospel?

Help the group think honestly about the things they regard as non-negotiable. These may be legitimate freedoms or good things, but the question is whether they have become more important than love for others or commitment to the gospel.

11. Where do you need greater self-control as modelled in this passage, so that your desires do not become more important than faithfulness to God?

Help the group identify areas where comfort, desire or self-indulgence can quietly become more important than faithfulness to God. This can happen consciously or subconsciously. Remind the group that pursuing godliness through self-control is not about gaining God's favour but is a response to living in His love and grace.

12. What good and true things might need to become secondary in your life in order for you to prioritise love for others and commitment to the gospel?

This may not mean changing your mind about something or realising that you were wrong. It may mean recognising that what you understand to be true is not always the most important thing in a particular situation. This is an important distinction for our people. We can find comfort in the dichotomy of right and wrong, but Paul is not dismantling that dichotomy. Rather, he is helping the Corinthian church see what it means to live out those convictions with love for others and devotion to God at the centre. Choosing love should not mean contradicting or betraying what is true. Instead, we walk in step with truth while choosing to forgo its application, even when exercising that freedom may benefit us, for the sake of others.

PRAYER

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

TERM 4 - WEEK THREE

- November 4th YA What's Next?
- November 7th Women's Morning

STUDY #4

KEPT BY GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-11:1



SMALL GROUP SURVEY

As a Discipleship Team, we want to serve our small group leaders and members as well as we can. Understanding our groups and their members helps us identify how we can strengthen and support this ministry.

We'd love for every member of your small group, including leaders, to complete the survey individually. Please take 10 minutes to pause and fill out the survey provided.

Responses are anonymous, and individual responses will not be identified.

Thank you for taking the time to contribute to the ministry in this way.

As always, if you have other feedback or questions, please contact:

- Your Small Group Coach for support relating to your group
- Emma Wynn-Jones for administrative questions:
emma.wynn-jones@stpauls.church
- Pat Jones or Erica Mandi Manga for pastoral questions or concerns: pat.jones@stpauls.church / Erica.MandiManga@stpauls.church

Leader's note: *The key teaching point of this study is that grace does not make us immune to temptation. Instead, it calls us to remain dependent on God, turn away from idolatry and use our freedom for his glory and the good of others.*

WELCOME

1. Thank you for filling out the survey. With the survey in mind, share with the group what you love about Small Group and what you hope to gain from attending.

BRIEF CONTEXT

Paul has been addressing the Corinthian church's understanding of Christian freedom. Some in the church were confident in their knowledge and freedom to participate in things others considered problematic. Paul has challenged them to consider how their freedom affects others and has used his own willingness to limit his freedom for the sake of the gospel as an example. The church now needs to consider this freedom in light of Israel's history.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13

REFLECT

2. How does the history outlined in v1-5 set Israel up as an example for us in v6-10?

Israel experienced God's provision, presence and saving action, yet many still turned to idolatry, indulgence, sexual immorality and grumbling. Their history becomes an example and warning for the Corinthian church.

3. What does Paul want the Corinthian church to learn from Israel's example?

Receiving God's grace and experiencing his blessings does not make us immune to temptation or guarantee that we will remain faithful. The Corinthians should not become overconfident, but should take sin seriously and turn away from idolatry.

4. v13 is a well-known and often-quoted verse. Considering the context in which it is written, what do you understand it to mean?

God is faithful and will not allow temptation to become an excuse for sin. He provides a way to endure temptation, but the surrounding passage shows that Christians are also called to actively flee from idolatry and remain faithful to God.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:14-22

5. What comparison does Paul draw between the Lord's Supper and the sacrifices offered to idols, and what does he want the Corinthians to understand?

Both involve participation. Sharing in the Lord's Supper represents participation in Christ, while eating at pagan sacrifices represents participation in the worship of idols. Christian freedom therefore does not mean treating participation in idolatry as harmless.

6. How do we understand the difference between Paul's language about sacrifices here and his teaching about food sacrificed to idols in previous chapters?

In chapters 8 and 10:23-30, the focus is on food and whether eating it is permissible. Here the issue is participation in pagan worship. The distinction is not simply the food itself, but what the meal represents and whom the person is participating with.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 10:23-11:1

7. What point is being made as the passage returns to quoting the Corinthians?

"Everything is permissible" does not mean everything is beneficial or constructive. Christian freedom is governed by the good of others and the glory of God.

8. What role does conscience play in the decisions being discussed here?

See study note on next page.

STUDY NOTE

Our conscience helps us recognise what we believe is right or wrong before God where Scripture does not specifically permit or forbid a behaviour. Christians can have different consciences as they seek to understand what is right or wrong, or how biblical truth should be applied. We should take our conscience seriously because deliberately acting against it means knowingly acting against what we believe is faithful to God. In this sense, conscience can help guide us towards faithfulness when Scripture does not give a clear command. At the same time, our conscience is not infallible, and this passage teaches us to take another person's conscience seriously without assuming that every matter of conscience is equally a matter of biblical truth.

Establishing which disagreements are matters of conscience is an important part of mature Christian community. This helps us avoid forcing others to submit to our choices of conscience or falsely labelling a different conscience as sinful. It also prevents us from using our freedom to ignore, look down on, or lead another person into sin because their conscience is more restrictive than our own. This is the danger Paul is warning the Corinthian church about.

9. Paul asks two questions in v29–30. How would you answer each question?

Paul is defending the freedom to eat with thanksgiving when there is no issue of participating in idolatry. At the same time, the wider passage makes clear that freedom must be exercised with regard for another person's conscience and for God's glory.

RESPOND

10. Can you think of matters of conscience where you and others might differ? How does this passage help us understand and respond to those differences?

Help the group distinguish between matters clearly addressed by Scripture and matters where Christians may legitimately differ. The passage calls us to take one another's consciences seriously, without treating our own freedom as more important than the faith of others or the glory of God. Some examples might include alcohol, entertainment choices, particular celebrations or cultural practices, clothing, food and drink, or how we use our time and money.

11. 10:31–11:1 gives a summary and conclusion of what has been said. What are the key principles being taught? Which of these convictions presents the biggest challenge to your walk with God?

Be motivated by glorifying God, be focused on what will benefit others and their conscience, and do not act for your own benefit, but for the benefit of others. This is a clear outworking of the greatest commandments. Love God with all your heart, mind, soul and strength, and love others as you would love yourself.

12. Where are you most vulnerable to temptation or spiritual overconfidence? What practices help you remain faithful?

Help the group identify areas where they may be overconfident or vulnerable to temptation. Encourage practical and spiritual responses that help them remain dependent on God and faithful to him. Where there is confession of sin, allow people to move through repentance, recognising the weight and seriousness of sin, before pointing them to the grace of Christ and the joy of forgiveness.

PRAYER

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

TERM 4 - WEEK FOUR

- November 15th The Commons

STUDY #5

UNITED IN GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-34



Leader's note: The key teaching point of this study is that our worship should honour God and reflect the unity, mutual dependence and honour of the whole Christian community. Taking seriously Paul's teaching about men and women in gathered worship and examining ourselves in how we treat one another around the Lord's Supper.

Content warning: This passage addresses relational dynamics between men and women, which can be difficult for some people and has sometimes been misused to justify domineering, coercive or controlling behaviour. Use discernment when approaching these topics. If the discussion is triggering or someone indicates they need support, respond sensitively and reach out for pastoral support. Stpauls.church/care has a helpful list of resources and options for professional support.

Other good outcomes from this study:

1. To recognise the significant factors involved in understanding biblical truth, both in its original context and in our modern context. Simply recognising that there are challenges here is a good outcome. **Don't feel like you have the responsibility to resolve every question or determine the correct interpretation.**

2. To develop a desire to grow in our skills of reading God's word together and exploring these matters more deeply.

3. To develop the discipline of not choosing an interpretation simply because we prefer it, but allowing a diligent reading of the passage to lead us.

WELCOME

1. Spend some time as a group reflecting on what stood out, encouraged, corrected or raised questions for you from Sunday's service.

The purpose of this question is to get everyone comfortable talking and on topic as much as it is to explore their responses to the services.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11: 2-16

REFLECT

2. Reading v3-9 can be quite confronting and confusing. This is a passage with contested interpretations, so it is wise to work carefully through the text to understand what Paul is communicating to the Corinthian church.

a. What does Paul say about the relationship between man, woman and God in v3?

Paul uses language of headship (see Study Note #2) to describe the relationship between God, man and woman. The precise meaning of this language is contested, particularly the meaning of "head".

b. What are both men and women participating in according to v4-5?

Both men and women are participating in prayer and prophecy in the gathered church.

c. What is Paul asking of men and women as they pray and prophesy?

Paul speaks to the topic of heads being covered or uncovered. Whatever the precise cultural practice being addressed, Paul connects it with honouring God and one another in gathered worship.

d. What reasons does Paul give for these instructions? v7-9

Paul points to the glory of God and to the relationship between man and woman established in creation.

3. The second half of this passage is a helpful interpretive tool for the first. Read v10-12 out loud again.

a. What does this say about the relationship between authority and dependence, and how might this help us understand the headship language?

Paul speaks of the woman having authority over her own head, suggesting that she has agency and responsibility over how she presents herself in worship. At the same time, v11-12 makes clear that men and women are mutually dependent on one another, and both ultimately depend on God.

b. What does v11-12 say about the origins and mutual dependence of men and women, and how does this help us understand the earlier creation language?

We gain some clarity about the relationship between creation and headship. At the same time, Paul stresses the mutual dependence of men and women, with both ultimately coming from God.

4. It can be difficult to understand how the different parts of this passage fit together. With what you have understood above, how would you answer the questions Paul puts to the Corinthians in v13-16?

***Before reading through the study notes below,** let the group wrestle with this question and encourage them to respond as if the question was asked directly of them.*

STUDY NOTE 1

There are differing interpretations of this text, and it may be helpful to explore these as a group. Please note that these are very brief summaries and do not fully capture each position.

Literal Reading

There are differing interpretations of this text, and it may be helpful to explore these as a group. Please note that these are very brief summaries and do not fully capture each position.

Permanent Principle in Cultural Expression

Paul teaches a continuing theological principle about honour, gender distinction and/or headship, but the veil/head-covering was the first-century cultural expression of that principle. Christians today therefore need to identify the underlying principle rather than reproduce the clothing practice.

Cultural Reading

Paul is addressing a specific Corinthian situation involving honour, shame, sexuality, status and culturally meaningful hairstyles or head coverings. On this reading, understanding the social and cultural context is essential to understanding what Paul is asking of the Corinthians. Scholars differ considerably on exactly what the cultural problem was.

Corinthian Reasoning

Paul is engaging with claims, assumptions or practices originating from the Corinthian church, potentially including statements they have made, quoting the Corinthians back to themselves as he has done previously in the letter. In this reading, parts of the argument may represent or reflect Corinthian reasoning that Paul then qualifies or corrects. The precise location and extent of any Corinthian quotation is disputed, and there is no consensus that v2-10 constitutes a quotation followed by Paul's response in v11-15.

STUDY NOTE 2

The Greek word translated "head" (kephalē) in v3 has been the subject of significant debate. Some understand it primarily to mean **authority**, while others understand it as **source or origin**, with some arguing that it carries elements of both. The meaning of the word in this passage has significant implications for how we understand Paul's teaching about the relationship between men and women. There is no scholarly consensus on the precise meaning, so we should be cautious about building the whole interpretation of the passage on one definition.

Leaders, use your discernment at this stage to see if the group has capacity to continue into another paragraph of Scripture. If not, perhaps set question 5,6,8 and 9 for the group to reflect on through the week and conclude with question 7. Remember, the goal is always deep and genuine discussion, not finishing the questions.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-33

5. What are Paul's major concerns with how the Corinthians are approaching the Lord's Supper?

Paul's major concerns are division, inequality, favouritism, exclusion and unequal access to participation.

6. Why do you think Paul responds so strongly to the misuse of the Lord's Supper?

The Lord's Supper is a gift to the Church from Christ and a means by which Christians remember and proclaim his death together. It is a gift of unity and community, an opportunity to share together in Christ. For people to be excluded or humiliated, or for the meal to be approached without recognising what it represents, dishonours Christ and his Church.

RESPOND

7. Having worked through the difficult first half of the passage, what principles about honouring God and one another should shape our participation in gathered worship today?

There are many conclusions that can be drawn from this chapter. However, whatever interpretation we take of the more difficult parts of the passage, Paul is clearly calling for honour and reverence in our worship of God and in how we participate together as his people.

8. How does this passage help us distinguish between legitimate differences within a Christian community and divisions that undermine our unity in Christ? What might this look like for our church community?

Differences are not a problem. God has created us with different gifts, backgrounds and circumstances for the good of his Church. However, when differences lead us to exclude, humiliate or disregard one another, they become divisions that undermine the unity of the body of Christ.

9. As we are called to in this passage, take a quiet moment to examine yourself before the Lord. Consider not only your own relationship with God, but also your relationship with those with whom you are united in the body of Christ. Share with the group or in pairs if helpful.

PRAYER

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK



TERM 4 - WEEK FIVE

- November 16th Integration Team Night

STUDY #6

CALLED BY GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-31



Leader's note: The key teaching point of this study is that God equips his people with different gifts through the same Spirit, for the common good of the whole body of Christ.
The aim is not simply to identify our individual gifts, but to understand how God uses different people and different gifts together to build up his Church.

WELCOME

1. What experience of church has brought you the most joy? What are all the different roles people would have played in creating and shaping that experience?

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-11

REFLECT

2. Paul tells us in v1 that he is now addressing spiritual gifts. What does Paul teach in v2-3, and why do you think this is the first point he makes on this topic?

Paul begins by focusing on recognising the work of the Spirit. The Spirit enables people to recognise and confess that Jesus is Lord. Spiritual gifts should therefore be understood in the context of our relationship with Jesus, rather than simply as abilities or experiences.

3. What other theological foundations are then established in v4-6?

There are different gifts, different kinds of service and different kinds of working, but the same Spirit, Lord and God are at work through them. Diversity does not mean division. The different gifts and activities have the same divine source.

4. Read through the list of gifts in v8-10. Which stand out to you, raise questions for you, or resonate most strongly with your experience of church?

We do not need to answer every question at this point. There is a danger of getting stuck here, so be sure not to dwell too long on gifts that may be unfamiliar to your group.

5. Are there any gifts in this list that you have rarely seen practised, or that are practised differently in different churches? Why do you think that might be?

6. V8-10 contains a list of spiritual gifts. Why do you think Paul brackets this list with v7 and v11?

In v7 Paul says that the gifts are given for the common good, while v11 says that the Spirit distributes them as he determines. The gifts are therefore not primarily about personal identity or status. They are given by the Spirit and intended to benefit the whole body.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 12:12-31

7. What point is being made through the discussion about the different body parts in v15-29?

Every part belongs to the body and has a place within it. Paul addresses and corrects both the person who feels they do not belong because they are different and the person who thinks they do not need others because they consider themselves more important.

8. Why might some parts of the body be considered weaker, greater or more presentable? Do we see similar attitudes in the church today?

It is easy to find ourselves valuing some gifts, roles or people more highly than others. Paul challenges both inferiority and superiority. No Christian should consider themselves unnecessary, and no Christian should consider another person unnecessary. Likewise, no Christian should consider themselves superior to another, or treat another person as inferior.

9. What does Paul communicate by the way he describes the different roles and gifts in v28–31?

God has appointed different people and roles within the church, and the body needs this diversity. The question is not whether everyone has the same gifts, but whether we recognise and value the different ways God equips his people to serve the body.

RESPOND

STUDY NOTE

Paul's teaching challenges us to think beyond "What is my gift?" and towards "How has God equipped us to serve one another?" This changes our mindset. Rather than simply asking what spiritual gift has been given to us, we can consider what gift God is giving his Church through us. The gift is from the Spirit and is given for the good of the Church. We are the people through whom God chooses to give those gifts.

Our response should therefore be both to recognise how God has equipped us and to look for ways those gifts can be used for the good of others.

10. Spend some time praying for the Spirit to shed light on the gifts you have been given and the gifts others in your group have been given. Share with one another the gifts you have seen in each other and how they have blessed the body.

This could be used as a time of encouragement that also prompts people to consider how they might use their gifts. Make sure no one in the group is skipped or missed if your group is sharing about each other's gifts.

11. What gifts do you see God giving you, and how could you use them to serve the body of Christ?

SMALL GROUP AND SPIRITUAL GIFTS

Small groups can be a great expression of the different gifts blessing the body in a microcosm of the church. There are many roles that do not need to fall to the group leader.

As a group, spend some time discerning the roles below. Are these roles that would be helpful to establish and share within your group?

- Co-Leader
- Leader in training
- Group administrator
- Hospitality coordinator
- Prayer coordinator
- Correspondent with your group's link missionary
- Pastoral Care coordinator
- Overseeing opportunities to serve together as a group
- Social and events coordinator
- Other needs your group might have

PRAYER

In prayer time this week, spend some time praying with expectation for the Spirit to be at work, revealing and affirming the gifts he has given within your group and how those gifts can be used to serve the Church.

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's

STUDY #7

BUILT FOR GRACE



1 CORINTHIANS 13:2-14:5

Leader's note: *The key teaching point is that God has given us gifts and roles within the church, and this passage shows us that they should be used in love. The emphasis in this passage is that the most important and foundational quality for all these gifts is love. We receive these gifts so that we might serve people in love. If we do not love, the gifts are ultimately of no value.*

WELCOME

1. Spend some time as a group reflecting on what stood out, encouraged, corrected or raised questions for you from Sunday's service.

The purpose of this question is to get everyone comfortable talking and on topic as much as it is to explore their responses to the services.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 13:2-13

REFLECT

2. What kind of love is Paul describing in this passage? Why is this love essential to everything else Christians might do or achieve?

Paul is speaking about the love we should see developed in our hearts as we experience the love of Christ. It is an affection for others that results in practical service, a reordering of priorities and humility.

3. V4-7 give a detailed description of what love looks like in practice. Which of these characteristics are most and least evident in your own life? Which do you think are most and least evident in the Christian community you belong to?

Please note, this question is purposefully focused on the positive. The challenge of this passage comes later in the study. Allow each person in your group the opportunity to answer this question. Different expressions of love will come more naturally to different people, and different expressions of love within the community will be more evident to different people.

4. What point is Paul making about love and spiritual gifts in v8-12? What conclusion does he reach in v13?

As people, we have a limited understanding of God. This means that while our prophecy and knowledge can and will be used by God to build up his Church, our understanding is inherently incomplete and can be mistaken. However, when we choose to love others in our hearts and actions, we are choosing the way of Christ.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 14:1-5

5. Paul tells the Corinthians to “pursue love” and “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts”. Why do you think Paul connects these two commands?

The pursuit of gifts can be corrupted by selfish desires, such as wanting to be the gifted one or to gain influence. Paul teaches us that we can pursue spiritual gifts motivated by love for God’s church. This love-fuelled motivation also allows us to respond with humble thankfulness for whatever gift God gives us.

6. What do you think the spiritual gifts of tongues and prophecy are, and how are they practised in this passage?

This may open up a broader discussion. It is an important question in the flow of this passage, but don’t allow it to derail the whole picture of this passage and study.

Both tongues and prophecy are, most importantly, gifts given by God through the Spirit to bless his people. Prophecy has different expressions, but in this passage it involves receiving something from God to share with God’s people.

Tongues, as they are spoken about in the New Testament, appear in different contexts. First, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul describes tongues as Spirit-prompted speech directed towards God that is not understood by those listening unless it is interpreted. This is why Paul places uninterpreted tongues below prophecy in a gathered setting. Second, Paul describes tongues being spoken publicly with interpretation, allowing the church to understand and be built up. Third, elsewhere in the New Testament, particularly Acts 2, people speak in tongues and others hear them in their own languages. This appears to be a different manifestation of tongues from what Paul is addressing in 1 Corinthians 14.

When we are talking about how God communicates with his people, it is important not to put limits on what God might do. This is a summary of patterns we see in Scripture, rather than an exhaustive definition of everything the Spirit might do.

7. Why does Paul place such an emphasis on prophecy over tongues in v2-5?

Paul wants the gifts of the Spirit to be used in the gathered community to bless the community. Uninterpreted tongues are not condemned but are less preferred because they primarily benefit the speaker rather than the gathered church.

8. What exception does Paul give to his preference for prophecy over tongues? How does this connect with what we looked at in 1 Corinthians 12 last week?

When there is interpretation of tongues. This reminds us that the focus of all spiritual gifts is to serve others.

STUDY NOTE

Paul does not condemn tongues in this passage. Rather, he gives preference to prophecy in the gathered church because of its greater capacity to build others up. In the same way, Paul's earlier elevation of love over giving to the poor is not a condemnation of giving to the poor. Something can be less valuable in a comparison without being wrong or worthless.

9. How have you seen the spiritual gifts of prophecy and tongues at work in the body of Christ? As you reflect on this passage, what role should they play in building up the church?

People will have a variety of experiences, both positive and negative. We need to avoid the trap of simply focusing on the negative. If your group has only had negative experiences, hear them out and move to the second half of this question, looking at what role these gifts should play in the church. Bring it closer to home by asking what role they should play in our church.

10. Read 1 Corinthians 12:29–31 and Romans 12:5–8. What do these passages tell us about the diversity of gifts God gives his Church and what our attitude towards them should be?

In denominations like ours, there can be a tendency towards scepticism or negativity around the gifts of the Spirit. However, we need to let the Scriptures lead our views on these things, rather than our own experiences or preferences. The Scriptures not only affirm these gifts but actually call believers to pursue them.

RESPOND

11. The love Paul describes is not meant to be theoretical in the Christian life. Love is not an optional extra for some believers or a feel-good addition to our faith. Love is foundational for all Christians.

Read through the attributes of love in v4–7. Considering how the people around you experience you, which of these attributes are evident in your life, which do you lack, and how can you practically grow in them?

Help your members view themselves through the lens of others. You can ask follow-up questions like, “Who in your world would experience the least loving version of you?” and “Are there moments or situations that move you too quickly out of this kind of love?”

12. Paul tells us to eagerly desire spiritual gifts. What might it look like for us to live out this calling? How could we actively pursue the gifts God gives while seeking to use them to build up the Church and serve others in love?

Prayer for these gifts is always the starting point, followed by an openness to take a step of faith and practise them. We always need to check that our motivation is the love and service of others. This helps us respond with humility to God’s work, no matter how he decides to work.

PRAYER

In prayer time this week, pray that the Spirit would work to reveal where our love does not reflect God's love.

Also, spend some time praying with expectation for the Spirit to be at work, revealing, affirming and using the gifts of tongues and prophecy within your group, and showing how those gifts can be used to serve the Church.

Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK



TERM 4 - WEEK SEVEN

- November 29th **ImpaKt leaders' registration closes**
- November 29th Toys and Tucker
- December 5th Christmas Cantata
- December 6th Accessible Christmas Carols

STUDY #8

RAISED BY GRACE

1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-23, 50-58



Leader's note: The key teaching point of this study is that the resurrection gives us confidence in the gospel, hope for our own resurrection, and motivation to stand firm because our labour for Christ is not in vain.

WELCOME

1. If you had one day left to live, how would you spend it?

STUDY NOTE

This is a shorter study, allowing time to look back and respond to the series as a whole in the RESPOND section.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-23

REFLECT

2. What is Paul's summary of the Gospel in this passage?

Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and appeared to many.

3. What evidence does Paul point to for this?

Jesus appeared to Cephas, the Twelve, more than 500 people, James, all the apostles and finally Paul himself. Paul is pointing to multiple witnesses to the resurrection.

4. Why does the resurrection determine whether Paul's preaching and the Corinthians' faith are useful or useless?

If Christ was not raised, Paul's preaching is useless and the Corinthians' faith is useless. They would still be in their sins, and those who have died in Christ have perished. The resurrection is therefore essential to the truth and hope of the Gospel.

5. What role does the resurrection play in our salvation?

The resurrection demonstrates Christ's victory over sin and death and is essential to our salvation. Because Christ has been raised, we have the hope of resurrection and new life with him.

READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:50-58

6. Paul, in his conclusion, turns the focus to the last days. What is Paul saying about who will inherit the kingdom of God, and what does this mean for us when Christ returns?

Our present perishable and mortal bodies cannot inherit the kingdom of God in their current condition. When Christ returns, we will be changed and our bodies will be made imperishable and immortal. This is the hope of the resurrection.

7. What do v53–57 teach us about our bodies, death, and the victory we have through Christ?

Our perishable bodies will be made imperishable, and our mortal bodies will be made immortal. Death will be defeated and, because of Christ, we can look forward to the victory God gives us through him.

8. What comfort, motivation or challenge do you get from the final verse of this chapter (v58)?

Because of the resurrection, we can stand firm in the Gospel and give ourselves fully to the Lord's work, knowing that our labour is not in vain. Our life with Christ, our service of the church and our humble love of others all have eternal significance and are for the glory of God.

RESPOND

STUDY NOTE

This is an opportunity to reflect not only on this passage but on the whole series in 1 Corinthians.

9. What has been the greatest encouragement to you in this series?

10. What has been the biggest challenge to you in this series?

11. What have you wrestled with in this series that you want to deepen your understanding of? How will you pursue that?

12. What habit, action or characteristic do you want to change or develop in response to this series? How will you do that, and what will accountability look like?

PRAYER

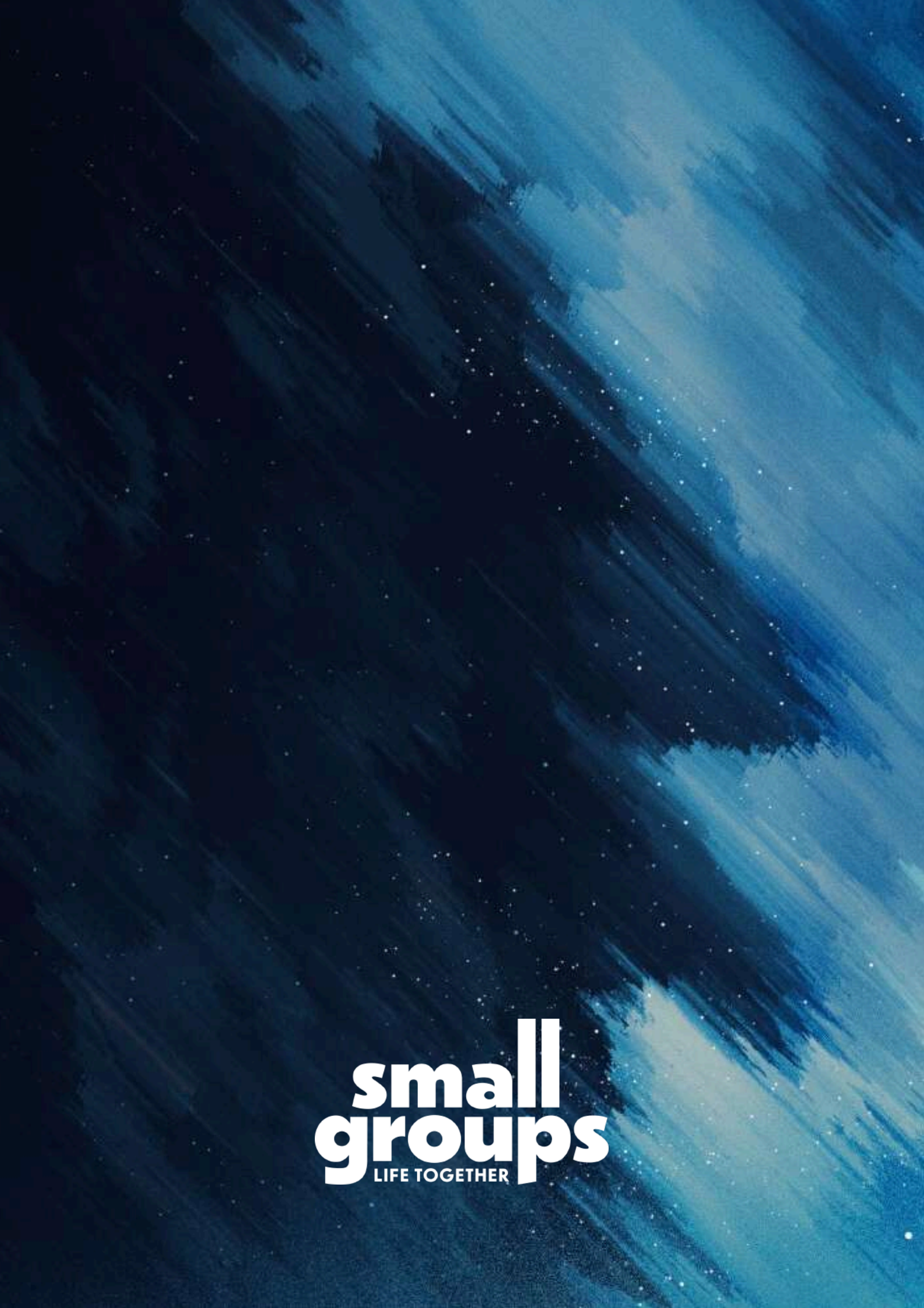
Spend some time sharing and praying for one another. Consider the points you have shared as takeaways from the series as a whole, and pray for the conviction, discipline and strength in the Spirit to live out what you have committed to before God.

As you pray, remember to include your group's link missionary and what's ahead in the life of St Paul's.

WHAT'S ON THIS WEEK

TERM 4 - WEEK EIGHT

- December 11th Final Crossfire for 2026
- December 13th ImpaKCt registration closes*
*Please note, no registrations can be taken after 13/12/26. Please contact the church office before this date if you have any issues.



**small
groups**
LIFE TOGETHER