

1 Corinthians 1 – 7: post sermon studies

Term 1 2017

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Snapshot of Corinth in AD55

Corinth was a key commercial and trade centre due its strategic location. It was affluent, with lots of people of diverse backgrounds living there and engaging in many secular activities. It was the New York, Los Angeles and Los Vegas of the ancient world....quite a bit like Sydney too!

Paul founded the Corinthian church (see Acts 18). He wrote a previous letter to them (see 1 Cor 5:9) where he raised the problem of sexual immorality and idolatry with them. It seems that some in the church have taken offense at his previous letter and question his authority to lead and advise them. The church had been heavily influenced by the surrounding culture's view on leadership, wisdom and power.

Study 3: **God's Secret Wisdom** (1 Corinthians 2:6 – 3:4)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Q2. Do you ever feel “foolish” as a Christian, living in Sydney in 2017? In what ways does this impact you?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 2:6 – 3:4

Q3. In 2:6-7 Paul describes his message as wise. How is this different to the “wisdom” he rejects in 2:1-5?

Q4. In verses 10-16, what is the difference between:

The spirit of the world	The spirit of God
The natural person (without the spirit)	The spiritual person

Q5. What is it about the Corinthians that causes Paul to call them “worldly- mere infants (3:1)?

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q6. What areas of immaturity do we tend to struggle with? Think both individually and as a body of believers in church?

Q7. What does it mean to be mature? What would it look like for us to mature in Christ this year? Think both on the individual/ personal level and corporately/ as the body of Christ/church?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Thank God that he has given us His Spirit so that we can be spiritual.
- Ask God to grow us in maturity.

Study 4: **God's** Fellow Workers (1 Corinthians 3:5 – 4:17)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:5-8

Q2. What do you think is the main point that Paul is trying to make with the use of the gardening metaphor?

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:10-17

Q3. What do you think is the main point that Paul is trying to make with the use of the building metaphor?

Read: 1 Corinthians 3:18 – 4:17

Q4. Examine the contrast between how the Corinthians see themselves and how the Apostles see themselves?

How the Corinthians see themselves	How the Apostles see themselves

Note: Irony Alert. Paul uses cutting irony with the Corinthians. They think that with their wisdom and *their fancy speeches they've got it all* - that they are kings in the faith. But even if they are kings in their own eyes, *they're not in God's*. *God's not impressed by human wisdom and achievements. He's impressed by people who live lives which match the foolishness of the cross.* Paul subverts the *Corinthians' pride by boasting about his weakness. They would have been embarrassed by his weakness but he's showing that his life of suffering and humiliation matches the 'foolishness' of the cross much better than their life of 'glory'.*

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q5. How does understanding God's role in growing people spiritually affect how we practically serve Him?

Q6. In what ways do we get caught up with the outward "stylish" aspects of ministry and godly living?

Q7. In 4:16-17, Paul urges the Corinthians to imitate him. From what we've seen so far in chapters 3 & 4, what concrete ways can be imitate Paul's attitude and actions?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Give thanks that God is the one who makes people grow and for his grace that we are made His.
- Ask God to grow us in "servant thinking" and that it will deeply affect the way you serve Him.
- Ask God to help you change you in imitating Paul in how you see yourself

Study 5: **God's** Pure Church (1 Corinthians 4:18 – 5:13)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 4:18–21

Q2. What does Paul mean that the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power?

Recap of Chapter 5: The Corinthians have been guilty of all kinds of bad judgment - turning a blind eye when they should have taken action, taking action when they should have turned a blind eye. In this chapter, there are two problems that Paul is tackling here: sexual immorality, and the way the Corinthians are reacting.

Read: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Q3. “Handing the man over to Satan” sounds spooky and severe. But from the rest of chapter 5, how does Paul intend this to happen?

Q4. What is the danger for the church if it doesn't happen? (Think about yeast in dough)

Q5. Look at the Corinthian's confusion about Paul's instructions in verses 9 to 12. What are the consequences of getting this simple instruction back to front? How are we going with this these days?

Q6. What's the problem with judging outsiders instead of disciplining insiders? What's the problem with going to outsiders for judgement on our inside disputes?

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q6. How can we, as a church, be serious about Paul's instructions to us here?

A **happy footnote...**

In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul talks about restoring to fellowship a brother who has sinned and been removed from the church probably the same person mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 5. Paul says, "Now... you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed... I urge you to reaffirm your love for him."

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Pray that we will take sin as seriously as God does.
- Pray that God will grow us individually and as a church family in our holiness and godliness.

Where to get help

If you've been in the terrible situation of having been betrayed sexually by someone either in this church or otherwise you need to know that there's somewhere you can turn for help. Contact Presbyterian Counselling on 1800 818 133. You can also contact Lauren Graham (laurenandjonathan@inet.net.au) as she is the Drummoyne Presbyterian Conduct Protocol Officer. Alternatively, contact either Sandy McMillan (sandymcmillan@drummoyne.org.au) or Darryl Soh (darrylsoh@drummoyne.org.au).

Study 6: Stop your quarrelling (1 Corinthians 6:1-11)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

Q2. What is the problem Paul is addressing (verse 1)? What makes this behaviour even worse in his view (verse 6)?

Q3. In what ways do you think Paul sees this behaviour as opposed to the gospel and damaging to the Corinthians' witness for Christ?

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q4. Why do we tend not to regard our rights as trivial? If clinging to rights is the problem, how is a focus on Jesus' death the solution?

Q5. What can we do to avoid disputes even emerging between us?

Q6. We need to stop and think for a moment whenever we're wronged, or when we see someone doing wrong. What new pattern of thinking should we adopt?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Thank God that in Christ, we are not now what we once were
- Ask God to grow us in how we relate with each other and to be shaped by the gospel in our relationships
- Pray for those relationships that you know that are fractured and pray that resolution shaped by the gospel may happen

Study 7: Flee from Sexual Immorality (1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 6:12– 20

Q2. Paul quotes a Corinthian catch-phrase in verse 12: “I have the right to do anything”. What are the two comebacks (in the same verse) that Paul gives to this attitude?

Q3. Some of the Corinthians thought their spirits were eternal but their bodies were not, so it didn't matter what they did with their “disposable bodies”. How does the resurrection of Jesus refute this attitude (verse 14)?

Q4. In the Old Testament, the temple was God's holy place. It was the place of God's presence, so it had to be clean and pure. But, says Paul, now God's Spirit lives in his people, so we are his temple. How should this change the way we live?

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q5. How does this passage shape our understanding of Christian freedom?

Q6. If sexual temptation is a problem for you, how does focussing on Jesus' death relevant?

Q7. Whether or not that specific temptation is a problem for you, what other ways do we need to think about honouring God in everything we do with our bodies?

An Action Plan

Paul offers a very clear action plan if you're tempted by sexual immorality. It's in verse 18. He says, flee from it! Run for your life! Stay away! Speaking statistically, in a church the size of ours, there will be a number of people caught up in sexual immorality right now. As you read these words, why not work out an immediate action plan. Fleeing sexual immorality may be costly. It may mean changing jobs. It may mean ending a friendship. It may mean having nothing more to do with someone you feel strongly about. Flee anyway! Remember, "you are not your own . . . you were bought at a price. Therefore, honour God with your body"

Is there an immediate action plan that you need to work out right now?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Thank God that we are bought at a price of the blood of Jesus
- Ask God to help us think about our bodies in light of Christ's resurrection.
- Ask God for wisdom for how we are to understand true freedom and to protect us from falling into sexual immorality.
- Ask God for strength to glorify God with our bodies and to flee where necessary.

Study 8: Glorifying God with your bodies (1 Corinthians 7)

Q1. What insights did you find helpful from the talk? What questions do you still have from the talk?

Q2. How would you summarise how the world sees the “Christian” attitude to sex these days?

Part A: INVESTIGATE THE BIBLE

Read: 1 Corinthians 7

Q3. What is the key statement Paul is responding to?

Q4. How does Paul describe our human natures when it comes to sex?

(a) What verses say this?

(b) What solution does Paul offer?

(c) What will the truly “spiritual” Christian do?

Q5. Verses 8, 11, 20, 24, 40 have something in common. What is it? What is the overall message of this chapter?

Part B: THINK IT THROUGH

Q6. Paul simply wants the Corinthians to be content the way they are! If you're married, stay that way. If you're not, don't be anxious about it. So in summary:

a) According to this chapter, how can those who are married:

- Show contentment in their circumstances?
- Honour the Lord?

b) According to this chapter, how can those who are single:

- Show contentment in their circumstances?
- Honour the Lord?

c) What are the principles that everyone should apply to their circumstances?

PRAYER SUGGESTIONS:

- Thank God for your current situation – physical (where you live, work, etc) and relational (friends, marital status, etc).
- Pray that God will help you faithfully serve and honour him in your particular situation
- Pray for strong marriages for our church family and in our community.
- Pray for those who are single at the moment – that God will sustain them in their singleness.