

FORMING A PEOPLE

A Reflection On 1 Corinthians

INTRODUCTION

Dear Friend,

We hope this guide will lead you deeper into the Holy Scriptures, giving you **space to slow down and spend time with 1 Corinthians in a way that provokes your curiosity about God, the way He is forming you, and the way He is forming us together toward Jesus.**

Throughout the guide, you'll encounter visual work created by people within our own community. While the images aren't illustrations of the text or the focus of our study, they are another invitation to slow down and pay attention. We believe there is something valuable about allowing Scripture, creativity, beauty, and our own questions to share the same space.

In a world that constantly demands our attention and our response, we want this guide to help you move at a different pace. Don't feel like you have to rush through the readings or get to the "right" answer. Linger. Pay attention. **Let yourself be curious about what you notice, the questions you have, and what the text might be revealing about God and about us.**

Each week, we'll move alongside the Sunday teaching and provide references to readings rather than the full text. We hope you'll print the readings and hold an actual Bible in your hands—preferably not a digital one, but you do you, Boo. There is something about holding the pages, marking them up, and slowly making a Bible your own. If you don't have a Bible you want to write in, consider printing or copying the text, double-spaced with generous margins, so you can underline, highlight, circle, and write down your questions.

And don't forget to listen. Hearing the Word of God read aloud feels different. Throughout the week, we encourage you to listen to Scripture through the Bible app and pair it with ordinary sensory experiences. Go for a walk. Sit outside. Make coffee. Pay attention to what you see, hear, and feel. The goal isn't simply to get through 1 Corinthians.

The hope is that, as we spend time with Scripture and learn to pay attention, we might become more aware of the God who is forming us—and the community He is forming us to become.

WEEK ONE

This week, there are five movements of reading, reflecting, and practice. Use these as a guide and go at your own pace. There is no right or wrong way about this.

I. **Get To Know**: The author of the letter to the Corinthian church is Paul. When reading a letter, it's important to understand who it is coming from and to whom the letter is written. While the text doesn't tell us too much about Corinth, it does tell us about Paul. Take time to read his story in the words of Luke and also in his own words.

The Prequel: Read the story of Stephen in Acts 6-8:1, where we first meet a man named Saul. After reading, close your eyes and listen to an audio version or imagine what it would have been like to be there. Imagine yourself as an onlooker in the crowd. How does Stephen's speech sit with you? Can you see what his face looked like when he looked up to see God?

"How does Stephen's speech sit with you? Can you see what his face looked like when he looked up to see God?"

II. **Read**: Acts 9:1-19 as told by Luke, Acts 22:1-21, Acts 26: 2-23

- What stands out to you about Paul's testimony?
- In what ways (if any) does it resonate with your own?
- What has God revealed to you about Himself?
- What were you like before you knew Jesus?
- In what ways has He changed the way you treat other people?

III. **Read:** Acts 9:19-31, Galatians 1:11-17, 1 Corinthians 15:3-11, Philippians 3:1-11

Notice what things Paul is confident about. Notice what doesn't get in the way of his confidence.

IV. **Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Now that you know a little more about Paul, you know what he brings to the Corinthian Church with his own story of God's transformation. From what you read here, what does he think about the Corinthian church? How does he describe them?

In spite of what Paul or the Corinthians have gotten wrong, Paul remains confident about his standing with God, Jesus's invitation to him, and his purpose in life.

IV. **Practice:** Solitude and Silence

As you think about your own life with God, what questions do you have for God? Are there areas in your relationship with Him where you lack confidence or hold doubt? Be as honest as you can be, not for His sake, but for yours. Allow yourself to be vulnerable with Him.

Practice sitting in silence for 10 minutes. Set a timer and ask God to be with you. If your thoughts distract you, don't judge them; notice them. Keep asking God to be with you. Sometimes those thoughts are things God wants you to pay attention to. Sometimes they are just distractions. Make a note of what comes to mind, what you might hear.

Note that if your thoughts turn inward to shame or condemnation, that is not the voice of God. **Sometimes, God's voice is corrective yet it is always kind. You will recognize it when His voice moves you toward love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control.**

Write down what you experience.



“Into the light”

Photo by Rob Gonzalez

WEEK TWO

This week there are five movements of scripture reading. Feel free to read them in a Bible or listen to them on audio or read them out loud. A mix of mediums is an interesting way to approach the text.

But first... pray. Ask God to open your mind and your heart to Him as you read.

I. **Read:** 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

Paul has just received a report from "Chloe's people" that the Corinthian church has split into factions, each rallying around a different teacher's name.

Take a closer look at verse 10. What does Paul appeal for here?

If you consider Paul's other writings, he doesn't think they should agree on every single thing, but rather on what he calls matters of "first importance."

- That being said, what would it actually look like for a church to be "united in mind and thought"?
- What does it tell you that a report from a household is what prompted this whole section?
- If you have ever seen, or been part of, a church community that organized itself around personalities rather than Christ, what has been your experience?

"What would it actually look like for a church to be "united in mind and thought"?"

II. **Read:** Acts 18:1-17

Before you can understand why "I follow Apollos" was even a thing people said, it helps to know who he was. Acts 18 introduces Priscilla and Aquila first. They were tentmakers Paul met in Corinth and was later with in Ephesus. This passage mentions several other names. What stands out to you about Paul or anyone else?

Acts 18:18-28

Let's take a closer look at Apollos. How is he described here, and how would you compare him to the way Paul describes himself?

The passage tells us Apollos had extensive knowledge of the Scriptures and spoke accurately about Jesus, but only knew the baptism of John. Priscilla and Aquila take him aside privately and "explain the way of God more accurately."

- What stands out to you about how Priscilla and Aquila corrected Apollos
- What do you notice about Apollos's response?
- What made someone like Apollos so easy for a community to rally around?

IIII. **Read:** Acts 19:1-7, Mark 1:1-8, Matthew 3:13-17

This passage explains what Apollos was missing. John's baptism was a baptism of repentance that pointed forward to someone greater who was coming. Baptism in the name of Jesus is connected to receiving the Holy Spirit and being joined to Christ himself.

- What do you observe in the difference between John's baptism and being baptized in Jesus's name?
- Why would any of this matter to a church already dividing itself over which leader they follow?

“What do you observe in the difference between John's baptism and being baptized in Jesus's name?”

IV. **Reread**: 1 Corinthians 1:10-17. This time, consider listening to the scripture or even reading it aloud.

Think about Paul’s questions. In many ways, our culture is similar. We sometimes categorize people by what we know about the churches they attend, or the Bible teachers they like. People are even judged by who they “follow” on social media.

- Have you ever noticed yourself aligning with a pastor, an author, a podcast, or any kind of movement that takes more of your time and attention than your alignment with Christ?
- What are the differences between unity and alignment in community and tribalism?

V. **Read:** Practice

Take some time to name specific people, groups, or camps that you might find within the American Church, in the Church in Middle TN, and even ones you might notice at Journey. Pray what Paul prayed in verse 10.

Imagine what that prayer answered would look like.

Ask God to show how you can embody this kind of unity.



“Collective Shortcoming”
By Shelby Kirby

WEEK THREE

This week there are five movements that include scripture and an invitation to practice.

Begin by praying. Ask Him to show you He is present with you. Ask the Spirit to open your heart and mind to receive all that God has for you. Set a timer for 5 minutes and practice being still before God.

I. **Read:** I Corinthians 1:18-25

Notice in verse 19, Paul quotes from Isaiah.

Read: Isaiah 29:11-16.

Isaiah is speaking to Jerusalem (Ariel). "Jerusalem's problem was heartless religion that had become a performance, with its inhabitants themselves as both actors and audience. They go through the motions with no expectation of encountering the living God."

The commentary talks about "expecting an encounter with the living God" as though that is the opposite of living without your heart connected to your religion.

> "Expecting an encounter with the living God"

- How does that sit with you in the context of both passages?
- What comes up for you in the places you inhabit?

Read: Mark 8:1-14

Paul points out to the Corinthians that Jews are looking for signs and Greeks are looking for wisdom, yet both continually miss the power and wisdom of God.

- What do we Americans/Western Christians seem to be looking for?

II. In the beginning of our reading yesterday, Paul referred to "the message of the cross." Scholar Michael Gorman says, "The word (logos) of the cross, the 'message' of the crucified Messiah Jesus, is the power of God released into the world." [1]

Read Paul's words in Romans as he lays out the specifics of the message:

Read: Romans 1:16-17

Read it a few times slowly, and reflect on how it sits with you.

- What does that message mean in practical everyday ways for people living in the world we inhabit?
- How are you witnessing God's power being released into the world today?

1 Gorman, Michael J.. 1 Corinthians: A Theological, Pastoral, and Missional Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2025.

III. **Read:** I Corinthians 1:6-31

Here, Paul again quotes the Hebrew Bible. Read Jeremiah 9:23-24.

Reflection Questions:

- In our contexts and today's faith communities, what concepts of authority and control hold sway?
- How does the message of the crucified Messiah confront these perspectives?
- In what ways does the local church prioritize and uplift those who are marginalized or lacking influence? Conversely, where do we fall short of this ideal? How effectively are we serving and learning alongside those society deems insignificant?[2]

Practice:

Who in our city is seen as ignoble, foolish, weak, lowly, or despised?

> How can we move toward people who are considered on the margins?

Take time to pray that they know Christ and experience His tangible and intangible provision.

How can we move toward people who are considered on the margins?

Find someone who is in a situation that our society treats as subhuman and move toward them in a way that makes you feel slightly uncomfortable. Look someone in the eyes and ask them how they are doing. Take time to listen. Offer a meal to someone who is hungry. Invite someone to a meal or coffee, even if you don't have the margin.

2 These questions are drawn from Michael Gorman's commentary: 1 Corinthians : A Theological, Pastoral, and Missional Commentary.

IV. **Read:** Luke 1:46-55 Known as Mary's Song or Magnificat, she sings of what the child in her womb would become.

Read: Psalm 113:4-8, Psalm 145:14, Matthew 11:25-28

Notice the threads of wisdom and power throughout Scripture, and notice how you feel and what you think about God as you read and meditate on these words.

> "Notice the threads of wisdom and power throughout Scripture."

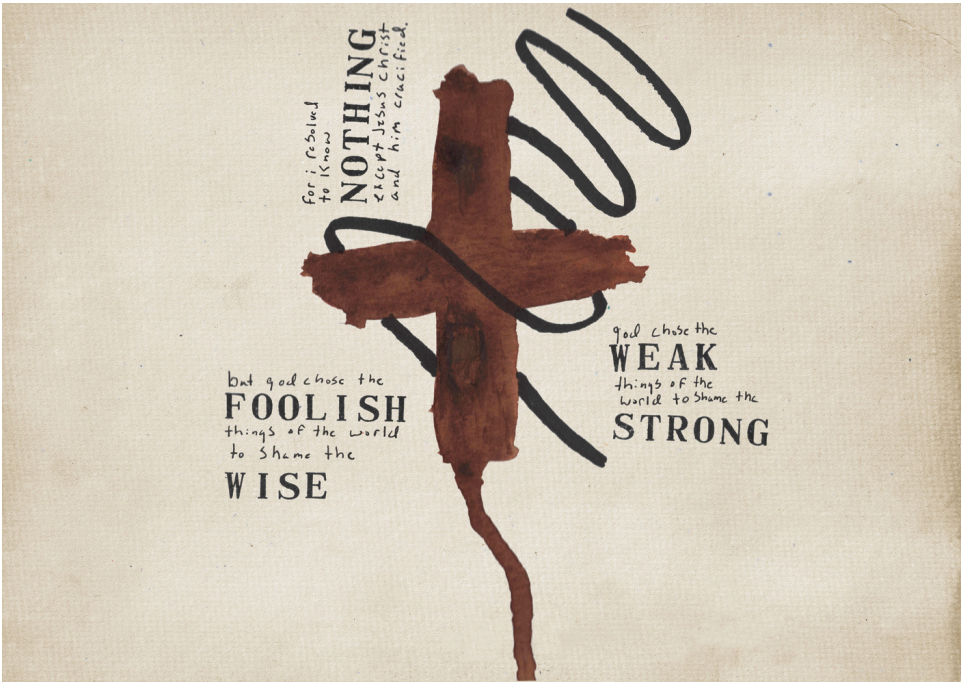
V. **Read**: I Corinthians 2:1-5.

If it isn't dependent on wise and persuasive words, what does/could a demonstration of the Spirit's power look like?

Practice:

Pray for Journey Church to be a community that lives in expectation of an encounter with the living God and one that experiences and shares in the demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Imagine what that would look like in our neighborhoods. **Imagine what it would look like for a generation of kids to experience God in this way without being manipulated or coerced.**



The Way of the Wound

by Reba Baskett

WEEK FOUR

Once again, we have five movements this week, each with scripture and an invitation to reflect or practice.

Begin by praying. Ask Him to show you that He is present with you. Ask the Spirit to open your heart and mind to receive all that God has for you.

Set a timer for 5 minutes and practice being still before God.

I. **Read:** 1 Corinthians 3:1-4.

Paul begins by naming the problems. What problems do you see him addressing?

Reflect:

- What does it mean that Paul calls spiritual immaturity "infancy" (not necessarily “bad”), but something to grow out of, or to not simply condemn?
- Where do you notice jealousy or rivalry showing up around preferences for certain leaders, authors, or styles of ministry, in your own heart or community?

> “Something to grow out of, or to not simply condemn”

II. **Read:** Romans 1:16-17.

According to Michael Gorman, Paul isn't being falsely humble when asking questions about himself or Apollos. He's actually redefining what leadership is. Planting and watering are real, necessary work, but the growth belongs entirely to God.[1]

Reflect:

- What's the difference between a servant through whom you came to believe and someone you owe ultimate loyalty to? If "each will receive his wages according to his labor," how might that change the way you see the leaders you follow?

III. **Read**: 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

Reflect:

- Why do you think Paul insists there's only one foundation, no matter who's doing the building?
- How would you describe the ways you are building your own faith or ministry?[2] Do you lead or serve out of things with lasting substance, or things that look impressive but won't survive being tested?

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1 Gorman, Michael J.. 1 Corinthians: A Theological, Pastoral, and Missional Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2025.

2 Everyone is in ministry, not just those who get paid for it. (I Peter 2:9, I Cor. 12:7, 27)

IV. **Read:** 1 Corinthians 3:16-23.

Reflect:

- What do you see in the text? What do you hear from your heart?
- Many of us were taught that we and our bodies are temples that should be kept modest and pure. Now that you see this in context, how does picturing the entire church as one temple sit with you?
- How does the text help you reframe factions and division, not just as rude and judgmental, but as a kind of desecration?
- Where have you mistaken worldly cleverness or status for real wisdom?

> Where have you mistaken worldly cleverness or status for real wisdom?

V. **Invitation to Practices**

Lectio Divina: Go to a Bible app or better yet, find another person or two and read/listen to the entire chapter two or three times.

- What sticks in your mind?
- What questions do you have?
- Where do you feel the Spirit's gentle conviction inviting you into a deeper relationship with Him and His people?

Examen: Find a quiet ten minutes. Settle, and ask God to be present with you as you look back over the last day or week.

Notice.
Walk back through your recent days. Where did you feel most sure of yourself, most secure, most like you belonged? Where did you feel most insecure or lacking? Don't judge these moments, just notice them.

Name the source.
For each moment, ask: what was I measuring myself against? Someone's approval or attention, being on the "right" side of an issue, a comparison to someone else? Try to be as specific and honest as possible. This isn't for God's benefit; it's for yours.

Respond.
Is there a particular attachment to a person's or group's approval, a label, or a side you've aligned yourself with that you need to name honestly before God and hold more open-handedly?

Write down what comes to mind. If shame or self-condemnation surfaces instead of this kind of honest clarity, that's not God's voice. Set it aside gently and keep asking him to be with you.

> "If shame or self-condemnation surfaces instead of this kind of honest clarity, that's not God's voice."

Close.
End by simply saying back to God what belongs to you, and whose you are.

WEEK FIVE

Begin by praying. Ask Him to show you that He is present with you. Ask the Spirit to open your heart and mind to receive all that God has for you.

Set a timer for 5 minutes. Breathe in and breathe out. Try to take several slow, deep breaths in and slow exhales out.

As you feel the breath fill your nose, lungs, and belly, take in the truth that God is with you in every breath and fiber of your being. As you exhale, trust that what God gives you to thrive can also be released into His loving care.

> "Take in the truth that God is with you in every breath and fiber of your being."

I. **Read:** I Corinthians 4:1-7.

Reflect:

- What questions come up for you in this section?
- Imagine Paul asking you those last three questions. How would you answer them?

II. **Read:** I Corinthians 4:8-13.

Reflect:

- Notice the sarcastic tone in Paul's writing. What does it reveal about the Corinthians?
- Verses 12-13 show a pattern: we bless; persecuted, we endure; slandered, we conciliate. What does this pattern of response say about how Paul understands power and strength?

III. **Read:** I Corinthians 4:14-21.

Reflect:

- Paul says he writes "not to shame you but to admonish you as my beloved children." What's the difference between those two postures, and which one do you lean toward when you need to correct someone you love, or when you are corrected?
- He ends by asking whether he should come "with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness" and ties that choice directly to power, not just tone. What would it look like for you to exercise whatever authority or influence you carry "in a spirit of gentleness"?

> What would it look like for you to exercise whatever authority or influence you carry "in a spirit of gentleness"?

IV. **Read:** Matthew 20:20-28.

Reflect:

- Jesus's words, "it shall not be so among you... whoever would be great among you must be your servant," come right after this request for the best seats, framed on both sides: "the last will be first, and the first last" (19:30, 20:16).
- Where do you notice yourself angling for a seat, literally or socially?
- Jesus describes his own authority in serving, "to give his life as a ransom for many." How does seeing this as the pattern Paul was taught to imitate change the way you read everything you just read in 1 Corinthians 4?

V. **Read**: II Corinthians 11:30-12:10.

Reflect:

- What do you notice in this passage? Where do you see consistencies with what you've read in I Corinthians?
- The passage lands on: "power is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak, then I am strong." If you were to describe your life by boasting in weakness (instead of strength), what would you say?

> Power is made perfect in weakness... when I am weak, then I am strong.



What the world calls weak, God calls beautiful.

We often look for beauty in strength, abundance, and power. But perhaps beauty is just as present in the fragile, the overlooked, and the ordinary.

Photographed by Robert Gonzalez
Honduras • Medical Clinic with IC13

WEEK SIX

"Because God, who is good, made all that is, all that is reflects the goodness of God. Because God, who is good, created everything - material and spiritual, bodies and souls, apes and angels - everything belongs to that good God."

- Beth Felker Jones, Faithful: A Theology of Sex

This week's readings can bring up tender things in us. Whether they have to do implicitly with sex or the way sex has been presented, it's valuable for us to ask God again to open our hearts and minds to His Spirit. Ask Him to illuminate His words to you in a Christ-centered way and show you who He is and how He cares for our souls and bodies.

> Take a few moments to ask God to show you His goodness in all of creation.

I. **Read:** Mark 10:17-18, Genesis 1.

Jesus jumps on that word good and says, "No one is good but God alone." We know that Jesus is God, so we begin knowing that God is good.

We read in the first chapter of the Bible about created goodness, and that [1] chapter also contributes to a theological vision of human relationship and sex. According to Genesis, all creation is good.

Take a few moments to ask God to show you His goodness in all of creation. Then, ask God to show you His goodness in YOUR creation. Where do you experience God's creative goodness in your life?

[1] Beth Felker Jones. 2015. Faithful: A Theology of Sex. Zondervan.

II. **Read:** I Corinthians 5:1-2, John 8:3-11.

Reflect:

Paul is not only troubled by the sexual sin, but he is once again bringing up the arrogance and pride of the Corinthians. A centered-set Church (with Jesus at the Center of everything) would hold a posture of grief and mourning if they were turned toward the center (Jesus Christ crucified).

In John we read of a woman humiliated in her sin, where Jesus takes the attention off her and puts it on Himself. Humility happens throughout this passage.

> Jesus takes the attention off her and puts it on Himself.

- Where have you allowed pride - and the ability to turn a blind eye or ignore - something in yourself of your community that is turned away from the center (Jesus)?

III. **Read:** I Corinthians 5:3-5, Matthew 18:15-17.

Reflect:

Paul's stated goal here is in the "so that" clause in verse 5. Here, he is not only calling out the sin of the man sleeping with his stepmother, but also of the whole community and how they have ignored it.

- What do you think is the Church's role in addressing sexual sin?
- Does that apply to all sexual sin?
- Excommunication or disfellowship has sometimes been abused in Christian circles, but does it have any place in the contemporary church?
- If so, in what kinds of circumstances and with what guardrails so it is not misused? If not, what are the possible consequences of having no accountability for egregious sin? [2]
- When you read Jesus's words in Matthew, what posture should we take toward a brother or sister who is operating outside of God's creative goodness?

"What posture should we take toward a brother or sister who is operating outside of God's creative goodness?"

2 Gorman, Michael J.. 1 Corinthians: A Theological, Pastoral, and Missional Commentary. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2025.

IV. **Read:** I Corinthians 5:9-11, Galatians 6:1, Mark 2:15-17.

Reflect:

- How do church communities discern the difference between arrogant sexual sinners (who need discipline) and struggling sexual sinners (who need pastoral care and gentle correction, or restoration)?
- What difference does that make in how the community treats them? (Gorman, 199)

V. **Read**: I Corinthians 5:12-13

Reflect:

- How does a Christian community discern the differences among sexual abusers, the sexually exploited, and the sexually immoral when the surface behavior can sometimes appear to be similar, especially from a distance
- What sorts of approaches to ministry does each group need?
- What does I Corinthians 5 urge the church to believe (faith), do (love), and anticipate (hope)? (Gorman, 199)

This outcast king lifted
himself high upon his savage cross,
extended the regal banner
of his bones, draping himself
upon his throne—his battered feet,
his wounded hands not fastened
there by nails but sewn
by the strictest thorn of love.

-Pamela Cranston, A Poem for the Feast of Christ the King

Begin by asking God to open your heart and mind to His Spirit and His wisdom.

I. **Read:** I Corinthians 1:18-25. Read it slowly several times. Consider listening to it on audio once or twice.

- What do you notice from the text?
- What might be difficult to receive or understand?
- What do you want to understand more deeply?

Read Mark 8:34-35 a few times, slowly.

Michael Gorman treats this passage from I Corinthians 1 as the thesis statement for everything we've read and discussed so far. In his commentary, he frames 1 Corinthians 1-4 under the heading "unity through the wisdom and power of the cross." Jesus's own words, "whoever would save his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake... will save it," form the root underneath Paul's whole argument.

Reflect:

- Looking back over the last several weeks, where have you seen the subversive pattern of losing to gain or weakness as power?

II. **Read:** John 17:20-23 two or three times slowly. Then read I Corinthians 1:10-17.

Reflect:

- How does Jesus's prayer help you understand I Corinthians 1:10-17?
- How do you experience unity in the Christian communities you find yourself in? What makes unity difficult?

"Do not conform to the pattern of this world,
but be transformed by the renewing of your mind.
Then you will be able to test and approve
what God's will is—his good,
pleasing and perfect will."
- Romans 12:2

Read the words that follow in Paul's letter to the Romans in 12:3-21.

Reflect:

- In what relationships might God be inviting you to pursue unity?
- What would it be like to receive Jesus's prayer and Paul's guidance?

III. **Read:** Luke 22:24-27 and I Corinthians 3:5-9 and 3:21-23.

Reflect:

- According to Paul, status in the church gets completely redefined around service rather than rank. Jesus says the same thing about himself at his own last meal with his disciples.
- Where have you caught yourself measuring a leader's worth (or your own) by something other than service?
- What makes a person worth following? Who have you followed that has led you closer to Jesus or to become more like him? Consider sending a text, making a call, or writing a handwritten note to thank them.

IV. **Read:** Luke 9:23-24 and I Corinthians 4:9-13.

Reflect:

- The trials Paul lists are directly linked to his ministry. They reveal how he lived out the call to bear his cross every day.
- In your own life, how might following Christ move from a periodic effort to a continual, day-by-day commitment?

V. **Read:** Luke 15:11-32 and I Corinthians 5:6-8 and 5:12-13.

Reflect:

- Last week's readings sat with the tension of "purge the evil person" against grace. The father in this parable runs toward his son before any repentance happens, and yet nothing about the son's direction is treated as fine either.
- Looking back over the whole letter so far, where have you landed on how grace and correction hold together?

"If Paul were writing to us today, what do you think he would say?"

Bonus:

Consider sitting down with a warm cup of something and reading I Corinthians 1-5, imagining yourself in ancient Corinth, part of a community that received this letter from someone you really value, whose voice and opinion matter to you.

- How do you receive it?
- If Paul were writing to us today, what do you think he would say?

WEEK EIGHT

According to Jesus, the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (our whole, embodied selves), and to love our neighbor as ourselves. God's desire is that all of these parts of us become integrated over our lifetime to make us whole and human, like Jesus.

As we get into the next few weeks, pray that God would open your heart, soul, mind and body to come into awareness of His way of being human, and how you, in your actual life, can participate in that formation.

Ask Him to protect you from shame and to encourage you towards wholeness. As your thinking about God and His ways may be challenged, ask Him for an open mind and for the gentleness of His ways to surround you.

> "Pray that God would open your heart, soul, mind and body to come into awareness of His way of being human."

I. **Read:** Daniel 7. This recording includes a dream Daniel had, followed by an interpretation of it. Pay particular attention to what he says in verses 18, 22, and 27.

Read: I Corinthians 6:1-4.

Reflect:

- Paul's claim that "the saints will judge the world" draws on this Jewish eschatological hope that God's people will one day share in his reign.
- If believers are destined to share in God's coming reign over the world, how might that change how we handle a present conflict with someone in our own community?
- Are you currently experiencing any conflict with people from your community (church, family, etc., with other believers) that this bears any impact on?

II. **Read:** Luke 12:13-21 alongside I Corinthians 6:5-6.

Reflect:

- How does Jesus's response in this parable inform how we understand what Paul is conveying to the Corinthian church?

III. **Read:** Amos 5:10-15 and Matthew 5:38-42 alongside I Corinthians 6:7-8.

Both Jesus and Paul were students of the Hebrew Bible. The Old Testament laid out the way of the Kingdom, and Jesus fulfilled it and lived it perfectly. What do you understand the heart of the conversations around lawsuits here to be? Why on earth would it be better to be defrauded?

> The Old Testament laid out the way of the Kingdom, and Jesus fulfilled it and lived it perfectly.

IV. **Read:** I Corinthians 6:9-10 alongside Matthew 18:21-35.

Reflect:

Paul doesn't let this list stand as a wall between "us" and "them," because verse 11 is coming. The parable works the same way: a servant forgiven an enormous debt turns around and has a fellow servant thrown in prison over a small one. The question king asks, "should you not have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?" is similar to what Paul is about ask.

The servant seems to have genuinely forgotten where he came from and what he was forgiven of. Where might you be forgetting your own former place on a list like verses 9-10, in a way that's made you harsher toward someone else's?

V. **Read:** I Corinthians 6:11 alongside Luke 19:1-10.

Reflect:

- The story of Zaccheus is about a man who built wealth by defrauding people and then when salvation came, his initial response is repayment.

Read: I Corinthians 6:1-11 a couple of times slowly and reflectively.

Reflect:

- Our readings this week can help inform our theology of justice. In what ways do they form your theology of lawsuits, judgment, and/or retribution?
- How do they urge us, the Church, to believe (faith), do (love) and anticipate (hope)?

WEEK NINE

I. **Read:** Philippians 2:1-4.

If you can think back on what we've read so far in I Corinthians, reflect on the same message here that undergirds every rebuke and exhortation he gave to the church in Corinth. Unity, love, abandoning rivalries, and looking to the interests of others above ourselves.

Reflect:

- Which of these are hardest for you to practice in community right now?

> This embodies gentleness paired with real, world-changing power

II. **Read:** Isaiah 42:1-9, Philippians 2:5-11.

God introduces his chosen Servant as someone who won't "cry aloud," won't "lift up his voice," won't even "break a bruised reed." This embodies gentleness paired with real, world-changing power, and it closes with "I am the LORD; I will not give my glory to another."

Reflect:

- What do you expect power and glory to look like, and how does this Servant, pictured in Isaiah, fit with that picture?

III. **Read:** Philippians 2:5-11, this time alongside John 13:3-17

Michael Gorman calls this hymn the center of "Paul's master story," the pattern everything else in his theology is built around. Notice John frames the foot-washing almost identically: Jesus acts "knowing that he had come from God and was going to God" right before he kneels with a towel. His security about where he came from is what frees him to lower himself, not what's put at risk by it.

> His security about where he came from is what frees him to lower himself, not what's put at risk by it.

Reflect:

- What would it look like for your own sense of identity to make you more willing to serve, rather than more protective of your status?

IV. **Read:** 1 Corinthians 2:14-16, Philippians 2:12-13.

Here, Paul tells the Corinthians that they already have the mind of Christ. In Philippians 2:5, he invites them to have "the mind of Christ." There is a sense of something they have in their possession and yet an invitation to keep it or cultivate it. What do you make of that and what do you think it has to do with working out our salvation with fear and trembling?

Reflect:

- What would it be like if Christians came together in community, choosing this kind of humility. Choosing to value others above ourselves? Pursuing not what is best for us, but what is best for others and the common good?

V. **Practice**: On the Bible app or with a friend, read Philippians 2:1-13 a few times slowly.

Take a few deep breaths. Meditate on what it says - that Christ freely, willing emptied himself, humbled himself and allowed himself to be humiliated for the sake of others. Wherever you are in your belief of this... you might fully believe it and you might have a hard time believing this is how it went down. Either way, believe or imagine it as reality and let God be with you wherever you are for 5-10 minutes.

If it's difficult for you to sit in silence, start with a walk in silence. No earbuds or headphones. Pay attention to the sounds of nature or life happening around you and ask God to be with you wherever you are.

Again, according to Jesus, the greatest commandment is to love God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength (our whole, embodied selves), and to love our neighbor as ourselves. God's desire is that all of these parts of us become integrated over our lifetime to make us whole and human, like Jesus.

As we come into more readings that might be difficult for us, we pray that God would open your heart, soul, mind and body to come into awareness of His way of being human, and how you, in your actual life, can participate in that formation.

"Ask Him to protect you from shame and to encourage you towards wholeness."

Ask Him to protect you from shame and to encourage you towards wholeness. As your thinking about God and His ways may be challenged, ask Him for an open mind and for the gentleness of His ways to surround you.

I. **Read:** Genesis 1:24-31.

Before Paul says anything about what not to do with your body, Genesis says what a body is.

Take note of everything this passage tells us about the creation of bodies.

Our bodies are not an afterthought to being made in God's likeness, they are part of it.

In what ways have you thought of your body as separate from, or less spiritual than the rest of who you are? How does "very good" push back on how you feel and think about your body?

> "Our bodies are not an afterthought to being made in God's likeness, they are part of it."

II. **Read:** I Corinthians 6:12-14, alongside Psalm 139:13-14.

How do these passages inform your thoughts on "the body is for the Lord, and the Lord for the body?"

What implications does this have on your view of your own body?

III. **Read:** Genesis 2:18-24, alongside I Corinthians 6:15-17.

"The two shall become one flesh" is a quote Paul lifted straight from the creation of woman. When he says union with a prostitute makes "one body" with her, he's not inventing new language. He's taking Genesis's own description of what sexual union actually does and applying its full weight to a situation most of his readers probably assumed was casual.

Reflect:

- What does it change for you to think of sexual union as doing something, not just meaning something, to the two people involved?

IV. **Read:** Romans 12:1-2, alongside I Corinthians 6:19-20.

"You are not your own, for you were bought with a price... glorify God in your body" and "present your bodies as a living sacrifice" are the same instruction from two directions. One guards against misuse, the other names what right use looks like. We were never meant to just guard our bodies or protect them from wrong use. We are meant to actively offer them and be formed by what we do with them.

Reflect:

- What would it look like this week to think of the choices we make with and for our bodies (i.e. rest, food, touch, work) as acts of worship rather than just, survival or rules to follow or break?

V. **Read:** Luke 7:36-50, Zephaniah 3:17

When we read the Bible, it's important that we read the parts that feel like warnings alongside the ones that show us what restoration looks like. A woman whose body carried real social shame uses that same body, her hair, her tears, and an expensive perfumed ointment to offer Jesus the most extravagant act of worship. Notice how he responds and just sit with that for a moment.

He receives her tears, and quite frankly, the way she shows her love to his body. He defends her publicly, and sends her away in peace.

> Sends her away in peace

Reflect:

- Where might shame be keeping you from offering something to God that he would delight to receive as worship?

MY EXPERIENCE _____

Explore what what came to mind, what you felt in your body, anything you noticed.

Draw or write a prayer for the week.



Exploring what it really means to bring heaven to earth,
share Jesus' hospitality and live cross-shaped lives.

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