

### Topic

Reconciliat ion

### Theme

Believers should reflect Christian character in their Christian family relationships and in their personal conduct.

### Desired Learner Response

The learner will be consistent in reconciling with other believers with whom he disagrees.

Materials

* Resources 1 and 9

# Team Disputes and Distinctiveness

### Scripture Focus

1 Corinthians 6

### Summary

The Corinthian Christians acted like unsaved peop le by suing one another in court. As God's redeemed peop le, they were called to settle their differences within the church family and to glorify God in every area of life.

**Outline**

1. Resolving Disputes (6:1-11)
   1. A shameful practice (6:1- 7a)
   2. A selfless principle (6:7b, 8)
   3. A sobering point (6:9-11)
2. Maintaining Distinctiveness (6:12- 20)
   1. Maintain godly purity (6:12- 18)
   2. Maintain a godly ambition (6:19, 20)

##### Memory Verse

*"Do ye not know that the saints shall judge the world? and if the world shall be judged by you,*

*are ye unworthy to judge the smallest matters?"*

*(1 Corinthians 6:2).*

**49**

## GETTING STARTED

#### Lawsuit Protection

**ASK:** What steps have you taken to protect yourse lf from lawsuits ? (Ql)

**ASK:** How would you respond if someone in the church sued yo u? (Q2)

Members of the church at Corinth were suing each other and taking their cases to civil courts. Paul called their practice shameful and encouraged them to main­ tain their distinction as Christians in society so they might have strong testimonies for Christ.

#### Brother v. Brother

**ASK:** Did you eve r wish you could take a sibling or perhaps a parent to court when you were gro wing up? What were the circumstances?

**ASK:** Ho w do you think taking a family member to court would have reflect­ ed on you r family name?

Familial lawsuits are bad for the family name! And living with each other during and after the lawsuit is not too pleasant either.

Paul addressed the Corinthians in a negative context yet again. They were suing each other and giving the body of Christ in Corinth a bad reputation.

## SEARCHING THE SCRIPTURES

Quarrels occur in even the most loving families, but they must not be allowed to rip the home apart. They must be resolved so the family can continue to function as a loving unit. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul addressed the church family at Corinth and provided guidelines for solving internal disputes and sustaining the church family's distinctiveness.

#### Resolving Disputes (6:1-11)

* + - 1. **A shameful practice (6:1-7a)**

**READ:** 1 Cor inth ians 6:1. **ASK:** In sett ling dis putes between belie vers, what advantages does a believer have over an unbe lie ver? (Q3) *The believer has the Holy Spirit and God's Word as his gui des.*

Lawsuits were common in the Greek culture at Corinth as they are today. When Corinthians became Christians, however, they gained an opportunity to resolve disputes with one another in a conciliatory and godly manner. Instead of employing this opportunity, they preferred the old system of scratching, gouging, and biting one another-spirituallyspeaking-in front of unsaved magistrates (6:1; cf. Gal. 5:15). Who would believe such combatants belonged to the same team of believers in Christ?

**ASK:** From a Biblical pers pective, why are lawsuits so common in every age? (Q4) *Lawsuits are common because sin is* a *universal problem. Some people sue because they were sinned against. Others file lawsuits hoping to sinfully deceive* a *court and win* a *settlement that does not rightfully belong to them.*

Paul reminded the Corinthian church that someday they will judge the world, including angels, during the millennial reign of Christ (6:2,3; Dan. 7:22). Believers might also take part in judging fallen angels when Satan, and by implication his angels, are *cast into the lake of fire* after the conclusion of the millennial Kingdom (Rev. 20:10; see also 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6). Paul's reference to *judging angels* might also indicate that believer's will rule over good angels during Christ's millennial Kingdom.

After pointing out that believers will judge angels, Paul seems to change his tone to sarcasm in verse 4, a verse that is admittedly difficult to interpret. He appar ­ ently suggested that if the Corinthians insisted on having disputes, then they would need to look no further than the least esteemed believer in the church to settle the dispute. Perhaps his point is that such a believer has God's Word and the Spirit as his resources. No unbelieving government official could match such resources. But the Corinthians acted as if *no one* in their church, not even one of their leaders, was qualified to judge disputes (6:5). The church members all claimed to be wise (3:18), but their practice showed otherwise. Paul was direct with the Corinthians in telling them such a practice was shameful (6:5).

**ASK:** Do you think the Corinthian believers who went to the civil courts to settle t he ir cases were often reconciled to one another after the verdict

was announced? Explai n. (QS) *Most likely not. The civil court gave verdicts, but it did nothing to change the believers' hearts and encourage reconciliation.Only the church under the direction of the Holy Spirit could bring trueclosure to the cases.*

We sh ould note that later in chapter 6, Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit (6:19). And even later in his letter he talked at length about the spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit gives to believers in the church (12-14). The overall purpose of those gifts was to edify the church, the Body of Christ. In chapter 13 Paul taught that believers are to use God's love to guide their exercise of sp iritualgifts. The Spirit's presence, His enabling, and His love more

than qualified believers to settle disputes between members. And the Spirit's pres­ ence, enabling, and love would help them focus on edifying one another instead of demanding their rights every time they felt wronged (12:7; 14:12,26).

**ASK:** Wou ld you say a believer who carries grudges against fellow church member s is living by the Spirit? Explain. (Q6) *If he was living by theSpirit, then he would be interested in lovingly edifying his fellow church member insteadof*

*carrying grudges against him or even seeking revenge.*

Brothers who brought brothers before unsaved judges blemished the church's testimony in Corinth (6:6, 7a).

**READ:** John 13:34, 35. **ASK:** For what did Jesus want His disciples to be known? (Q7) *For their love for one another.*

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 6:7a. **ASK:** How did Pau l describe the Corinth ians' prac­ tice of taking each other to court? (08) *As a complete failure.*

#### A selfless principle (6=7b, 8)

Instead of suing a fellow church member, Paul taught that taking a loss or suffer­ ing damages would be better than going to a secular court (6:7). Of course, this may not have been an option in every dispute that arose in the church. But Paul pointed out that in the cases at hand, the Corinthian church members were not simply caught up in circumstances beyond their control. They were wrongfully acting as the aggres­ sors (6:8). And aggressively gaining a satisfactory verdict in such instances would mean little since the legal battle would injure the church's testimony.

**READ:** 1 Corint hians 6:8. **ASK:**What would motivate a belie ver to *do wrong* and *defraud* his brethren even at the expense of the ch urch's testimony (cf. 3:3)? (09) *Such a believer would be motivated by self-centered, carnal thinking.*

Paul does not give specifics on how a church should handle legitimate dis- putes between church members. He speaks only of utilizing a wise *man* (6:5). We can infer that such a proceeding would be under the authority of the autonomous congregation and might fall in the category of a church discipline case.

We should note that Paul is not teaching that government courts are neces­ sarily evil and that believers should always avoid them. His teaching that such government *powers ... are ordained of God* (Rom. 13:1) mal<es that clear. Certain issues in a believer's life may require the court's involvement even if a matter con­ cerns a dispute with another believer. There could also be a situation in which a believer attempts to settle a matter with another believer by following the pattern of 1 Corinthians 6 only to find the other believer wants to take the matter to court. In such cases, believers will need God's wisdom and the assistance of other godly believers to maintain a good testimony and godly attitude.

#### A sobering point (6:9-11)

Paul made a sobering point to those Corinthian believers who insisted on suing each other. He stated that their actions were like the actions of the unrigh­ teous. Their bickering lawsuits were no better than the vilest offensives of the unregenerate, wicked Corinthians who were destined to eternal separation from God if they did not turn from their sins and trust in Christ as their Savior (6:9, 10). The Corinthian believers had responded to the gospel. The Lord had reached down into the miry clay, scooped them up, washed them from their sinful filth, set them apart to honor and serve Him, and gave them a righteous standing in His sight (6:11). They were sanctified in their position before God, but they were acting like they were still unrighteous unbelievers.

This point issobering because God counted on the Corinthian believers to be His witnesses to the lost in Corinth. When the Corinthian believers acted like they were still unrighteous, they hurt their ability to communicate thegospel effectively to the lost.

**ASK:** What should happen to petty disagreements between believers when they consider how their actions affect their ability to communicate the gospel?

(Q 1 O)*The believers should movequickly to resolve their differences and then support each other in their common goal ofwinning thelost for Chrsi t.*

* + 1. **Maintaining Distinctiveness (6:12-20)**
       1. **Maintain godly purity (6:12-18)**

Paul went on to develop the truth that a believer's life is not about freedom to do what he pleases but about how he might use his freedom in Christ to glorify God and reach the lost. Paul gave four questions for believers to ask to determine

if they should engage in certain practices. Paul then used those questions to show that sexual immorality is obviously not an acceptable practice.

**RESOURCE:** Display resource 9 as you go over Paul's guidelines from 1 Cori n­ thians 6:12 and 13.

Choosing Godly Practices

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Paul's first guideline in determining whether to engage in a practice was to ask

if the practice was *expedient,* or profitable (6:12). Did the practice help Paul in his

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Paul's second question focused on whether the practice would enslave him and damage his reputation and his relationships (6:12).Sin is usuallyenslaving, but other practices may become enslaving and sinful if they take a believer's time and keep him from serving God faithfully.

walk with God?

Paul's third and fourth questions addressed the lie that practices that involve the physical body cannot be wrong. Some believers in Corinth thought that since eating is not a spiritual exercise, then other physical activities, including those of a sexual nature, must not have any bearing on a believer's sp iritual life. This thinking originated with the Greeks, who believed the physical body was worth­ less and therefore had no bearing on a person'sspirituality. But Paul was clear

that a believer's physical body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord (6:13). All a believer'sactions, including physical activities, are supposed to be for God's glory(cf. 6:20). So Paul's third question asks whether the practice in question helps the believer glorify God. His fourth question builds on the third. It asks whether the practice demonstrates that the Lord owns the believer's body (6:13).

**ASK:** What are some practical ways a belie ver might demonstrate that the Lord owns his body? (Ql 1) *He takes care of his body so he might serve God effec­ tively with it; he does not use his body to draw attention to himself.*

To emphasize his point that the believer's body belongs to God and is there­ fore important, Paul reminded the Corinthians that God raised up Christ from the dead and would one day raise all believers from the dead (6:14). Their physical bodies were important to God.

Taking his argument even further, Paul taught that a sexual relationship is more than just a physical act because believers are *members of Christ* (6:15). When a believer has a sexual relationship with a *harlot,* he becomes a *member* with the harlot. Shoulda believer who is a member of Christ also become a member with a harlot? Paul emphatically said,*God forbid* (6:15).

Paul quoted Genesis 2:24 to support his teaching (1Car. 6:16; cf. Matt. 19:5).

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God's plan for marriage has always been for one man and one woman to become one flesh. That is the only godly sexual relationship because it is the only one that reflects the Lord's union with the believer (6:17). The only fitting course to follow, then, was to *flee fornication* (6:18). Indulging in fornication, Paul explained, is equivalent to destroying one's own body (6:18; cf. Prov. 6:32).

**ASK:** What makes fleeing fornication possible? (Q12 ) *Strong marriage relation­ ships, regular time inGod's Word, submission to the Holy Spirit's control.*

#### Maintain a godly ambition (6:19, 20)

Paul summoned the Corinthian Christians to honor the Lord with their bodies, living for Him as redeemed people. The Christian's body is *the temple of the Holy Ghost* (6:19). These words no doubt stunned first-century Jewish believers, who were the product of roughly one thousand years of discipline in temple worship in Jerusalem. Paul wrote similarly to the church at Ephesus, comparing the church body to a living temple, inhabited by the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:21, 22).

Since a believer is the Spirit's temple, wherever the believer goes, the temple of the Holy Spirit goes. Whatever he does, the temple of the Holy Spirit does. These sobering facts ought to grab our attention and influence our actions. Perhaps we need to rethink our priorities, redefine our interests, reorder our habits, and rear­ range our schedules because we are the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Paul went on to tell the Corinthians that they were God's purchased posses- sion (6:19b, 20).

**READ:** 1 Corinthians 6:20 . **ASK:** What price was paid for believers? (Ql 3)

*Christ's death on the cross.*

We are God's purchased possessions. Just as a buyer purchased a slave in the slave market and set him free, so God bought us at the cost of His Son's blood, and He has set us free to serve Him. Our lifelong ambition ought to be to glorify God in our bodies and in our spirits (6:20).

As we saw in lesson 1, the pagan Temple of Aphrodite, with its one thousand priestesses, dominated the religious scene in Corinth. Paul wanted the Corinthian believers to display the temple of God through their lives in a way that would put Aphrodite in the shadows. As they did, they would create a stark contrast between their lives and those of the pagan Corinthians.

**ASK:** As the society around us becomes more promiscuo us, is it easier or more difficult to live a holy life? (Q14 ) *Sin and temptation may be moreaccessible,yet the person who abides by God's Word will project God's holiness more brilliantly before the*

*world.*

As God's redeemed people, the Corinthian Christians had received the oppor­ tunity to show their unsaved neighbors that Christ did make a difference in their lives. They could have let their lights shine so others would see their good works and glorify their Father in Heaven (Matt. 5:16). Unfortunately, they muffed that opportunity. They condoned sin in their church and then drafted lawsuits against one another. Their light was dulled. The effectiveness of their future witness

hinged on their willingness to heed Paul's exhortation to *glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's* (6:20).

Have you checked your light's *wattage* recently?

**MAKING IT PERSONAL**

#### The Court of Our Minds

Most of us will probably not have an occasion to drag a fellow believer into court. But all of us will face conflicts with fellow believers. Sometimes we drag our fellow believers into the courts of our minds and play the roles of prosecutor, judge, and jury. We may even present our case before family members or other fellow believers.

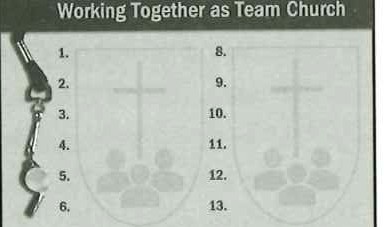
**ASK:** Why do we sometimes feel justified in *trying* an offending fellow believer in our own persona l courts? *We feel like we have theright to plead our case. We think we will feel better if we try offending believers in the court of our minds. We value being just ified over being reconciled.* (Q 15)

**ASK:** In stead of trying fellow believers in the courts of our minds, what should w e spend our energy doing? (Ql 6) *Seeking reconciliationwith the offending be/i,.:ver.Searching our own hearts for sin.*

#### Reputation Is at Stake

**ASK:** What does the wor ld con clude about Christ by watching your life, espe cially your interaction with fellow believers? (Ql 7)

**ASK:** What will you do to str engthen your testim ony before the world? (Ql 8)



**7.**

#### Summary and Memory Verse

Use resource 1 to review the response for this lesson: Reflect Christ in relating to believers.

Encourage your learners to memorize 1 Corinthians 6:2. Give them an opportu­ nity to quote the verse in class next week.

# Team Relationships



### Topic

Relationships

### Theme

Whether single or married, the believer should honor and serve the Lord.

### Desired Learner Response

The learner, whether single or married, will focus on serving God through his or her li fe.

Materials

* Resources 1 and 10

### Scripture Focus

1 Corinthians 7

### Summary

The Corinthian Christians faced several issues involving their marital status. Paul addressed these complicated and controversial issues and urged the Corinthians to honor and serve the Lord,whether married or unmarried.

##### Outline

1. **Principles about Getting Married (7:1- 9)**
   1. Marriage is normal (7:1, 2)
   2. Marriage is a partnership (7:3-5)
   3. Marriage is optional (7:6-9)
2. **Principles about Staying Married (7:10- 24)**
   1. Instructions for a believing couple (7:10, 11)
   2. Instructions for a believer married to an unbeliever (7:12-24)

**Ill. Principles about Singleness (7:25-38)**

1. Free to stay single or to marry (7:25-28)
2. Free to serve the Lord (7:29- 38)
3. **Principl es about Remarriage (7:39 , 40)**
   1. Free to remarry after spouse dies (7:39)
   2. Free to remarry in the Lord (7:39)
   3. Free to remain unmarried (7:40)

**Memory Verse** *"For he that is called in the Lord,being aservant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also he that is called, being free, is Christ's servant"*

*(1 Corinthians 7:22).*

**56**