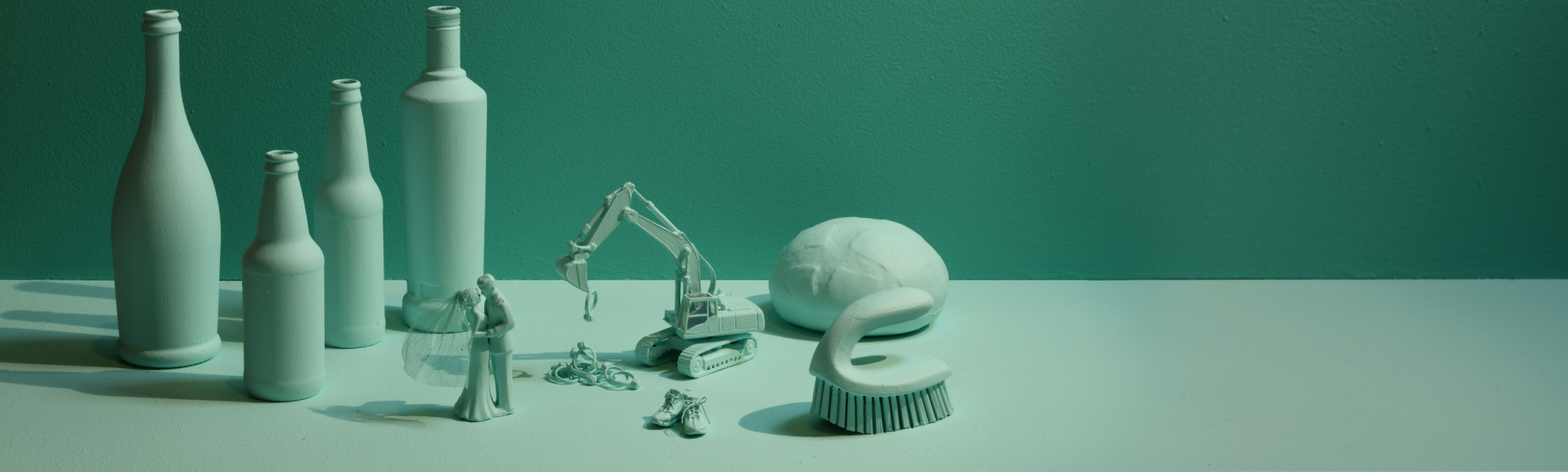


1 CORINTHIANS

gospel formed relationships / discussion guide



OVERVIEW FOR PART 1:

Join us as we walk through the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. We'll see the many cultural similarities between the pacific northwest and ancient Greece, as well as be challenged in how we are designed to live out the gospel through the local church.

In the second mini-series we will see how God designs relationships and the inner workings of church life, even when things are hard.

PART 2: WEEK ONE The Grace of Discipline

Text: 1 Corinthians 5

When we think about discipline, especially church discipline, we may have negative reactions. We may think of abuse, vindictiveness or judgmentalism. However, discipline, when done well, is a real gift – it's a grace from God. We know personally that we must discipline ourselves to really accomplish any of value. We have to discipline our body to submit to exercise in order to get fit. We discipline our appetites in order to experience healthy diets. We discipline our schedule to make time for what matters most. We know from experience that discipline done well produces a more flourishing life. It also produces a flourishing world wherever it is properly expressed. We can see this in everything from parenting to education to politics to law

enforcement. When done with grace, truth, sincerity and care, discipline in all places leads to life.

The church is God's family – God's household. However, it is also a broken one. We sin and we hurt one another. As such, it requires discipline. In this passage, Paul confronts the church's failure to directly rebuke a brother living in sin – a son is sexually involved with his step-mother and instead of correcting the behavior, the church is boasting either in their freedom or in their assumed spirituality despite this sin. In that day, incest was not only a violation of Jewish law but of Greco-Roman law as well. As a result, the reputation of Jesus and his church was being defamed. Paul knew that the church, if it continued to do nothing, would also be corrupted by this so-called brother's sin. Paul confronts them for doing nothing and for boasting along the way when they should be mourning over sin. He also instructs them to exercise church discipline.

Jesus laid out a process of church discipline in Matthew 18:15-17. Clearly this situation in Corinth is at the end of the process. It's time to hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, which is another way of saying: Treat him like he's not yet a Christian and pray that the destructive nature of sin in his life leads him to repent and turn to Jesus before it's too late. At the moment, he thinks he's a Christian who is in good standing with God. However, his inability to see his sin, repent of it, and even blatantly continue in it, shows that we should be concerned for his salvation. He needs to know this and be concerned. Part of turning a person over includes not being relationally entangle with (associated with) a person who is engaged in continual, unrepentant sin (any kind of sin) that is bringing destruction to the church. This includes informing them and their community that they are no longer seen as members of the church. It also includes not allowing them to share in the Lord's Supper (not even eat with them) or allowing them to engage in activities or practices that are distinctively for Christians alone. It will require wisdom to determine what other ways we should not be associated with them. This does not mean we shun them completely since the goal of discipline is redemption and restoration into community. We would not be able to call them to repentance and see them restored if we never interact with them. We especially want them to be able to attend our gatherings with the hope of seeing them repent.

Read: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 and Matthew 18:15-17

1. What is the process for church discipline according to Jesus and Paul?
2. What does this tell you about how God cares for his church?

3. How has allowing sin to remain unaddressed in the church hurt the reputation of Jesus and the effectiveness of the Church's mission?
4. Where does our view of sin need to change? How might we interact differently in light of that?
5. The goal of discipline is loving restoration. What might that look like in our community?
6. The tendency is to remove ourselves from the world or become just like it. Paul offers a different alternative. How should Paul's words here affect how we engage in Jesus' mission together?