

**GROWTH GROUP STUDIES | TERM 4, 2018**

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**STUDY 1: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1 ­– 9:23**

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. What issue in the Corinthians church does Paul now turn to address? How does he begin to address it? Why start here? (vv. 1-3)

1. Is the statement “knowledge puffs up” general or specific? Can knowledge be a good thing?
2. In v. 4-6 Paul focuses in on knowledge. Who has knowledge? How do they know it? What is it?
3. What is the knowledge that some don’t possess? Where has it come from? How does it shape their lives? (vv. 7-8)
4. From vv. 9-13, how do knowledge and love work together in the Christian life?

1. In 9:1-23 Paul uses his Apostleship to illustrate his point. What does Paul know? (vv. 1-14)
2. How does Paul love? Why does he do it? (vv. 12b, 15-18)
3. What is Paul teaching the Corinthians with regards to their eating practices? (vv. 19-23)

**THINKING IT THROUGH**

1. What are some examples of when we demand our ‘rights’ as Christians? Where do we get this knowledge from?

1. For each example above, how have others become “accustomed” (9:7) to their different thinking about these things?
2. How will love shape our approach to these matters?
3. What will produce this love in us? How can be proactive in producing it in ourselves?

**STUDY 2: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24 – 11:1**

1. Thinking back to 8:1-3, what is the root issue that Paul is addressing in 8:1 – 11:1? With regards to that issue, what has he discussed so far?

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. In 8:3 – 9:13 Paul wrote about self-constraint for the sake of others. What does he now begin to address in 9:24-27? What images does he use? How do they contribute?
2. In 10:1-13, Paul turns the attention of the Corinthians to the history of Israel in the wilderness.

	1. What is significant about the fact that Paul writes, in v. 1: “our ancestors”
	2. What period of Israel’s history is Paul recalling in vv. 1-5? What is significant about this for us?
	3. Who was present amongst the Israelite community during their time in the wilderness? What is the implication for Christians?

* 1. What is the warning of v. 5? Why did this occur, vv. 6-10?
	2. According to vv. 11-12, why have these events been recorded in the Old Testament?
	3. What assurances does Paul give us in vv. 13-14? How do we weigh them against the warnings from Israel’s history?
	4. Stop and reflect on your own personal experience. When are you tempted with/to:

		1. Idolatry
		2. Sexual Immorality
		3. Put Jesus to the test
		4. Grumble against God
	5. How will vv. 13-14 help you address each of these situations?
1. In 10:1-13, Paul has reminded us of the importance of putting off sin so that we can finish the race well. In 10:14-22 he now returns specifically to the root issue of his discussion: idolatry.

	1. What is his command, and what is the reason for it?

* 1. Again Israel is used as the example. What point do you think Paul is making about idolatry in v. 18-22?
	2. What do you think might be some implications of this for us, as Christians?
1. In 10:23 – 11:1 Paul brings together all his teaching on idolatry, which began in 8:1.
What are the principles he leaves us with? How will they help you as you run the race?

	1. 10:23-24
	2. 10:25-30

* 1. 10:31 – 11:1

**STUDY 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16**

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. In v. 2, Paul praises the Corinthians. Remembering 1 Cor 10:31, what would lead Paul to this?

1. What specifically does he praise them for in 11:2? What do you think he is referring to?
(see also: v. 16, 1 Cor 11:17 – 14:40)
2. What is Paul implying about the Corinthians when he begins v. 3, “But I want you to realise …”?
3. What is the order of relationships in the church that Paul sets out in v. 3?

* 1. Explore together how the relationships of men and women in the church are interpreted by:

		1. the relationship of Christ and every man.

* + 1. the relationship of God and Christ.
	1. Whether you are male or female, who is God calling to model your life on?
1. In vv. 4-6, how does Paul apply God’s ordering of relationships, to the church?

1. In vv. 7-12, Paul further grounds the order of relationships, this time in creation. How do the following passages from Genesis illuminate what Paul says in Corinthians?

	1. Gen 1:27 and 1 Cor 11:7

* 1. Gen 2:18, 23 and 1 Cor 11:8-9

* 1. Gen 2:23 and 1 Cor 11:11-12

*.*

* 1. Paul says ‘a man ought not to cover his head’ (v. 7) and ‘a woman ought to have [a sign of authority on] her own head’ (v. 10). In light of what we have seen, why is this Paul’s command?

1. Having spoken of the nature of God, and the design of creation, what does Paul now urge the Corinthians to consider? (vv. 13-15)

1. Paul ends this section with a warning ( v. 16). How does it contrast with how he began (v. 2)?

**THINKING IT THROUGH**

1. Should women wear hats in church? Can a Christian man have a pony tail? What about a Christian woman who is undergoing chemotherapy? What biblical principles need to shape the way we relate to each other, and to God?

**STUDY 4: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34**

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. What appears to be happening when the Corinthians come together as a church? (vv. 17-19)
2. How did this impact on their eating of the Lord’s Supper? (vv. 20-22)
3. In vv. 23-26, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the traditions (cf. 11:2) concerning the Lord’s Supper. As you work through the details of these verses, reflect on: a) what each part contributes; b) the seriousness of what was happening in Corinth.
	1. “The Lord Jesus” –
	2. “on the night he was betrayed” –
	3. “took bread … gave thanks … broke it” –
	4. “this is my body, which is for you” –
	5. “do this in remembrance of me” *–*
	6. “after the supper he took the cup” *–*
	7. “this cup is the new covenant in my blood”
	8. “you proclaim the Lord’s death until he comes”
4. Having clarified what the Lord’s Supper is, what is Paul’s warning to the Corinthians? (vv. 27-29)
5. What has happened to the Corinthians because of their sin? Why has God done this? What does it tell us about God?
6. What is Paul’s conclusion about how to eat the Lord’s Supper?

**THINKING IT THROUGH**

1. What has this passage caused you to reflect upon personally, regarding the Lord’s supper?
2. Although we may not shame, humiliate, or dishonour other members of God’s church when we share the Lord’s supper, can you think of other examples where we might see this happening? What would it mean then, for us, when we do share the Lord’s Supper?

**STUDY 5: 1 CORINTHIANS 12**

**READ THE PASSAGE**

**1 Corinthians 12:1-3**

1. Despite most English translations, the word ‘gifts’ (Greek: ‘*charisma’)* is not used by Paul in v. 1. Instead he uses the Greek word *pneumatikon* (‘spirituals’). Literally then, v. 1 reads: “Now about spiritual things/matters …”.

To put it another way, Paul begins with a broad issue before addressing the particular issue of ‘spiritual gifts’. Using vv. 1-3, what broad issue is Paul addressing?

1. As a group, brainstorm some examples of how Christians today might have been influenced or lead astray in their thinking about spiritual things?
2. What is the work of the Holy Spirit? What is not? How do you think these opening verses might shape what Paul will go on to say about ‘spiritual gifts’?

**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**

1. Complete the following and share with the group things you notice:

v. 4: different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

v. 5: different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

v. 6: different \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, same \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. According to v. 7, why are gifts given?

1. What examples of gifts does Paul give? Do you think it matters what gifts you have been given?

**1 Corinthians 12:12-31**

1. In vv. 12-31 Paul uses the metaphor of the human body to explain the reality of spiritual gifts in the church. How does that metaphor contribute to our understanding of the diversity, unity, and equality of people and their gifts?

1. What happens if everyone wants to be a head? What happens, on the other hand, if there are only “unpresentable” parts and no “more presentable” ones?

1. Compare the list of gifts in vv. 8-11 with the list in vv. 28-31. What is different? What is the same? What are some implications of this?

**THINKING IT THROUGH**

1. How has this passage helped you better understand “spiritual things”?

1. Where can you see opportunities to serve for the common good?

**STUDY 6: 1 CORINTHIANS 12:31 – 13:13**

1. As you come to read the passage, take a moment to remember the context. What issue is Paul addressing?

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. From 12:31, what is Paul now setting out to do?
2. What examples of spiritual giftedness does Paul give in vv. 1-3? Do you think he is depreciating their value?

1. If we do not have love, how does it affect others?

1. What does a lack of love do to *us*? Why is this the case?
2. List out the ways Paul describes loves in vv. 4-7. For each, decide what kind of love it is: sentimental or behavioural.

1)

2)

3)

4)

5)

6)

7)

8)

9)

10)

11)

12)

13)

14)

15)

1. How does this kind of love serve as “the most excellent way”?
2. What makes love different to the spiritual gifts? (v. 8)
3. According to v. 10, when “completeness” comes, what is “in part” will disappear. What eras of time is Paul referring to? And how do his illustrations help us understand the connection between them?

1. Paul concludes with the famous triad of “faith, hope and love”. Consider each one and explain why love is greater than any spiritual gift, or any other virtue.

**THINKING IT THROUGH**

1. How has this passage helped you better understand “spiritual things” (12:1-3)?

1. As a group, take time to reflect upon opportunities you can see for us to grow in our love of each other:
	1. in our Sunday Gatherings

* 1. in our Growth Groups

* 1. throughout the week

**STUDY 7: 1 CORINTHIANS 14**

1. As you come to read the passage, take a moment to remember the context. What issue is Paul addressing?

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. What are the two spiritual gifts that Paul focuses on in 1 Corinthians 14? What information can we glean about each from vv. 1-5?

Gift: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Gift: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_
2. According to 14:1 prophecy is the gift that is to be especially desired.

	1. What is prophecy?
	2. Why is it to be especially desired? How can we desire it?
3. What principles, positive and negative, does Paul layout in vv. 6-25 about speaking in tongues?
4. In vv. 26-40 Paul outlines what should happen ‘when you come together’.

	1. What is the goal whenever we gather together? What has God given us for this? (v. 26)
	2. What instructions does Paul give about tongues? (vv. 27-28)
	3. What instructions does Paul give about prophecy? (vv. 29-33)

* 1. What instructions does Paul give about the role of men and women in the weighing of prophecy? (vv. 34-35)

1. In vv. 36-40 Paul brings his argument to a conclusion with a final warning and encouragement. How has this passage helped you better understand “spiritual things” (12:1-3)? How has it challenged the way you gather with your brothers and sisters in Christ? What are you eager to do differently?

**STUDY 8: 1 CORINTHIANS 15**

**READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-34**

1. In vv. 1-11, Paul reminds the Corinthians of the gospel that they have received and believed. What is the gospel?
2. What sources of authority does Paul give for the truth of Jesus’ bodily resurrection? (vv. 1-11)

1. From vv. 12-19, why is Paul puzzled by the Corinthians? Why is their error so crucial?

1. In vv. 20-28, Paul describes Christ as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep”. What does he mean? When will our resurrection happen?
2. In vv. 29-34 Paul uses several scenarios to show how the coming resurrection ought to motivate life now. In what ways does/should the resurrection motivate people?

**READ 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-58**

1. In vv. 35-49, Paul is comparing our present bodies with the future resurrection body. Explore the different ways Paul explains the resurrection:

	1. A seed and a plant (vv. 35-38)
	2. Different kinds of flesh and bodies (vv. 39-44a)
	3. Natural and spiritual bodies (vv. 44b-49)

1. According to vv. 50-57, why is it essential that we be resurrected, bodily? How has, and how will, God achieved this?
2. In v. 58, Paul gives a final exhortation in light of his entire argument up to this point. What two implications of the resurrection does Paul put before the Corinthians? Discuss as a group what each one will mean for our lives too.

	1.
	2.

**STUDY 9: 1 CORINTHIANS 16**

**READ THE PASSAGE**

1. As Paul concludes this letter he reminds the Corinthians of something they already knew: that he would be returning to them and collecting money for the church in Jerusalem.

	1. How was the money to be collected?

* 1. How would this collection embody the main ideas of this letter?
	2. How do these instructions challenge us?

1. Paul has had some harsh words for the Corinthians in this letter, but as he describes his travel plans in vv. 5-9, what does it reveal about his heart for the Corinthians? How can that be an example for us to imitate? (c.f. 10:31-11:1)
2. As Paul informs the Corinthians of the situation in Ephesus, what two reasons compel Paul to stay there long? How can that be an example for us to imitate?
3. What can we learn from the instructions regarding:

	1. Timothy (vv. 10-11)
	2. Apollos (v. 12)
4. In vv. 13-14 Paul gives five commands. What are they? How does each relate to the larger themes in 1 Corinthians?

1. In vv. 15-18 Paul urges the Corinthians to submit to Stephanas and other gospel workers. How might the Corinthians have had their minds shaped regarding servanthood, submission, and giving recognition to others?
2. There were lots of issues in the Corinthian church – money, sex, greed, communion, idolatry, speaking in tongues etc. What do the final greetings in vv. 19-24 show us about the power of the cross? How do they help us think about what needs to shape our church?