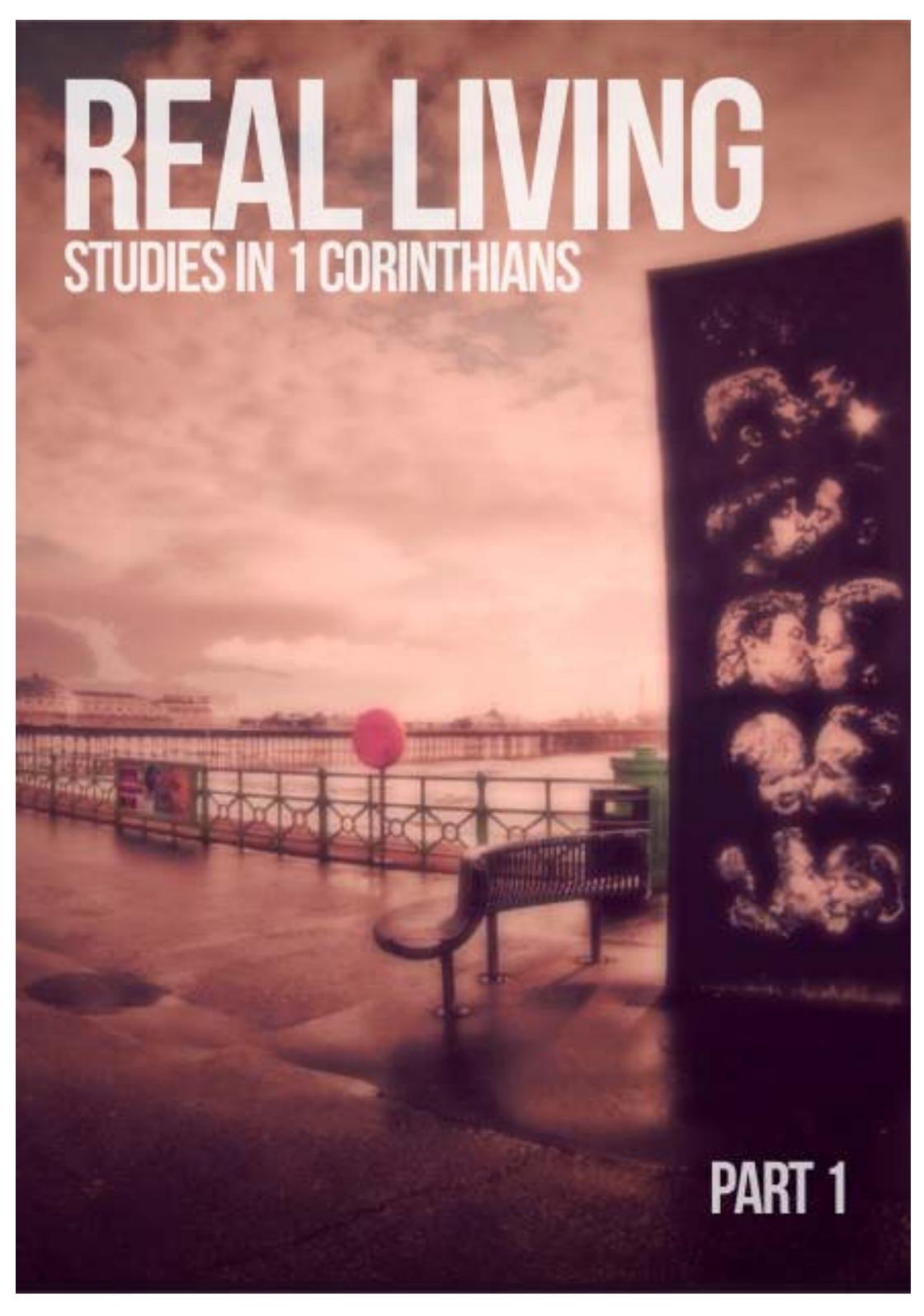


REAL LIVING

STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS



PART 1

Introduction

How to really live and love in Brighton today, that is what I hope we will discover as we dig into 1 Corinthians. It is written by the Apostle Paul to the church in Corinth a seaside city not unlike Brighton, covering issues such as unity, sexuality, spirituality, and freedom.

Part of my desire is that this would be a series of studies that we cover together as communities and small groups across the church and that as we do that, it would help us in our togetherness in Christ and His word. We will also be going through the book of 1 Corinthians in our Sunday morning messages so do feedback to Tim or I any of your reflections from the Bible studies or the messages.

The Bible studies are deliberately designed to be flexible to recognise the many different types of communities and groups that meet. They are basically written for those that meet once every other week to study the Bible.

For communities where the outward focus is strong, a shorter study with seekers in mind maybe more appropriate. For these groups I have tried to highlight in bold questions that I think could work well for such communities. Some groups I know meet weekly - and hence there is an extra study most weeks for those groups to have 2 studies over 2 weeks studying one chapter.

Finally there are some communities and groups where they meet less frequently, only monthly or so, for Bible study. While in some seasons that is appropriate, perhaps this is a season to explore as a group trying to meet more regularly, like every other week, this would enable some of your discussions not only to keep up with both the sermons on Sunday and the studies, but also to strengthen togetherness in Christ's word.

The best benefit will come from doing these studies alongside the appropriate sermons in the morning, but don't worry if you get slightly out of sync, either ahead or behind.

May the Lord bless you as you study His word; may it help us with "Real living".

David

1. Real Living: How to lack nothing

1 Corinthians 1

Sermons preached on 22nd and 29th September

Connect

1. What makes a person Spiritual? What qualities would you expect to see in their life? What would you not expect to see?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 1

Verses 1-9 Greetings

2. Who is this letter to?
3. What blessings do we already have because of our relationship with Christ?
4. What other things does Paul desire for the Corinthian believers?

Verses 10-17 Division

5. Imagine a church with no divisions and absolute unity. Describe what you see?
6. Now imagine what it was like to be part of the Corinthian church with its four factions. Describe what you see? What impact is it having on individuals? What impact is it having on the wider community?

7. Why do you think cliques had grown around Paul, Apollos and Cephas?

Verses 18-31 Foolishness and Wisdom

8. What are the different reactions people have to the message of the cross? Why are such opposite views held? Why is it so contentious? See also Deuteronomy 21:23.

NB This is not a new phenomenon.

“Archaeologists discovered some second century graffiti in Rome making fun of a young man bowing down before a figure on a cross, which was drawn with the head of a donkey. Besides this the caption:

“Alexamenos worships God!” His friends clearly thought it was ridiculous that he should be foolish enough to worship as a god a man who had been executed as a common criminal.”

John Stott, “The Cross of Christ”

9. What do these verses teach us about earthly wisdom?
10. What then should our attitude be towards learning?
11. The Corinthians in particular boasted in worldly wisdom and those who taught it. How does the message of the cross destroy all such boasting?
12. The Corinthians also felt intellectually superior to others. What had they forgotten about their past and the reason God chose them?

13. Have you ever been made to feel foolish for being a Christian?

Apply

14. Disunity begins between two people. Are you in disagreement with a brother or sister? What could you do to resolve it?

15. What have you learned about true Spiritual wisdom?

Prayer suggestions:

- Spend a few minutes reflecting on John 17:20-23 then pray for unity in the church.
- Pray for those who consider the cross to be foolishness so that they too can be saved. You may want to share the names of family and friends.

Extra Study

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. What achievements in your life are you proud of? What reasons do you have to be proud of them?

Discover

Verses 1-9 Greetings

3. What is an apostle?
4. Where does Paul's authority come from? Why should we listen to him?

Verses 10-17 Divisions

5. What is Paul's appeal in verse 10 and why does he do it "in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ"? What extra significance does this give it?
6. What has happened in the Corinthian church? Why do you think this has happened?

Verses 18-31 Foolishness and Wisdom

7. What in particular were the Jews looking for? Why?
8. What in particular were the Greeks looking for? Why?
9. In the light of what they were looking for why did these two groups of people especially find the cross to be a “stumbling block” and “foolishness”?
10. Do people still seek the same things today? In what ways can it be wrong to seek them?
11. What foolish, weak, lowly and despised things has God chosen to display his wisdom? How has he done this?
12. What does it mean to “boast in the Lord”?

Apply

13. There are many different types of people mentioned in chapter one. Which one do you most identify with? Does this need to change?

Prayer suggestions:

- Ask God for the Spiritual gift of wisdom as individuals and for the church.
- Pray for those who consider the cross to be foolishness so that they too can be saved. You may want to share the names of family and friends.

2. Real Living: become wise through foolishness

1 Corinthians 2

Sermons preached on 29th September & 6th October

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?
2. Can you think of a time you have felt out of step with unbelieving people around you? What happened?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 2

Verses 1-5 Christ crucified

3. What did it mean for Paul to “know nothing... except Jesus Christ and him crucified”? Why did he make this resolve?
4. In what ways is this phrase an accurate summary of the gospel?
5. What would your life look like if you were to make this same resolve?
6. When is human knowledge useful to the gospel? In what ways can it be a hindrance?

Verses 6-16 Spiritual wisdom

7. What is the “message of wisdom”?
8. Have you ever found this message intellectually challenging to your own “wisdom of this age”? If so, in what ways?
9. How does God reveal his wisdom to us?
10. It is believed that the “we” in verse 11-13 is referring to Paul himself and the other apostles. In light of this what is the relationship between the Spirit of God and the Bible?
11. What impact does this have for us?

Apply

12. How can you ensure that you are receiving God's wisdom and avoid living by the “wisdom of this age”?

Prayer suggestions:

- Read James 1 verses 5-7. Ask God to give you wisdom to live your life
- Pray that God would enable your family and friends to receive God's Spirit so they are able to understand message of the cross.
- Pray for an opportunity to put into practice verses 1-5 with one or more of your family and friends you have been praying for.

Extra Study

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. When talking about the gospel to an unbeliever what impact does your personal education, family background, social standing and career have on your conversation?
3. As you reflect on your past what reasons do you have for being humble rather than proud?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 2

Verses 1-5 Christ crucified

4. What was Paul's heritage and background? See Philippians 3:5-6
5. Why does he not draw attention to this in his contact with the Corinthians?
6. Would it have changed the message? What is he trying to avoid?

Verses 6-16 Spiritual wisdom

7. What does Paul mean by “God's secret wisdom”?

8. When and how was it hidden? See Luke 24:25-27
9. When and how was it revealed? Compare John 20:9 to Acts 2:24-28
10. Having received God's wisdom what are some of the dangers for the Christian? (Verses 15-16). How can we avoid falling into them?
11. What does it mean to have the "mind of Christ"?

Apply

12. How can you have the "mind of Christ"? Are there any practical implications for you that could put in place this week?

Prayer suggestions:

- Pray that God would enable your family and friends to receive God's Spirit so they are able to understand message of the cross.
- Pray for an opportunity to put into practice verses 1-5 with one or more of your family and friends you have been praying for.

3. Real Living: Resolving conflict in the church

1 Corinthians 3

Sermon preached on 13th October

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?
2. When you are looking for a new church to join, what do you look for? What attracted you to Holland Road?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 3

Verses 1-4 Spiritual immaturity

3. Even though the Corinthians had the Spirit of God, what was it that caused Paul to say they were spiritually childish?

Paul had founded the church in Corinth during one of his missionary journeys where he stayed for some time, (Acts 18:18) leaving Apollos to lead it as he continued on. It seems both Paul and Apollos had their loyal followers who had developed an unhealthy rivalry between themselves and the abilities of their preferred leader.

4. Why was this rivalry especially unhealthy and immature?

Verses 5-15 Founded on Christ

5. What is Paul's teaching on:
 - a) The role of a church leader?
 - b) The position of the church?
 - c) The foundation of the church?
6. What are the implications of this for how we view and treat our church leaders and each other?
7. In what ways is the church like a field? In what ways is it like a building?
8. What kind of works are gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay and straw?

Verses 16-22 Belonging to Christ

9. What warning is contained in these verses? And what encouragement? Why was each of them needed in Corinth?
10. In verse 3 Paul has accused the Corinthians of being worldly. How can he say to the same people, "You are God's temple" and "God's Spirit lives in you"?

Apply

Spend a moment or two by yourself and imagine a scale of spirituality. At one extreme sits worldly attitudes, thoughts and actions. At the other extreme sits absolute holiness in all attitudes, thoughts and actions.

11. According to how you have lived your life in the last week, where would you place yourself? If you feel able break into twos and share your reflections with each other.

Prayer suggestions:

- Pray Ephesians 1:15-18 for each other.
- Pray the same prayer for your family and friends who are unbelievers.

4. Real Living:

Who should I follow? Hero worship in the church

1 Corinthians 4

Sermons preached on 20th October

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?
2. How do you deal with the problem of pride in your life?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 4

Verses 1-7 Faithfulness

3. What does Paul consider to be the most important quality of his leadership/preaching? Why do you think this is?
4. What do you think the Corinthians were judging him on?
5. What standards do we often use to judge God's servants?
6. What does it mean "to go beyond what was written" (verse 6)? How might this lead to taking pride over one another?

Verses 8-17 Spiritual Pride

6. How does Paul describe the position of an apostle v 9?
7. What were some of the sacrifices that the apostles made?
8. What is the attitude of the Corinthians compared to that of Paul and the other apostles? What had they got wrong?
9. Imagine you are a Corinthian believer receiving this rebuke from Paul. How do you feel? What do you think?
10. What has motivated Paul to write these things?

Verses 18-21 Kingdom power

11. What kind of Kingdom power do you think Paul hopes to find when he visits the Corinthians?
12. Which is the best symbol for this power – a whip or a gentle loving spirit?

Apply

13. What kind of Kingdom power is evident in your life?
14. What would it mean for you to imitate Paul? (verse 16).

Prayer suggestions:

- Read silently Philippians 2:6-11 and spend a few moments reflecting on the humility of Christ. Pray from this.
- Pray that God will show you where you need to make changes, either in your attitude or actions.

5. Real Living: Judge those inside the church not outside

1 Corinthians 5

Sermons preached on 27th October

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?

“The consumer is champion and personal choice is everything...This is the era of the do-it-yourself faith, of making your own god”
Martin Wroe of the Observer.

2. Do you agree that this is an accurate description of attitudes towards faith in Britain today? Why or why not?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 5

Verses 1-3 Sexual immorality

3. What has gone wrong in the Corinthian church? How has this level of immorality been allowed to happen?
4. What reasons might they have put forward for being “proud” (verse 2) of what was happening? What does this further reveal about their spirituality?

5. What is the difference between the “judgement” Paul is expressing in verse 3 and the type of judging he has previously condemned in chapter 4:5? See also Matthew 7:1 & 5.

Verses 4-5 Church Discipline

6. The man in question is unrepentant. What instructions does Paul give to handle this situation?
7. How should it have been tackled as soon as it was known? See also Matthew 18:15-20?
8. To “hand this man over to Satan” is to send him out of the church and back into the world, where Satan holds sway. How is this intended to benefit him?

Verses 6-8 Effects of sin

9. What effect do these verses suggest unchallenged sinful behaviour by an individual might have on the whole church? What about just a little sin?
10. Paul compares the Christian life to the Passover and the Feast of unleavened bread. How are they similar?

Verses 9-13 Attitude to unbelievers

11. What is our attitude to be towards immoral behaviour among unbelievers?

12. How does this change when dealing with believers? Why the difference?

13. How can you apply a balanced understanding of God’s holiness and His grace when faced with immorality in an unbeliever?

Apply

14. Is there a habit, thought pattern, or attitude in your life that you would feel uncomfortable about if someone tried to bring it to your attention?
15. Have you ever considered the consequences that your sin has on the life of the entire church?
16. How can you cultivate a teachable attitude in your life? Who are you currently accountable to?

Prayer suggestions:

Take a few moments to examine your life. Search yourself for any immorality.

- Are you doing anything that you know is sin; that you know God forbids? If so, confess it and turn away from it. If you think you will need to make yourself accountable to someone else in the group make sure you speak to someone.
- Pray for the gift of discernment to be evident amongst the body at Holland Road so that sin may be revealed, challenged wisely and handled appropriately.
- Keep praying for God to reveal himself to your family and friends.

Extra Study

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. What is your view of sin? Do you shrug it off or view it as God views it? Does your view change according to whether you are considering sin in your own life or seeing it in someone else?

Discover

Verse 1-3 Laxity in holiness

3. The Corinthians were exhibiting a gross lack of concern for holiness. How else might this have manifested itself? See Romans 8:5 and Galatians 5:16 and 19:21.
4. What safeguards could a church put in place to help prevent such laxity as the Corinthians were displaying from ever becoming an issue?

Verses 6-8 A little yeast

5. In verses 7-8 Paul refers to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Read together Exodus 12:14-20 which lays out the instructions given to the Israelites regarding this Feast.
6. What instructions were given concerning eating bread or anything made with yeast?

7. What is to happen to a person who eats bread or anything made with yeast during the Feast of Passover and Unleavened bread?
8. What kind of bread were they to eat during this time?
9. What does the "yeast" in bread represent in 1 Corinthians 5:8?
10. What does "bread without yeast" represent in 1 Corinthians 5:8?
11. How is Christ described in 1 Corinthians 5:7?
12. Why is it so important to get rid of the sin in our lives?

Verses 9-13 Attitude to unbelievers

13. Remind yourselves of your answers to question 11 from last week. Do you believe it is true that the Christian community is more often intolerant with unbelievers and tolerant with believers? Why do you think this is?
14. What are the dangers of this?

Apply

15. What things foster a culture of purity and intolerance of sin in a church? Are formal rules enough?

16. What are the risks of misplaced interest in the morality of other Christians?
How can we avoid them?

17. How can you encourage each other to live "holy and Godly lives"? 2 Peter
3:11

Prayer suggestions:

- Read through Ephesians 4:24-5:4.
- Pray for each other to be able, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to get rid of the attitudes and practices of a life without Christ and to fully embrace a life of holiness and purity.

6. Real Living: Why does sex matter?

1 Corinthians 6

Sermons preached on 3rd & 17th October

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?
2. How do you respond when you are mistreated by another Christian? Have you ever been tempted to take legal action against a fellow believer? What were your motives? What did you learn from this experience?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 6

Verses 1-11 Lawsuits

3. What commands and guidance does Paul give for settling disputes between Christians?
4. What do you suppose constitutes "trivial" cases? Should Christians ignore "trivial" sins committed against them?
5. Are you willing to be cheated or taken advantage of? If not, why not?
6. Why do you think Paul highlights the specific sins that he does in verses 9 and 10?

7. Why does Paul warn us not to be deceived?
8. In verse 11, what three processes affected the Corinthians change of behaviour?

- Search your own heart for any unresolved issues you may have either against another believer or with your own body.
- Pray for your family and friends.

Verses 12-20 Sexual immorality

9. What false views does Paul refute? What arguments does he use to do this?
10. What does it mean in practice to “flee from sexual immorality” and to “honour God with your bodies”? See also Romans 12:1-2

Apply

11. If you find yourself in a conflict with another believer that you are unable to resolve between yourselves, how would you seek to resolve it? Who would you like to mediate (verses 4-6)? Who do you consider to be a peacemaker?
12. How can you work toward increasing your level of biblical wisdom and discernment?
13. (For personal reflection) What can you do to help yourself to avoid sexual immorality?

Prayer suggestions:

- Pray for the church to be a body of people that resolve conflicts well and avoid sexual immorality.

Extra Study

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. When you are wronged how do you usually react? How easy do you find it to “turn the other cheek”? Are you someone who finds it hard not to retaliate?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 6

Verses 1-11 Lawsuits

3. Why should a believer refuse to take another believer to court? Are there conditions under which Christians should take legal action against other Christians?
4. How do you feel about judging the world and angels?
5. What does this tell us about the high view that God holds believers in? Does this give you a greater sense of confidence when you think of judging more trivial matters here on earth? Why or why not?
6. Is it practical to think that there will be elders/judges in a church who can settle disputes? Is this a reasonable goal? How can it be accomplished? See also Luke 12:13-15. What limits might be advisable?

7. Do you believe Christians who persist deliberately in a lifestyle of sin, as describe in verses 9-10 go to heaven? Why or why not?
8. How does verse 11 reassure those who have sinned in these ways but have since repented?

Verses 12-20 Sexual immorality

9. What do you learn from these verses about a Christian view of the body?
10. Verse 12 is believed to be a popular Corinthian saying of the time. Explain the second part of the verse “I will not be mastered by anything.” What does it mean if you are mastered by something?
11. What kinds of things or habits can enslave us?
12. How can understanding your body as a temple of the Holy Spirit (verse 19) help you to have a healthy control over your bodily desires?

Apply

13. Read Matthew 6:19-34. How can you learn to trust in a sovereign God who promises to meet all your needs rather than give in to your desires in moments of weakness? What would help you to be stronger?

14. What is the conclusion on how we should use our body? How can this be applied to other areas besides sex?

Prayer suggestions:

- Pray for God to give us the wisdom we all need to help each other in resolving disputes.
- Pray for those caught in sexual sin especially those who feel enslaved or trapped by circumstances, such as child prostitutes and those who are trafficked and sold. Pray that God will provide them a way out.

7. Real Living: Marriage & singleness

1 Corinthians 7

Sermons preached on 24th November & 1st December

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last time influenced your life this week?
2. What contemporary view of marriage have you encountered in the people around you? How are the consequences of that view impacting us all?

Discover - Read 1 Corinthians 7

Some Corinthians at the time held the view that all sex was unspiritual. Quite possibly this had developed among some of the Christians because of the lax attitude we encountered in chapter 6 that others had towards the body's significance and value. It seems some were extending their low view of the body to justify the contradictory position that all sex was unspiritual. Paul starts chapter 7 correcting the Corinthians thinking on this matter. It is thought that the phrase "it is good for a man not to marry" in verse 1 may have been another popular saying of the time that he is refuting.

Verses 1-11 Marriage and Singleness

3. What is Paul teaching about marriage and singleness?
4. How can married couples apply the biblical principle that "my body belongs to my spouse" in verses 4-5?

5. How will greater personal sacrifice protect married couples from Satan? Why does Satan seek to obliterate Christian marriages?

Verses 12-16 Mixed marriage

6. What instructions are given to those married to unbelievers? See also Malachi 2:15 and I Peter 3:1- 2.

'Sanctified' (verse 14) cannot mean 'saved', as that has still to be decided (verse 16). It may mean that Paul wants to distinguish between union within marriage and the union outside of it which he condemned so strongly in chapter 6 verses 15-17.

7. Why might the believing partner need this reassurance about their own status and that of their children?"
8. What are the benefits of staying with an unbelieving spouse?

Verses 17-24 Situation in life

9. What are the principles behind Paul's teaching?
10. What difference would a sense of calling to your situation in life make?

Verses 25-40 A choice

11. Why does Paul change from giving instruction to giving advice in verse 25?

12. What three pieces of insight and advice does Paul give regarding marriage and singleness in:

- a) Verses 29-30
- b) Verses 33-34
- c) Verses 36-38

13. What influence should each of these have on our own view of marriage?

Apply

14. What situation in life are you currently in? Think about your job, life stage, marital status, journey of faith. What reasons do you have to be thankful for it?
15. Are you presently content in the role that God has called you to occupy? Why or why not? Why might you be seeking a change?

Prayer suggestions:

- Based on the principles you have been discussing pray for:
 - ⇒ those who are single
 - ⇒ those who are married
 - ⇒ those considering marriage
- Pray for those outside the church who have no understanding of God's high view of their body and of marriage.

Extra Study

Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. How does contemporary thinking influence our view of the significance of our circumstances?

Discover - Read I Corinthians 7

Verses 1-11 Marriage and Singleness

3. What practical advice does Paul give for avoiding sexual immorality?
4. What is the teaching about separation and divorce?
5. How does this compare to Jesus' teaching in Matthew 19:9 and Mark 10:2-12?

Verses 12-16 Mixed marriage

6. What is the significance of verse 14 for the children in a marriage where one parent believes and one does not?
7. What reasons does Paul give for making a concession for divorce in verses 15-16?

8. Why is this not an easy way out? Can you think what circumstances this might apply to?

Verses 17-24 Situation in life

9. Which two examples of situation in life does Paul use to illustrate his point? Why does he choose these in particular?

Verses 25-40 A choice

10. What are the advantages of singleness?
11. How would you summarize the teaching on marriage from these verses into one sentence?
12. What advice does Paul give to those considering marriage in verses 36-40? What one condition does Paul make? Why is this?

Apply

13. I Timothy 3:16 says "All scripture is God breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness". As you think back over the whole series in I Corinthians so far, how has it been useful for
 - a) Teaching
 - b) Rebuking

d) Training in righteousness

14. Is there any one thing in particular God has spoken to you about? What are you doing about it?

Prayer suggestions:

- Pray for God's help to fulfil the call he has placed on your life.
- Pray for your family and friends to hear and respond to his call.

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Small Group Studies
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