



Big Idea:

How does a church live out the calling of God.

THE STORY SO FAR:

After the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth his followers started moving out to the surrounding regions to tell people about the good news of Jesus. Early on as recorded in the book of Acts they face some strong opposition from the leading Jewish authorities who saw this new religion as something that was corrupting their sacred view of who God was. These Christians in their view were blaspheming by saying that God had fulfilled the Old Testament promises of blessing the entire world by becoming the man Jesus. The Christians also claimed that Jesus had died a death on behalf of the people and this death atoned for the sin of people. The proof of this was that God had raised him from the dead.

One of the religious leaders that headed this opposition was Saul from Tarsus, a highly educated and influential religious leader. Saul meets the resurrected Jesus on his way to persecute this new Christian movement and radically converts to follow Jesus. Saul then uses his Roman name Paul and as he travels around, he tells people about the new life that is possible by following Jesus. One

of the places Paul stops and works for several years is the city of Corinth.

Corinth was a major port city for the Roman world and would see a large amount of trade and imports. Paul spent about a year and a half there working as a tent maker and teaching about Jesus.

Read Acts 18:1-17

In this passage we see that Paul had spent time in Athens the major political center of the Greek world. He then travels to Corinth which was the major port for the region.

Question: Paul seems to use a lot of strategic intentionality about the places he travels

Paul stays in contact with the churches he plants, and they write letters asking for wisdom and clarity about the issues they face. The letters to the Corinthian church is an example of this because they had a lot of issues they were trying to work through. Here you can see an outline of the book and the issues inside the church that Paul is addressing.

Disunity in the church, 1-4
Improper sexual relationships 5
Christians bringing a lawsuit against each other 6
Healthy marital relationships 7
Food sacrificed to idols 8-10
How to gather in worship 11-14
The resurrection 15

Read: 1 Corinthians 1:10-25

Questions: How does Paul address teachers/preachers being elevated above Christ?

Read: 1 Corinthians 4:5-21

Questions: How do you see Paul responding to the original issues stated in chapter 1?

Paul uses this outline through the rest of the book, he address specific issues the Corinthian church is having and shows them how the Gospel when properly applied solves the problem. While it is simple it is not easy for them to do.

Read: 1 Corinthians 5:1-12

The 2nd part of verse 5 points to a future hope that the discipline of the local church will help lead to the salvation of the man who is sleeping his stepmother.

Questions:

What do you think of Paul's reaction to what is going on in the church?

Why does he instruct the people to put the man out of the community?

Paul creates a lot of clarity for how the church should love fellow believers and non-believers. Why is that clarity important?

Read: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13

It is important for Christians to have unity on the central issues of the faith, such as the Lordship of Jesus, that he really died on a cross and was raised to life. Other issues such as the color of the carpet in the church can be issues that are up for debate.

Questions:

What is Paul calling sides that disagree to do in the case of food sacrificed to idols?

How can this principle be applied with issues that people struggle with today?

Read: 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

Paul here shows that he is willing to take on many things to move the message of Jesus forward. He is willing to do anything short of sin to introduce people to Jesus.

The next section Paul addresses the church and gives them instructions for how to have an orderly worship service.

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:20-26

Paul focuses on the centrality of the resurrection as part of his core argument for unity.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12-23

There are many difficult issues the church in Corinth is dealing with. Paul is clear that some of these issues are central to the worship of God and gives firm instructions for how to deal with them. Other lessor issues he encourages the people to live with the other brother in mind, to live in unity with one another. Not uniformity of agreement on all issues but a unity grounded in the resurrection. He ends his book with these words.

Questions:

What is the difference between unity and uniformity?

Why does Paul challenge the church to life in unity?

Read: 1 Corinthians 16:13-14

What Paul consistently does through the book is draw the Corinthian church back to the good news of Jesus. He grounds all of his correction and direction in that gospel message and then applies it to their issues.

Question:

How does seeing all of life through the lens of the way of Jesus redefine how we live?