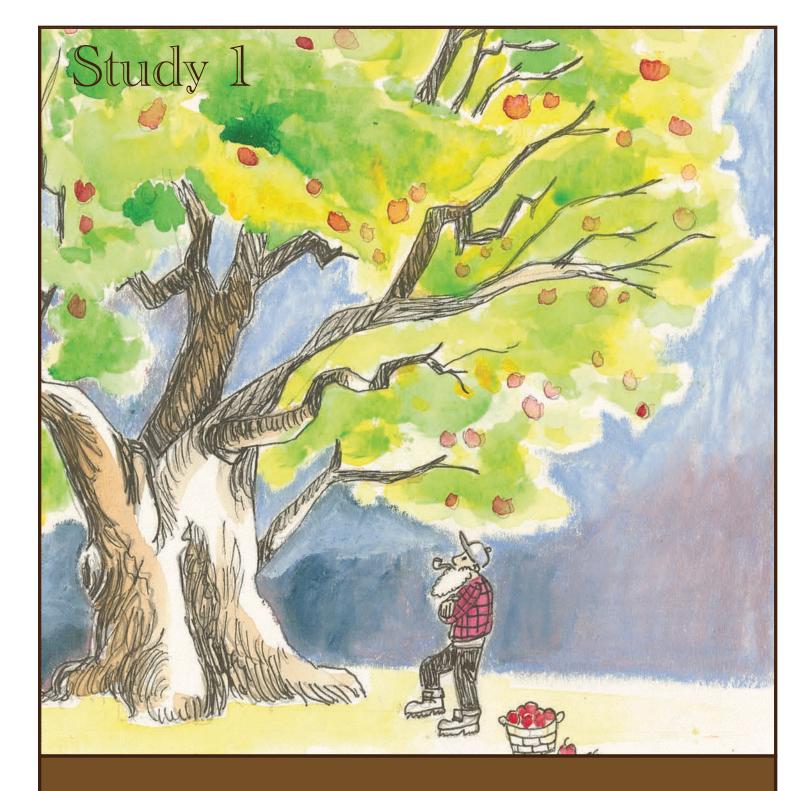
Growing in True Spirituality

1 Corinthians Series

Companion Bible Study

Table of Contents

Study One	5
Study Two	13
Study Three	21
Study Four	29
Study Five	37
Study Six	45
Study Seven	53
Study Eight	61
Study Nine	69
Study Ten	77
Study Eleven	85
Study Twelve	93



1 Corinthians 1:1–9

Paul begins his letter with an opening (v. 1-3) and thanksgiving (v. 4-9). In this opening, Paul identifies himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ, identifies the church as those sanctified in Christ Jesus, and in so doing highlights the called nature of Christianity. Both Paul and the church have been called by God into a new identity and purpose. By highlighting this "called" identity Paul is both emphasizing the centrality of Christ for Christian identity and community as well as anticipating the problem of divisions within the Corinthian community (1:10-4:21).

Paul then continues in thanksgiving to give genuine thanks for the gifts God has given the Corinthian church and reminds the them of the many benefits they have in Jesus Christ. Paul reminds the churches of these gifts because Christ's gifts are meant to unite and build one another up, whereas in Corinth, those gifts have been used for selfish purposes causing fracture and divisions within the church.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9

6

1 Cor. 1:1 Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes,

2 To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours:

3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

4 I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus, **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Notes:

A. Pray

B. Look Closely

This step is for observation and close reading.

What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, etc.

C. Look Structurally

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. Circle all the instances where Paul used the word "called". In each instance, who is called and what are they called into?

2. Underline all the times Paul invokes Jesus Christ. According to the text, what does Christ do in and for those who believe in him?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

A Few Questions to Consider

B

1. 1 Corinthians is a letter to a church filled with factions and disputes (3:10). Why does Paul mention or refer to Jesus Christ ten times in this passage rather than jumping straight into the problems?

2. Why is it important for the church to be reminded that they do not lack in any spiritual gift? What should this teach them about the God they have come to serve?

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. Three times in this opening section, Paul emphasizes the nature of the Christian calling. How does God's call change our relationship with God, ourselves, and with others?

2. Why is Paul reminding them about the unity in Christ before addressing the divisions or fractions in the community?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. What has Christ called us out of and what is he calling us into? How will we respond today, both individually and communally?

2. When God calls us into a new life in Christ, how do our lives look different from the surrounding culture today?

Prayers:	

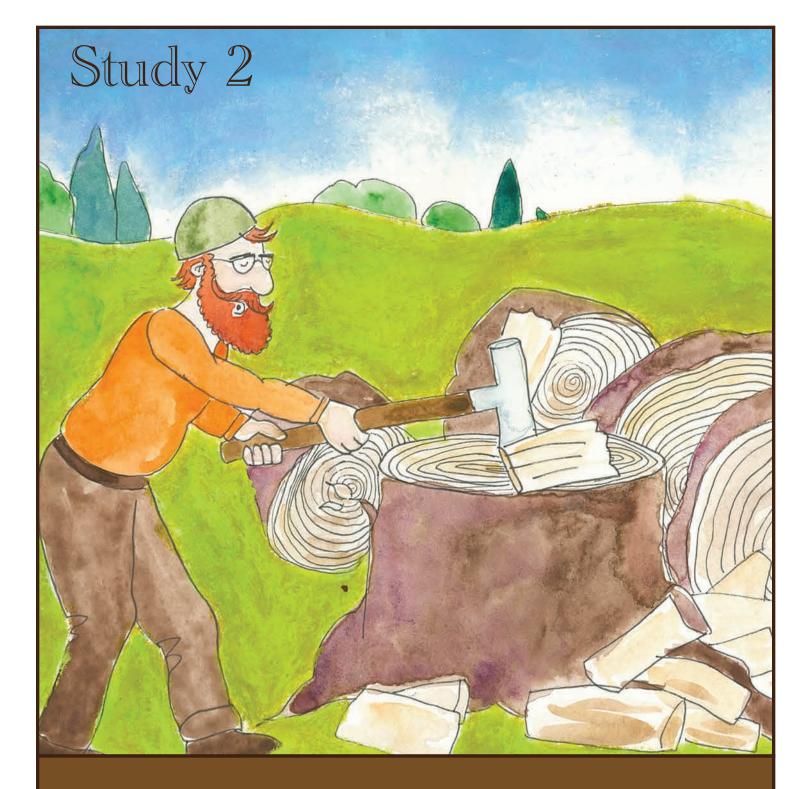
Study Notes

1. Sosthenes (1 Cor. 1:1)

We don't know much about who Sosthenes is. Some commentators think he was the scribe who wrote the letter, but it would be highly unusual for a scribe to insert his name in the greeting. Thistleson argues that Paul includes Sosthenes in his greeting because Paul does not want to be perceived as a solo maverick but instead as someone who always collaborates with others and part of a ministry team. Whoever Sosthenes is, he must have been known to the Corinthian church since Paul identifies him as brother.

2. Lord

Paul identifies Jesus Christ five times in this passage. In Corinth, to confess someone as one's "lord" is to recognize their superiority, dominance, and authority over one's life. It can be used of a master over slave, king over subject, or God over worshiper. This confession therefore binds the Corinthian church to Jesus Christ as Lord over all believers and severs them from those who insist that Caesar is lord.



1 Corinthians 1:10–17

1 Corinthians 1:10 begins not only the body of the letter, but also a block of text ending at 4:21, in which Paul deals with factions and divisions within the Christian community in Corinth. But these factions and divisions are symptomatic of an even bigger problem: the Corinthians' triumphalist attitude that fails to recognize the foolishness of the cross as the wisdom of God, and that gives them a flawed understanding of the church and its leaders—an attitude that threatens the unity of the church and endangers the gospel.

This passage states the presenting problem—factions and divisions—and ends with a sharp contrast between human wisdom and the cross, leading into the beginning of Paul's more detailed argument based on the nature of the gospel itself (Study 3), the Corinthians' own experience as the new people of God, and Paul's preaching that brought them there (Study 4), understanding true spiritual wisdom (Study 5), correcting a false view of church and ministry (Study 6), and apostles as models of the wisdom of the cross (Study 7).

1 Corinthians 1:10–17

1 Cor. 1:10 I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. **11** For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. **12** What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. 16 (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

Notes:



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C. Look Structurally

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. What seems to have been the focus of the quarreling in the Corinthian church? What is Paul calling them to do?

2. Paul is one of the leaders referred to in 1:12. With that in mind, what do you notice about his attitude in this passage?

Look at the Context

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B A Few Questions to Consider

1. Why is Paul so agitated over the Corinthians following particular apostles? And when Paul says in 1:12 that some of the Corinthians say "I follow Christ", is he commending them or criticizing them?

2. Paul invokes the images of crucifixion and baptism. How do those relate to the issue of divisions over leaders? What is it about those two issues that gets to the heart of unity?

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. When Paul asks the Corinthians to "agree" without "divisions" and "be united in the same mind and the same judgment", is he expecting uniformity of thought and expression? Is this a call for "tolerance"? What exactly is Paul calling for?

2. What is the connection between allegiance to Christian leaders, particularly those we find eloquent and inspiring, and potential disunity? How might the cross of Christ be emptied of its power by words of eloquent wisdom (1:17)? Is there anything inherently wrong with eloquence or rhetoric?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. Paul is concerned about divisions in the Corinthian church, and the impact those divisions have on the gospel. Are there any such concerns for our church today? What issues do churches divide over, and with what negative results?

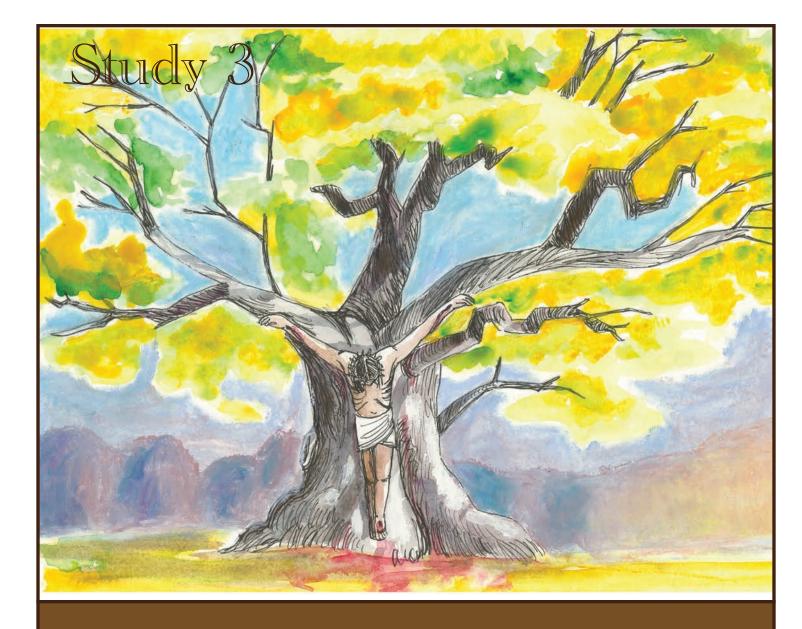
2. How do we go about being united in the same mind and the same judgment?

Prayers:	
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19

Study Notes

1. "I follow Apollos" (1 Cor. 1:12) While this passage makes it clear that the Corinthian church was divided concerning preferred leaders, there is nothing anywhere in 1 Corinthians to suggest that there was any division between the leaders themselves.



1 Corinthians 1:18-25

This passage represents the crux of the whole letter. It is the heart of the gospel, it is what the Corinthians weren't getting, and it is the root cause of most of the other issues dealt with by Paul in the letter.

The Corinthians cherish wisdom, and in the next three paragraphs–1:18-25, 1:26-31 and 2:1-5–Paul answers the question "where does wisdom lie?".

The previous passage raised the issue of divisions over leaders, concluding with a sharp contrast between human wisdom and the cross (1:17). Paul was anxious for the Corinthian Christians to understand that human cleverness, sophistication and rhetoric could effectively empty the cross of its power–if the Corinthians were putting their trust in human wisdom.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25, Paul says the gospel message itself cannot be understood in terms of human wisdom—it's all about a 'crucified messiah', the ultimate contradiction in terms; in 1:26-31, Paul argues from the Corinthians' own experience, asking how God could possibly have chosen them as believers in Corinth if the gospel was related to human wisdom. Finally, in 1 Corinthians 2:1-5, Paul describes his own experience proclaiming the gospel to the Corinthians, showing that he could in no way be viewed as an expression of human wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:18–25

1 Cor. 1:18 For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. **19** For it is written,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart."

20 Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach about and to save those who believe. 22 For Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom, 23 but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

Notes:



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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. Who does Paul say are the ones being saved? Who does Paul say are the ones who believe? And how does the text say they come to believe?

2. How does God respond to human wisdom?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. What does it mean when Paul summarizes the gospel message with the simple statement, "we preach Christ crucified"?

2. Why is a crucified Messiah a "stumbling block" to the Jews? Why is a crucified Messiah "folly" to the Gentiles? Why the difference in words?

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. If "Jews demand signs and Greeks seek wisdom" and the world cannot know God through human wisdom, how does one present the gospel to them?

2. What are the implications of Paul's statement that "in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom"? How is God's wisdom perfectly reflected in the cross?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. What lessons can we draw from this text about engaging with a society that may not understand or accept the message of the cross? How can this passage speak into modern discussions of power and weakness?

2. How might we be challenged by the notion of God's foolishness being wiser than human wisdom?

Prayers:

Study Notes

1. "For it is written..." (1 Cor. 1:19)

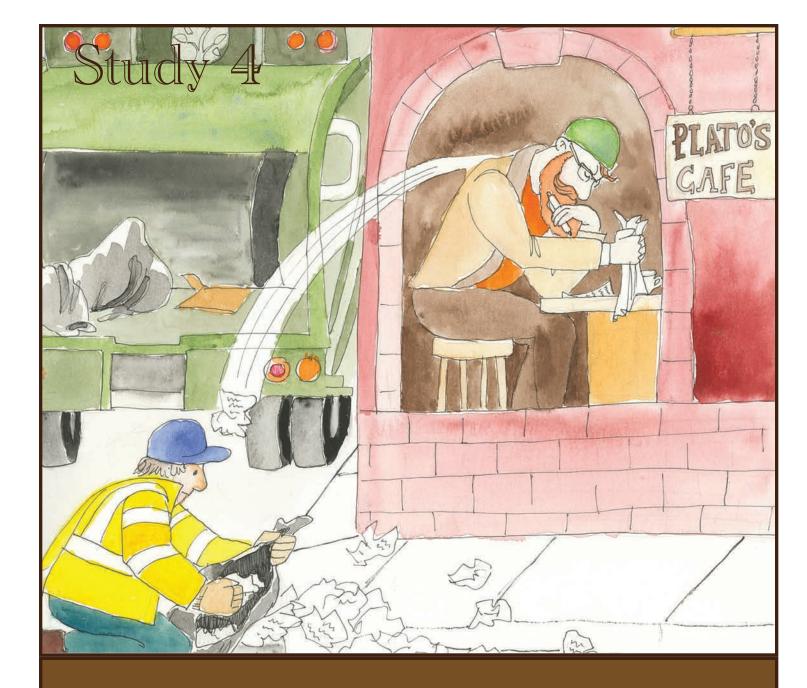
Verse 1:19 is a quotation from Isaiah 29:14 dealing with Israel's 'wise' self-reliant leaders and their false counsel, who doubted God's capacity to save them. They honored God with their words but not their hearts. God's response was a promise to do new things: the people of God and the nations of the world were in a mess, but God was going to do something new and wonderful and unanticipated which would reduce to rubble the wisdom of the world.

2. "wise...scribe...debater..." (1 Cor. 1:20)

The Greek word translated "scribe" is the technical term for the Jewish teacher of the law. And "the one who is wise" is, presumably, the Gentile wise one. So Paul is calling forth the wise Jewish teacher and the wise Gentile teacher. Both together are "the disputer of this age"; both are involved in disputes, one over law and one over wisdom. They are called out to be told that God has made foolishness the wisdom of the world.

3. "we preach Christ crucified..." (1 Cor. 1:23)

This is one of the few places in the New Testament where Christos should have been translated "messiah", not "Christ". Paul was clearly pointing to the historical reality that it was God's messiah who was crucified, a notion so thoroughly outrageous and offensive in human understanding as to be unthinkable. A "crucified messiah" is the preeminent oxymoron. Messiah means God's ultimate, powerful deliverer, the one who would bring signs, wonders, power, splendor, triumph and glory-the perfect expression of God's victory in this world. Crucifixion means weakness, humiliation, defeat. Apart from God's wisdom, the two words simply could not be juxtaposed. The Jews demanded signs, the Greeks sought wisdom, but what Paul gave them instead was a crucified messiah, a stumbling block to the Jews and folly to the Gentiles.



1 Corinthians 1:26-2:5

Paul now completes his answer to the question, "where does wisdom lie?". Back in 1:17 he contrasted human wisdom and the cross, suggesting the possibility that "words of eloquent wisdom" might empty the cross of Christ of its power.

In this passage, Paul gives two specific illustrations to demonstrate the truth of what he said in 1:18-25. In 1:26-31 he argues from the Corinthians' own experience, asking how God could possibly have chosen them as believers in Corinth if the gospel was related to human wisdom. And in 2:1-5 he describes his own experience proclaiming the gospel to the Corinthians, showing that he could in no way be viewed as an expression of human wisdom.

So, taking the three paragraphs together, Paul is arguing that the Corinthians' very existence as believers stands in contradiction to their stance on wisdom: the gospel message itself stands in contradiction to human wisdom, the recipients of the gospel message in Corinth stand in contradiction to human wisdom, and the preacher through whose words they received the Holy Spirit stands in contradiction to human wisdom.

1 Corinthians 1:26–2:5

1 Cor. 1:26 For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. 27 But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; 28 God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, 29 so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. 30 And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, 31 so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord."

2:1 And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. 2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. 3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, 4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, 5 that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.

Notes:



A. Pray

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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. According to the passage, who does God choose to call and use for his purposes?

2. What does Paul emphasize about the source of believers' boasting? What message did Paul bring to the Corinthians?

Look at the Context This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was? B A Few Questions to Consider 1. How does Paul's message challenge the cultural norms of Corinthian society? 2. What was the purpose behind Paul's intentional weakness and fear when he preached to the **Corinthians?**

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. How does the message of the cross, as emphasized by Paul, shape our understanding of God's redemptive work?

2. Paul says that he never moves on from "Jesus Christ and him crucified". Why not?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. How can the concept of God's calling and choosing encourage believers who may feel inadequate or insignificant in today's competitive world?

2. What would it mean for us to "know nothing... except Jesus Christ and him crucified"? How would we go about doing that?

Prayers:

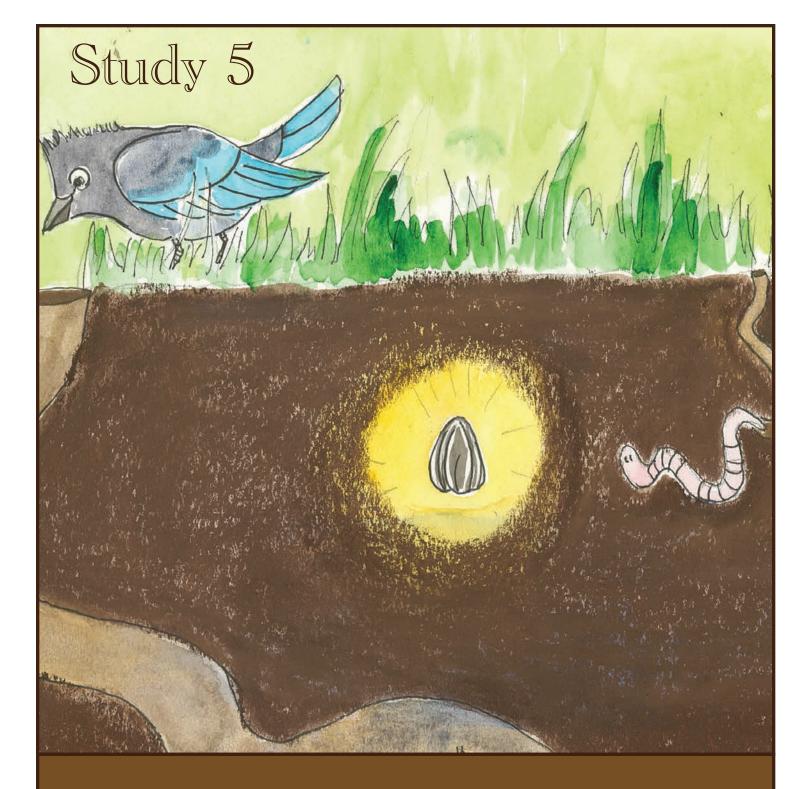
Study Notes

1. "consider your calling" (1 Cor. 1:26)

Paul is not asking them to think about the nature of their calling by God. He is asking them to think about their situation in life at the time of and following their calling.

1. "boast" (1 Cor. 1:29, 31)

We tend to equate boasting with bragging. The Greek word translated "boast" in this passage means placing one's full confidence in something, and giving verbal expression to that confidence. It would be bragging if the something was oneself, but bragging is not the primary meaning.



1 Corinthians 2:6–16

As is repeatedly demonstrated in Scripture, God does not measure importance through the eyes of worldly standards. In the previous section we see that God chooses what is foolish in the world to shame the wise and Paul did not arrive in Corinth relying on clever rhetoric. Instead, he relied on the power of God, not the wisdom of men.

Paul continues this theme by exposing the limits of human wisdom. It is temporary and doomed to pass away. "Natural" human wisdom is unable to discern the things of God even declaring it foolish. In contrast, the gospel embodies true wisdom which can only be discerned by those who are mature; those who have been saved. True wisdom cannot be acquired. It is revealed by the Spirit of God leaving the recipient unable to claim superiority. This very notion stands opposed to the values held in esteem at Corinth.

1 Corinthians 2:6–16

1 Cor. 1:6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. **7** But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. **8** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. **9** But, as it is written,

"What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God. **11** For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. **12** Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God. **13** And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. 15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one. 16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

Notes:

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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. What two types of wisdom does Paul identify in this section? What are the different sources of wisdom?

2. Who is the 'mature' in 2:16?

Look at the Context

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B A Few Questions to Consider

1. What 'secret and hidden wisdom of God' is Paul talking about in 1 Cor. 2:7? Why is it described as a secret?

2. The activity of the Holy Spirit is stressed in 1 Cor. 2:10-16. What do we see the Spirit doing? What does this reveal about the role of the Holy Spirit? What is the relationship between the cross and the Spirit?

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. Considering the priorities of secular Corinth, how does the promise in 1 Cor. 2:12 provide both assurance and rebuke to the church? (see also 1 Cor. 2:14)

2. What is the connection between allegiance to Christian leaders, particularly those we find eloquent and inspiring, and potential disunity? How might the cross of Christ be emptied of its power by words of eloquent wisdom (1 Cor. 1:17)? And is there anything inherently wrong with eloquence or rhetoric?

What's the Main Idea?

С

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. In what ways can this passage encourage you as you speak to your friends and neighbours about your faith in Christ?

2. What reassurance do we have as believers that God will guide us in our walk with him?

Prayers:

43

Study Notes

1. "rulers of this age" (1 Cor. 2:6, 8)

The rulers mentioned in these verses do not only refer to Caiaphas, Pilate, or Jewish authorities. This reference is multilayered and includes demonic powers who stand opposed to the gospel. All, however, are "doomed to pass away."

2. "But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 2:7)

Secret translates 'in a mystery' and is not referring to a puzzle that we find difficult to solve. It is referring to a secret, that as humans, we are unable to penetrate. In his loving kindness, God's Spirit has revealed his gift of salvation to us.

3. "the Lord of glory" (1 Cor. 2:7)

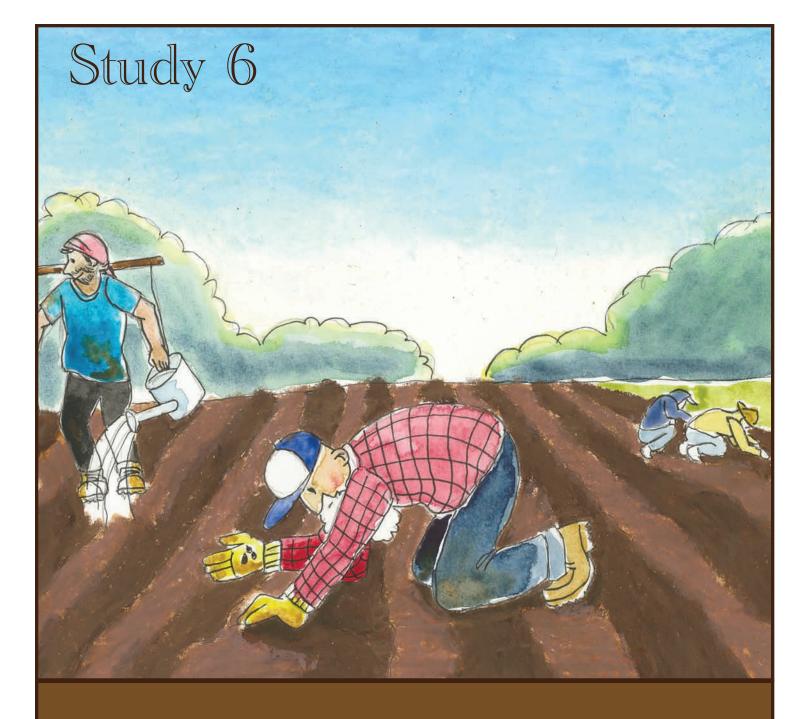
This description has been previously used to describe God the Father. Here Paul uses it as the loftiest title he has ever ascribed to Christ. Paul regularly assigns the highest place of all to Christ.

4. "The spiritual person judges all things" (1 Cor. 2:15)

Many people in Corinth would have seen themselves as 'spiritual', therefore able to 'judge all things' but Paul redefines this understanding. The person guided by the Spirit is able to go to the source of all wisdom (Ja 1:5) but this does not mean that they are experts in life. Rather, guided by the Spirit they are able to discern / spiritually judge spiritual things. Those without the Spirit are unable to do so in return. They do not have the mind of Christ.

5. "mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16)

As Christ dwells in those who have received the Holy Spirit (the truly spiritual person), they have the mindset of Christ. That is, their outlook and viewpoint is conformed to the will or mind of God.



1 Corinthians 3:1–17

At the end of chapter 2, Paul contrasted the "natural person", for whom the wisdom of God is folly, with the "spiritual person", to whom the Spirit has imparted an understanding of the true wisdom of God. Paul's concern was to demonstrate that our present existence as believers is an existence predicated on living in the Spirit. We live in a world where we are still encountering evil, but we live as Spiritual people in that world.

In this passage, Paul opens by calling out the Corinthians for their childishness—they are being infants as over against being Spiritual. They have been given everything they need to be truly Spiritual people, yet they insist on behaving like "people of the flesh", still living the self-centred, self-sufficient, competitive lives characteristic of their pagan origins, as if they were still part of the old age of corruption and decay. That they had missed the point of the cross was evident in their taking pride in the personalities of the apostles and following the normal human practice of seeking reflected honor and status by associating with them—a notion that Paul now upends by calling all of the apostles "servants", none of whom are anything.

Having chastised the Corinthians, Paul goes on to use farming imagery and then building imagery to show how their radical misunderstanding of the gospel has led to flawed understandings of both the church and its leaders.

1 Corinthians 3:1–17

1 Cor. 3:1 But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. **2** I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, **3** for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? **4** For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human?

5 What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. **6** I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. **7** So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. **8** He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. **9** For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

10 According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. **11** For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw— 13 each one's work will become manifest, for the Day will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. 14 If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.

16 Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? **17** If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Notes:



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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. In the farming metaphor of 1 Cor. 3:5-9, Paul plants and Apollos waters; in the building metaphor of 1 Cor. 3:10-17, Paul lays the foundation, but who replaces Apollos as the one who builds on it? Who, then, is this passage addressed to?

2. In 1 Cor. 3:10-17, Paul gives only one command. What is it? And what are the consequences of following or not following that command?

Look at the Context

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B A Few Questions to Consider

 What does Paul mean when he says to the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 3:16, "you are God's temple"?
(see Ezekiel 43:7) And what is he referring to when he says, "if anyone destroys God's temple"?
What is being tested by fire in 1 Cor. 3:13?

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. These Corinthians are Christians, saved by the grace of God, but nevertheless still sinners living in a fallen world. How can Paul expect them to live a Spirit-oriented life? Is it realistic to expect Christians to live cruciform lives?

2. What sort of activities do you think Paul has in mind when he writes about building the church? (1 Cor. 3:12-15) What are the implications of the fact that the result won't be known until the Day of the Lord? What determines whether our work will survive or be burned up?

What's the Main Idea?

C

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. Who built on the foundation of Jesus Christ in your church and in your own personal life? How are you seeking to build on that foundation?

2. Considering the individualism prevalent in Western society, how can this passage challenge us to prioritize the growth and wellbeing of the church as a whole?

Prayers:	
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51

Study Notes

1. "spiritual people" vs "people of the flesh" (1 Cor. 3:1)

In the New Testament, the Greek word translated "spiritual" virtually always means "pertaining to the Spirit of God", so the spiritual person is a person who has the Spirit actively working in his life, who is actively attempting to live a cruciform life. "People of the flesh", in this context, are people who live without the Spirit, who live entirely on a human level, moved entirely by human drives. These are two kinds of human existence, not two kinds of Christian existence.

2. "we are God's fellow workers" (1 Cor. 3:9)

The Greek of 3:9 is difficult to translate, resulting in an awkward phrase which appears to treat the leaders as fellow workers with God. What it actually means is that the leaders are fellow workers, all of whom belong to God.

3. "no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 3:11) The foundation is Jesus, the crucified messiah (2:2), whose work resulted in salvation, in redemption, in bringing in the Corinthians and making them God's people. The superstructure must conform to that foundation; it must be made of the same stuff.

4. "gold and silver and precious stones, wood, hay, straw..." (1 Cor. 3:12)

Gold, silver and precious stones represent the temple (1 Chr. 29:2; Ex 25:3-7; 31:4, 5; 1 Chr. 22:14-16), while wood, hay and straw, all being flammable materials, represent the stuff that the Corinthians were into.

5. "as through fire..." (1 Cor. 3:15)

This may be a colloquial expression meaning being rescued at the last moment. In his commentary, Anthony Thiselton says it is likely that the phrase had become a metaphor like "brand plucked from the burning" (Amos 4:11), comparable to "saved by the skin of one's teeth".

6. "you..." (1 Cor. 3:16-17)

Each "you" in these verses is plural. Paul is directing his comments to the church as a whole.



IF WE CAN UTILIZE OUR SYNERGISTIC MARKETS TO CUSTOMIZE INTERFACES WE COULD SYNDICATE NEXT-GENERATION VENTURES & ULTIMATELY INCUBATE VIRAL NETWORKS TO HARNESS VPSTREAM PORTALS!

1 Corinthians 3:18-4:5

This passage continues Paul's instructions in the context of building the church: 3:18-23 instructs the Corinthians as to how they should regard themselves; and 4:1-5 instructs them as to how they should regard God's servants.

The argument in 3:18-23 restates and further develops the themes from 1:18-2:16, where Paul connected wisdom and foolishness to factions and boasting in leaders. He cautions them not to be deceived by what appears to be wisdom but is not, and he offers a new reason why they shouldn't boast in human leaders.

Verses 4:1-5 restates the issues of apostles as servants and the coming judgment, with the language of the text putting the spotlight especially on Paul himself. It is thought that, because of Paul's lifestyle and particularly his suffering, his apostolic status is being questioned by some of the triumphalist Corinthians. This passage answers that challenge and speaks to the more general question of how Christians should regard leaders.

1 Corinthians 3:18–4:5

1 Cor. 3:18 Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise. **19** For the wisdom of this world is folly with God. For it is written, "He catches the wise in their craftiness," **20** and again, "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile." **21** So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours, **22** whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, **23** and you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

1 Cor. 4:1 This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. 2 Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful. 3 But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. 4 For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.

Notes:



A. Pray

B. Look Closely

This step is for observation and close reading.

What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, etc.

C. Look Structurally

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. What is Paul's instruction to those who think they are wise in this age?

2. What does Paul say about judging others and being judged in 1 Cor. 4:3-5?

3. What does Paul claim will happen when the Lord comes?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. In 1 Cor. 1:18-25 Paul asserted that what God does looks foolish to the world. How does 1 Cor. 3:18-20 add to that assertion? If following Christ has nothing to do with the things the Corinthians value and boast about, what does it have to do with?

2. What are the implications of 1 Cor. 3:21-23? Try to rephrase that statement in your own words.

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. Why is it wrong to boast about people? *Review 1 Cor. 3:5-17*. What should we boast about and why?

2. How should Christian leaders conduct themselves? Why does Paul tell the Corinthian church to not judge him?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. How easy is it for us to place value on people or church leaders according to worldly standards or by comparison with others?

2. What practical applications might the idea of "the Lord who judges me" have for Christians in today's society?

Prayers:	

59

Study Notes

1. "He catches the wise in their craftiness" (1 Cor. 3:19)

This quotation is from Job 5, which is a speech of Eliphaz, one of Job's comforters. By the end of Job it is clear that God judges those comforters and says their 'wise' counsel was wrong. The crafty are too clever for their own good and always get trapped in their own schemes and ambitions.

2. "The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile" (1 Cor. 3:20)

This quotation is from Psalm 94, which asserts that the Lord knows our thoughts and they are futile—in spite of manipulative and corrupt leadership by those in authority, the schemes of these people fail because their best thinkers are fallible.

3. "boast" (1 Cor. 3:21)

The English word "boast" is generally used to mean "brag", but that is not the primary meaning of the Greek word it translates, which carries the sense of 'taking pride in' or 'glorying in' or 'put one's confidence in' something, and giving verbal expression to that confidence. It would be bragging if the something was oneself, but bragging is not the primary meaning.

4. "all things are yours..." (1 Cor. 3:21)

This may be a Corinthian slogan taken from Greek philosophical thought: the philosophers appealed to it to affirm human self-sufficiency; Paul redefines the phrase to affirm the Christian's complete dependence on God. Paul makes the positive point that all things belong to the Corinthians because they are no longer their own but belong to Christ—everything is theirs because they are Christ's, and Christians are sharers and inheritors with Christ. In contrast, the list in 1 Cor. 3:22 can separate them from God if the believers' attention is diverted from God or to themselves. So, for example, by focusing on only one apostle or leader, they deprive themselves of access to the gifts of the apostles or leaders who they exclude.

5. "servants..." (1 Cor. 4:1)

The Greek word translated "servant" is unusual—it means helper or assistant.

6. "stewards..." (1 Cor. 4:1)

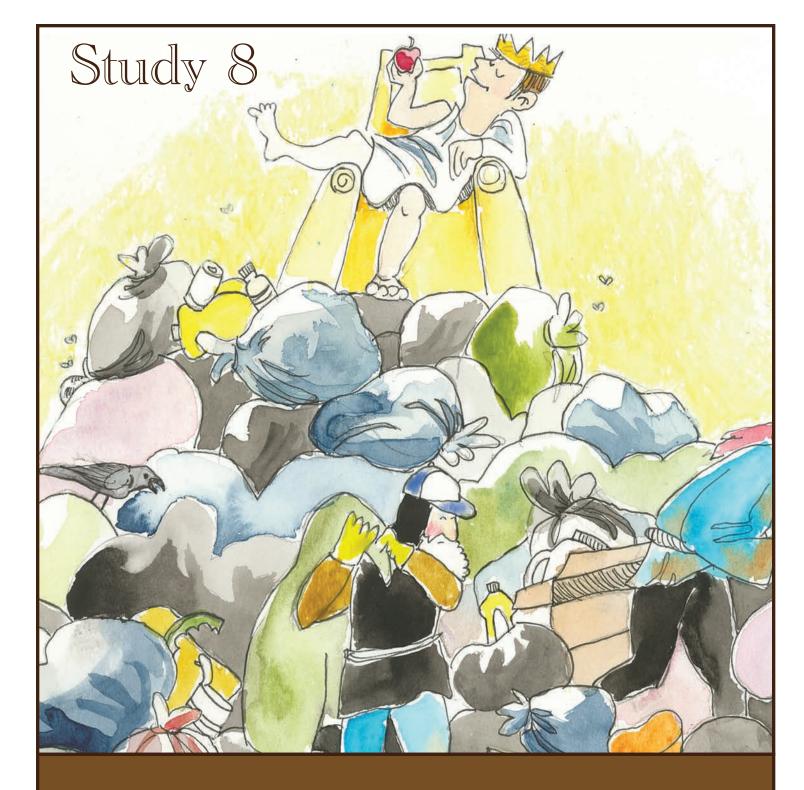
"Steward" is a confusing translation of a Greek word which referred to the manager of a household or estate. In the Greco-Roman world, that person would normally have been a trusted slave, who was responsible for the operation of the household, and who was accountable only to the master. Paul refers to the apostles in this capacity because they manage the household of God, they are responsible for bringing the guests of the household into knowledge of the mysteries of God, and they are accountable only to God.

7. "mysteries of God..." (1 Cor. 4:1)

Refers to God's plan of salvation, long hidden to human minds, but now revealed in the gospel, known through the Spirit and especially entrusted to the apostles to proclaim.

8. "Therefore do not pronounce judgment before time..." (1 Cor. 4:5)

Paul has just stated that as the Lord's steward/servant, it is to the Lord that he owes responsibility. Human judgment has little value and is unreliable; even self evaluation is suspect. Some of the Corinthians seem to be judging Paul's faithfulness and credibility compared to others. Paul says to stop judging. He is accountable to God and only God is able to judge the inner motivations of people.



1 Corinthians 4:6–21

The previous passage continues Paul's instructions in the context of building the church: 3:18-23 instructs the Corinthians as to how they should regard themselves; and 4:1-5 instructs them as to how they should regard God's servants.

This passage represents the conclusion of the opening section of (1:1 - 4:21) with 4: 8-13 being described as the climax as it provides a final step in a critique of human boasting. The Corinthians are particularly addicted to the sin of pride and Paul reminds them of the futility in their boasting; there is nothing special that sets them apart as everything they have comes from the Lord. This arrogance has led to a sense of self-sufficiency which Paul addresses in v.8. Paul's rebuke is firm in this section but comes from a place of love as he implores them to imitate him as he follows the way of Christ.

1 Corinthians 4:6–21

1 Cor. 4:6 I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favour of one against another. **7** For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! **9** For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. **10** We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honour, but we in disrepute. 11 To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, 12 and we labour, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; 13 when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

14 I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. 15 For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 16 I urge you, then, be imitators of me. 17 That is why I sent[b] you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. 18 Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. 20 For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. 21 What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

Notes:



A. Pray

B. Look Closely

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C. Look Structurally

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How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. What does it mean to 'not go beyond what is written?'

2. What does Paul mean when he asks 'what do you have that you did not receive?'

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. 1 Cor. 4:8,10 appear to be sarcastic. What point is Paul trying to make?

2. Paul uses strong language to describe the condition and situation of the apostles in1 Cor. 4:11-13. How does their reality expose the contradiction between Christian and worldly

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. What does Paul mean when he urges the Corinthians to imitate him in 1 Cor. 4:16–17?

2. In 1 Cor. 4:19, Paul questions the so-called 'power' behind the arrogant talk of the Corinthians. What demonstration of power does Paul expect to see with the coming of the Kingdom of God?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. In what ways have we been tempted to place more value on and give more time to people who are perceived to be highly educated and wealthy?

2. How does an unhealthy sense of self-sufficiency keep us from growing in our relationship with Christ?

Prayers:	

Study Notes

1. "not to go beyond what is written" (1 Cor. 4:6)

Refers to what is written in scripture but more specifically to what Paul has already been teaching the Corinthians. They must not elevate human leaders or human wisdom above God. (1 Cor. 1:29–31; 1 Cor. 1:19; 1 Cor. 3:19–20).

2. "Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings!" (1 Cor. 4:8)

The Corinthians are feeling secure. Unlike those Jesus describes in Matthew 5:6 ("Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be satisfied"), they do not need anything. The Stoic catch-cry taught by Diogenes is in view here. "I alone am rich, I alone reign as king." They appear to be adopting a Stoic ideal of self-sufficiency.

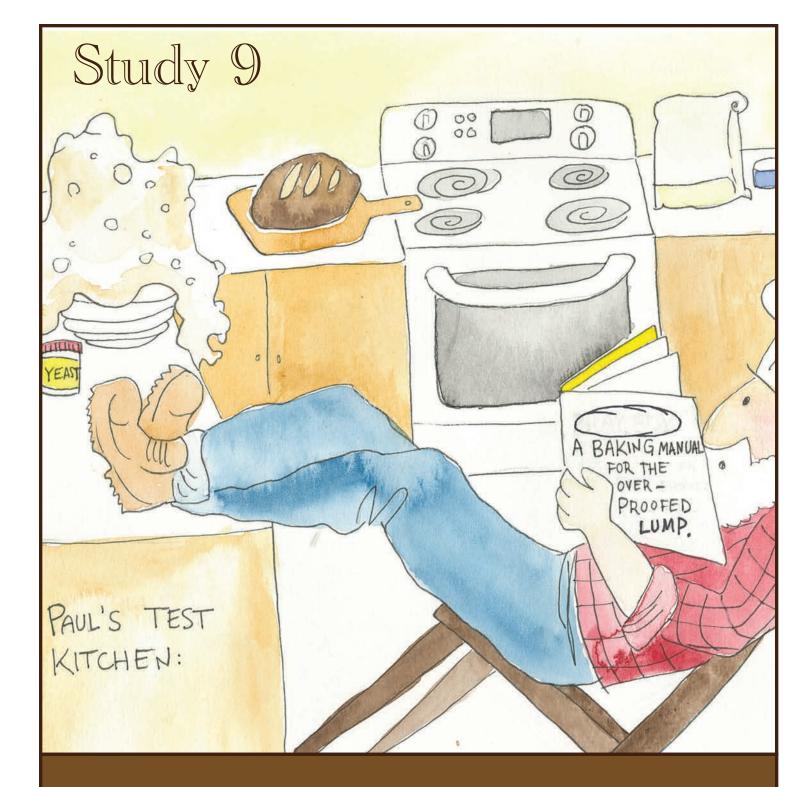
3. "For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers." (1 Cor. 4:15) 'Countless guides' represents the highest imaginable number of people who have a responsibility to teach or train but are motivated by payment. Paul, however, founded the church and his affection for them runs deep. His motivation is for their benefit and they should listen to his warnings.

4. "be imitators of me." (1 Cor. 4:16)

The focus is Christ, not Paul. 'Take your cue from me' in that Paul is demonstrating a life dead to sin and alive in Christ. (Rom. 6:6-7; 1 Thess. 1:6)

5. "For the kingdom of God does not consist of talk, but of power." (1 Cor. 4:20)

The Kingdom of God is more than clever talk and good advice, it brings salvation. The power of the Kingdom of God was demonstrated in the gospels and this power is what will enable the Corinthians to live a life worthy of their calling.



1 Corinthians 5:1–13

Paul continues his challenge in this section to rebuke a spirit of pride and boasting. Previously we see that the Corinthians are puffed up and self-sufficient. In this passage pride has embraced sexual sin in the body of Christ.

Arrogance rather than humility is governing their behaviour and unwillingness to deal with sexual sin will allow for the permeation of decay to spread within the church. In addition, the sexual sin that is being tolerated goes beyond even the pagan norms of morality! Paul takes this very seriously and firmly demands accountability and although he refers to the evil doer, he is more concerned with the shocking response to the sin by the church. He reminds them to become who they are in Christ.

1 Corinthians 5:1–13

1 Cor. 5:1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. **2** And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

3 For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. **4** When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, **5** you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.

6 Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? 7 Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— **10** not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. **11** But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. **12** For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? **13** God judges[b] those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you."

Notes:



A. Pray

B. Look Closely

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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. Paul gets straight to the point in the opening verses. How does Paul expect the church to have reacted to such behavior?

2. What is Paul warning the church about in 1 Cor. 5:6-8? How should they be living instead?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. Paul is worried less about who the evil doer is and more about the acceptance of his behavior by the church. What does Paul mean when he tells the church to "deliver this man to Satan"?

2. In 1 Cor. 5:9-10 Paul is correcting a misunderstanding. What was the misunderstanding and why does it matter? (1 Cor. 5:3)

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. Why is Paul insistent that the Corinthian church does not associate with an evil doer who "bears the name of brother"? *See 1 John 1:6.*

2. In 1 Cor. 5:6 Paul says, "Your boasting is not good...a little leaven leavens the whole lump". He uses Passover language and encourages them to be a 'new lump'. What does leaven metaphorically represent? What are the connections and conclusions Paul is drawing?

What's the Main Idea?

C

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. How has this passage
challenged us in the way we
respond to sin in our own lives and
sin in the wider church?

2. Has this study brought to mind an area in my life that I need to repent of before the Lord?

Prayers:

Study Notes

1. "and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans for a man has his father's wife" (1 Cor. 5:1)

If this sin had involved the man's mother, Paul would have said. It is more likely that it means stepmother, a woman divorced from his father, or even a step-mother where his father had died. This behavior, not unheard of, was nevertheless repulsive and condemned even by the pagans.

2. " I am present in Spirit" (1 Cor. 5:3-5)

Paul does not mean that he is simply keeping them in mind or 'as if' he is present. Thisleton explains that "It is the power of the Holy Spirit that Paul is present." Paul is an important part of the Corinthian church that is now threatened with corruption but is, "sanctified by the common bond of the Spirit, who indwells the corporate body."

3. "deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh" (1 Cor. 5:5)

Being removed from the church (excommunicated) is to be given over the sphere or realm of Satan, the place where Satan has influence. This may lead to physical consequences. (Acts 5:1-10; Acts 13:8-11; 2 Cor. 12:7)

4. "Christ, our Passover, has been sacrificed" (1 Cor. 5:7)

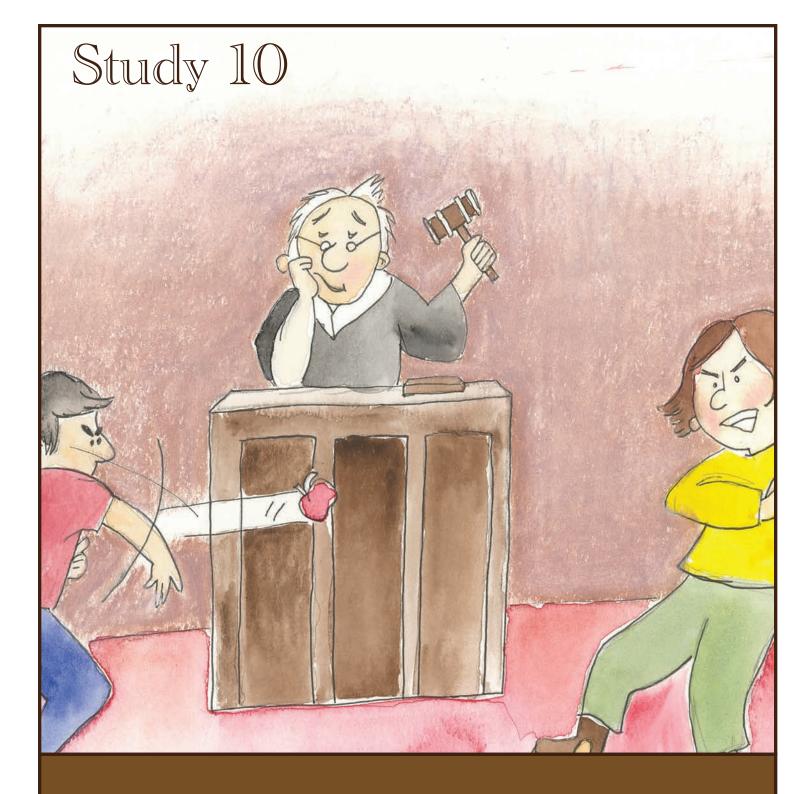
Paul does not use the word lamb in the original Greek, but does use the imagery of the Passover to convey that in Egypt, God's people were to remove all yeast before the sacrifice. (Exod. 12:15; Exod. 13:7) Christ, our Passover has already been sacrificed, it is time to get rid of all yeast - all sin.

5. "I wrote to you in my letter" (1 Cor. 5:9)

Paul had written previously to the church in Corinth and although we get an idea about the subject matter, there is no copy in existence.

6. "For what have I to do with judging others? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?" (1 Cor. 5:12–13)

The emphasis here is on discipline in the church; on those who bear the name of Christ. There is a difference between the two and although God will ultimately be the one to judge those on the outside, the church is not required to remain silent about injustice and what God has ordained for humanity.



1 Corinthians 6:1–11

In our previous study Paul rebuked the church for their moral laxity over a member sleeping with his father's wife. Now Paul addresses the church because instead of dealing with internal disputes within the church, they are hauling one another off to court.

These lawsuits breed mistrust and tribalism. In the long run, such factions will destroy their ability to witness God's love. Paul then writes to shame the Corinthian church because who they are called to be is not reflected in how they act. It's worth mentioning that Paul's criticism is not directed at the wrongdoer but is instead directed at the church for going to the authorities rather than exercising their role as a community to judge and adjudicate.

1 Corinthians 6:1–11

1 Cor. 6:1 When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! 4 So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Can it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, **6** but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? 7 To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? 8 But you yourselves wrong and defraud—even your own brothers![a] **9** Or do you not know that the unrighteous[b] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Notes:



A. Pray

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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. Why is Paul "shaming" the Corinthian church? What does Paul say the church ought to be doing? What is Paul's answer to the one wronged and to the wrongdoer?

2. 1 Cor. 6:9–11 list a series of vices that have no place in the kingdom of God. What are they?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. Why is Paul so concerned about these lawsuits? How do these lawsuits affect church unity, witness, and love?

2. Paul describes two types of people in this section. Who are they? What does it mean to be washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of Jesus?

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. When disputes arise, what does the passage reveal about what the posture of the Christian heart should be? How does this reflect Chrisitan unity, love, and witness?

2. In light of the gift that Christians receive through Christ described in 1 Cor. 6:11, how is Paul expecting the lives of unbelievers to be transformed?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. Minor disputes can be a threat to Christ's witness and love. How does this passage convict and encourage you?

2. In 1 Cor. 6:11, Paul says you were washed, justified, and sanctified. How have you experienced this new spiritual reality in your own lives?

Prayers:	

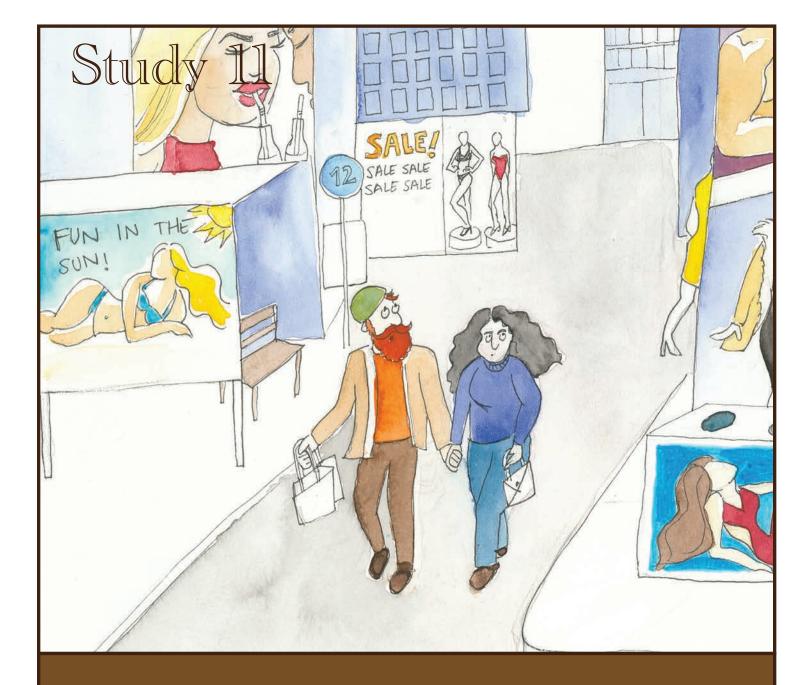
Study Notes

1. Judging world and angels (1 Cor. 6:2–3)

There is some disagreement about the precise meaning of this judgment. It seems unlikely, however, that we should think of people judging the world and angels as independent individuals. Rather, we need to think corporately as those who are heirs of God and co-heirs of Christ (Romans 8:17; 6:5). Judgment remains Christ's but Christians are united with him. With this in mind, human litigation is trivial in light of the final judgment. With God's wisdom, they should be mature enough to handle these smaller disputes.

2. To have lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:7)

Paul doesn't specify what these lawsuits are, but he does consider them trivial (1 Cor. 6:2). Instead Paul looks at how damaging these lawsuits are, and considers them a loss. No matter who wins or loses, Paul sees the litigious spirit of Corinth as a moral deficiency and reveals the triumph of selfishness over love.



1 Corinthians 6:12–20

In this passage, Paul returns to the issue of sexual immorality by taking on another ethical failing by the Corinthians: prostitution, sex for hire.

In general, prostitution in the Greco-Roman world was not viewed negatively. It was a common and accepted part of the daily life of adult males. Brothels and sex workers, both male and female, were legal, and widely viewed as a necessary social institution.

In our passage, it seems that some of the Corinthian Christians were arguing for the right to continue the normal pagan practice of visiting prostitutes. They made their argument by asserting their Christian freedom, and by drawing on the analogy of food, where Paul's basic position would have been well known—God doesn't care about food, so it doesn't matter what we eat. The Corinthians viewed themselves as Spirit-people, and believed that spiritual issues ranked far above anything pertaining to the body, about which God also didn't care.

Given the magnitude of the Corinthian error, Paul's response seems remarkably gentle. And imagine what Paul's message about being 'bought with a price' would have meant to the slaves within the Corinthian church.

1 Corinthians 6:12–20

1 Cor. 6:12 "All things are lawful for me," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful for me," but I will not be dominated by anything. **13** "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food"-and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. **15** Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, "The two will become one flesh." 17 But he who is ioined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. **18** Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. **19** Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

Notes:



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D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. How does Paul qualify the general statement that "all things are lawful"?

2. What command does Paul give in this passage?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. What would Paul have understood the expression "sexual immorality" to include?

2. Why did the Corinthians use the slogan, "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other"? What is Paul's answer to it?

D Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. How do we reconcile Paul's view that "all things are lawful" with his command that the Corinthians "flee from sexual immorality"? If there are limits to freedom in Christ, what are they? How can you be free and have limits?

2. How does the idea that our bodies are members of Christ influence our understanding of personal and communal holiness? How does sex fit into holiness?

What's the Main Idea?

C

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. How can Paul's teaching that 'all things are lawful but not all things are helpful' guide our decision-making today? How does the Christian gospel offer a better story to young people who are led to believe that it doesn't matter what they do with their body, so long as "they are not hurting anyone"?

2. What are some practical ways we can 'glorify God in our body'?

Prayers:	
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91

Study Notes

1. "all things are lawful for me" (1 Cor. 6:12)

Paul is quoting this as one of the Corinthian slogans. Any new Christian who had heard Paul's teaching about being justified by faith without works of the law might well have understood him this way. And it is a slogan with which Paul may have agreed, but never as an unqualified absolute. We are free to live out our full human potential in Christ; we are not free to do whatever we please.

2. "and God will destroy both one and the other" (1 Cor. 6:13) This is thought by many commentators to be part of the Corinthian slogan that Paul is quoting, because it makes more sense in the mouths of the Corinthians than it does in the mouth of Paul. So the quoted phrase should be: "Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other". That is, it doesn't matter what you eat and it doesn't matter what you do with your body because, in the end, both are destined to die.

3. "sexual immorality" (1 Cor. 6:13) There was no Greek word for "sexual immorality". When the Old Testament was translated into Greek in the 3rd century BC, the translators needed a word for the Hebrew concept of sexual immorality and they settled on the Greek word porneia, which was really the standard Greek word for "prostitution", and was not pejorative.

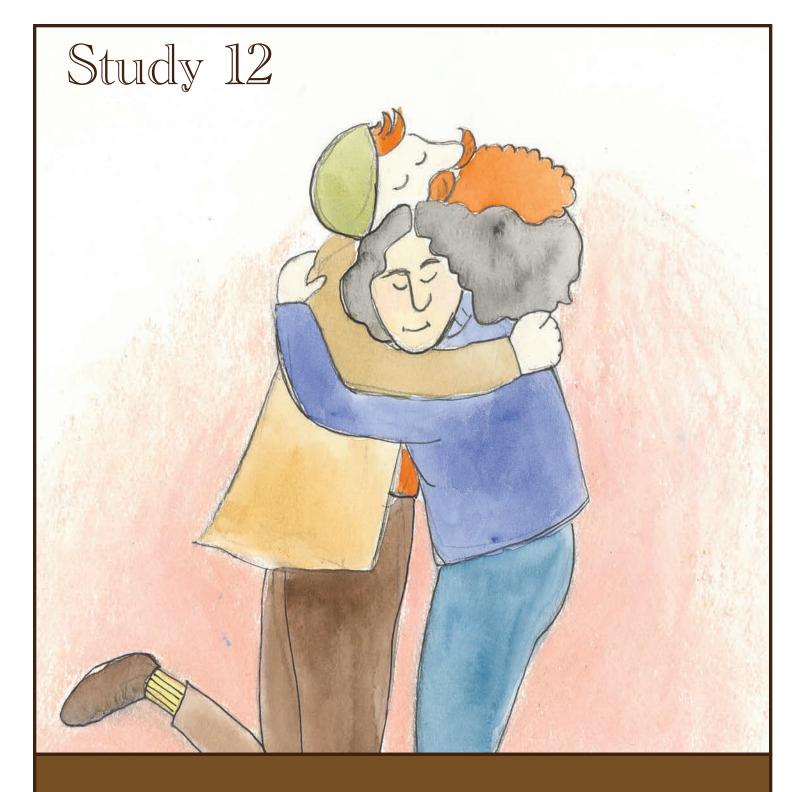
4. "will also raise us up" (1 Cor. 6:14) What we do with the body is important, not least because it is destined for resurrection. This would seem to highlight the incompatibility of union with a prostitute who might not herself be a member of Christ, and whose own body therefore might not be destined for resurrection.

5. "The two shall become one flesh" (1 Cor. 6:16) Paul quotes Gen 2:24 to apply the one-flesh union created by marriage to sex with a prostitute. It appears to be Paul's view that there is no such thing as casual sex without enduring consequences. Every act of sexual intercourse joins the partners together into one body. If a Christian joins himself to a prostitute, and if the prostitute represents forces opposed to God, this immoral act has aligned the Christian over against God.

6. "he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him" (1 Cor. 6:17) The union between believers and Christ is of an altogether different kind than that created by a sexual relationship and can be expressed only in terms of the Spirit. As Gordon Fee says in his commentary, "Paul's point is that the physical union of a believer with a prostitute is not possible because the believer's body already belongs to the Lord, through whose resurrection one's body has become a "member" of Christ by his Spirit."

7. "Every other sin..." (1 Cor. 6:18) Paul's emphatic command to "Flee from sexual immorality" is clear, although elaboration on the meaning of "sexual immorality" would have been welcomed. The rest of the verse, however, is notoriously difficult, and has been interpreted in various ways. Anthony Thiselton, in his commentary, suggests that Paul perceived "the sexual act as one of intimacy and self-commitment which involved the whole person; not the mere manipulation of some 'peripheral' function of the body." This view suggests that sexual sin is unique in that one fully gives oneself to one's partner, potentially removing one's body from union with Christ by putting it under the mastery of a prostitute, and thereby calling into question one's redemptive status.

8. "you were bought with a price..." (1 Cor. 6:20) This is imagery of a purchased/redeemed slave. You are not your own to do with as you please. Christ paid for you with his blood, and now you belong entirely to him, and are accountable to him.



1 Corinthians 7:1–24

In Chapter 7, Paul gives practical advice about sex and marriage. In verse 1, it is clear that Paul is addressing an issue which the Corinthians wrote to Paul in a separate letter. The Corinthian church thought celibacy, even within marriage, was a sign of a higher spiritual state; a way for them to become more 'holy.' Paul writes to correct the church's understanding both of sexuality as well as of marriage and singleness.

1 Corinthians 7:1–24

1 Cor. 7:1 Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." 2 But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. 3 The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. 4 For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. 5 Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. 7 I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another.

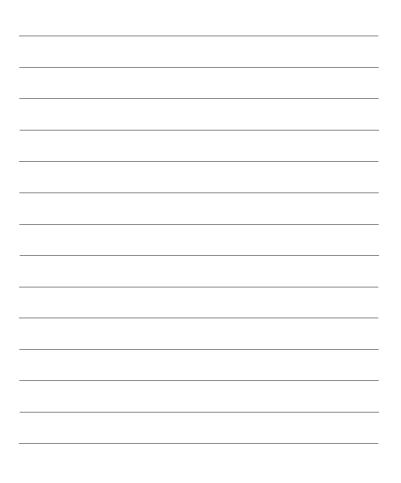
8 To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. 9 But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

10 To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband **11** (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.

12 To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. **13** If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. **14** For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. **15** But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. **16** For how do you know, wife, whether you will save

your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

17 Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. This is my rule in all the churches. **18** Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. **19** For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. 20 Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called. 21 Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) 22 For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ. 23 You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. 24 So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.



Notes:

A. Pray

B. Look Closely

This step is for observation and close reading.

What details do you notice? This could include: characters, setting, commands, promises, repetitions, Big Bible words, etc.

C. Look Structurally

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

D. A Few Questions to Consider

1. Make a list of the people Paul addresses. What is his council to each group?

2. Why is Paul clear to make a distinction between what he says and what the Lord says?

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage. How are the different parts connected? How does it connect to the rest of the book? What is the historical context? What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

A Few Questions to Consider

B

1. Looking back at the previous section, Paul gave several theological arguments for the importance of sexual union. Combining the previous section with this passage, in your own words, summarize Paul's view of sex, marriage, and singleness.

2. What does Paul mean by holiness in 1 Cor. 7:14?

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

1. Often in western churches we emphasize marriage over singleness. How does Paul challenge this view and why does he wish that all were as he is (i.e. single)?

2. What is Paul's main point in 1 Cor. 7:17-24? What does this have to do with sexual relationships in Corinth? Why does he use examples of circumcision and bond servants?

C What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

1. Whether married or single, how does this passage encourage us to live today? What do you find difficult about this?

2. In what ways can our different physical/practical circumstances positively bear witness to the gospel?

Prayers:	

99

Study Notes

1. "concerning the matters about which you wrote" (1 Cor. 7:1)

The Corinthian church had written a letter to Paul, and Paul is now either quoting this letter or summarizing the gist of it.

"It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman."

This seems to be a teaching or slogan that many in the Coirnthian church adopted. Due to both their desire to be seen as "spiritual" or more holy, as well as following Paul's own example of singleness, the Corinthian church seemed to encourage sexual abstinence among married couples. Paul is going to correct this view and offer his own views as well.

3. "For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does." (1 Cor. 7:4) Paul is saying that wives and husbands do not have the right to use their bodies at will. Morris notes that they have obligations to one another. Not only does Paul see the sexes as having absolute equality, he will not allow a view that a) leaves the sex act in control of the husband and b) sex within the context of marriage is defiling.

4. "For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband." (1 Cor. 7:14)

The point being made here is that the spouse who becomes a Christian is no less holy because they are married to a continuing pagan. They do not need to seek a divorce in order to elevate their spiritual state. Further, holiness is a dynamic concept ie. the fruit of God's love in action. Leon Morris stresses that, "it is a scriptural principle that the blessings that flow from fellowship with God are not confined to the immediate recipients but extend to others." The non believing spouse will experience the benefits of God's goodness to their believing spouse though not become sanctified.

5. "I wish that all were as I myself am." (1 Cor. 7:7)

Paul is single and celibate, but Paul recognizes that not everyone is like him or has received the gift as he has. He is also making it clear that he has not reached a higher spiritual state because he's single.

6. "not I but the Lord" and "I, not the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:10, 12)

Paul now gives a sharp command in verse 10. He is summarizing the teachings of Jesus on marriage. In verse 12, Paul is applying Jesus' teaching to the Corinthian church but is careful to make clear that this is his own injunction. It appears the early church would, at times, produce sayings and ascribe them to Christ to provide authority. Paul is not prepared to do so.

7. "Only let each person lead the life"

We are to live the life that God sets before us. "A Christian does not have to seek 'the right situation' in order to enjoy Christian freedom or to serve God effectively." (Thistleton) This is Paul's expectation in all of his churches.

8. "bondservant" (1 Cor. 7:21)

A bondservant was a slave in the Greco-Roman world.

