



# EPIPHANY

NOTHING BUT CHRIST

STUDY GUIDE



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EPIPHANY

NOTHING BUT  
CHRIST

winter

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What comes to mind when you think of the word *epiphany*? Do you think of a light-bulb? A fresh realization? A new idea?

These are our common uses of the word, but in the church the meaning of epiphany is even richer. For us, the day of Epiphany is January 6, when the church celebrates the day Jesus was visited by the Magi. It is a day in which we celebrate the revelation of Jesus to the Gentiles (that's you and me!).

The day of Epiphany ushers in a whole season, sometimes called "Epiphanytide" that will take us all the way to Ash Wednesday and the start of Lent.

The season of Epiphany is a time of remembering the centrality of Jesus and his revelation to us in the Gospels. This is why we are calling this new series

## **Epiphany: Nothing but Christ**

Together we will dig into later New Testament writings, from Acts to 1 Corinthians, to discover what some of our most well-known early Christians—Peter and Paul—had to say about who Jesus was, why he mattered, and what that means for us today.

Put yourself in their shoes for a moment. Jesus has only recently ascended into heaven. They have been left with the gift of the Holy Spirit and clear instructions: make disciples of all nations. Now they must figure out how to do that in their various communities, cities comprised of Jews and Gentiles, locals and foreigners, men and women, young and old. These diverse groups will need someone to unite them as they seek to learn, grow, and obey.

That person is Jesus. It is still true for us today! Let us follow him together this Epiphanytide.

On the journey with you, *Pastor Courtney*

# EPIPHANY DAILY BIBLE PLAN

Sermon Series: Epiphany: Nothing But Christ

Dates: January 11 - February 15, 2026

## Memory Verses

- 1 Corinthians 1:17-21, 25

All resources are available on the PCOM app and at [mypcom.com/dailybible](http://mypcom.com/dailybible)

*This reading plan dives into the centrality of Christ in Paul's life and in his pastoral theology. It starts with the incredible story of conversion (and surprising inclusion of the Gentiles in salvation) in Acts and then turns to the theme of Christ in many of his letters.*

## ACTS: CHRIST AND THE SURPRISE INCLUSION OF GENTILES

- ☐ 1/11: Acts 8:1-25
- ☐ 1/12: Acts 8:26-40
- ☐ 1/13: Acts 9:1-19
- ☐ 1/14: Acts 9:20-42
- ☐ 1/15: Acts 10:1-23
- ☐ 1/16: Acts 10:24-48
- ☐ • **Video: Acts 8-12**
- ☐ 1/17: Acts 11:1-18
- ☐ 1/18: Acts 11:19-30

## 2 CORINTHIANS: CHRIST OUR RECONCILIATION

- ☐ 1/28: 2 Corinthians 2:12-3:6
- ☐ • **Video: 2 Corinthians Intro**
- ☐ 1/29: 2 Corinthians 3:7-18
- ☐ 1/30: 2 Corinthians 4:1-18
- ☐ 1/31: 2 Corinthians 5:1-10
- ☐ 2/1: 2 Corinthians 5:11-6:2

## 1 CORINTHIANS: CHRIST OUR UNITY AND WISDOM

- ☐ 1/19: 1 Corinthians 1:1-17
- ☐ • **Video: 1 Corinthians Intro**
- ☐ 1/20: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31
- ☐ 1/21: 1 Corinthians 2:1-16
- ☐ 1/22: 1 Corinthians 3:1-23
- ☐ 1/23: 1 Corinthians 4:1-13
- ☐ 1/24: 1 Corinthians 4:14-21
- ☐ 1/25: 1 Corinthians 12:1-11
- ☐ 1/26: 1 Corinthians 12:12-31
- ☐ 1/27: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

## EPHESIANS: BLESSINGS THROUGH CHRIST

- ☐ 2/2: Ephesians 1:1-14
- ☐ • **Video: Ephesians Intro**
- ☐ 2/3: Ephesians 1:15-23
- ☐ 2/4: Ephesians 2:1-10
- ☐ 2/5: Ephesians 2:11-21
- ☐ 2/6: Ephesians 3:1-21

**PHILIPPIANS: THE HUMILITY  
OF CHRIST**

- ☐ 2/7: Philippians 1:1-11
- ☐ • **Video: Philippians Intro**
- ☐ 2/8: Philippians 1:12-30
- ☐ 2/9: Philippians 2:1-18
- ☐ 2/10: Philippians 2:19-30
- ☐ 2/11: Philippians 3:1-14

**COLOSSIANS: THE  
SUPREMACY OF CHRIST**

- ☐ 2/12: Colossians 1:1-14
- ☐ • **Video: Colossians Intro**
- ☐ 2/13: Colossians 1:15-23
- ☐ 2/14: Colossians 1:24-2:23
- ☐ 2/15: Colossians 3:1-17

***We provide a week of grace and make-up between reading plans.  
The next reading plan will start with our Lenten sermon series on  
February 22.***

# 1

## every nation

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ACTS 10:34-48

### MEMORY VERSE

*For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.*

*1 Corinthians 1:17*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

#### CHANGE YOUR MIND

In today's Scripture, we will learn about Peter receiving a revelation from God. This will transform the way he relates to his neighbors and alter the course of his life.

Are you open to having your mind changed by God? Can you think of a recent example when God opened your eyes to a new truth or way of being? To a new way to love a neighbor? If so, share (or write) the story.

Proverbs says, "The way of fools seems right to them, but the wise listen to advice" (12:15). We see this truth throughout Scripture: Paul changes from a murderous man to a passionate preacher, Mary gains courage, Cornelius becomes a follower of Jesus.

For today's spiritual practice, open your heart to the power of God with the following simple prayer: *God, show me where in my life I might be wrong, misguided, or mistaken. Teach me your path of wisdom, and give me the humility to admit when I've been wrong. Amen.* Then be on the lookout for God to show you!



## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

The passage that precedes this one, (Acts 10:1-22) is important to summarize before we read today's text. It involves the conversion of a man named Cornelius and it will give context to all that follows.

Cornelius was a centurion, or Roman soldier, a person of great power and influence. He also feared God and wanted to know him. An angel appears to Cornelius in a vision, telling him that his prayers and care for the poor have been seen by God. The angel then tells Cornelius to send for a man named Peter, who can be found in a town called Joppa.

Before Cornelius's messengers reach Peter, the disciple receives a vision from God where he sees all sorts of unclean animals. A voice tells Peter he can eat them.

"Surely not, Lord!" Peter protests. He is a faithful Jew and has never intentionally broken one of the ancient purity laws. Though he is now a follower of Jesus—a Christian—he is unsure which of the ancient purity laws still apply. Isn't it better to be safe than sorry? "I have never eaten anything impure or unclean!" he says.

But the voice replies to Peter, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Cornelius's messengers arrive, begging Peter to go visit the centurion. He does, but when he arrives, Peter says,

"You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with or visit a Gentile. But God has shown me that I should not call anyone impure or unclean."

Cornelius shares with him that he was praying three

days earlier when suddenly an angel appeared, telling him to send for Peter. Cornelius tells Peter that he and the large gathering of people who have come to learn from Peter are ready to listen to everything the Lord has commanded Peter to tell them.

And from here, our story continues.

*Read Acts 10:34-35 aloud.*

**Q1.** What two things does Peter say he has realized?

*Read Acts 10:36-38 aloud.*

**Q2.** Who is Jesus Christ Lord of, according to Peter? What did Jesus go around doing?

*Read Acts 10:39-48 aloud.*

As a point of clarification: “Hanging him on a tree” is biblical shorthand for Jesus being crucified on a cross.

**Q3.** Acts 10:39-43 is a short summary of the entire Gospel (Good News) message of Jesus. What are its main points?

**Q4.** Why do you think this passage concludes with the baptism of Cornelius and his household? Why is it significant that Gentiles are fully included in baptism from the very beginning?

## **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Because many of us attend churches that have been established for decades or are part of denominations that have existed for hundreds of years, it can be difficult to think our way into the first days of the church. Jesus has just ascended into heaven. If you were an early Christian, what questions would you have about what to do next?

**Q2.** What is Peter's response to God sending him in a new and surprising direction—toward the Gentiles, who were strangers and foreigners to the Jewish people?

**Q3.** Are there any areas of your life where you've ignored, feared, or discounted a stranger or a foreigner? How might God be calling you to share his love with one today? This week?

**Q4.** What habits or beliefs do you hold that God might be encouraging you to re-examine, shift, or transform in light of his love for the stranger and the foreigner?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

*You're invited to choose one or more of the following to do on your own over the next week as a way of deepening the lesson of this Bible study through action. Make a plan to undertake your chosen action(s) before next week's study.*

### **1. Memorize!**

Beginning this week, learn each of our memory verses during this six-week study. (Each week's is written at the beginning of the lesson.) You may wish to set the verses to music, say them out loud, or print them out to place them somewhere you'll see them often. Memorizing with a friend can be even more fun and effective!

### **2. Read the full passage**

Like many epic stories, this one is lengthy but so very worth it! Read Acts 10:1-48, and as you do, put yourself in the shoes of different characters. What would it have been like to be Cornelius? Peter? One of the messengers that sends for Peter? An onlooker in the crowd?

### **3. Befriend**

You don't have to look far to meet people from different cultures or nations. This week, ask God to give you an opportunity to show love to someone from a different background, language, or culture. Even if you don't share a language, you can still share a smile or a meal. (Hint: If you aren't sure where to start, there are two congregations—one of Chinese heritage and one of Persian heritage—that meet at PCOM every Sunday morning!)



# 2

## giving thanks

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

### MEMORY VERSE

*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.*

*1 Corinthians 1:18*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

#### LECTIO DIVINA

*Lectio divina*, or “spiritual reading” is a slow, thoughtful way of reading Scripture that allows God’s words to soak into our hearts. It slows us down and helps us hear each and every word of the Scripture as God’s word to us. As we read aloud, we are attentive to the way the Holy Spirit may help a word, phrase, or verse stand out in our minds.

We will practice lectio with one short verse today. Read it aloud slowly three times. (If you are in a group, it may be helpful to have three different voices read.) As you read, notice what God highlights for you:

*God will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

—1 Corinthians 1:8

Then, write or discuss what word or phrase from the text came to your attention. Prayerfully consider what God may be saying to you through this Scripture today.

## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

When we read one of the New Testament letters written to a specific church, city, or group of people, we are literally reading someone else's mail. It was first God's word to them, in their time and place and context. It is now God's word to us, in ours.

For this reason, it can be very helpful to know a few things about the context of this letter, so we can put ourselves in the shoes of the early Corinthians and see things from their perspective, even as we interpret the text through our experience and time, too.

Corinth was a city at a prosperous crossroads, situated between two major seaports. We may liken it to the American city of Miami, or the modern European city of Paris. Corinth also hosted major sporting events (the "Isthmian Games," an athletic festival second only to the Olympics in importance).

In 146 B.C., the city of Corinth was decimated by a huge, brutal Roman army. Buildings were leveled and the Greek citizens of Corinth were all either executed or enslaved. Then, in 44 B.C., the city was refounded as a Roman colony. A hundred years after that, Paul wrote this letter to a city still recovering from its war-torn past. Corinth was a Greek city ruled by Romans with customs, history, and culture from each.

Paul founded this church and stayed with them for about eighteen months before moving on to plant other churches. This letter is the first record we have of his ongoing correspondence with a church he founded and loved, but was now growing quite concerned about.

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-3 aloud.*

**Q1.** What type of greeting does Paul begin this letter with? In what ways is it similar to how we might begin a letter today? How is it different?

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-6 aloud.*

**Q2.** Why does Paul thank God for the church in Corinth? In what ways have the people been enriched by God?

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:7-9 aloud.*

**Q3.** What don't the people lack? Who will keep them firm to the end? What do you think the significance is of the action here being God's, not the people's?

**Q4.** Who is faithful, according to Paul? What has this God called the people of the church in Corinth into?

## **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** It is notable that Jesus is the main actor at the start of this letter. Later on, Paul will call the Corinthians to greater obedience and faithfulness, but here at the letter's beginning he wants to make a clear point: it all begins with Jesus. When you think about your own spiritual life, can you describe how it all began with Jesus? Or do you have a different story to tell? (Perhaps you grew up in another faith or first connected with God through stories or nature.)

**Q2.** Paul begins this letter by giving thanks to God for the people of this church. As we read on in the weeks ahead, we will discover that the Corinthians were giving Paul some real difficulty. They were quarrelsome and disagreeable over many issues. Yet Paul does not begin with correction or admonishment, but with thanks. Do you find it easy or difficult to express gratitude?

**Q3.** If Paul was going to write our church a letter today, what do you think he would say to us?

**Q4.** If Paul was going to write you personally a letter today, what do you think he would say to you? Write it below:



## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Witness Jesus at work**

Prayerfully ask Jesus to open your eyes to his work in your neighborhood this week. Then be on the lookout and get ready to be amazed!

### **2. Join Jesus at work**

Where do you see Jesus at work in your neighborhood, at your school or workplace, or somewhere you go frequently? How might Jesus be inviting you into his work, to serve and love your neighbors? Join him this week!

### **3. Write a letter**

Letter writing is becoming a lost art, but a hand-written letter can still mean the world to someone, offering encouragement, love, or a reminder of our shared mission in Christ. Prayerfully consider who God might be inviting you to write a letter to this week.

# 3

## a church divided

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1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-18

### MEMORY VERSE

*For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise;  
the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."*

*1 Corinthians 1:19*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

*WORK THROUGH A QUARREL*

In today's Scripture, Paul addresses quarreling in the church. It is not becoming of God's people to have simmering conflict in our midst. But here's the good news: God gives us tools to make lasting peace!

Are you quarreling with anyone right now? Take a moment or two in quiet prayer to ask God to reveal to you if there is anyone you aren't at peace with.

Now for the challenge: Invite God into your conflict. You may wish to pray the following prayer:

*Jesus, I am struggling with [Name]. I want to live at peace with them, but we have a conflict that we need your help in resolving. Please give me gentleness, clarity, and the right words to begin seeking your peace.*

Then set up a time to speak with the person this week. (Note: if there has been violence or abuse between you, you may need to forgive them from a distance and keep from re-engaging. This, too, honors God.)

## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:10 aloud.*

**Q1.** This feels like a tall order, doesn't it? What two things does Paul want for the church in Corinth?

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:11-16 aloud.*

**Q2.** What are the Corinthians quarreling over? Why does Paul see this as a problem?

**Q3.** Why does Paul say he is glad he didn't baptize many of them? Why do you think he doesn't want anyone to be able to say that they were baptized in his (Paul's) name?

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:17-18 aloud.*

**Q4.** Why do you think Paul says that if he preached with wisdom and eloquence it would empty the cross of its power? (v. 17) What is the message of the cross? Why might this message seem like foolishness to some but the power of God to others?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** In Paul's letter, he is frustrated that the church is divided over who they follow. Some say they follow Jesus, others say they follow Paul, Cephas (Peter), or Apollo. Can you think of any parallels to these divisions in our modern church?

**Q2.** Where do you see quarrels in the American church today? What about within our church? What do people tend to disagree most about, when it comes to faith?



**Q3.** What are a few things you see as essentials of our faith? (For example: the resurrection of Jesus or the call to love our neighbors.) What are a some things you see as non-essential? (For example: whether the church music is primarily played on a piano or an organ. You might laugh, but churches have split over far less!) How might we tell the difference between the two?

**Q4.** Unity is essential, but so is grace. We will never agree on absolutely everything. (I bet my favorite hymn is different than yours!) How can we be gracious to one another in the non-essentials of our faith and life together, while having unity on the essentials (Jesus is Lord, we are called to love our neighbors as ourselves, etc.)? Is there anyone in your life with whom you have a deep disagreement but also a deep love and a good relationship? Share (or write) the story.

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Work through conflict**

Spend time this week working through the conflict you identified in this lesson's invitation to spiritual practice. If you need to reconcile with another person, approach the conversation gently and prayerfully, owning your side of the conflict and asking for forgiveness for specific wrongs you have done.

### **2. Read up on peacemaking**

It can be helpful to develop tools for working through conflict, particularly if we tend to be conflict-averse or conflict-seeking. Peacemaking takes work, but the payoff can be both immediate and eternal. Plus: God commands it of us! Check out Ken Sande's book, *Peacemaking: a Biblical Guide to Resolving Conflict*.

### **3. Lower the temperature**

Offer the grace and peace of Christ each time you encounter conflicts this week. Rather than yelling, lower your voice. Instead of weighing in to an online debate, hold your peace or offer a word of kindness. Look for points of connection rather than that which divides us.

# 4

## Christ crucified

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1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

### MEMORY VERSE

*Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law?  
Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made  
foolish the wisdom of the world?*

*1 Corinthians 1:20*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

#### LEAN INTO WEAKNESS

In today's Scripture, Paul reminds us that God chooses the weak things of this world to bring God glory. As we love and serve Jesus, we often rely on our strengths. There's nothing wrong with this! Some of us are gifted speakers or musicians, others among us love to serve behind the scenes, visit the sick, or teach children. God is glorified when we serve from our strengths.

But our weaknesses have vital things to teach us about relying on the power of God, too. So this week, you're invited to lean into weakness as a spiritual practice.

First, ponder: what are you *not* good at? What is a stretch for you? Perhaps you are an extrovert who struggles to spend time in quiet prayer. Maybe you're more introverted, and crowds are tough for you. Then, lean in. Identify one way you can intentionally lean into your area of weakness by serving God within it this week. Share with your group (or write, if you're doing this study alone) how you plan to lean into your weakness and rely on God's power this week.

## AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-19 aloud.*

**Q1.** What will God destroy? What will God frustrate? Why do you think this is?

In his book *The Glorious Gift of Weakness*, pastor Eric Schumacher writes:

“Weakness reminds us that God designed all of life to be lived by faith. He didn’t create us to live by our own power, only introducing the need for faith once we needed to be saved from sin and death. Life, liberty, and happiness aren’t found in our independence. They’re rooted entirely in our dependence on the Lord.” Weakness is not a bad thing, though we often fight it or try to hide it. Weakness is a continual reminder that we belong to God and it is only in God’s power that we live and move and have our being.

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:20-25 aloud.*

**Q2.** What do you think Paul means when he writes that Christ is “the power of God and the wisdom of God” (v. 24)? What hints does he offer in verse 25?

Our culture tells us that what is important is wealth, power, influence, and strength. Yet we serve a God who came to earth and died on a cross for us, conquering not with violence but by giving himself up for us. In the world's eyes, this can seem very foolish. But in the economy of God, it is *everything*.

As Efreem Smith writes in *Church for Everyone*, "How the church views Christ affects how it lives out its missional ecclesiology. Specifically, what the church believes about Christ shapes the way it approaches the poor, marginalized, and dispossessed." In other words, when we begin to understand that the poor are important to Jesus, that he himself lived and served among the poor, we begin to understand our mission as a church. We no longer focus on our own power or status but instead begin to serve as Jesus did.

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31 aloud.*

**Q3.** Why do you think God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise and the weak things of the world to shame the strong (v.27)? In what ways does God's reality and intention differ from the world's?

**Q4.** Why may no one boast before God? Who is it that has given us everything?

## **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Who does our culture hold up as most important or valuable? Who is least important or valuable in the eyes of the world?

**Q2.** How does Jesus overturn those ideas?

**Q3.** When in your life have you felt weak, despised, or lowly? Share (or write) the story.

**Q4.** Who else in your life might be feeling weak, despised, or lowly? How might Jesus be inviting you to reach out to them with his love this week?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Provide for the lowly**

Catholic activist Dorothy Day once said, “We must talk about poverty, because people insulated by their own comfort lose sight of it.” PCOM partners with South County Outreach and Family Assistance Ministries (FAM) to care for those who have fallen on hard times. Consider offering a donation of food or money to one of these great organizations this week. (You can even bring food in to the church and put it in the blue barrels in the office and we’ll donate it for you!)

### **2. Embrace your weakness**

Our usual response to our own weakness is to minimize, deny, or hide it. But what if we embraced it? This week, every time you struggle with something, use it as an opportunity for prayer. Thank God that in your weakness, he is present, loving, and strong.

### **3. Serve the poor**

We can feel quite insulated from poverty here in Orange County, but if you begin to look more closely, you will see signs of it all around us. Perhaps you yourself are in a season of real financial need, or you see a friend or neighbor struggling. Perhaps you notice an unhoused neighbor lingering outside a grocery store, or a friend walking because their car broke down and they can’t afford to fix it. There’s no shame - God often meets us powerfully in times of want and scarcity. If you have more than you need right now (and Jesus’ definition of abundance is having more than one shirt!), consider how you might serve those who are less well off. Serve by stocking shelves at FAM, head down to Door of Faith Orphanage with supplies, or bring a meal to a neighbor who has fallen on hard times.

# 5

## wisdom revealed

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1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-12

### MEMORY VERSE

*For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.*

*1 Corinthians 1:21*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

#### LISTENING PRAYER

Prayer is much more than just talking to God. It's also listening to God and being with God, increasing our awareness of the presence of God within and around us. Today we are going to practice the listening element of prayer.

Sit comfortably, with your feet flat on the floor and your hands in your lap or on the table in front of you. Breathe deeply, in and out, for a moment or two.

Then offer the next few moments to God. You may wish to pray the following prayer:

*Dear Jesus, I want to learn to listen more closely to you today. Still my mind and open my heart to your presence and to your word to me today.*

Then sit quietly for several minutes. If your attention wanders, that's okay. Simply return to your listening again. Close with an amen, and then reflect: What did you sense from God during your time of listening?



## **AN INVITATION TO STUDY:**

*Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-2 aloud.*

**Q1.** What is the only thing Paul wanted to know while he was with the Corinthian Christians?

*Read 1 Corinthians 2:3-5 aloud.*

**Q2.** What did Paul come to the Corinthians with (v.3)? Was his preaching impressive by human standards? What about by God's standards?

In *Feasting on the Word*, New Testament scholar Edith Humphrey writes, "Wisdom is, first and foremost, a who rather than merely a body of knowledge or a human capacity...Here Paul pictures Jesus as God's own wisdom, at last among us with transformative power."

*Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-12 aloud.*

**Q3.** How good are the things God has prepared for those who love him (v.9)? What do you think this verse is trying to do for us?

**Q4.** According to Paul, what have we received (v.12)? Why has God given this to us?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** When have you faced something with weakness and/or with “great fear and trembling” (v.3)? What was it, and what happened?

**Q2.** Does this passage give you a different impression of Paul than you previously had, or does it reaffirm things you already knew about him?

**Q3.** What does it mean to you that God has prepared things for us that are so amazing we can't even imagine them? Do those good things seem far off or close? Has that changed as you've gotten older?

**Q4.** How does the Spirit of God work in us to help us understand God? What would you like God's help in understanding today?

## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Seek wisdom**

There is knowledge—learning more facts about the world—and there is wisdom. Wisdom is a deeper way of knowing and understanding. It is borne out of humility, seeking God, and being open to the working of the Holy Spirit. This week, spend time in prayer asking God for wisdom. Then, be on the lookout for opportunities to grow in your understanding of Jesus—God’s own wisdom!—through prayer, spending time in Scripture, and meditating on the presence of Jesus.

### **2. Go forth in fear and trembling**

What’s something you’ve always wanted to do or try but haven’t because you’ve been too afraid? Perhaps you love kids but worry you’re too old to serve in the nursery. Maybe you would relish reading Scripture in worship, but public speaking makes you really nervous. Whatever it is, make a plan to try it anyway this week. If Paul can serve God with fear and trembling, so can we!

### **3. Pray your listening prayer each day**

Take five or ten minutes each day this week and sit quietly with God, open to hearing whatever God might have to speak to you.

# 6

## good leaders

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1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-9

### MEMORY VERSE

*For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.*

*1 Corinthians 1:25*

### AN INVITATION TO SPIRITUAL PRACTICE:

*GRATITUDE*

Where would we be without good leaders? I'm not just talking about pastors (though I am so grateful to serve on the team that I do!). I'm talking about teachers and coaches, wise school board members and sacrificial politicians (they do exist!). Those who seek the common good. Those who see each of us as individuals with different needs and hopes. Those who go the extra mile. Those who serve us as though they were serving the Lord himself.

This week, identify a leader who has impacted your life for good and respond to them in gratitude with a phone call, a card, a text, or an email. Let them know how their service and care have transformed your life. If you aren't sure about their faith, perhaps you could also extend the offer to pray for them.

Then reflect: how does practicing gratitude for good leadership tune your heart to the heart of God? How might encouraging others be a ministry? How might a good leader inspire you to be a better leader yourself?

## AN INVITATION TO STUDY:

*Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-2 aloud.*

**Q1.** When it comes to their spiritual maturity, what age are the Corinthian Christians, according to Paul? What does he give them to “eat” (i.e. what level of spiritual teaching are they ready for)?

In their book *Mid-Faith Crisis*, authors Catherine McNiel and Jason Hauge write about the simplicity of a beginner’s faith. “This Inherited Faith stage is where we all start: young children embracing everything we are taught by our parents and community. Normal, healthy human development requires spending time in this concrete, black-and-white mindset. But, of course, we cannot stay with our Inherited Faith forever.”

While a beginner’s faith is a beautiful thing, it becomes a problem when we don’t progress to a deeper, more mature faith over time. This is Paul’s lament with the church in Corinth. He wants to give them meatier teaching, but they haven’t grown past the infancy stage of the faith. This results not only in immature quarrels but in a lack of healthy leadership both within their church and in their surrounding community.

It is our call and privilege to grow up in the faith.

*Read 1 Corinthians 3:3-4 aloud.*

**Q2.** What are signs of the Corinthian Christians’ worldliness? What are they acting like?

*Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9 aloud.*

**Q3.** Paul wants no glory for helping plant seeds of faith among the Corinthians, and writes that Apollos deserves no credit for watering those seeds. To whom does all glory belong, when it comes to growing good fruit?

**Q4.** What does it mean to be a “co-worker” in God’s service? How does this differ from us being on a mission for God?

### **AN INVITATION TO REFLECTION:**

**Q1.** Christian maturity often involves understanding and processing issues and Scriptures of greater complexity, discovering deeper trust in God, and opening up your heart to trusted friends and leaders when you are struggling with sin. Where do you see signs of spiritual maturity (ready for solid food!) in your life?

**Q2.** Spiritual immaturity often shows up in worldly behavior--quarreling, grumbling, discension, black-and-white thinking, and an inability to love those who are different than we are. Where do you see signs of spiritual immaturity (still drinking milk!) in your life today? In what ways might God be calling you to deeper wisdom in those areas?

**Q3.** What resources do you have that can help you in a quest for greater Christian maturity? What people are in your life that could help you along this path?

**Q4.** When we begin to see ourselves as God's co-workers, joining Jesus on his mission, it tends to have a twofold effect: we experience less pressure (it's not all on us! Jesus is with us!) and we experience more creative ways to partner with God (God will open doors and show us things we couldn't have imagined on our own!). How is Jesus inviting you to be his coworker this week?



## **AN INVITATION TO ACTION:**

### **1. Pick up your next study guide**

Let's keep learning! Now that we're drawing this study guide to a close, it's time to grab your next one! Stop by the church office, the gazebo, or check the PCOM website for more info.

### **2. Celebrate your memorization**

Did you memorize the suggested Scriptures with us during this study? Well done, you! Do something to mark this wonderful accomplishment: perhaps you need a cupcake, a sunshine-filled hike, a nap, or to celebrate with a friend.

### **3. Join Jesus on his mission**

Prayerfully take the next steps to your answer to Q4 on the previous page.

## **Bibliography:**

*Feasting on the Word Commentary*, Year A, Vol. 1  
Richard Hayes, *1 Corinthians: Interpretation Commentary Series*  
Dan Kreiss and Efrem Smith, *Church for Everyone*  
Catherine McNiel and Jason Hague, *Mid-Faith Crisis*  
Eric M. Schumacher, *The Good Gift of Weakness*  
Ken Sande, *Peacemaking*

## **A Place for Prayer Requests**



a grow resource  
from  
Presbyterian Church of the Master



STUDY GUIDE