

# 1 CORINTHIANS

## discussion guide

### **OVERVIEW FOR PART 1:**

Join us as we walk through the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians. We'll see the many cultural similarities between the pacific northwest and ancient Greece, as well as be challenged in how we are designed to live out the gospel through the local church.

In the first mini-series we will look to the first four chapters, where Paul deconstructs the counterfeit places we find meaning and significance, and makes his case for why Christ is the greatest person for us to look to for our status and hope for the future.

### **PART 1: WEEK ONE It's All About Grace**

Text: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

This first set of verses is the opening greeting to Paul's letter to the church in Corinth. Corinth was a port city in Southern Greece that had been capture and destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. The Romans rebuilt it and it became a center of commerce, culture, arts and politics. It was one of the largest and most influential cities in Europe at the time. At the center of the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, which had over 1000 priestesses dedicated to temple prostitution. As a result, the city was also a hotbed of sexual immorality and idolatry.

The church in Corinth was only 5 years old when this letter was written. Most of the Christians were therefore quite young in their faith and substantially influence by the surrounding culture. Instead of being a distinct people set apart to show what God is like, they began to become conformed to the culture around them. That is one of the main reasons Paul wrote his letter. He wrote it to answer some of the pressing questions these young believers were asking, but also to confront the ways in which they had given in to the sin of their city. They were unsubmitted to leadership, dividing

up into factions and bringing lawsuits against one another. They were getting drunk at their parties and sleeping with prostitutes provided for them by the hosts. At their worship gatherings, they were unruly, insulting and interrupting the preachers, talking to each other during their gatherings and even getting drunk on the communion wine. Their worship gatherings were no longer focused on Jesus and building each other up in the faith with their spiritual gifts. Instead, they were consumed with themselves and how they might impress one another with the gifts God had given them. Frankly the church was a mess.

You would expect Paul to start his letter with a rebuke. However, instead he starts with reminding them of who God is and what God has done. God is a gracious God who called them to be saints and graciously gave them all they had. Paul knows that in order for them to respond in humble repentance, they will need to be reminded of God's grace. All they have is a gift from God, so they have no room for boasting. Even though they sin, God's grace has forgiven them and will sustain them and enable them to be considered guiltless in the end. This is all due to their fellowship with Jesus Christ. All those whose faith is in Jesus have union with Jesus, which means, like a marriage, all that belongs to Jesus now belongs to us. Jesus' righteousness becomes ours. Our sin became his, which he not only died for, but buried in the grave as well. And now Jesus' holiness is our holiness. In Jesus – by faith in his life, death, burial and resurrection, we are considered holy. The Corinthians needed to hear this first before they were rebuked by Paul for their sin. Paul knows that if they are convinced that God's grace is sufficient for their sin and that their status and standing before God is secure because it's based on Jesus' performance and not theirs, that they can not only humbly hear the rebuke but also boldly repent from their sin as well.

In the end, it's all about grace. God's grace gives all we have. God's grace forgives what we have done and will do. And God's grace will sustain us guiltless until the end.

### **Read: 1 Corinthians 1:1-9**

1. What can we learn about who God is and what God has done from these verses?
2. According to Paul, who are we if we have called upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in faith?
3. If we are saints who are guiltless, only by God's grace, how should that affect how we live? How should it affect how we confess our sin? How we confront others in sin?
4. If we believe it is all about grace, how should we work this out in community together?
5. How should this affect how we engage with and love people who don't yet believe in or follow Jesus?