

## WELCOME LETTER: First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

Welcome to the 1 Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class!

The purpose of this Equipping Class is for you to grow in your knowledge of and obedience to God's Word as you dig deeper into the sermon text through weekly inductive homework questions, group discussion, and accountability.

This equipping class is unique. Unlike other classes, the content of this class is not meant to stand alone but will work in partnership with the sermon and your growth group. The intent is not for you to anticipate the points that Pastor Bret will make in the sermon. Rather, the goal is to enhance the impact of the sermon in your life since you will have already spent significant time during the week thinking through the passage.

The homework questions will guide you in thinking about the text and what it teaches in more detail, but some of the larger conclusions will be left for Pastor Bret to make in the sermon. Your extended study time during the week will allow you to spend more time considering particular words and phrases and their implications and how the sermon text relates to other passages. The homework questions will also allow for more specific and personal reflection and application in your own life.

There will typically be three days of questions to be answered throughout the week in preparation for group discussion on Sunday mornings. Some questions will help you carefully observe the content and context of the passage, some will help you understand what is being taught in the passage, and others will help you think through how the message being taught applies to real life.

Please note, while each question is important for building an understanding of the text, the group discussions on Sundays will not cover every question every week. The goal is not to make sure that each box has been checked. Instead, the Sunday discussions will focus on talking through a few of the questions in greater detail in preparation for the sermon.

Unlike many classes where the teacher up front does most of the talking, these Sunday morning groups are meant to be real discussions among the participants. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the discussion, we are limiting the size of the groups. Therefore, it is essential that the class participants be committed to investing the time at home each week to do the homework and be willing to engage in the discussion on Sunday mornings. We all absolutely understand that there may be a week where the circumstances of life prevent you from completing your homework, but as a general rule, we expect those who sign up for this class to commit to doing the work.

In order for the discussion time to be fruitful, we are depending on you to come prepared and willing to share what you have been learning during the week. The facilitators will be there to guide the discussion time and to provide clarification where needed, but the content of the discussion will primarily come from you, the participants, and we want everyone to participate (and no one to dominate) in the conversation. The class will begin promptly at 9 a.m. Please arrive on time so that you do not miss out on any of the discussion!

We encourage you to begin your study early in the week so that you have time to really think (and keep thinking) about the passage without being rushed.

We are so excited to see how the Lord uses this class to grow us all in our knowledge of and obedience to His Word as we seek to live it out together as the body of Christ at Summit Woods!

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### Introduction

As mentioned in your Welcome Letter, the goal of the homework questions and group discussions is to better prepare you to hear and respond to the sermon since you will be more familiar with the Bible passage that is being preached.

Remember to begin your study early in the week so that you have time to really think (and keep thinking) about the passage without being rushed, and come prepared to share with the others in your group what you are learning as you invest time studying God's Word.

#### ❖ Day 1

➤ Background Information:

First Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul sometime between AD 53-55. We know that it was not his first letter to the Christians in that city (see 1 Cor 5:9). He wrote this letter while living in Ephesus (see 1 Cor 16:8). Paul initially visited the city of Corinth during the latter half of his second missionary journey, preaching the gospel and establishing a church there (see Acts 18). In 1 Cor 5:10 and 7:1, Paul indicates that he is writing to correct their misunderstandings of his earlier letter and to answer questions in response to a letter they had sent to him.

Corinth was a key social and commercial city in the province of Achaia in Greece, situated on a very narrow strip of land between the ports to the Adriatic and Aegean seas. Due to the dangers of sailing around the Peloponnesian peninsula, cargo from the ships was often portaged from one port to the other, across land through the city.

Originally a Greek city, Corinth lay abandoned for more than 100 years after being destroyed in 146 BC during war with Rome. The Romans built a new city there in 44 BC. The city had a diverse population and was widely known for the worship of many pagan gods and for wanton sexuality during both the Greek and Roman periods. The pagan religion was integrated into all aspects of social, commercial, and government affairs.

Corinth was also well known as a venue for professional orators to display their rhetorical skill. People in the city would pay to watch them speak and debate, cheering on favorites and heckling others, much like the fans at a sporting event. As a form of entertainment, the spectacles were all about presentation with much less concern for the truthfulness of the content. This was the societal environment surrounding the church in Corinth.

➤ The Assignment:

The assignment for this week is to read 1 Corinthians. Do not stop to try to figure out the parts you do not understand. The goal is to get a big picture of what Paul is saying. Remember, Paul wrote this as a letter, so the Corinthians would have heard it read to them in one sitting. As the weeks progress, we will dig into the details. For this week, focus on seeing the bigger picture and making note of Paul's repeated themes and key ideas.

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In general, we will encourage you to spread the questions out throughout the week. However, for this week, if you are able to read the letter in one sitting, do so! (1 Corinthians takes approximately 1 hour to read.) If you need to divide it into smaller sections, we recommend: chapters 1-6, chapters 7-11, and chapters 12-16. Look over the questions below before you begin reading.

### ❖ Days 1-3

Read through 1 Corinthians, keeping these questions in mind.

1. What key words and ideas does Paul repeat throughout the letter?
2. What are the problems Paul addresses? (Make note of both the *different* tangible/behavioral ways in which they are sinning and the *similar* heart issues revealed in these ways.)
3. What are Paul's stated goals for the Corinthians?

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4. Though Paul speaks about several different areas of their life and worship, there is a unified theme to the heart issues Paul is addressing. In 1 or 2 sentences, summarize Paul's big-picture intent for the Corinthians. (If you need a prompt, consider: What does Paul want them to do? What does he want them not to do? How or why?)

5. Do you think the things Paul addressed with the Christians in Corinth in the first century will be helpful for us as twenty-first-century Christians in America? How so?

6. What was it like to read the entire letter all at once (or over just a few days)?

7. Before you read the letter this week, what was the first thing that came to mind when you heard “First Corinthians”?

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8. Did anything surprise you when you read the letter?

9. Did anything jump out to you that you can apply in your daily life this week?

In preparation for Sunday, pray for Pastor Bret as he prepares and for our congregation to be ready to hear the message and live accordingly. Pray also for the other Equipping Classes.