

Daily Devotionals: Dear Church | August 7, 2022

1 Corinthians 3:10-23 | Leadership

DAY 1

Flying over the Grand Canyon is amazing! If you're on a flight from anywhere in the midwest to Southern California, chances are you'll get a glimpse of this wonder from above.

But seeing the Grand Canyon up close and spending time in it is something else completely. To marvel at the detail, the beauty, and even hike it, gives you a perspective you could never get with a quick flyover.

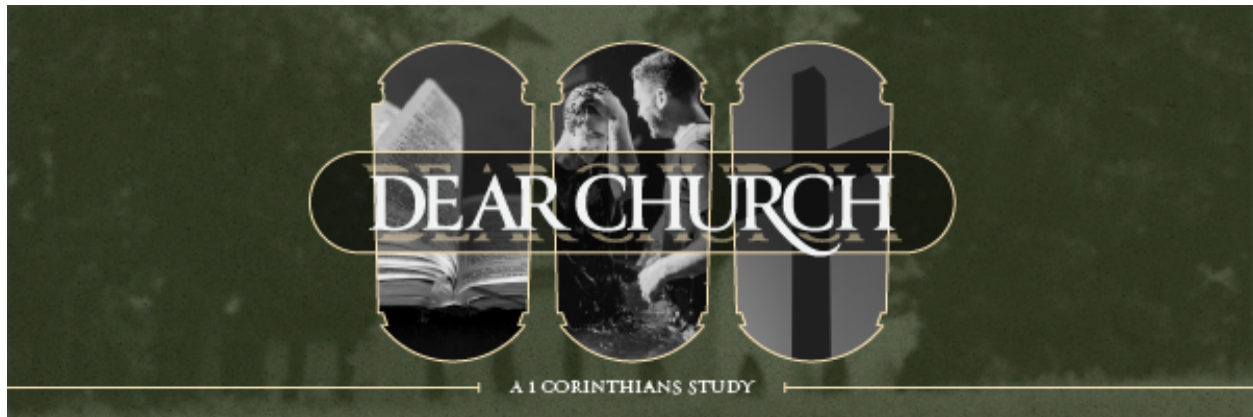
So, this week as we continue to journey through 1 Corinthians, let's "hike" into the text and observe the ways God was speaking to the church in Corinth, and to us, through the Apostle Paul.

As we dive into week four of this series, you need to know that Paul is going to continue the conversation that he began in chapter three concerning the traits of a true servant of Jesus. Paul's words in the previous chapter must have hit the Christians in Corinth hard as he challenged them about their lack of spiritual maturity and their divisiveness. His solution in chapter three? **Build your life on the foundation of Jesus Christ and have complete dependance on God!**

Sounds simple enough, right? Maybe. Maybe not.

We all know from experience how difficult this is to live out and how quickly we revert to old habits and ways in times of stress. That's why here, in chapter four, Paul continues the conversation about how the Corinthians are not to divide themselves over worldly standards of what leaders should look like, comparing one person to another. *Instead*, they ought to view everything through the eyes of heaven.

1 Corinthians 4:1-21: 1 This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light



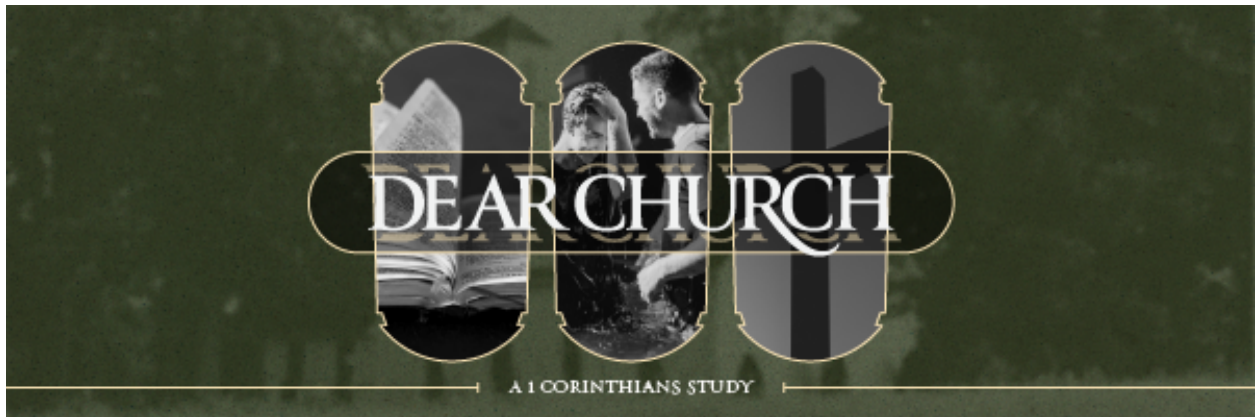
what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

6 Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! 9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

14 I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. 15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. 20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 21 What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?



What's your first reaction to what you've read?

What do you sense is the main topic Paul is writing about here? Explain.

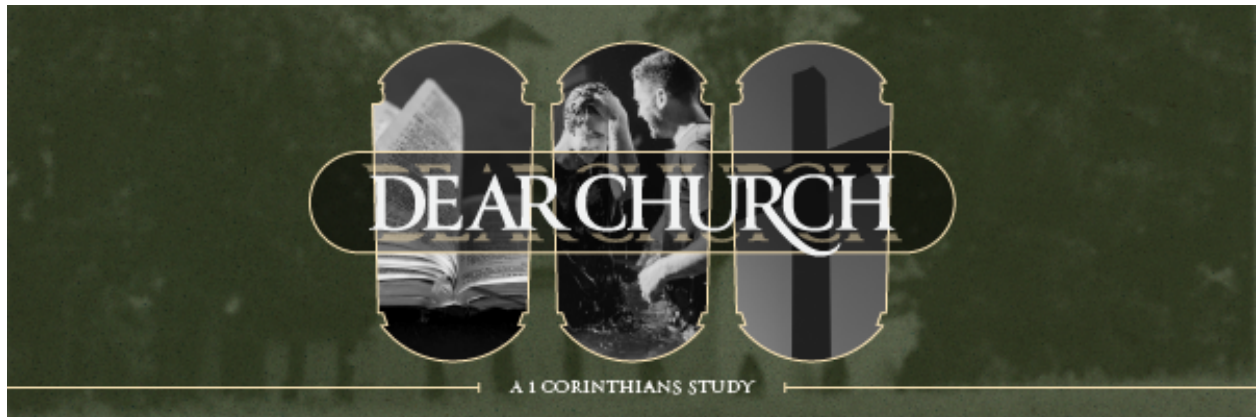
What words are repeated?

Do any sentences stand out? Which ones?

What was confusing?

What was encouraging?

What's something to pray about as a result of your reading of this passage?



DAY 2

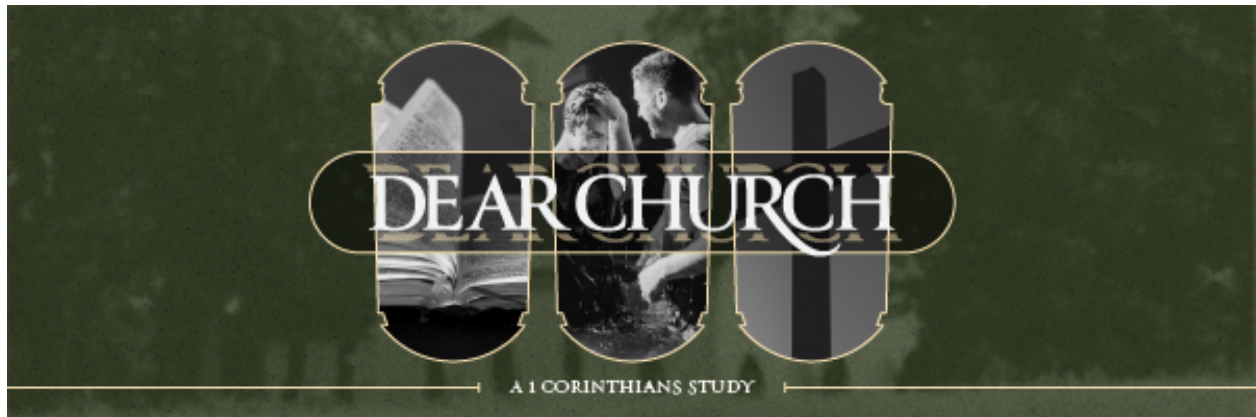
1 Corinthians 4:1-5: 1 This, then, is how you ought to regard us: as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. 2 Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. 3 I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. 4 My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 5 Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.

How does Paul describe himself and the rest of the Apostles here in verse 1?

Now read Mark 10:45. How do you think this verse informs Paul's understanding of servanthood?

In verse 2, Paul goes on to say that “those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” The word for “trust” is best translated as a “steward or manager of household affairs for the owner of the house.”

Based on your journey through 1 Corinthians up to this point, what areas might Paul be calling our church to be faithful stewards? Why?



Read 1 Corinthians 4:1. What word does Paul use to describe the thing he’s been entrusted with?

Paul has become a steward of God’s grace and the mystery of Christ. That word “mystery” can be the cause of a lot of confusion. It can conjure up ideas of God holding out on us or of something we have to hold onto by blind faith, but that’s really not Paul’s point. He’s not talking about something unsolved or unknown. The word for mystery in the Greek has more to do with something being unveiled that was once previously hidden!

How does 1 Corinthians 2:7 relate to or clarify what Paul says here about God’s mystery?

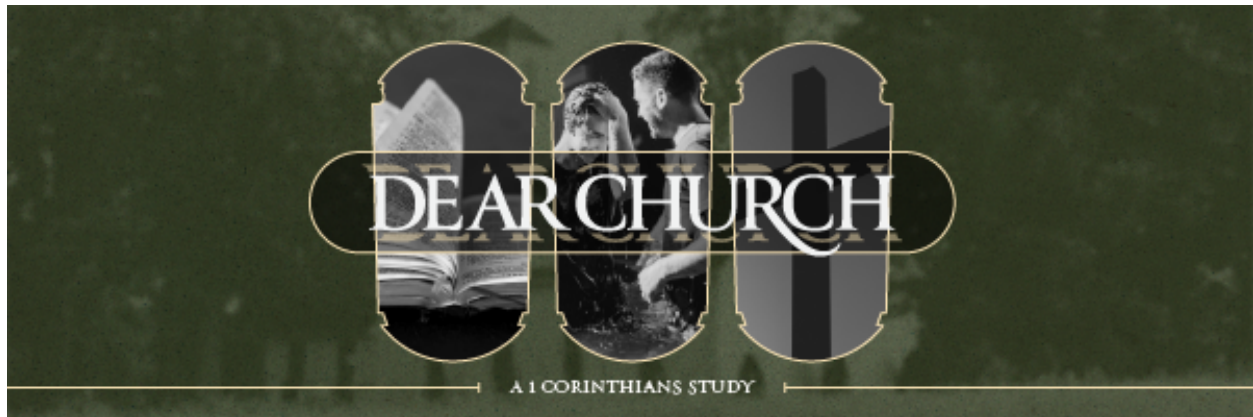
Now read Romans 16:25-26 and Ephesians 3:1-6. What do these Scriptures say about this “mystery?” How do you see correlations between these verses and the “mystery” Paul mentions in 1 Corinthians 4?

Paul concludes 1 Corinthians 4:1-5 by talking about “judgment,” particularly as it pertains to us standing before God and being judged as faithful stewards of what He’s entrusted us with.

In verse 5, what are the three things that Paul explains will happen at the judgment?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.



DAY 3

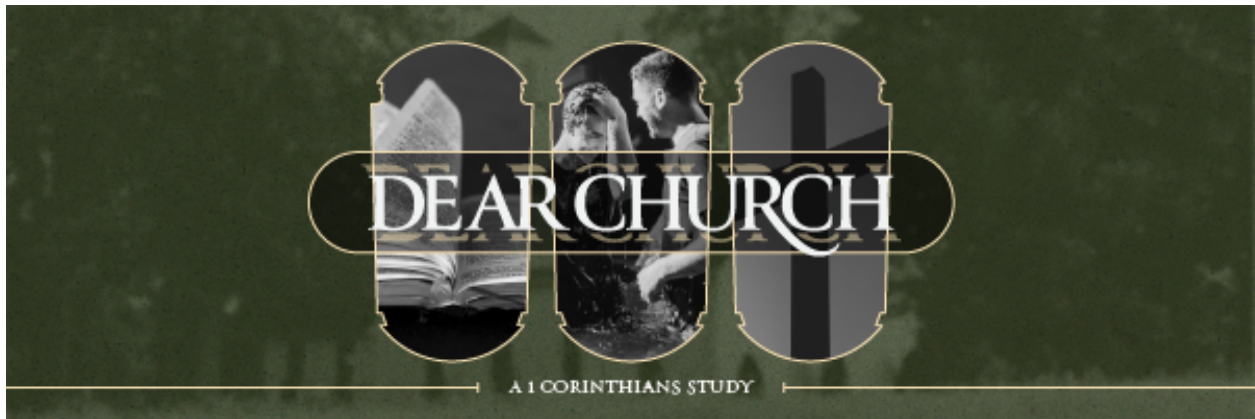
1 Corinthians 4:6-13: 6 Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.” Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. 7 For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? 8 Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you! 9 For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. 10 We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! 11 To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. 12 We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; 13 when we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.

The Corinthian church was divided. Some preferred Apollos. Others preferred Paul. And still others preferred neither of these men! Just like our political landscape today, division was becoming a real issue. People were jockeying for position, thinking of themselves as better because of which leaders they attached themselves to, how many resources they had, and more.

In our text today, Paul is drawing a clear distinction between the servanthood of Apollos and himself with the pride of those in the Corinthian church.

As we mentioned yesterday, 1 Corinthians 4 is, in many ways, about servanthood to Christ. The word “servants” in 1 Corinthians 4:1 has several meanings. It can have connotations of...

- Anyone who serves with their physical hands
- In the New Testament, it can refer to the officers and attendants of magistrates
- It can refer to of the attendants of a king, servants, retinue, the soldiers of a king, of the attendant of a synagogue
- It can refer to anyone ministering or rendering service



As you read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13, list out all the challenges and trials that Paul and Apollos are facing as servants of Jesus.

Take a moment to read through 2 Corinthians 11:23-29. What does Paul list here about his sufferings as a servant of Christ?

Paul is making the point that his apostleship is not based on jockeying for any authority or position or power. He's not here vying for the Kingdom of God with any ill-motive or ego or pride. Instead, he's embarking on a downward journey. A self-emptying journey. A journey very much unlike the Corinthians themselves.

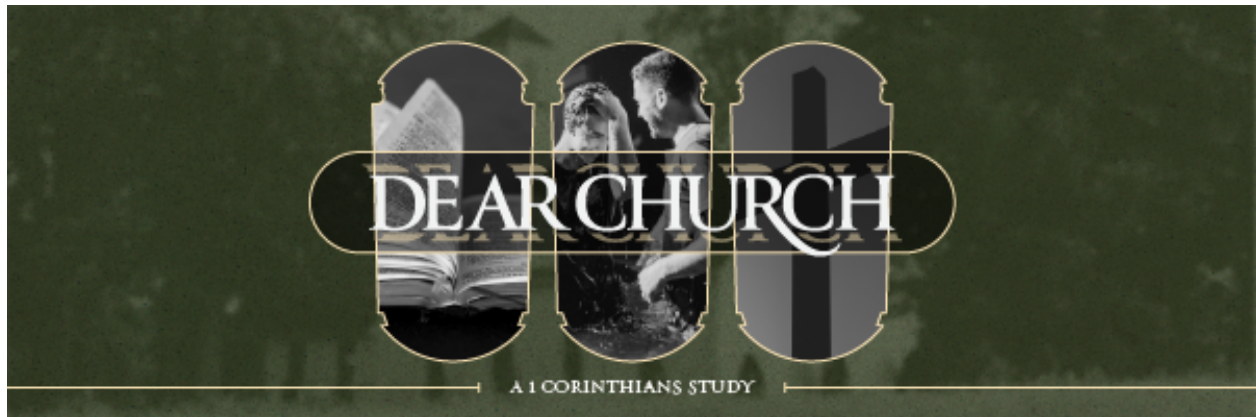
How exactly does Paul describe the Corinthians towards the end of verse 6?

The Corinthians are prideful, and their pride is bringing about their ruin. The interesting thing for the church of God at Corinth is that they have no reason to quarrel.

Take a moment to list all of the things the Corinthians possess in 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

What is their position in life the result of (see verse 7)?

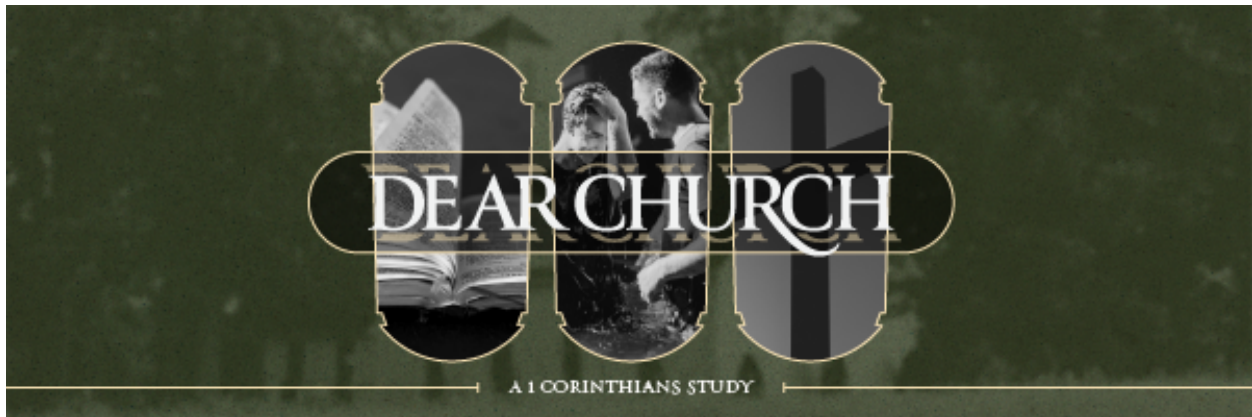
How does the list above compare and contrast with the lives of the Corinthians?



How might the Corinthians' attitude toward one another change if they took on Paul's humility and if they saw everything they had as a gift from God?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.



Day 4

For today's study, we're going to look at the next section of this letter to the Corinthians as Paul continues to share his heart for this struggling church.

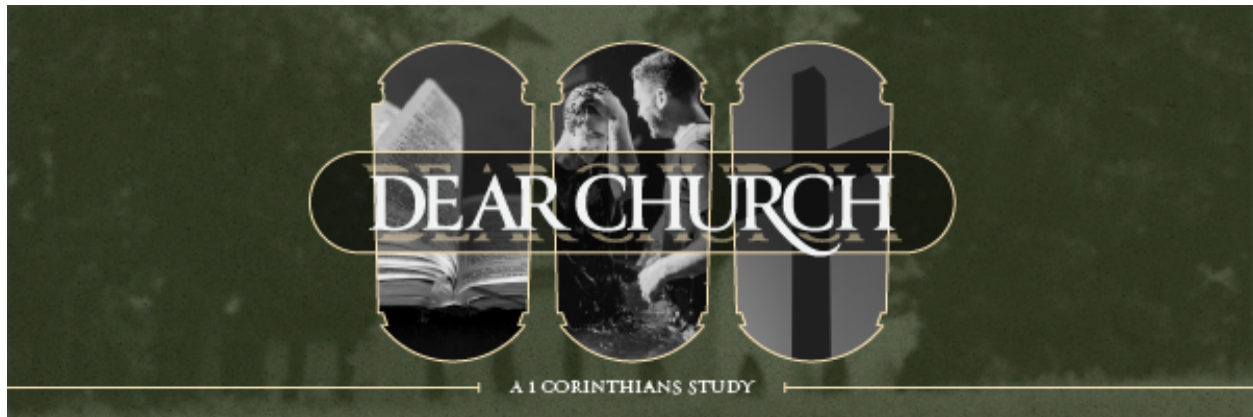
1 Corinthians 4:14-21: 14 I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. 15 Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. 16 Therefore I urge you to imitate me. 17 For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. 18 Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. 19 But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. 20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. 21 What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

According to verse 14, what was Paul's stated purpose for his lovingly confrontive words in this chapter? What do you think Paul is hoping to accomplish?

How does Paul describe his relationship to the Corinthians in verse 15? What sort of role or authority in their lives does that position give him?

Think back to the first time you remember being "disciplined" or "corrected" for doing something wrong as a child. Not a great memory, right? In fact, it's probably a memory that has some shame, guilt, or hurt associated with it.

Read the following verses. Then in the margins to the side or in a notebook, jot down some of the common themes followed by noting how these verses support Paul's purpose for his challenging words so far in this chapter.



- **John 3:16-17**
- **Romans 8:1**
- **Hebrews 12:5-11**

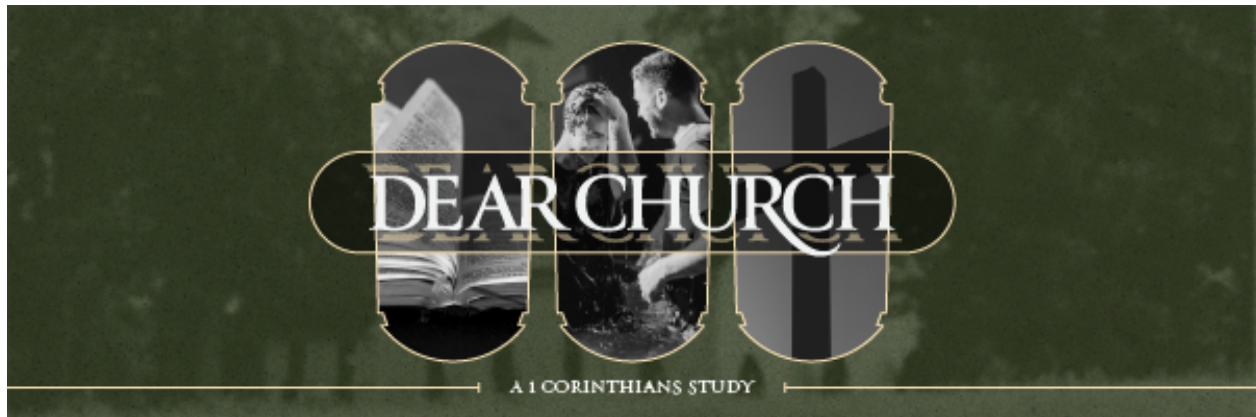
In the context of “Godly discipline,” what is the goal of spiritual correction according to this passage? How is this different from your view of correction in the past?

Discipline (or correction) according to Paul is an essential part of the Christian walk. We commonly call this “accountability” in our day. The only difference is that with our culture’s version of accountability, there tends to not be much weight behind it. Here, Paul uses his authority to help shape the Corinthians into the kind of people God wants them to be.

And he does it in three ways: (1) his example; (2) his writing; and (3) his son in the faith, Timothy.

All three of these ways of “correction” are for a singular purpose that is stated by Paul in the latter half of verse 17. What is that purpose?

As Paul wraps up chapter four of his letter to the Corinthians, he begins again to confront their pride, stating that when he finally gets to visit, he will be the one judging how they “talk” and what “power” they have (verse 19).

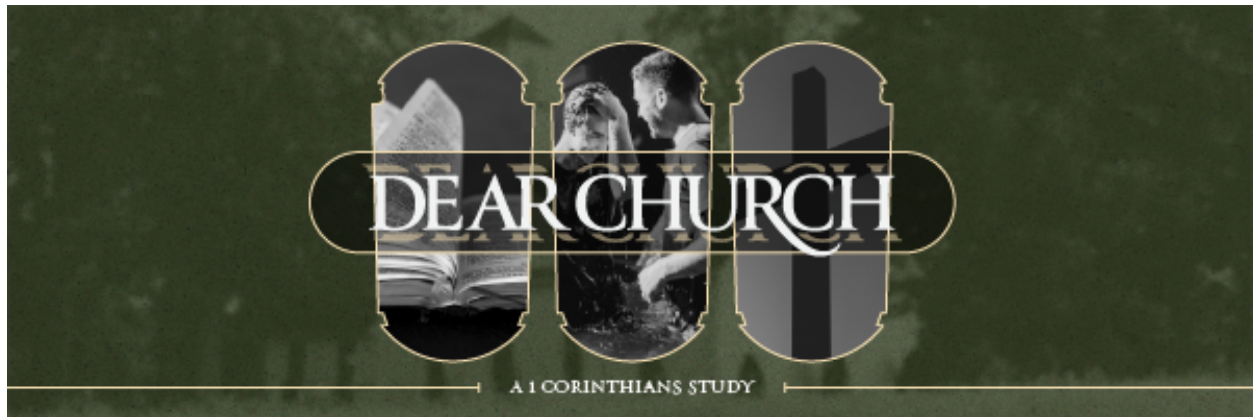


Re-read 1 Corinthians 4:18-21. How does 1 Corinthians 2:1-5 relate to what Paul says here?

What is true “power” in the kingdom of God and how does it relate to worldly power (see Philippians 2:5-11 for how Jesus exercised his power)?

RESPONSE: What is one takeaway from your time with this passage today?

PRAYER: Write a prayer out based on your reading and study today.



DAY 5

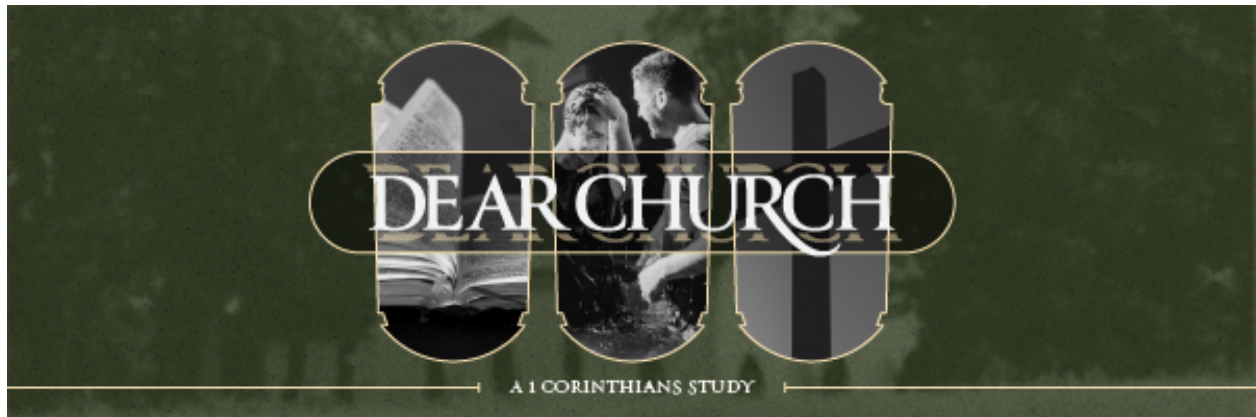
On this final day, read through our passage prayerfully one last time and then answer the questions below.

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What did you learn this week that challenged you most?

What did you learn this week that encouraged you most?

What did you learn about yourself from this study?

What did you learn about God?

What lingering questions do you have?

PRAYER: Write a prayer out based on your reading and study this week.