A photograph of two people in a green canoe on a calm, misty lake. The person in the front is wearing a blue jacket and holding a paddle. The person in the back is wearing a green jacket. The water is still, reflecting the canoe and the people. The background is a soft, hazy landscape.

April 15 Yes, it is! The path to all-inclusive peace
April 22 Yes, it is! Living as a conduit of peace.
April 29 Yes, it is! Reaping the benefits of peace.
May 6 Yes, it is! Living for the place of peace.

Is Peace
Possible?

CHURCH



MATTERS

1 Corinthians

Sermon and Life Group Study Booklet, Apr-Sep 2018



If you would like to look into joining a Life Group, please contact steve.nation@stmattswanniasa.org.au for more information

Is Peace Possible?

As God's people, we are called to respond to conflict in a way that is remarkably different from the way the world deals with conflict. Conflict is often very painful. But as our church staff team learnt last year, conflict can also provide an opportunity to bring great good: glorify God, serve other people, and grow to be like Christ.

As believers, we are called to actively pursue genuine peace and reconciliation instead of accepting premature compromise or allowing relationships to wither. We are called to "forgive others as God, through Christ, has forgiven us" (Ephesians 4:32).

As we will see in the following studies, we are called to keep short accounts with one another (Ephesians 4:26); to take responsibility for our own contribution to the conflict (Matthew 7:3-5); to go show our sister brother their fault (Matthew 18:15); and to seek reconciliation (Matthew 5:23, 24).

We have all been part of conflict. We are probably in the midst of it now. And we will face conflict in the future. God has brought peace to us, and calls peacemakers 'blessed' (Matthew 5:9). We're doing these studies because followers of Christ should be committed to resolving conflict in a way that glorifies the Lord, edifies the body of Christ, and reflects His character.

The following studies on Peacemaking are heavily reliant on the work of Watermark Church's *Resolve: A six-week Course on Biblical Conflict Resolution* (watermark.org). This work in turn leant heavily on *The Peacemaker*, by Ken Sande (Baker Publishing 2004)

Yes, it is! The path to all-inclusive peace. Col 1:15-23



For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven,

MAKING PEACE BY THE BLOOD OF HIS CROSS.

COLOSSIANS 1:19–20

Yes, it is! The path to all-inclusive peace. Col 1:15-23

Make a list of all the personal attributes and roles Jesus has in Colossians 1:15-20.

Jesus' personal attributes (who He is)

Jesus role/s (what He has done, is doing, will do)

What might your answers above tell us about the following:

Environmental concerns

The problem of evil

Church life

Conflict between people

Considering Colossians was written to a group of people (a church), made up of individuals, what do verses 21-23 tell us about:

Our Past (v.21)

Our present (v.22)

Our future (v.23)

In light of Colossians 1:15-23, what does it mean to 'continue in your faith' (v.23)? And specifically, how does continuing in our faith have any effect on the following? Think practically.

Environmental concerns

The problem of evil

Church life

Conflict between people

Some questions to think about before the next study

1. How was conflict handled in your family growing up?
2. How have you handled conflict/miscommunications in the past with friends?
3. In your experience, has the church failed to handle conflict differently than the world? Explain.

Yes, it is! Living as a conduit of peace. Matthew 7:1-5.

Yes, it is! Living as a conduit of peace. Matthew 7:1-5.

For starters: **What makes one person easy to love while another is so hard to love? Share your experiences.**

If you've ever taken a zoology class you may have heard of the fight-or-flight instinct, which describes a behaviour common to nearly all animals—when they encounter stress or a perceived threat, they will either run away or turn and attack. A possum plays dead. A deer darts away at an unfamiliar sound. A wild hog charges its opponent.

Interestingly, people tend to respond in similar ways. If we're honest, when we're hurt or offended by someone, our natural reaction is to physically or emotionally withdraw from that person, or to become angry and aggressive toward them. We attempt to protect ourselves or assert our own dominance. James 4:1-3 explains that this comes from our selfish desires and passions within us. However, as the redeemed body of Christ, we are called, in humility, to think of others above ourselves (Philippians 2:3), and to bring glory to God in everything we do (1 Corinthians 10:31).

Conflict is not necessarily bad or destructive. Even when conflict is caused by sin and causes a great deal of stress, God can use it for good (Romans 8:28-29). As the Apostle Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1, conflict actually provides three significant opportunities. By God's grace, we can use conflict to:

1. Glorify God (by trusting, obeying and imitating Him).
2. Serve other people (by helping to bear their burdens or by admonishing them in love).
3. Grow to be like Christ (by living in obedience to God's word).

These concepts are totally overlooked in most conflicts because people naturally focus on escaping from the situation or overcoming their opponent.

Read Matthew 5:43-48

1. Jesus seems to think that we all have enemies (5:44). Who is your enemy? Why?
2. Most people will exhibit both the “fight” and “flight” at different times, but will have a preference toward one. What is yours? How has that specifically played out in the past (e.g., shutting down, making cutting remarks, raising your voice, using hurtful words, etc.)?

In view of God’s great love for us, we can reject the urge to fight or take flight, but instead, we can begin to look at conflict from God’s perspective—understanding it is not necessarily something bad, but perhaps an opportunity.

3. Re-read verses 45-47. Jesus is giving His people the highest test of Christian integrity, faith and maturity - how we treat those who disagree with us and dislike us. To return evil for evil is so normal, so human. And to return good for good, is normal – it too is human. To return evil for good is evil. But to return good for evil - that’s just strange. **What connection does verse 45 have with verses 46-47? What does this tell us?**

Digging deeper. Read Colossians 3:14

When conflict presents itself, we must realize there is no middle ground: we must either overlook the offense or be willing to discuss with the offender directly. Choosing to overlook an offense means trusting that God, who always judges justly (1 Peter 2:23), has a plan to make that hurt right, and that we don't have to exact justice ourselves. It means we choose to believe the best about the other person and remind ourselves that we have been forgiven of much ourselves (Luke 7:47).

When deciding if an offense can be overlooked, here are four helpful questions to ask:

- Is the offense dishonouring God?
- Has it damaged a relationship?
- Is it hurting other people?
- Is it hurting the offender himself/herself?

If the answer to all of these is “no,” then we should let the subject go and move on. However, if the answer to any of them is “yes,” then we should make preparations to go and discuss the matter with them.

Go and Be Reconciled

If we've been trying to overlook the offense for days, weeks, or months, and it's still irking us, we should consider that perhaps this is God's way of prompting us that we need to go and talk it through with the other person. The reason we go and discuss an offense with another person is never to prove a point or shame them. By contrast, our goal should be honest communication—even to the point of exposing our own hurt—that promotes reconciliation so that a deeper, more authentic relationship might result. In effect, we're saying, “I need you to know how this made me feel, so that we can learn/repent/ forgive and move forward together.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is an example of an offense that you would overlook, versus one you should go and discuss directly?

2. Practically, how do you proceed in overlooking an offense? What Scriptures can you meditate on to get your heart in the proper place?
3. If the goal is reconciliation rather than trying to “prove a point,” how should this alter our approach?

Extra study

Read Matthew 18:15

Having done the hard work of discovering our part in the conflict and determining that the offense is too serious to overlook, it is time to take action. God's Word commands us to go and talk with our brother privately and lovingly about the situation.

We could prepare for the conversation specifically by:

- Praying for humility and wisdom (1 Peter 5:5).
- Planning our words carefully – thinking of how we would want to be confronted (Proverbs 12:18, 15:1-2; 16:23).
- Anticipating likely reactions and planning appropriate responses – rehearsals can be very helpful (Proverbs 20:18).
- Choosing the right time and place – set aside time to talk in person (Proverbs 16:21; 27:12).
- Avoiding text or email for anything emotionally charged.
- Assuming the best about the other person until we have facts to prove otherwise (Proverbs 18:17).
- Trusting God (Psalm 37:3).

Practically speaking, it's good to initiate the conversation and share some ways that God has revealed to us our own shortcomings. To the extent that these have negatively impacted the other person, we should discuss any hurts we may have caused, accept their feedback, and ask for their forgiveness. Starting the conversation this way sets a tone of humility — one that can be contagious—and removes any sense of condescension or judgment. This should not just be an obligatory apology, but a humble admission that, in the eyes of an infinitely holy God, our sin is just as offensive as theirs.

After we've addressed our own contribution to the issue at hand, we must gently and truthfully share how we've been hurt by the other person. It is important to be factual and specific, not to exaggerate or over-generalize. We should be clear and

straightforward in relaying not only the incident that caused the hurt but also our feelings related to it. We should affirm our love for them and our desire for reconciliation and unity.

If the initial conversation does not resolve the conflict, we should not give up, but invite one or two others along in another attempt to be reconciled (Matthew 18:16). The goal in bringing others along is not to build a coalition who can justify our position, but to provide objectivity to help both parties involved work toward a God-honoring solution.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. For those who tend to avoid conflict, this part of the reconciliation process can be the most difficult. What holds you back from telling another person how you've been hurt by them?
2. What are the ways you prefer to be approached with a difficult matter? (Think about both verbal and non-verbal.)
3. How could you initiate a conversation with someone who has hurt or offended you? Brainstorm some opening lines.
4. What are some ways to affirm your concern and respect for the other person?
5. What steps would you take in "widening the circle" if the first conversation does not go well? Who should be your "one or two others"?

Yes, it is! Reaping the benefits of peace.

James 3:13-18.

Yes, it is! Reaping the benefits of peace.

James 3:13-18.

The old saying goes: “Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me.” Do you agree / disagree? Why?

Read James 3:13-18

What does James 3:13-16 tell us about the source of our problem and its effects?

Have you ever wanted something really badly and it seemed like everywhere you looked, other people were getting it or already had it? For example, let’s say you’re considering buying a new car. Suddenly, it seems every 5th car on the road is the same make and model you’ve been eyeing!

The truth is that the number of cars on the road hasn’t suddenly changed; it’s that our brains are focused on one specific vehicle, and everything we see, hear, or read is running through that filter. Likewise, we are subconsciously ignoring all the other vehicles that are not the one we have our hearts set on.

Similarly, our way of looking at things is far more affected by our own biases and predispositions than we care to admit. Each of us has a tendency to magnifying another’s faults while minimizing our own.

James 3:17-18 gives us the resolution to our problem of our tongue and our heart. What is the source of our resolution and what are its effects?

Digging deeper. *Read Matthew 7:3-5*

Jesus doesn't say "Don't get the speck out of your brother or sister's eye," but rather to examine ourselves first, before we go.

When examining ourselves and trying to see our own "log," we're generally looking for two different kinds of things. First, there are our own attitudes and biases. For example, maybe we are prone to hear something as being much more hurtful than was actually communicated (negative interpretation). Or maybe we are holding this person responsible for an old wound, and therefore anything he/she does is perceived as rude and insensitive (bitterness).

Secondly, there are sinful words and actions. We need to take responsibility for these, ask for forgiveness and repent from them no matter how small we think they are. It may be easy for us to say, "Well, I may have raised my voice, but that doesn't excuse him from being a complete jerk!" We would do well to flip that around: "He may have been a jerk, but that doesn't excuse my yelling."

The final and most important step in this preparation process is to identify the real issue, since attitudes and behaviours are just symptoms of a deeper heart-issue. The root issue may be an unhealed wound, a sinful desire, or even a good thing that's been elevated to a sinful place—all from which Christ wants to set us free. Removing our logs is exceptionally difficult because the person trying to detect and diagnose the problem may be part of the problem. This is where we must lean on God's Spirit, God's Word, and God's people to help us see what we can't see. Sometimes, in the process of removing the log from our own eye, we find that the offense against us is really nothing, or much smaller than we initially thought.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Have you ever gone to someone to address a hurt or sinful behaviour and discovered in the process that you were more in the wrong than you thought? Describe the experience.

What are the common root issues that you deal with that cause many of your conflicts?

What are some practical steps that you have found helpful in seeking to “take the log out of your own eye”?

To what degree people describe you as having verse 17’s qualities? What are your personal areas for improvement?

Yes, it is! Living for the place of peace. Revelation 21:1-8

What do you do with unresolved conflict?

Read Revelation 21:1-8

What do these verses tell us about the future? What does this tell us about conflict, resolution, and peace?

How should the reality of Revelation 21:1-8 shape the reality of our lives?

Digging deeper: Be prepared for unreasonable people

Read Matthew 18:17

Unfortunately, after attempts to be reconciled with our brothers and sisters, friends and co-workers through multiple conversations (both one-on-one and with others), there are times when we are unable to resolve the issue. At this point, the solution is to expand the circle of accountability and wisdom to include a wider community within the body of Christ.

It is imperative that the process not stop short of any Scriptural admonition to diligently preserve the unity that the Lord intends (Ephesians 4:3). Where conflict

persists, the offender's community should be brought in so that they may directly and authoritatively speak into the matter. Where necessary, the Life Group might need to separate itself from the obstinate person (Matthew 18:17a; 1 Corinthians 5:1-2), until s/he is willing to deal with the sin at the heart of the conflict.

While it's certainly frustrating to not get the results we desired, we can still rest well knowing that our approval does not come from men, but God (Galatians 1:10). We should remember that God does not measure success in terms of results, but in terms of faithful obedience. All God expects of us is to obey His revealed will as faithfully as possible (Romans 12:18).

Additionally, we must resolve not to give up on finding a biblical solution. In the meantime, we should:

- Control our tongue (Romans 12:14; Ephesians 4:29).
- Seek godly advisors and not isolate ourselves (Proverbs 15:22, 18:1).
- Keep doing what is right (Romans 12:17; 1 Peter 2:12, 15; 3:15b-16).
- Recognize our limits, fulfilling our role and trusting God with His (Romans 12:18-20).
- Use the ultimate weapon of deliberate, focused love (Romans 12:21; John 3:16; Luke 6:27-31).

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. **How are you tempted to respond to an unreasonable person?**
2. **Describe a tough conversation with a person who seemed unreasonable. How were the principles outlined above and in previous chapters followed; and if not, how might you follow them if you could do it again?**

4. While we wait for the glory of Revelation 21:1-5, what do you think Paul means when he says, “if possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18)?

MATTERS



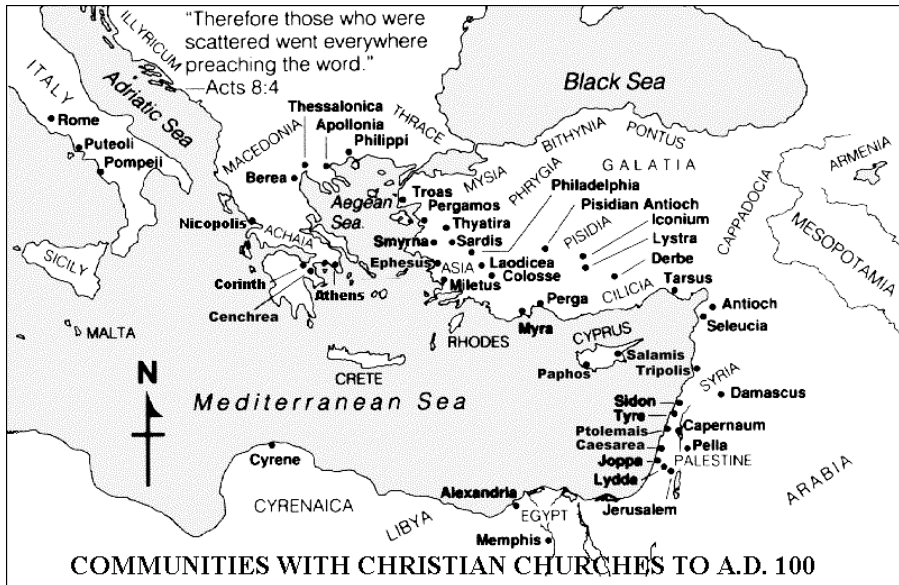
CHURCH

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

49AD – Paul Preaches in Corinth and sets up the church

51AD – Paul leaves Corinth

55AD – Paul sends 1 and then 2 Corinthians



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Bryson Smith, 1 Corinthians 1-7, Church Matters, Matthias Media (with substantial editing by Ben Ho from St Lucia Evangelical Church);

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Alan Stibbs (ed.), Search the Scriptures, 1 Corinthians, IVP

1 Corinthians 1:1 – 2:5

1 Corinthians 1:1 – 2:5

What opinions do people listen to about how to live? What is it that makes us listen to particular people's opinions?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

1. Who was 1 Corinthians written from and to?
2. Paul is about to deal with various divisive factors in the life of the church at Corinth. What is significant, therefore, about his approach in verses 1-9? What can we learn from these verses about our privileges and prospects as Christians?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17

3. What are the main causes of the divisions in the church at Corinth?
4. How may similar divisions arise in the church today? According to this passage why are they fundamentally wrong? What is the remedy for them?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17 - 2:5

5. List Paul's reasons for preaching the word of the cross in the way he did.

6. Why do you think God has made a church like we read in 1:26-31?
7. What does 2:1-5 tell us is the most important thing in Christian ministry?
Why?
8. Imagine you found yourself moving to another community and looking for a new church. What would you look for most of all?
9. What do you think God (through the Apostle Paul) wanted the Corinthians to do as they read these verses? What would He want us to do today?

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

Who would you say is the wisest person alive today? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

1. Where does true wisdom come from? What is it like? Read also John 14:25-26 and 2 Thessalonians 1:13.
2. Do you ignore God's wisdom if the world says it is foolish?
3. How much of your day do you spend listening to the world, and how much listening to God in His word? If this needs to change, what will you do about it?

1 Corinthians 3

1 Corinthians 3

Describe in one sentence what you think 'church' is.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-4

1. How does Paul describe these Christians (in verses 1-4)? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-23

2. List all the ways Christian workers are described in 1 Corinthians 3. What is, or should be, their relationship to:

God:

Each other:

What three warnings does Paul give them in verses 10-18?

Are you growing as a Christian? Why / why not?

Have you realised that your church belongs to God, not you; and His wishes and plans for it are more important than your preferences?

Is there any part of your attitude towards church which you need to change?

1 Corinthians 4

1 Corinthians 4

1. From what you've seen in chapters 1-3, in your own words, summarise the problems that the Corinthian church was having (both in their thinking and behaviour)

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-17

2. Look carefully at 1 Corinthians 4:1-5
 - a. What criteria did the Corinthians use to assess their leaders? (think back to previous chapters) What is God's criterion?
3. Look carefully at 4:6-13
 - a. What lesson did the Corinthian church have to learn? (I.e. what were they doing wrong that they had to learn this lesson?)(v6-7)
 - b. Fill out the following table: how did the Corinthians view of themselves compare to the apostles? (9-13)

Corinthians	Paul & Apostles

- c. Who had the proper perspective of being 'Christian'? What evidence from the passage makes you say this? (Read also 4:14-17)

Application:

Does your view of being a Christian seem more like the Corinthian view or the Apostles' view?

What might the Christian view practically look like in our church?

1 Corinthians 5

1 Corinthians 5

1. "It's not right to judge what anyone else does." Do you agree or disagree? Are there any situations in which you'd change your answer?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-8

2. What did Paul hear that's happened in this church?
3. What has been the reaction to this in the church? What does God through the Apostle Paul think of their response?
4. How does Paul's commands in verses 4-5 reflect Jesus' teaching during His time on earth? See Matthew 18:15-17.
5. How does Paul refer to Christ in verse 7? (Read Exodus 12:17-28 for background info). Why is this relevant?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:9-13

6. In verse 9, Paul reminds his readers to “not associate with sexually immoral people”. From verses 10-11, what does Paul *not* mean? What does he mean?
7. Many Christians don’t want to think about confronting public (or private, for that matter) sin. Why do you think this is?
8. What part must we all play in keeping our church pure? Galatians 6:1-5 is helpful instructions for this.

Fleeing Immorality in God's Church

(1 Corinthians 6:7-20)

Fleeing Immorality in God's Church

(1 Corinthians 6:7-20)

"All sins are equal to God". "All sins are the same" – do you agree or disagree? Why?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:7-11

1. Paul describes the Corinthian church as being persistent in wrongdoing. What warning does Paul give to them in light of this?
2. Why is unrighteous living totally out of place/inconsistent with being a Christian?

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20

To understand this section, it helps to know the underlying Greek philosophy that had great influence over the Corinthians thinking. Greek philosophy taught that the body (physical) was bad, but a person's spirit was good. In this way, whatever was done to the body doesn't matter because it wouldn't last into the afterlife – only the spiritual would.

It is clear that this section is about sexual immorality, with the specific issue of prostitution. Paul reports two catchphrases that the Corinthians used to think through this issue.

3. The first saying was: "All things are lawful for me"
 - a. What do you think the Corinthians meant by this saying?
 - b. What does Paul say to show them they have got this understanding wrong? (v12)

4. The second saying was: “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food and God will destroy both one and the other”.
 - a. What do you think the Corinthians meant by this saying? (What’s this got to do with sexual immorality?)
 - b. What does Paul say to show them they have got this understanding wrong? (v13b-14)

Paul says four things to counteract this wrong thinking
5. After counteracting the wrong view of the body (and therefore their wrong view about sexual immorality), Paul go on to explain the significance of our bodies. As Christians, what has happened to our bodies? (v15-20)
6. How should we understand sexual immorality? How should we respond to sexual immorality?
7. How much are you driven to live a changed life based on understanding what you have been saved to become (cleansed, sanctified, justified)?
8. What are some specific and practical ways you can do this?

Suggestions for Prayer:

- ❖ Thank Jesus for what he has done for you (washed, sanctified, justified)
- ❖ Pray for real repentance in areas of persistent struggle
- ❖ Pray for yourself to really take sexual sin seriously

Godliness in God's Church (1 Corinthians 7)

Godliness in God's Church (1 Corinthians 7)

What does our society say is better: being single or being married? What do you say?

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1

1. Like the last study, we see that Paul quotes what people in the Corinthian church have said to him. What is the statement they are making and what do you think they mean by this? How is this related to the previous section?

This is a confusing chapter in some respects. It often seems like Paul is jumping from one topic to the next. In order to examine the main idea that unifies the whole chapter, we'll look at it under three main truths that Paul wants to convey.

Instructions for the married. Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

1. In these verses, Paul is addressing married people. What instructions does Paul give to them, and why?

Instructions for the unmarried. Read 1 Corinthians 7:6-9, 25-40

2. What reasons does Paul give for remaining single?
3. What reason does Paul give for not remaining single?

4. Do you think Paul sees singleness as being worse than, as good as or better than marriage? Explain.

The guiding 'rule'. Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-27

5. What rule is spelt out in this section (v.17, 20, 24)? (Consider: what is the 'call' that Paul is referring to?). Try and rephrase this rule in your own words.
6. What relevance does this have to the question on the issue of marriage and singleness?
7. In your life situation, what would it mean for you to be devoted to the Lord and pursue holiness?



Design by the Evans girls