

1. If you had to give one piece of advice to Satan on how to kill a church what advice would you give?

Get the members to start complaining about all that's wrong with the church by gossiping about each other.

2. What are some of the motives that people have for coming to church other than getting to know Jesus Christ?

People come to church to 1) see friends or family, 2) to make business contacts, 3) to find dates with the opposite sex 3) to please family members or friends, 4) to create a particular image, 5) to find status and power, 6) out of habit, 7) to find our information, 8) to find another church 9) to fulfill court obligations, 10) to make others feel uncomfortable, 11) to show off, 12) to belong to a group and 13) to have something to do.

3. Who was the John who wrote 3 John.

This was the apostle John, the brother of James. He was one of the inner three in Jesus' group of disciples.

The apostle John.

The similarities between the Gospel of John and these letters identified as 1, 2, and 3 John are so remarkable that it would be difficult to argue that these writings were done by two different people. The syntax, the vocabulary, and the thematic developments are so strikingly similar that even the inexperienced reader can tell that the letters were penned by the writer of the Gospel. Therefore, once the writer of John's Gospel is identified, we can automatically identify the writer of the letters.

Clearly, whoever wrote the Gospel was an eyewitness of Jesus and among the very first to follow him. The writer of this Gospel calls himself "the one whom Jesus loved" ([John 13:23](#); [19:26](#); [20:2](#); [21:7](#), [20](#)). He was one of the twelve disciples, and among them he was one of those who was very close to Jesus (for example, see [John 13:23-25](#), where John is said to have been leaning on Jesus' breast during the Last Supper).

The synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) reveal that three disciples were very close to Jesus: Peter, James, and John. Peter could not have been the author of this Gospel because the one who named himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" spoke with Peter at the Last Supper ([John 13:23-25](#) NIV), raced Peter to the empty tomb on the morning of the Resurrection ([John 20:2-4](#)), and walked with Jesus and Peter along the shore of Galilee after Jesus' appearance to them following his resurrection ([John 21:20-23](#)). Thus, someone other than Peter authored this Gospel. In addition, the writer could not have been James, for he was martyred many years before this Gospel was written (see [Acts 12:2](#)). The writer must have been John, the son of Zebedee, who shared a close relationship with Jesus. Most likely, it was also John who was with Andrew (Peter's brother) when they became the first to follow Jesus ([John 1:35-40](#)). He was the one who was known to the high priest and therefore gained access for himself and Peter into the courtyard of the place where Jesus was on trial ([John 18:15-16](#)). This one disciple stood by Jesus during his crucifixion ([John 19:25-26](#)) and walked with Jesus after his resurrection ([John 21:20](#)). This is that same disciple who wrote the Gospel that bears his name ([John 21:24-25](#)).

The author's proclamation as an eyewitness is just as pronounced in the first letter as it is in the Gospel. In 1 John, the author claimed to be among those who heard, saw, and even touched the eternal Word made flesh ([1:1-5](#)). In other words, John lived and traveled with the man Jesus. As such, his testimony is firsthand; he was an eyewitness of the greatest person to enter human history. Surely no human knew Jesus better than John.

At the beginning of 2 and 3 John, this author identified himself as "the Elder." This title probably pointed to John's position at that time as the oldest living apostle and chief leader among the churches in the Roman province of Asia (otherwise known as Asia Minor). This is made clear in 1 John by the way he addressed the believers as his "dear children" ([2:1](#), [18](#), [28](#); [3:7](#); [5:21](#)).

Some scholars have thought this "elder" refers to a different John on the basis of a quotation from Papias, bishop of Hierapolis in Asia Minor (A.D. 100–140). Papias's comment, transmitted through Eusebius via Irenaeus, is "If anywhere one came my way who had been a follower of the elders, I would inquire about the words of the elders—what Andrew and Peter had said, or what Thomas or James or John or Matthew or any other of the Lord's disciples had said; and I would inquire about the things which Aristion and the elder John, the Lord's disciples, say." A number of significant commentators have argued for the existence of an elder or presbyter John in Asia Minor who was different from the apostle John. However, Irenaeus, in *Against Heresies* and in the *Muratorian Fragment* (both from the end of the second century), assigns 1 John to the apostle John.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1, 2, & 3 John.

⁹ I wrote to the church, but Diotrephes, who loves to be first, will have nothing to do with us. ¹⁰ So when I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, spreading malicious nonsense about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome other believers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.

¹¹ Dear friend, do not imitate what is evil but what is good. Anyone who does what is good is from God. Anyone who does what is evil has not seen God. ¹² Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone—and even by the truth itself. We also speak well of him, and you know that our testimony is true.

Commentary Material

Descriptive and definitive words come to mind when specific names are spoken. A certain man is described as generous, another as stingy. One woman is pictured as outgoing, another as reserved. People are known for their actions; over time, they build reputations, and adjectives accumulate on their personal resumes.

For example, little is known about Gaius or Demetrius, except that both men were generous and faithful. And Diotrephes barely makes a ripple in history, except that he is described as self-centered and mean-spirited.

Third John may be short, but it speaks much about the value of a good reputation. As you read this letter from the beloved apostle John, consider how you might be described and determine to be known as one who follows close to Christ.

DATE AND SETTING

Written in about A.D. 90 from Ephesus.

Third John was also written in a similar setting to 1 and 2 John. The occasion, however, was not the threat of heresy. The problem faced in this situation was a certain Diotrephes, who was repudiating the authority of "the Elder" (John) and trying to frustrate his leadership. The letter is addressed to Gaius, who was still loyal to the elder. John commended Gaius and asked him to provide for the genuine missionaries who would be passing through.

Again there is insufficient information to establish date or additional setting. The familiar terminology and writing style tie it closely to the other two letters.

AUDIENCE

Gaius, a prominent Christian in one of the churches known to John.

Third John was written to Gaius. Although the New Testament mentions several men with the name Gaius ([Acts 19:29](#); [20:4](#); [Romans 16:23](#); [1 Corinthians 1:14](#)), it would be difficult to say that any one of these was the same as the Gaius in 3 John. At any rate, Gaius was commended for his Christian walk and hospitality and so was

Demetrius, both of whom stand in sharp contrast to Diotrephes, "who loves to be the leader" (v. 9 NLT).

PURPOSE

To commend Gaius and Demetrius for giving hospitality to Christian teachers who traveled from city to city. These two men are models for the church. By contrast, Diotrephes refused to welcome those teachers sent by John, and he even had the audacity to excommunicate any believer who did welcome them. John, therefore, censured Diotrephes, who exemplifies autocratic church leadership.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1, 2, & 3 John.

I sent a brief letter to the church about this, but Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader, does not acknowledge our authority.^{NLT} The brief letter referred to here was probably neither 1 or 2 John, but another letter that no longer exists. Apparently, John had previously sent this letter to the church (of which Gaius was a member), encouraging them to welcome and help the traveling teachers whom John was sending their way and perhaps to give support to help them along their journey. But a man named Diotrephes had refused to acknowledge the apostle's authority (literally, he "does not receive us"). He ignored the letter, perhaps even destroying it. This necessitated John's writing this letter to Gaius so his words would be heard.

Diotrephes, who loves to be the leader (literally, "loving to be first among them"), apparently refused to support these traveling preachers, thus snubbing John in the process. Diotrephes had an important position in the church but was blinded with pride and self-importance ([1 Timothy 3:6](#)).

Diotrephes' lust for leadership was symptomatic of the same lust that would take over the church in the following centuries. One by one, churches—formerly cared for by a group of elders—were taken over by one leader. This eventually led to a whole system of bishops, cardinals, and a pope.

LIFE APPLICATION

POWERMONGERS

The antagonist of 3 John is a church leader named Diotrephes. The description is not pretty: John portrays him as a man who loved to be in charge, as well as a malicious gossip. Diotrephes was also in the habit of excommunicating members who crossed him. John vowed to confront this powermonger on his next visit. Whether he did or did not isn't known. However, his actions serve as a warning to us. Leadership is not about honor and privilege; it is about humility and responsibility. Biblical leadership means condescending to serve. Anyone who craves a position of authority or who is primarily interested in titles and clout and

being in the limelight is unfit to lead God's people. Test your own motives by asking: Would I still do this gladly if no one ever praised me? if I never got recognition? if the will of another was chosen over my desires?

10 *So if I come, I will call attention to what he is doing, gossiping maliciously about us. Not satisfied with that, he refuses to welcome the brothers. He also stops those who want to do so and puts them out of the church.*^{NIV} *John would deal with Diotrephes personally if he were able to go to Gaius's church (see v. 14). This verse explains some of what Diotrephes was doing. He apparently wanted to control the church. John denounced four errors of Diotrephes:*

- 1. Diotrephes refused to acknowledge the authority of other spiritual leaders (v. 9).*
- 2. Diotrephes was gossiping maliciously about those leaders. The Greek word, phluaron, literally means "to talk nonsense." Diotrephes' words were evil and senseless, but apparently the church members were too untrained in Scripture or too afraid of him to be able to stand against what he was saying.*
- 3. Diotrephes was a bad example to the believers because he refuses to welcome the brothers—that is, other gospel teachers. He regularly refused to give hospitality to the brothers sent from John. What prompted this boycott? Some scholars think that the brothers sent from John may have been Jewish Christians and that Diotrephes was the leader of an anti-Jewish group in the Gentile churches. This group recognized Paul as an apostle but opposed John, who was trying, through love, to unite the various elements in the Gentile churches. It is also possible that Diotrephes held theological views that were at odds with John's; therefore, he did not want John's coworkers teaching in his church. Whatever the case, Diotrephes was trying to dominate the church and lord it over all the members—telling them who to receive and who not to receive. Gaius had apparently not listened to Diotrephes but had continued to be hospitable. For this, John commended him. Not only was Gaius doing what was right, he was doing it in the face of persecution from those in his own church.*
- 4. Diotrephes was attempting to "put out of the church" those who opposed his leadership. Diotrephes even took it upon himself to excommunicate any members of the church who received the brothers sent from John. How arrogant!*

Sins such as pride, jealousy, and slander are still present in the church; thus when a leader makes a habit of encouraging sin and discouraging right actions, he or she must be stopped. If no one speaks up, great harm can come to the church. That is why John was going to call attention to what Diotrephes was doing so the believers would understand how wrong Diotrephes was and how evil his actions were. John was prepared to publicly expose Diotrephes before the whole church. Christians must confront sin in the church; if they try to ignore the sin, it will continue to grow. A true Christian leader is a servant, not an autocrat!

11 Beloved, do not imitate what is evil but imitate what is good. Whoever does good is from God; whoever does evil has not seen God.^{NRSV} John's reaction to Diotrephes is surprising. Instead of expressing revenge, John promoted goodness. John encouraged Gaius to imitate what is good—that is, to continue showing support and hospitality (v. 5). Human beings are imitators by nature, but they must choose whom they will imitate. John encouraged Gaius to continue to follow what is good, for whoever does good is from God. Diotrephes might put pressure on Gaius, but Gaius should take a stand for what was right. If he were to give in to pressure from Diotrephes, he would be giving in to evil, and whoever does evil has not seen God. True Christians are known by their actions. John wrote at length in his first letter about how believers must show love for one another. Those who do not love do not know God, for God is love ([1 John 4:8](#), [16](#)).

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4. What was at the root of Diotrephes' problem?

Diotrephes was self-centered and cared more about himself than he did the church. He wanted to be in charge and the center of what was taking place.

How does his problem conflict with Jesus' statement Mark 9:35 Today's New International Version (TNIV) ³⁵ Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all."

Greatness is determined by servanthood. The true leader places his or her self and needs last, as Jesus exemplified in his life and in his death. Being a "servant" did not mean occupying a servile position; rather it meant having an attitude of life that freely attended to others' needs without expecting or demanding anything in return. Jesus expounded on this concept in his call to self-denial (Mark [8:34](#)) and in his emphasis on loving your neighbor as yourself (Mark [12:31](#)). Seeking honor, respect, and the attention of others runs contrary to Jesus' requirements for his servants. An attitude of service brings true greatness in God's kingdom.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Mark.

5. What are ways in which we find ourselves like Diotrephes in which we insist things be done in the church the way we want them to be done?

We can insist our order of service, our kind of music, our dress code for service, our particular program or ministry be supported, our schedule for how pastors spend their time, our time for worship services or bible studies to be held, our people to be put in certain positions or our way of receiving an offering. There are so many ways in which we can demand our way, and often times we may truly think we are standing for God in the position we hold, when there may be very little biblical basis for the position we hold. We forget that tradition is not the same thing as the will of God.

6. What was a change that took place in the church that you fought against or resisted, but it actually helped the church.

I can recall that I was at first opposed to liturgical dancing during worship. It's hard for me now to understand why I was so opposed to having it because it has certainly been a blessing. I was opposed to children wearing sneakers in the children's choir. I learned the kids wore their \$75 sneakers with the same amount of pride as I did my \$29.99 shoes, and that God was not more impressed with one on Sunday than he was the other one.

7. One of the problems that kills a church is the amount of negative feedback that members share with each other about the church or other members or ministries of the church. Why do you think people put up with the negative gossip that Diotrephes was spreading about John and the other leaders in the church?

I think some of the people were afraid of Diotrephes and the power he seemed to hold. They did not want to get on his wrong side. Sometimes we as Christians are naïve to think if we just pray for people, they will change their behavior. No

doubt there were also some people who just liked to keep gossip going because it was good entertainment.

8. Almost all churches suffer from a negative feedback loop. What do you do when people who are members of our church attack our church verbally in your presence?

I usually ask “what happened, why are you saying that”. Often times I find the problem is not nearly as big as they start out to make it. One bad experience can distort a person’s view. For instance, “the young people in this church are out of control.” It may mean the two young people near them kept talking during the service even when asked to stop.

9. Why do you think Diotrophes refused to welcome other believers and put out of the church those that wanted to welcome in new people?

Diotrophes obviously had a group that supported him and his style of leadership. If new people came, that would mean church growth. If the church grew, but not all the new people held him in high esteem, his power in the church would diminish. The people who were most opposed to Diotrophes were probably the ones who wanted the church to grow. By putting the group out of the church along with the new people, Diotrophes

10. How guilty are you of not wanting to welcome in new people? How do we unintentionally make new people feel unwelcomed?

The biggest way we unintentionally make new people feel unwelcome is by focusing our attention on the people we already know when we come to church. We ignore them by unintentional neglect. We give our time to those we already know. There are times when we ignore people because we think we should already know them because they might be members, and we do not want to embarrass ourselves. We can also ignore new people by having the mindset of leaving as soon as the church service is over. We can help cause people to feel unwelcome by the way we greet them and when we greet them. We should greet people when we first see them, rather than waiting in the point of service where we are told to greet one another.

11. When was the last time you spent at least 2 minutes talking to a new person after church?

Last Sunday.

12. What made Demetrius radically different from Diotrephes?

But everyone speaks highly of Demetrius, even truth itself. We ourselves can say the same for him, and you know we speak the truth.^{NLT} John here mentioned a man named Demetrius in a way that made him a complete opposite to Diotrephes. Demetrius exemplified goodness, whereas Diotrephes exemplified evil. Nothing is known about Demetrius except that he may have carried this letter from John to Gaius. The book of Acts mentions an Ephesian silversmith named Demetrius who opposed Paul ([Acts 19:24](#)), but this is probably another man. When Demetrius arrived, Gaius certainly opened his home to him.

Whatever people said about Diotrephes, everyone was speaking highly of Demetrius, even truth itself. The goodness of Demetrius's life was evident when it was compared to the gospel standard of truth, which involves real acts of love and hospitality. In contrast to the corrupt Diotrephes, Demetrius had a high regard for truth. John personified truth as a witness to Demetrius's character and teaching. In other words, if truth could speak, it would speak on Demetrius's behalf. "We ourselves can say the same for him" means that in addition to the testimony of everyone who knew

Demetrius, and of the truth itself, John and his coworkers also gave him their commendations. The believers, especially Gaius, could believe the veracity of John's statements because John spoke the truth (see [John 19:35](#); [21:24](#)).

LIFE APPLICATION

A GOOD REPUTATION

In contrast to the arrogant Diotrephes, John wrote, "Demetrius is well spoken of by everyone" (v. 12 NIV). What a testimony! Here was a man with a sterling character and—consequently—a spotless reputation. Where Diotrephes tried to command respect, Demetrius earned it! You, too, can have a name that is honored in the community . . . if you put together a long record of consistent godliness. Is the effort worth it? Absolutely! Solomon wrote: "A good name is more desirable than great riches; to be esteemed is better than silver or gold" ([Proverbs 22:1](#) NIV). A good reputation doesn't demand that you be perfect, but it does require your willingness to admit wrong. Is there someone you need to apologize to today? That may be the first step in building a good name for yourself.

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13. What will you do in the final three months of this year to make our guest feel welcomed?

Open my eyes to see the people God is sending to our church and make an effort to connect with them on a greater level.

Life-Sharing Lesson 2 "How To Heal The Church" Philippians 2:1-5

1. What happens to you when you get an infection?

I either feel pain in the area of the infection or my body feels bad on the inside all over without just one localized spot.

2. What kind of things will infect a church?

Pride, arrogance, envy, bitterness, unforgiveness, immorality, gossip, anger, false teachings, sin, slander, hatred, greed, materialism, favoritism, racism, nationalism, selfishness

Philippians 2:1-5 Imitating Christ's Humility ¹ Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, ² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind. ³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. ⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same attitude of mind Christ Jesus had:

Commentary Material

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion.^{NIV} [Verses 1-18](#) continue the thought from [1:27-28](#), "Whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, and are in no way intimidated by your opponents" (NRSV). Paul wanted unity in the Philippian church so they could carry on the ministry of the gospel; but such unity would only be possible by being united with Christ so that there would be harmonious relationships among the believers themselves. Thus Paul used four "if" clauses here that can actually be rendered "since." Paul had no doubt that, for the most part, these conditions existed in the Philippian church. They had

some problems to deal with, but the church had proven itself to be strong and unified. Paul gave four results of being unified:

(1) Paul knew the believers experienced *encouragement from being united with Christ*. The word translated "encouragement" is *paraklesis*, also translated "exhortation" (which can mean either comfort or rebuke).

Jesus used a form of the same word when he spoke of the Holy Spirit (the Paraclete) as the Counselor or Comforter ([John 14:16](#)). Every believer has received encouragement, exhortation, and comfort from Christ. That common experience ought to unite the Philippians.

Two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self.

*St. Augustine,
The City of God*

(2) The Philippian believers had *comfort from his love*. The common experience of Christ's love should unite believers ([Ephesians 5:25](#)). In turn, their common love for Christ should cause them to love one another. This love that is available to us more than compensates for the pain and trouble we face.

(3) The Philippian believers had *fellowship with the Spirit*. When a person believes in Jesus Christ as Savior, he or she receives the Holy Spirit. This might be better translated, "The Spirit has brought you into fellowship with one another." Each believer has personal fellowship with the Holy Spirit in his or her private life; all the believers are united by the same Spirit in times of fellowship. This is the fellowship of the Spirit—the common participation of all believers in the Spirit (see [1 Corinthians 12:13](#)). Because there is only one Spirit, there can be only one body ([Ephesians 4:4](#)); factions or divisiveness have no place in the body of Christ. (See also [2 Corinthians 13:14](#).)

(4) Paul combined *tenderness and compassion*—as if he were saying, "tender compassion." When the Holy Spirit works in a believer's life, fruit is produced ([Galatians 5:22-23](#)). Paul pointed out two particular "fruits" of true concern for one another that help build unity among believers. "Tenderness" refers to sensitivity to others' needs or feelings; "compassion" means feeling the sorrow of another person and desiring to help alleviate it. Such concern for one another unifies a body of believers.

[2:2](#) Then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.^{NIV} The Philippians had given Paul great joy ([1:4](#)). Yet Paul was aware of a lack of unity in the Philippian church. For example, believers were demonstrating a false sense of spiritual superiority over others ([2:3](#)), and some were not working harmoniously with others ([4:2](#)). Paul knew that even the beginnings of divisiveness could cause major problems unless the "cracks" were repaired quickly. Even as he listed above four results of being unified with Christ and described those results as if they were already present in

the church, he asked the Philippians to make his joy in them *complete* by responding to any problems and making any needed adjustments so that they would be truly and completely unified.

The four results of unity listed above are here joined by four goals for harmony in the church. Paul wanted the Philippians to understand the importance of a unified outlook.

(1) Because of their common experience in Christ and their common fellowship with the Holy Spirit, the believers should then be *like-minded*. This does not mean that the believers have to agree on everything; instead, each believer should have the mind (or attitude) of Christ, which Paul describes at length in [2:5-11](#). The word translated "like-minded" in this verse is the same word translated "attitude" in [2:5](#).

LIFE APPLICATION

MIND YOUR MIND

Why did Paul focus on the mind ("like-minded") during times of conflict and trouble? Because the mind has analytic abilities. It creates reasons and justifies actions. It harbors suspicions and catalogs offenses against us. It advocates fighting for our rights.

A bad attitude fosters resentment. The remedy is twofold: keep the proper attitude with a wholehearted love for others, and keep unified with fellow believers. Make peacemaking a top priority.

(2) Paul also wanted the church to have *the same love*. Paul described the mind of Christ in [2:5-11](#), and these verses also describe the love of Christ. Christ's love sent him from heaven, into humble humanity, to death on a cross on behalf of sinners. Although believers cannot do what Christ did, they follow Christ's example when they express the same love in their dealings with others (see [Galatians 5:22](#)). Because the believers had received comfort from Christ's love ([2:1](#)), they ought to have that same love toward one another. They should also love like Christ as they reach out to a lost world.

(3) Jesus had prayed for future believers, "that they may be one" ([John 17:22](#) NIV). The church ought to be *one in spirit*. Paul's thought was the same as he wrote in [1:27](#). The Holy Spirit should unite the believers into one body.

(4) As they stand firm in the Spirit, they overcome small differences and work forcefully toward *one purpose*—a common goal ([3:14-15](#)). The church's goal was to spread the gospel. While its members could do that in various ways, they should be unified in reaching it.

If the Philippian believers sought these goals, they would maintain harmony. Paul's joy would be complete—he would have no more need to worry about them. A unified church is a formidable fortress for any enemy. The very unity of the Philippian church would ensure that it could stand against any persecution or false teaching that might come its way.

Paul would likely be horrified at the fragmentation and lack of unity among believers and churches today. While legitimate differences of doctrine must be examined, we as Christians should have more unity than division.

2:3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves.^{NRSV}

Here Paul identifies the problems grating on the Philippian church. The words *do nothing* could just as easily be rendered "think nothing." Both actions and thoughts need to be guarded against ambition and conceit.

Where there is charity and wisdom, there is neither fear nor ignorance. Where there is patience and humility, there is no greed.

St. Francis of Assisi

Members in the Philippian church were causing discord by their attitudes or actions. They desired recognition or distinction, not from pure motives, but merely from *selfish ambition* (see also [1:17](#)). They were creating factions based on personal prestige, drawing away members and creating parties. Their *conceit*, that is, their excessively favorable opinion of themselves or their abilities, caused them to place themselves above others. They were conceited about their own opinions, without reason or basis. When a group of such people gets together, looking down on everyone else for one reason or another, factions form and divisions occur. The result is an absence of any encouragement, comfort, fellowship in the Spirit, or tenderness and compassion ([2:1](#)). Those kind of people cannot work with others in the church in

LIFE APPLICATION

LASTING IMPRESSIONS

Many people—even Christians—live only to make a good impression on others or to please themselves. But self-centered living, selfish ambition, or conceit brings discord. Paul therefore stressed spiritual unity, asking the Philippians to love one another and to be one in spirit and purpose. When we work together, caring for the problems of others as if they were our problems, we demonstrate Christ's example of putting others first, and we experience unity. Don't be so concerned

about making a good impression or meeting your own needs that you strain relationships in God's family. Let the Spirit of God work through you to attract others to himself.

like-mindedness and love ([2:2](#)). When people are conceited and selfishly ambitious, they ruin a church's unity. We should not tolerate arrogant leaders who are willing to split a church into factions in order to gain power and followers.

While selfish ambition and conceit can ruin unity, genuine *humility* can build it. Being humble involves having a true perspective about ourselves in relation to God (see [Romans 12:3](#)), which in turn gives us a correct perspective on our relationships with others. Being humble does not mean that we should put ourselves down, tell everyone how bad we are at everything, and refuse to acknowledge any good in ourselves. Instead, humility is a healthy respect for who God is, and then a healthy respect for ourselves because of what God did on our behalf. We are sinners, saved only by God's grace, but we *are* saved and therefore have great worth in God's kingdom. We are to lay aside selfishness and treat others with respect and common courtesy.

Regarding others as better than ourselves means that we are aware of our own failings and are thus willing to accept failings in others without looking down on them. It means that we can look for and point out the good in others, rather than just looking for and pointing out our own good qualities. It also means that we consider others' interests as more important than our own. This selfless attitude links us with Christ, who was a true example of humility. It is the very opposite of conceit and selfish ambition, and it allows believers to work together, to have tenderness and compassion, and to have the attitude and love of Christ Jesus himself.

LIFE APPLICATION

COMPARISONS

People often compare themselves to others to excuse their behavior or to bolster their pride. They may think, for example, "What I did wasn't so bad. After all, look at what she did." They may look at people who are worse off and think that they are pretty good in comparison. Or they may think the worst of people and quickly judge them. Those kinds of comparisons can only lead to pride and self-centeredness. Paul wrote that instead we should assume that others are better than we are, giving them the benefit of the doubt. In so doing, we will build others up and develop humility. We need to show consideration to

others.

Paul wrote to the Romans, "Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment. . . . Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. Honor one another above yourselves" ([Romans 12:3, 10](#) NIV). Selfish conceit has no place in a believer's life. Such pride undermines the oneness vital to the church. Instead, we ought to give other believers the value and respect they deserve. While people are different, and although we may really dislike some other believers, there is no room for pride. We must acknowledge fellow believers as valuable members of God's kingdom.

Like Paul, Peter also counseled humility. Peter had been greatly humbled in his experience of denying his Lord. He wrote: "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.' Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time" ([1 Peter 5:5-6](#) NIV, see also [1 Peter 3:8](#)).

[2:4](#) Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.^{NRSV} The word translated *look* is *skopein*, used by Paul to mean "regard as your aim." Each believer should not be completely absorbed in his or her own concerns and spiritual growth, but should also look at others, noting their good points and qualities. A sure cure for conceit and ambition is appreciative recognition of others' good qualities and their walk with the Lord.

In [2:21](#), Paul pointed out that people look to their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. It is easy to get caught up in competition, aggressive acquiring, and vying for our own rights and needs. But compared to knowing Christ, those interests seem shallow. We need Christ's attitude of self-sacrifice to look beyond ourselves to the needs of others. Ultimately, all believers must look to the one supreme Example and follow in his footsteps, which Paul will describe in [2:5-11](#). Paul wrote to the Romans, "We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. . . . For even Christ did not please himself" ([Romans 15:1, 3](#) NIV).

LIFE APPLICATION

INTEREST RATES

Philippi was a cosmopolitan city. The composition of the church reflected great diversity, with people from a variety of backgrounds and walks of life. [Acts 16](#) gives us some indication of the diverse makeup of this church, which included Lydia, a Jewish convert from Asia and a wealthy businesswoman ([Acts 16:14](#)); perhaps a slave girl (see [Acts 16:16-17](#)),

probably a native Greek; and the jailer serving this colony of the empire, probably a Roman ([Acts 16:25-36](#)). With so many different backgrounds among the members, unity must have been difficult to maintain. Paul encourages us to guard against any selfishness, prejudice, or jealousy that might lead to dissension. Showing genuine interest in others is a positive step forward in maintaining unity among believers.

[2:5](#) Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.^{NIV} If anyone didn't understand what Paul meant by acting out of humility ([2:3](#)) and looking first to others' concerns ([2:4](#)), then Paul made it clear by giving an example to follow. The believers should adopt the same attitude or frame of mind that was found in Jesus Christ, their Lord. Paul was speaking to the Philippian church as a whole, describing the church's attitude, that each believer, as part of the whole, was to have Jesus' attitude of service so that the entire church would be thus characterized.

Many people feel that they can't control their moods or attitudes. But Paul doesn't accept the fact that Spirit-filled Christians are slaves to their attitudes. Christ had this attitude; so must we. "Those who live according to the sinful nature have their minds set on what that nature desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires" ([Romans 8:5](#) NIV). One of the great myths of popular psychology that has drifted into the church today deals with impulsive behavior based on emotions. In an attempt to get in touch with our feelings, this myth advocates that we must do what our feelings indicate. Christians are able to be in touch with their feelings but still do what following Christ requires. Those who accept Jesus Christ as Savior enter a community of believers, the church. Believers are to obey their Savior because of who he is and what he has done on their behalf. Paul eloquently describes this in the following verses.

LIFE APPLICATION

CAN'T IMAGINE?

Imagine Jesus as a grump, so negative by midday that people cross the street to avoid eye contact.

Or imagine Jesus waking in the morning and making statements like, "What a dull day. I'm sleeping in."

If Jesus doesn't fit these scenes, neither should you. In the morning, get up with the zest Jesus had, sure that God the Father will guide each hour. As dusk approaches, refresh yourself in the tender mercies of the Lord, and don't

let the day's pressures make you a grump. Live your day like Jesus lived his.

**Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary –
Philippians, Colossians, & Philemon.**

3. What does it mean for the members of the ministries of the church to be like-minded?

It means that the members all have the same ultimate goal which is to make that ministry better so that the church can be healthier in carrying out its mission to win others to Jesus Christ. They lay aside personal ambitions for the good of the entire ministry.

4. What is it to be one in Spirit and in mind?

To be one in Spirit is to recognize that the same Holy Spirit which dwells in you also dwells in your brothers and sisters in Christ. Our motives for the things we do arise out of wanting to please the Holy Spirit. It's not about us, but about God. To be one in mind, is to choose to have the same goal and purpose in order to further God's plans in bringing the gospel to the world.

5. How do we curb selfish ambition or vain conceit in the church? Whose responsibility is it to keep these things in check?

Curbing ambition and vain conceit begins with a look in the mirror and asking ourselves the question, "what is my real motive for doing this ministry." Am I seeking to lift up the name of Christ, or am I looking for some type of self-glorification. It is hard to do something with a pure motive for God, without having the devil sneak into the picture and our hearts begin to look for some form of self exaltation. We can desire to sing a song completely to the glory of God, and right in the middle of it, we begin thinking do others think I'm doing a good job. We begin hoping for some kind of response at the end from the people as though we were

singing for them rather than for God. Many times we are greatly offended if our name is inadvertently left off a list or our name is not called for something we did to God's glory. It is easy for any of us to have ambition and conceit in our hearts. The mere fact that we want to offer our best leads us into a vain competition. We want this year's program to be the best ever. We should be happy with this year's program being the best that it can be. There should not have to be a need to compare it to others.

If we fail to curb our own self ambition or vain conceit, then it is the job of those over us to help us see how our actions are hurting the body. The goal is to keep us from becoming a larger problem while restoring us to the right place that Christ has for us.

6. What are the practical steps involved in valuing others above yourself? What does this look like in a church?

We ask the question, what is best for someone else in this situation. We look at ways to help develop the other person into being what God has called them to be. We recognize their potential for growth and their potential to contribute. We do not see them as competition but as co-laborers. We consider their opinions to have value. We try to understand their points of view. We remove our special interests from the situation for a moment to try to be objective.

In a church it looks as though we are doing our best to try to love, encourage and respect each other in our various ministries and in the church at large. We keep in mind that being faithful to Jesus in all areas is what is most important.

7. What are some of our own personal interests that we must let go of in order to make the church healthier?

(The answers to this question will vary depending on what is happening in the church at a given moment. Almost all change that happens in a church means that some self interest is going to be in conflict somewhere in the body. This question is meant to cause us to examine some things we hold to based on our personal likes, traditions, or background. In church we put a lot of emphasis on

personal appearance, on seating, on order of service, on styles of music, on length of service, on time of service, on giving, on styles of preaching, on priorities for ministry, on babies in the worship service, and the like. Try to help people identify their own prejudices.)

8. What are some of the interests of others that we need to become more aware of in the life of the church?

We need to become aware of the different talents and gifts that God has placed inside of others. When we automatically ask the same person or persons to do a task, we may be missing out on others who could do it equally as well but are never asked. This keeps us from wearing out some people. We need to be aware of the needs of others so that we can begin to design ministries with those needs in mind. If a family has several deaf members, what can we do to minister to that person's family. We need to know other's work schedules to see if we are offering bible study and worship at times when they can be most helped by them.

9. Should we come to church with an attitude of receiving something from God or an attitude of service to others for God? Why?

When we come together we should come with the attitude of receiving something from God because of the operation of the gifts of the spirit. There is teaching, preaching, prophesying, words of wisdom, words of knowledge, gifts of help, gifts of healing, and others which indicate that coming to worship is an opportunity to be blessed by God. Yet the same gifts and others indicate we are going to be serving others. The gifts of mercy, of helps, of service, of giving all indicate that something is flowing from us in service to others. We are to come to worship prepared to be used by God in whatever way the Lord desires for that particular Sunday. That means we come expecting to receive and expecting to serve.

10. How would our church change if 90% of those arriving came with an expectation on Sunday that God would use them today to make a positive difference in someone else's life?

We would see people excited about coming to our church whether they were guests or members who have been around a long time. The positive spirit would be contagious and we would experience growth numerically and spiritually. We would have the testimony of being a church where the people really loved each other.

11. What is it to have the mind of Christ? Matthew 20:26-28 ²⁶ Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ²⁷ and whoever wants to be first must be your slave— ²⁸ just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

To have the mind of Christ is as simple as seeking to please our Heavenly Father in all that we do. Jesus said, “I have not come to do my will, but to do the will of Him who sent me.” Those words are revolutionary. A church packed with people with this mindset, would turn the world upside down.

Life-Sharing Lesson 3 “How To Build The Church” John 17:20-26

1. Other than the Spirit, what do you think is the most powerful weapon the church has at its disposal in changing the mind of the world?

I think the most powerful weapon is the ability to love those who mistreat us and to love those whom others would not choose to love because of either who they were or what they may have done.

"My prayer is not for them alone. I pray also for those who will believe in me through their message."^{NIV} After praying for his disciples, Jesus prayed for all those who would believe in him *through their message*. In a sense, everyone who has become a Christian has done so through the apostles' message because they wrote the New Testament and were the founders of the Christian church. So Jesus was praying for all the believers who would ever exist. He was praying for you and others you know. And he was praying for those he wants us to reach! Knowing that Jesus prayed for us should give us confidence as we work for his kingdom.

17:21 There are three requests in [verse 21](#), each beginning with the word *that*: (1) **"that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You"**; (2) **"that they also may be one in Us"**; (3) **"that the world may believe that You sent Me."**^{NKJV} All the requests hinge on one another. In the first request, the Lord asked for unity—that *all* the believers would be one. This all-encompassing petition includes all the believers throughout time. This oneness does not readily fit the idea of one unified church structure. Rather, this unity becomes most visible through love, obedience, and commitment to the Father's will.

LIFE APPLICATION

BECOMING ONE

Jesus' great desire for his disciples was that they would become one. He wanted them unified as a powerful witness to the reality of God's love.

Unity between believers is not often mentioned as the catalyst for someone becoming a Christian. However, Christian unity does provide an

environment for the gospel message to make its clearest impact, and lack of unity among Christians frequently drives people away. Are you helping to unify the body of Christ, the church? You can pray for other Christians, avoid gossip, build others up, work together in humility, give your time and money, exalt Christ, and refuse to get sidetracked by arguing over divisive matters.

In the second request, Jesus prayed for a unity among the believers that is based on the believers' unity with him and the Father. Christians can be unified if they live in union with God. For example, each branch living in union with the Vine is united with all other branches (see [15:1-17](#)); or each part of the body is united with the other parts so that when one hurts, they all hurt, and when one rejoices, they all rejoice ([1 Corinthians 12:12-27](#)).

This union with the Father and Son would result in people all over the world believing that Jesus had been sent by God as the world's Savior—and not only believing, but receiving this Savior as their own. This is the third request.

[17:22-23](#) Jesus further explained this oneness in terms of mutual indwelling: "**The glory that you have given me I have given them.**"^{NRSV} Jesus was still referring to all his followers, not just the immediate disciples. The phrase is a promise. Jesus gave all true believers his glory by completing his mission of revealing God ([17:4-6](#)). Jesus' work was not only to speak and model the character of God. His ultimate purpose was to present both the splendor and character of God (God's glory) in such a way that God would become personally real to the disciples. They, in turn, were to pass on what they had received to others who would also believe. Those who, in fact, received the glory would become unified by their shared relationship with Christ.

[17:23](#) "**That they may be one as we are one: I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.**"^{NIV} Complete and perfect unity between God and believers results in worldwide belief. When we demonstrate this oneness, we will convince the world that the Father sent the Son, and that the Father loves believers deeply and eternally, just as he loves the Son.

LIFE APPLICATION

VISIBLE UNITY

Christian unity begins in the heart of individual believers. Are we willing to be unified with others who may be completely different from us other than the fact that we both follow Jesus Christ?

Unity in Christ grows as local church groups practice Christ's teachings. This unity can expand as groups of local churches discover they can practice larger efforts in obedience to Christ. Because Satan's power is directly challenged by these examples of unity, we can expect resistance. We can also expect simple resistance from people who confuse human loyalties and traditions with the command to obey Jesus. To achieve Christian unity, we need Christ's help and the Holy Spirit's restraining power.

To promote unity in Christ, take these steps:

- Focus on the nature, attributes, splendor, and holiness of God. Filling our minds with God will keep us from being occupied with ourselves.
- Keep mind, heart, and ears open while keeping the mouth closed longer. Realize that not all believers use the same terms, nor speak the same "language." Impulsive conclusions can prevent us from getting along with those who share allegiance to Jesus Christ.
- Steer clear of persons who closely measure everyone else by their standards. We may be the next to be "dissected" and judged.
- Remember that Jesus died for persons, not principles or a system.
- Stay out of endless arguments over various denominational methods and church traditions. Satan uses these to distract the church from obeying its commission. Better to fail as we obey than to neither fail nor obey!

[17:24](#) "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world."^{NIV} Jesus wants all believers (the eleven disciples and all others) to be with him where he is so they can see his glory. What wonderful assurance Jesus' prayer gives us to know that the Lord of heaven wants us to be with him. This request impacts our present experience and future hope. In the present, we unite with Christ in God the Father (see [14:6](#); [Colossians 3:3](#)). In the

future, we will be with Christ in eternal glory and enjoy with him the love he experienced with the Father forever.

See Also:

[Chart: Christ Is in Us; We Are in Christ](#)

LIFE APPLICATION

OUR RESOURCES IN CHRIST

[John 17](#) contains a storehouse of resources God makes available to us as disciples of Jesus. What more could we ask for? What else could we need?

- Jesus give us eternal life ([17:2](#)).
- Jesus prays for us ([17:9](#), [20](#)).
- The Holy Father protects us ([17:11](#)).
- Jesus gives us the words of God ([17:8](#), [14](#)).
- Jesus sets us apart for special service ([17:17-18](#)).
- We are unified with God and Christ ([17:21](#), [23](#)).
- We have God's love ([17:23-24](#), [26](#)).
- Christ is in us ([17:23](#)).
- Jesus reveals God to us ([17:26](#)).

Because we have these wonderful resources, we can persevere in our faith.

[17:25-26](#) Jesus addressed his Father as "**Righteous Father**" because God's righteous judgment reveals that the world's knowledge of God is incorrect and that the disciples' knowledge is correct. Just as Jesus had chosen the name "Holy Father" ([17:11](#)) to present his request for protection of the disciples, so here Jesus added *righteous* as a highlight to the gulf that exists between the world and God. Jesus knew he was the living

The end of all knowledge is to know God, and out of that knowledge to love and imitate Him.

John Milton

connection between the lost world |
and his loving, righteous Father.

"Though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me."^{NIV} The world failed to recognize that Jesus was God's communication to them. The disciples did recognize this, for they had come to believe that Jesus was the one sent from God. Jesus, who knew the Father personally and intimately, had revealed the Father to his disciples and would continue to do so. Thus, Jesus could say, **"I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known."**^{NIV} Finally, Jesus asked the Father to love the disciples with the same love he (the Father) had for his Son.

LIFE APPLICATION

FAULTY KNOWLEDGE

The world does not know Jesus truly, for its information comes from biased sources. Consider where most people get what they know about Jesus:

1. Television/cinema—These media constantly portray God, Christians, evangelists, and the Bible in connection with perversion, mental illness, child abuse, and dishonesty. Religious characters are stereotyped as deranged or weak and often are objects of destructive humor.
2. History—Accounts are written blaming Christians for most of the evils in the world. They highlight serious failures of Christians (the Crusades, the Inquisition, genocidal acts) so as to imply that God and the Bible prompted these injustices. Many of these acts were done in ignorance or blatant disobedience to God's revealed commands. Often injustices were done as by-products of political moves by people who used the Bible to justify their sinful desires.
3. Religious training—Some people were forced to adopt a church's or religious school's "view" of God without opportunity for questions or real understanding. Required religious instruction can cause students to rebel. They not only resist the system but dismiss what may well be the truth. Wrong views taught by well-meaning teachers, or even right truths conveyed to children in an unloving manner can devastate a person's adult understanding of God. Those who "haven't paid much attention to God since Sunday school (or confirmation)" should be challenged to think again.

4. Philosophy—In philosophy, God is reduced to a concept for purposes of discussion and understanding. Unfortunately, many attempt to keep him in that state. As long as God is nothing more than a concept, people will invent any number of creative ways of "seeing" him. When we allow God's revelation, the Bible, to guide our thinking about God, many of the philosophies of the world will be shown to be in serious error about God.

Believers need to be aware of the mistakes and biases against Christianity that they will face in the world. One of our bridge-building efforts with nonbelievers will be to guide them in questioning their sources of knowledge about God.

"In order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them."^{NIV} Jesus asked that the Father's love would be in believers and that he himself (Jesus) would be in them. This expresses the heart of the Father's desire, which is to have his Son in his people: "I . . . in them." And because it is the Father's desire, he will make sure it is accomplished. How do you understand your relationship with God the Father. Is his love in you?

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – John.

2. When Jesus prays that we might be one, what do you think Jesus is actually praying for?

Jesus is praying that all of us would actively practice living in obedience to Him recognizing that our goal is not to get our own way, but to be found pleasing in His sight. Our becoming one is found in us surrendering ourselves to the same Lord and master.

3. What does being one look like in a family of believers?

In a family of believers it looks like a group of people who leave their personal agendas behind in order to attempt to discover the mind of Christ. We all may still have our passions for certain types of ministries, but we recognize that Christ may be working in the passions of others as well and together we seek to reach a working compromise in which God receives the glory. We do not insist on

getting our own way. We run everything through obedience to the word of God in discovering the mind of Christ. The call is to love each other and to serve each other be it in the home or in the church.

4. What does being one look like in a family of mixed believers and unbelievers?

We cannot be one in the sense of Jesus' prayer with unbelievers. We can all be in the same church and working for a common purpose, but we will not be one in obedience to Jesus Christ. We can be in one family in one house, but there is still going to be the separation between believers and unbelievers. We are called to love those in our homes who are unbelievers so as to win them to Christ, but we are not one spiritually with unbelievers.

5. What does it mean for us to be in Christ in order for the world to believe that Jesus was sent by the Father?

People often confuse believing in Christ with being in Christ. To believe in Christ is to obey and follow the teachings of Christ having accepted him as your Lord. The world is going to believe by seeing how Christ is actively at work in our lives through the love that is flowing out of our lives in our dealings with each other and with the world. When Jesus said "love one another as I have loved you." That command was given as a directive to believers toward other believers. It was not a command on how we were to love those who are not believers. There should be a greater willingness to sacrifice for those who are fellow believers.

6. Why does Jesus pray for us to be in Him for the world to believe, instead of praying that we would have great evangelism program for the world to believe?

If we are not in Christ, we can have a host of wrong motives for doing what we do. Great programs do not necessarily cause people to believe. There are many things that can get people's attention, but they do not necessarily win over their hearts. When we are living for Christ, we have something to share with others

that is real to us. When people come to our churches, they are looking for people who have had their loves touched and changed by an encounter with God. If we are in Christ, they will see Christ in us. Evangelism is merely a tool to get people to see that God is interested in them.

7. How important do you think it is for believers to love other believers and what do you mean by the word love in this context?

Without love for other believers, our faith becomes null and void. Nothing will turn people off quicker than to see believers treat each other with hatred and discord. People have an innate sense that people who know God, will treat others differently. Love in this context means that we are looking out for each other's best interest as we walk together in obedience to the word of God. Love is that willingness to make great sacrifices on behalf of another who is truly in need. John puts it this way in 1 John 3:16 ¹This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for one another. ¹⁷ If any one of you has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, how can the love of God be in you? ¹⁸ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

8. Why is speaking encouraging words to one another a great way to build the church?

We are all going to go through some hard times. We will all have our share of failures and mistakes. We will all have our seasons of prayers not being answered as quickly or in the manner we like. We need to have encouragement from one another to stay faithful to the call that God has upon our lives. This passage in Hebrews 10: 23-25 is a good example of our need for encouragement.

²³ *Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴ And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and*

good deeds,²⁵ not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

9. What do you think Jesus means by praying for us to be brought to complete unity?

Jesus is praying that we can let go of all the things that separate us from one another by saying yes in obedience to Jesus. We confuse traditions and personal preferences with the will of God and establish barriers around ourselves in so doing. The barriers cause us to be distrustful and suspicious of others. All the barriers we erect can become hindrances in other's ability to see our love for each other. Jesus wants us to experience all of the glory of God. Jesus wants us to have the same kind of joy of knowing the Father as Jesus had. Jesus glory cannot be made complete in us until we are complete in our unity.

10. Why is church growth important based on verse 24?

John 17:24 (NIV) 22 "Father, I want those you have given me to be with me where I am, and to see my glory, the glory you have given me because you loved me before the creation of the world.

Jesus wants all those who have been given to Him to be with Him. We know that God loves everyone. The Scripture tells us that **2 Peter 3:8-9 (NIV)**

⁸ But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. ⁹ The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. Church growth is one of the processes God uses in bringing people to repentance. God desires for people to see Jesus' glory.

11. What happens to us when Jesus is in us in the way He prays to be in us in verses 25 and 26?

John 17:25-26 (NIV)

²⁵ "Righteous Father, though the world does not know you, I know you, and they know that you have sent me. ²⁶ I have made you known to them, and will continue to make you known in order that the love you have for me may be in them and that I myself may be in them." ---We change and experience God's love at a greater depth than we have known before. To know what it felt like for Jesus to know the love of the father is a tremendous leap forward for us spiritually. Jesus never doubted the love of the father.

12. Where do you think evangelism begins to take place?

Evangelism is taking place every moment right where we find ourselves.

13. How should you practice evangelism inside the church?

By intentionally choosing to love people and seeing how I can help them.

Life-Sharing Lesson 4 “Changing The World”

1. What comes to your mind when you hear the phrase, “the church is changing the world.”

What comes to my mind is that I see policies changing in the world in terms of moral standards and the way people are being treated. I see revival breaking out in communities and people coming together to get to know God. I think of people being so impressed with the saints, that they begin to hold them in high regards because of the lives they are living.

Acts 17 In Thessalonica ¹ When Paul and his companions had passed through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue. ² As was his custom, Paul went into the synagogue, and on three Sabbath days he reasoned with them from the Scriptures, ³ explaining and proving that the Messiah had to suffer and rise from the dead. “This Jesus I am proclaiming to you is the Messiah,” he said. ⁴ Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women. ⁵ But other Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason’s house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.^[a] ⁶ But when they did not find them, they dragged Jason and some other believers before the city officials, shouting: “These men who have caused trouble all over the world have now come here, ⁷ and Jason has welcomed them into his house. They are all defying Caesar’s decrees, saying that there is another king, one called Jesus.” ⁸ When they heard this, the crowd and the city officials were thrown into turmoil. ⁹ Then they made Jason and the others post bond and let them go.

COMMENTARY MATERIALS

PAUL PREACHES IN THESSALONICA / [17:1-9](#)

Leaving Luke in Philippi, Paul, Silas, and Timothy journeyed in a southwesterly

direction along the Grecian coast, eventually arriving at Thessalonica. There Paul repeated his usual procedure: go first to the synagogue and preach to the Jews and God-fearing Greeks there. The response was typical—a revival among the Greeks, a riot at the hands of the Jewish leaders! Here the mob accused the Christians of turning "the world upside down" ([17:6](#)).

[17:1](#) Now Paul and Silas traveled through the towns of Amphipolis and Apollonia and came to Thessalonica, where there was a Jewish synagogue.^{NLT} *Thessalonica was about one hundred miles from Philippi, along the*



Ministry in Macedonia

Luke stayed in Philippi while Paul, Silas, and Timothy continued on the Egnatian Way to Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica. But trouble arose in Thessalonica, and they fled to Berea. When their enemies from Thessalonica pursued them, Paul set out by sea to Athens, leaving Silas and Timothy to encourage the believers.

Egnatian Way toward Athens. Amphipolis was about thirty miles from Philippi, and Apollonia, an additional thirty miles. No record is given of any ministry occurring in these towns, though surely the missionaries would have taken every opportunity to speak about Christ.

Thessalonica was one of the wealthiest and most influential cities in Macedonia, with a population of over 200,000. This is the first city where Paul's teachings attracted a large group of socially prominent citizens. The most important Roman highway (the Egnatian Way)—extending from Rome all the way to the Orient—went through Thessalonica. This highway, along

with the city's thriving seaport, made Thessalonica one of the wealthiest and most flourishing trade centers in the Roman Empire. Recognized as a free city, Thessalonica was allowed self-rule and was exempted from most of the restrictions placed by Rome on other cities in the Empire. With its international flavor, however, came many pagan religions and cultural influences that challenged the faith of the young Christians there.

After his ministry in Thessalonica, Paul would write two letters to the Thessalonian believers (1 and 2 Thessalonians), encouraging them to remain faithful and to refuse to listen to false teachers who tried to refute their beliefs.

17:2-3 And Paul went in, as was his custom, and on three sabbath days argued with them from the scriptures, explaining and proving that it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead, and saying, "This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you."^{NRSV} A synagogue (a group of Jews who would gather for teaching and prayer) could be established wherever there were ten Jewish males. Paul's regular practice was to preach in synagogues as long as the Jews would allow it. See [13:46-47](#) on why Paul went to Jews first. Often those who weren't Jews would come to these services and hear Paul's preaching. For a description of a synagogue service, see the commentary at 13:15.

Paul spent three sabbath days ministering to the Jews, and Luke used three different words to describe his ministry:

- "argued" is the Greek word *dialexato*, which means "discussed" or "conversed"—contrast this with [17:17](#) where Paul debated (*dialogo*);
- "explaining" is the Greek word *dianoigon*, which literally means "opening"; it is used of Jesus' instruction of the two on the road to Emmaus in [Luke 24:32](#);
- "proving" is the Greek word *paratithemenos*, which carries the idea of "bringing something forward as a way of proof;" here Paul brought the appropriate Old Testament scriptures before his audience, particularly those that taught the suffering, death, and resurrection of the Messiah, Jesus.

The fact that Paul spent three Sabbaths in the synagogue does not mean he spent only three weeks in Thessalonica. Paul probably was there for much longer (a time period that occurred between [17:4](#) and [17:5](#)). He had to

have been there long enough to do everything mentioned in his letter to the Thessalonians, such as work at his trade ([1 Thessalonians 2:7-9](#)), win converts, instruct new believers in the Christian life ([1 Thessalonians 4:1-2](#)), and form a strong bond of love with these believers ([1 Thessalonians 2:17-20](#)). Paul's letter to the Philippians indicates that he was in Thessalonica long enough to receive from the Philippians financial help "more than once" ([Philippians 4:16](#) NLT).

LIFE APPLICATION

WISE WITNESSING

When Paul spoke in the synagogues, he wisely began by talking about Old Testament writings and explaining how the Messiah fulfilled them, moving from the known to the unknown ([17:2-3](#)). This was a good strategy. When we witness for Christ, we should begin where people are, affirming the truth they do know, and ultimately move toward presenting Christ, the one who is truth.

[17:4](#) Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, as did a large number of God-fearing Greeks and not a few prominent women.^{NIV} The response at Thessalonica was typical of the response Paul had experienced from the beginning days of his missionary travels. Some of the Jews were persuaded and joined them. In addition, a large number of God-fearing Greeks also joined (see commentary on Cornelius at 10:2). The gospel continued to reach more Gentiles than Jews ("a large number" of Greeks as opposed to "some" Jews).

In Thessalonica, however, a third group responded—not a few prominent women (the Greek word for "prominent," *proton*, means "first," "chief," or "most important"). These were influential women in the upper class (see [16:14](#); [17:12](#)). "Joining" Paul and Silas means that they had come to faith, had been baptized, and were actively participating in whatever aspects of discipleship and instruction were available.

17:5 But the Jews were jealous; so they rounded up some bad characters from the marketplace, formed a mob and started a riot in the city. They rushed to Jason's house in search of Paul and Silas in order to bring them out to the crowd.^{NIV} So far Paul's ministry was following its usual course. The gospel was preached in the synagogues with meager response from the Jews. The Gentiles, however, were responding in great numbers (both worshipers in the synagogues and others). Then, as had been the custom, the nonresponding Jews became jealous and set their sights on running these "heretics" out of town or worse.

The Jewish leaders didn't refute the theology of Paul and Silas, but they were jealous of the popularity of these itinerant preachers. Their motive for causing the riot was rooted in personal jealousy, not doctrinal purity. They rounded up some bad characters off the streets, formed a mob, and started a riot in the city.

The leaders of the mob knew where to find Paul and Silas—at Jason's house. Jason was an early Thessalonian convert who, like Lydia, had convinced the travelers to stay in his home.

The term "crowd" may be an allusion only to the gathered mob. More likely, however, it is a technical reference for the governing body of Thessalonica—the "Assembly."

LIFE APPLICATION

IN THE LINE OF FIRE

Jason was persecuted because of his association with Paul and Silas ([17:6-7](#)). We don't know much about Jason except that he evidently was the local host and sponsor of Paul and Silas. Jason is just one of many unsung heroes who faithfully played their part to help spread the gospel. Because of Jason's courage, Paul and Silas were able to minister more effectively. As you serve Christ, you may not receive much attention (in fact you may receive only grief). But God wants to use you. Lives will be changed if you demonstrate courage and faithfulness.

17:6-7 Not finding them there, they dragged out Jason and some of the other believers instead and took them before the city council. "Paul and Silas have turned the rest of the world upside down, and now they are here disturbing our city," they shouted. "And Jason has let them into his home. They are all guilty of treason against Caesar, for they profess allegiance to another king, Jesus."^{NLT} The mob had not found Paul and Silas at Jason's house. Perhaps Paul and Silas had been informed and had hurried away from the dangerous crowd. So the mob grabbed Jason and some of the other believers and brought them before the city council. They shouted out their accusations, presumably because of the noise of the gathered mob.

Their accusations, like all good lies, bore some resemblance to the truth but were presented in their worst light. Paul and Silas were not guilty of treason against Caesar just because they declared allegiance to the King of kings, for Christ's kingdom is of an entirely different sort than Caesar's was.

The Jewish leaders had difficulty manufacturing an accusation that would be heard by the city government. The Romans did not care about theological disagreements between the Jews and these preachers. Treason, however, was a serious offense in the Roman Empire. Although Paul and Silas were not advocating rebellion against Roman law, their loyalty to another king sounded suspicious.

17:8-9 The people of the city, as well as the city officials, were thrown into turmoil by these reports. But the officials released Jason and the other believers after they had posted bail.^{NLT} The story told by the leaders of the riot had its desired result. The whole lot of them—from the city officials to the people of the city—were thrown into turmoil by these manipulative accusations.

Because there was no substantive case, however, and because Jason and the other believers had done little more than house the accused, they were released. Jason posted bail—putting up cash for freedom. This probably was not "bail" as we know it, insuring his presence at a future trial—there was really nothing to "try." More likely it was a pledge of sorts, assuring the authorities that Paul and Silas would leave town and not return. In Paul's first letter to this church, his statement about Satan blocking a future trip ([1 Thessalonians 2:18](#)) may refer to the events described here.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Acts.

2. What is Paul's message about Jesus Christ?

Paul's message is that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and that it was necessary for the messiah to suffer and rise from the dead. Since Paul was preaching on the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, he had to convince the Jews of the necessity of the Messiah having to die in the first place. Many Jews had expected the Messiah to come and establish a kingdom, not come and die on a cross. Paul had to convinced the Jews that Isaiah 53 was actually talking about the Messiah, and then convinced them that Jesus fulfilled Isaiah 53.

3. Why do you think Paul's message would be appealing to a large number of God fearing Greeks and prominent women?

The term "God-fearing" is a technical term for a Gentile who attended the synagogue and followed the Jewish laws but had not been circumcised. This is different from a "proselyte," who was more thoroughly committed to Judaism and, thus, often harder to reach for Christ. Christianity allowed for equal position before God for both Gentiles and women. Judaism kept the male Jew in a privilege position before God before all others. Paul comes with the message found in Galatians 3:28 which says there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ. Jesus. The Greeks and the women were being offered the same kind of relationship to God as the Jewish men were. This removed their second class citizenship in the synagogues.

4. How is Jesus Christ a liberating force that will change the world?

Jesus came into a world that was divided into all types of classes with one group opposing another. Yet Christianity offered everyone the same opportunity to know God and be saved. It knew no language barriers, race barriers, class barriers, sex barriers, nationality barriers, or ethnic barriers. If you gave your life to Christ, you were in the kingdom. It's command to love one another, forced each different group to

change its policies from oppressing other people. It did not do away with the divisions in society. It sought to make societies more just and righteous in that people from all walks of life had dignity and had been created in the image of God. In the eyes of God, no one human being was superior to another.

5. How does people reaching people for Christ cause jealousy and anger today?

Very few people like losing the power they have over others. One can see how people want to remove the influence of the church from society because the church will often stand in their way of doing what they want to do. Those in the homosexual movement want to insist that leading a person out of the gay lifestyle can cause the person to want to commit suicide, therefore the church should not try to set the person free. Some churches get upset with megachurches who appear to be reaching large number of people for Christ. They seek to find something wrong with their message or ministry otherwise people would not be going to them. Jealousy and anger can be stirred up in the churches. Abusive spouses do not want to see their spouses give their lives to Christ, because the person is finally equipped to rebel against the abuse and leave the relationship. We see in the Muslim world, a host of laws designed to prevent people from giving their lives to Christ. Churches are burned and destroyed when people turn to Christ in several countries. Abortionist are often angry when people who use to work in the industry give their lives to Christ, and tell the truth about what is going on under the guise of the right to choose.

6. How would you have felt if you were Jason being dragged out of your house for the cause of Christ?

I don't think I would have been too happy at the prospect of it all. I probably would have been scared and frightened. I probably would have been hoping that Paul and his companions had gotten away safely.

7. How would you feel if our church was accused of having caused trouble all over the world?

To have caused trouble all over the world for the cause of Jesus would be a good thing. However a church can do a negative event and cause trouble all over the world such as the church that insisted it would burn copies of the Koran a number of months ago. We want to make sure that the trouble we are causing is leading to a positive change in people's lives and in the society where the trouble is being caused.

8. Where should the church be causing trouble in our society today?

The church should be causing trouble in the areas are society is hurting. We should be causing trouble on the fairness of our economic system. We should be causing trouble on the issues of greed and debt. We should be causing trouble in the things that lead to poverty such as divorce and teenage sex. We should be causing trouble with the banking and housing issue. We should be causing trouble in the political arena. We should be causing trouble with violence in our community. The way we cause trouble is not by always protesting, but by getting people saved in each of the arenas and placing them in strategic places to speak up for what is true. Our trouble comes from speaking the truth of God's word in each situation and standing firm in it. The church should refused to be silenced by any group which opposes the word of God.

9. Is the church more effective when it is protesting against something or when it's doing something behind the scenes to minister to people who are being affected by the problem? Which should come first?

The church is most effective when it has a strategy for doing both. Some churches are going to be better equipped to minister using one tactic and another church will be more effective using the other. As the body of Christ, we must not look down upon the work done by other parts of the body. We have to minister to those who are suffering, but it would be foolish to not to try to end the cause of the suffering in the first place. It is in the one to one ministering to those who have been hurt that will probably lead to the most conversions for Christ. That's where one human being touches another with the love of Jesus Christ. God doesn't call us all to do the same thing, but God does call us all to make a difference in the situation.

10. Why is insisting that Jesus is the king to whom we owe allegiance such a threat to the world today?

Can you imagine what would happen if Christians in one nation refused to take up arms against Christians in another nation. What would happen if those in the justice system would expose injustices in the system because of their allegiance to Christ? What would happen in corporate boardrooms if Christians in those rooms leaked out information that they knew was stealing from others, killing others, and deceiving others. Imagine what would happen to politicians if they had such an allegiance to Christ, that they would choose to do the right thing even if it meant they were not going to be re-elected. Our system is built upon a world of secrecy and silence in order to either get by or to protect ourselves. An allegiance to Jesus Christ would force us to challenge that secrecy and silence.

11. Do you think Jason's experience made him a stronger believer or a believer willing to be content staying out on the fringe? Why?

I think Jason became a stronger believer after this experience. He did not deny the charges made against him. He didn't try to turn in the apostles. He knew that part of

being a believer was that some were going to have to suffer for their faith. No doubt Paul had shared with them, the beating and jailing he had endured in Acts 16 in Phillippi. Furthermore God had let Jason and the others go without their being cast into jail or being beaten. Jason is mentioned again later in Paul's life in Romans 16:21 (NIV)

²¹ Timothy, my fellow worker, sends his greetings to you, as do Lucius, Jason and Sosipater, my relatives.

12. What's the cost that we are not willing to pay to change the world today?

I think one of our biggest challenge is giving up the conveniences that we have. We are addicted to our lifestyles and enjoy the way things are. It's difficult giving up the comforts we enjoy in this life, to try to change the world. We are reluctant to give up the American Dream for the dream of the Kingdom.

13. Of the following, what is it that you are most resistant to give up for the cause of Christ? Your time, your talents, your wealth, your sin, your comfort, your pride or your fear.

I think for me, my comfort has become a stumbling block. I don't want a chaotic future. But as soon as I wrote it, I recognize, I still have no control over how chaotic my future will be regardless of how well and safe I try to plan it.

Life-Sharing Lesson 5 “Did God Change His Standards” I Corinthians 6:9-11

1. If somebody points and says, “now there’s a wicked person,” what image comes to your mind about the person being called wicked.

I think of someone who has done something very cruel to another person with no sense of remorse about it, and would do it again if given the chance to do so.

2. What do you think God means when God says that someone is wicked in the New Testament?

When God says someone is wicked, it usually refers to people who live as though God does not exist and they do as they please with their lives.

1 Corinthians 5:9-11 Today's New International Version (TNIV)⁹ I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—¹⁰ not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world.¹¹ But now I am writing to you that you must not associate with any who claim to be fellow believers but are sexually immoral or greedy, idolaters or slanderers, drunkards or swindlers. With such persons do not even eat.¹² What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?¹³ God will judge those outside. “Expel the wicked person from among you.”^[a]

COMMENTARY

5:9-11 When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or who are greedy or are swindlers or idol worshipers. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. What I meant was that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian yet indulges in sexual sin, or

is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or a drunkard, or a swindler. Don't even eat with such people.^{NLT} The words "when I wrote to you before" refer to Paul's earlier letter to the Corinthian church, often called the "lost letter" because it has not been preserved. In that letter, he had told the Corinthians *not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin*. Either the Corinthians had misunderstood what Paul meant, or they had avoided his command by pointing out the impossibility of not associating with sinners in a sinful world. So Paul made it clear here that he *wasn't talking about unbelievers*, for they, by nature, are involved in sexual sin, greed, swindling, and idol worship. Believers cannot disassociate themselves completely from unbelievers—they *would have to leave this world to avoid people like that*. In addition, with no contact with unbelievers, believers would not be able to carry out Christ's command to tell them about salvation ([Matthew 28:18-20](#)).

Paul meant that believers were *not to associate with anyone who claims to be a Christian* and yet has a sinful lifestyle. Paul listed a few sins such as sexual sin, greed, idol worship, abuse, drunkenness, or swindling (stealing by violence, extortion). Believers must separate themselves from those who claim to be Christians yet indulge in sins explicitly forbidden in Scripture and then rationalize their actions. By rationalizing their sin, these "believers" harm others for whom Christ died and they tarnish the image of God in their lives. A church that includes such people is hardly fit to be the light of the world because it distorts the picture of Christ that it presents to the world. The church has a responsibility to rebuke, correct, and restore those in the fellowship who claim to be believers but live like unbelievers.

[5:12-13](#) It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your job to judge those inside the church who are sinning in these ways. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the evil person from among you."^{NLT} The difference between believers and nonbelievers lies in their relationship to Jesus Christ, but a difference also exists in how believers are to relate to those inside and outside the church. The *outsiders* (referring to nonbelievers) are to be met where they are (even in their sinful lifestyles, [5:9-11](#)) and offered the gospel message. Yet the believers are not responsible to *judge* them because *God will judge those on the outside*.

In the church, however, believers have the *job to judge those . . . who are sinning in these ways*. The Bible consistently says not to criticize people by

gossiping or making rash judgments. At the same time, however, believers are to judge and deal with sinners "who are sinning in these ways," referring to blatant, unrepented sin as described in 5:9-11. Paul's instructions for this sinful man—you must remove the evil person from among you (5:1-2)—come from [Deuteronomy 17:7](#). This instruction should not be used to handle trivial matters or to take revenge; nor should it be applied to individual problems between believers. These verses are instructions for dealing with open sin in the church, with a person who claims to be a Christian and yet who sins without remorse. The church is to confront and discipline such a person in love.

See Also:

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.

3. Why do you think the word of God is telling us it is okay to associate with immoral people in the world, but not immoral people in the church?

Immoral people in the world are doing what is natural for them to do. That is why we are to take the message of the gospel to them so that their eyes can be opened. Jesus expected us to be in the presence of immoral people because that's where he often was. He was there to show them a different way of living. We are called to do the same. It's not immoral people in the church that we are to confront, but immoral people in the church who claim to be believers. It is the believer who claims to know Jesus as Lord, but rejects Jesus' authority over their lives when it comes to a personal choice to sin. By giving this person a role in the church, it gives the appearance that Jesus has accepted their sin and that the church has accepted it as well.

4. How do we apply grace, forgiveness and discipline to the above group of believers?

It has to begin with what we find in Ephesians 4:15 to speak the truth in love. Sometimes people are not aware that their actions are considered sinful. Here are the biblical steps that the bible gives for church discipline.

Chart: Church Discipline

CHART: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The church, at times, must exercise discipline toward members who have sinned. But church discipline must be handled carefully, straightforwardly, and lovingly.

Steps ([Matthew 18:15-17](#))

1. Go to the brother or sister who sinned; show the fault to him or her in private.
2. If he or she does not listen, go with one or two witnesses.
3. If he or she refuses to listen, take the matter before the church.

After these steps have been carried out, the next steps are:

1. Remove the one in error from the fellowship ([1 Corinthians 5:2-13](#)).
2. The church gives united disapproval, but forgiveness and comfort are in order if he or she chooses to repent ([2 Corinthians 2:5-8](#)).
3. Do not associate with the disobedient person, and if you must, speak to him or her as one who needs a warning ([2 Thessalonians 3:14-15](#)).
4. After two warnings, reject the person from the fellowship ([Titus 3:10](#)).

5. How is this judging different than judging in Matthew 7:1 when Jesus said, "do not judge or you too will be judged."

When Jesus spoke the words, he was clearly speaking about being hypocritical in our judgment in that we were doing the same thing we wanted to judge others for doing. He was making it clear that the same standard of judgment would be used against us.

"Judge not, that you be not judged" may be the most-often-misquoted text from the Bible. People frequently apply it as if it were a flat command against all moral judgment. In fact, people use it to judge what they consider a judgmental attitude on

the part of another. Jesus, however, gave these words as one negative application of the Golden Rule. That is, we should not treat others as we do not want to be treated. We should seek to measure ourselves and others by the same standards.

Jesus declared as unacceptable excusing personal sin while holding others accountable for similar behavior. When you perceive a fault in others, your first impulse may be to confront or reject that person. But ask yourself first if your awareness of the failure mirrors your own life. Your effort to help will be in vain if the person can point out the same fault in you. Practice your own remedy before you ask others to do it.

LIFE APPLICATION

CRITIC'S CORNER

Jesus tells us to examine our motives and conduct instead of judging others. The traits that bother us in others are often the habits we dislike in ourselves. Our untamed bad habits and behaviors are the very ones that we most want to change in others. Do you find it easy to magnify others' faults while excusing your own? If you are ready to criticize someone, check to see if you deserve the same criticism. Judge yourself first, and then lovingly forgive and help your neighbor.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – Matthew.

In this passage, judgment is based on a believer's choice to openly engage in sin even after he or she has been shown the errors of his or her ways.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 Today's New International Version (TNIV) ⁹ Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor practicing homosexuals ¹⁰ nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

COMMENTARY

6:9-10 Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.^{NIV} In these verses, Paul gives a strong proclamation about those who will not inherit God's kingdom: the *sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, homosexual offenders, thieves, greedy, drunkards, slanderers, and swindlers*. The Christians could not call themselves followers of Jesus and allow any kind of evil to permeate their lives. By saying that none of these people *will inherit the kingdom of God*, Paul was referring to people who persist in their evil practices with no sign of remorse. Such people—if they think they are believers—need to reevaluate their lives to see if they truly believe in Christ.

LIFE APPLICATION

WHAT ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY?

Paul wrote that "homosexual offenders" will not "inherit the kingdom of God." There are so many different opinions in our world today regarding homosexuality. Some believe that they can be Christian homosexuals. Some believe that homosexuality is an inborn trait, just like a person is born white or black. Some believe that homosexuality is merely an alternative lifestyle to be accepted. Some think homosexuals ought to be able to "get married," "have kids," and be treated as a "family." So what should Bible-believing Christians think?

What Christians need to understand is that homosexual acts *are* sin—pure and simple. The Bible says so. Homosexuality is not a lifestyle, an inborn trait, or something to be treated as normal. Homosexual activity is sin. Yet it is not unforgivable. God loves homosexuals just as much as he loves other sinners. Jesus' death on the cross paid for the sin of homosexuality, just as it paid for the sins of lying, greed, lust, hate, and pride. It has been said—and it is

true—that the church is a hospital for sinners, not a showcase for saints. It is a place where those caught in homosexual behavior can be freed and forgiven. It is a place where believers who have committed the sins of hatred, prejudice, and self-righteousness toward homosexuals need to go to ask the Lord for forgiveness and healing. Homosexuals, like all sinners, stand guilty before God. Rather than spreading hatred, spread the word that there is hope for sinners of all kinds through the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. He is the one who sets people free, regardless of their sins.

"Male prostitutes" (arsenokoitai) refers to those who practice homosexuality. Some attempt to legitimize homosexuality as an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Even some Christians say that people have a right to choose their sexual preference. But the Bible specifically calls homosexual behavior sin (see [Leviticus 18:22-29](#); [Romans 1:18-32](#); [1 Timothy 1:9-11](#)). Christians must be careful, however, to condemn only the practice, not the people. Those who commit homosexual acts are not to be feared, ridiculed, or hated. They can be forgiven, and their lives can be transformed. The church should be a haven of forgiveness and healing for repentant homosexuals without compromising its stance against homosexual behavior.

[6:11](#) And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.^{NIV} The list of sins may seem unduly long ([6:9-10](#)), but apparently Paul was being complete in listing what kinds of lives and lifestyles from which the Corinthian believers had come. Paul listed sexual sins such as immorality, idolatry (pointing to the sexual content of some forms of idol worship), adultery, male prostitution (the temple of Apollo employed young men whose job was to fulfill the sexual desires of male and female "worshippers"), and homosexuality. Even the writings of pagan authors and historians attest to the rampant immorality in the city of Corinth. Many of the believers had come out of a lifestyle where sexual perversion was part of their "worship!" Paul also listed other sins such as stealing, greed, drunkenness, slander, and swindling. These sexual sins and other personal sins described *what some of [the Corinthian believers]*

were. When Paul had come to Corinth, he met people with the lowest morals. Yet the power of Jesus Christ had changed them.

Paul stressed that there is no kind of sin that cannot be forgiven. When the Corinthians received Jesus Christ, they *were washed*. This refers to a cleansing process that had washed away their sins through the blood of Jesus ([Hebrews 10:22](#); [Revelation 7:14](#)). They *were sanctified*, meaning that they had been set apart by God ([John 17:17](#); [1 Corinthians 1:2](#); [1 Thessalonians 4:3](#); [5:23](#)). And they *were justified*, meaning that God had declared that these believers were righteous and just in his sight. Believers are justified *in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ*. The "name" refers to the character and nature of the One who justifies—he was perfect and sinless. Because Jesus took their punishment, sinners are able to come to God. With the full name as given here, "the Lord Jesus Christ," comes the full title of the One who is God, who became a man, and who then returned to heaven to reign forever. The phrase "Spirit of our God" reminded the believers that the Holy Spirit draws people to God and fills them when they believe. "We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink" ([12:13](#) NIV). In this verse, the Trinity is represented—God the Father, Jesus Christ the Son, and the Holy Spirit all taking part in transforming people from their sinful lives to a new way of living in obedience to God.

LIFE APPLICATION

THE WAY WE WERE

The list of the disinherited that Paul included in [6:10](#) served very much like a well-known Old Testament parable. God had sent the prophet Nathan to confront David about his sin with Bathsheba ([2 Samuel 12:1-14](#)). Nathan's parable about the rich man who had stolen the poor man's only lamb and then had killed the lamb enraged the king. At that point, Nathan pointed out that the case they were discussing was David's own behavior.

Paul used a similar tactic. He reminded the Corinthians of the behaviors that are evidence of sin. He appealed to their shared conviction that such lives, if left unchanged, would not lead to

eternal life. Then, as they nodded their heads in agreement, he stated the punch line: "And that is what some of you were" ([6:11](#)).

Any time Christians downplay or forget their condition without Christ, there are two negative results: (1) It makes them value the freedom they have in Christ less; and (2) it makes them less compassionate about people who have never heard the gospel.

Life Application Bible Commentary - Life Application Bible Commentary – 1 & 2 Corinthians.

6. The word wrongdoers has usually been translated wicked in other translations. When all the changes that have taken place in our society, can God still hold people to this standard found in verses 9-10, why or why not?

Yes, because the word of God does not change. God does not change character by the will of the majority of people. The Old Testament is full of God's people attempting to change the commands of God to their liking. God did not, and God removed the people from God's presence.

7. Why does God put the sexual sins on the same levels of being greedy, slanders and swindlers?

Sin is what separates us from God. The separation takes place regardless of what specific sin caused the separation. We like to rank sin so that some of them do not seem as bad as others, but that's not what God does. God tells avoid to avoid sin. God's system keeps us from looking down on the sins of others because we all have fallen in these three areas.

8. Is it possible to remove items from the bible listed as sin, based on new scientific research based on psychology, psychiatry, and other mental or medical disciplines. Why or why not?

No, because God knew about human disciplines long before humans did, and God had known then what was sin and what was not. Simply calling alcoholism a disease did not get rid of the sin of drunkenness. Calling something a lifestyle does not alter the nature of the sin. Calling something a right to choose does not change the killing of a baby. The Word of God is to be the standard by which we measure certain behaviors. It is not changed by a vote of the professional class.

9. What do you think was God's purpose in identifying some things as sin?

God's purpose was to show God's love for us. God knew which things would lead to pain, suffering, and degradation either in our lives or in the lives of others. All that God has deemed sin can be shown to have negatively impacted ourselves or others. God wants us in a right relationship with Him. Sin cannot dwell in the presence of God without it being consumed. Sin keeps us from receiving all the blessings that God wants to pour into our lives.

10. How do we know that God simply can't wink and look the other way when it comes to sin?

We find this in **Hebrews 12:25-29 (NIV)**

²⁵ See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?

²⁶ At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens." ²⁷ The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken--that is, created things--so that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸ Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful, and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe,

²⁹ for our "God is a consuming fire."

To worship God acceptably is to come before God with a clean spirit and a pure heart. The only way we can get either of them is to confess our sin, forsake our sin, and ask forgiveness.

11. How do we know that Paul was accepting of people who practiced these behaviors listed in this passage?

We know because Paul clearly loved the Corinthian family of believers and he states that some of the Corinthian family had come out of the very lifestyles he was speaking against. In verse 4 of chapter 1, Paul writes to the Corinthians "I always thank God for you Because Of his grace given you in Christ Jesus." Paul did his best to reach all kinds of people with the message of Jesus Christ.

12. What is the great hope and encouragement that is found in this passage?

The great hope found in this passage is the verse **1 Corinthians 6:11 (NIV)**

¹¹ And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. No one has to think their sin cannot be forgiven or that it is so much worse than everybody else's. No one has to have their past be a drain on their lives. When God saves us, we get a new start.