#31 1 Cor 1-7

Bible Reading Class

A Bible Reader's Conviction

- All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Tim. 3:16-17, NIV)

A Blessed Journey

1. May you study God's Word with a reverent heart and walk in His will.
2. May the Word of the Lord prosper, and may He add to the church those who are being saved.
3. May the Lord bless your days of reading Scripture.

B R C
Read the Bible. Follow Jesus

Read the Bible. Follow Jesus.

The Guiding Principles of BRC

- Christ-Centered
- Bible-Based
- Mission-Minded

BRC: A Gentleman's Agreement

- I'll complete weekly reading assignment
- I'll watch weekly teaching video in its entirety
- I'll complete weekly quiz (closed book)

The Structure of the 27 Books of the New Testament

three Synoptic Gospels

John

Four Gospels

Acts

Thirteen Pauline Epistles

Other Nine Epistles

Five Books of Historical Narrative

Twenty-two Books of Doctrinal Teaching

- Corinth was located in the Roman province of Achaia.
- It was a prosperous and wealthy major city.
- Trade flourished and culture thrived.
- The people enjoyed a high standard of living.
- Paul preached there for a year and a half and led many people to the Lord.

Paul's Relationship with the Church in Corinth

- *After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Messiah. But when they opposed Paul and became abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent of it. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."* (Act 18:1-6)
- *One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: "Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. 10 For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city." 11 So Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.* (Act 18:9-11)

Apollos' Relationship with the Church in Corinth

- *Meanwhile a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a learned man, with a thorough knowledge of the Scriptures. He had been instructed in the way of the Lord, and he spoke with great fervor and taught about Jesus accurately, though he knew only the baptism of John. He began to speak boldly in the synagogue. When Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they invited him to their home and explained to him the way of God more adequately. When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the brothers and sisters encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who by grace had believed. For he vigorously refuted his Jewish opponents in public debate, proving from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah.* (Act 18:24-28)

Background of 1 Corinthians

Historical Background: The letter was written around **A.D. 55**, from **Ephesus** *("But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost." — 1 Cor. 16:8).* During his **second missionary journey**, Paul stayed in **Corinth for a year and a half** *(A.D. 51–52; Acts 18:11)*, where he preached the gospel, led many to Christ, and established the church. Several years later, after hearing of the many problems facing the Corinthian church, Paul wrote this letter with a **pastoral concern** to instruct and correct them. **1 Corinthians was not Paul's first letter** to the Corinthians *("I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people ." — 1 Cor. 5:9).*

Background of the City: Corinth was a **major commercial city**, a center for both **sea and land trade**. It had **two harbors**: **Cenchreae** (eastern harbor; Romans 16:1), linking **Asia and Africa; Lechaion** (western harbor), linking **Europe.** Shaped by **Greek culture**, the people valued wisdom and intellectual achievement. Because of its thriving trade, the citizens were **cosmopolitan, open-minded**, and exposed to many cultures and religions. The city contained **twelve temples**, including the **Temple of Apollo** in the city center and the **Temple of Aphrodite**, the goddess of love, on the hill above the city. The Corinthians lived in prosperity and indulgence and were notorious for **sexual immorality**. The saying *"to live like a Corinthian"* referred to a life of **moral corruption**.

Content of the Epistle

- The purpose of Paul's letter was to instruct the church in Corinth on how to deal with the various problems they were facing, such as divisions, tolerating sexual immorality, believers taking one another to court, marital problems, eating food sacrificed to idols, divisions at the Lord's Supper, exalting the gift of tongues, and denying the resurrection. In order to provide such instruction, Paul does three things in this letter：

Content of the Epistle

1. Affirming His Identity and Authority

One reason for the disorder in the Corinthian church was their lack of spiritual discernment. They were unable to distinguish who truly were servants of God and listened to anyone who spoke, even false teachers. Therefore, in order to give proper instruction, Paul had to establish his identity.

- Paul told the Corinthians, *"Even if you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers* (1 Cor. 4:15) " . He emphasized that he was an apostle called by the will of God, that through the gospel he became their father in Christ, and that he carried authority given by God, calling the Corinthians to imitate him and follow his teaching.

Content of the Epistle

2. Pointing Out Their Errors

Like a **strict father**, Paul spoke plainly and directly, without avoiding the issues. He clearly identified the errors of the Corinthians and called them to repentance and correction. *(Exercise: The following quotations are all from 1 Corinthians; please indicate the chapter numbers.)*

- *"I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ."*
- *"It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate."*
- *"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already."*
- *"… for your meetings do more harm than good. … I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you,"*
- *"How can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?"*
- *"Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God?"*

Content of the Epistle

- *“ I say this to shame you.”*
- *“You have become arrogant and have not mourned instead.”*
- *“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?”*

Content of the Epistle

3. Giving Correct Practices and Spiritual Principles

After pointing out their errors, Paul went on to **teach the right way to act** and the **spiritual principles behind those actions**. *(Exercise: The following quotations are all from 1 Corinthians; please indicate the chapter numbers.)*

- *"That all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought."*
- *"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."*
- *"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ."*
- *"Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?"*
- *"Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful."*
- *"Expel the wicked person from among you."*

Content of the Epistle

(The following quotations are all from 1 Corinthians; please indicate the chapter numbers.)

- *"You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies."*
- *"Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all share the one loaf."*
- *"'I have the right to do anything,' you say—but not everything is beneficial. 'I have the right to do anything'—but not everything is constructive."*
- *"Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it."*
- *"And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."*
- *"But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep."*
- *"Therefore, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."*
- *"Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. Do everything in love."*

Outline of the Book

- **Introduction** (1:1–9)

1. **Church Divisions** (1:10–4:21)
2. **Church Discipline** (Chapter 5)
3. **Church Lawsuits** (6:1–11)
4. **Sexual Immorality** (6:12–20)
5. **Christian Marriage** (Chapter 7)
6. **Food Sacrificed to Idols** (Chapters 8–10)

Outline of the Book

7. **Covering the Head in Worship** (11:1–16)
8. **The Lord's Supper** (11:17–34)
9. **Spiritual Gifts** (Chapter 12)
10. **Love** (Chapter 13)
11. **The Superiority of Prophecy over Tongues** (Chapter 14)
12. **Resurrection** (Chapter 15)

- **Conclusion** (Chapter 16)

Key Passages in 1 Corinthians

1. The Message of the Cross (1:18–25)
2. Building using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw (3:6–15)
3. The Temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19–20)
4. Becoming All Things to All People (9:19–23)
5. The Meaning of the Lord's Supper (11:23–26)
6. Spiritual Gifts (12:4–11)
7. The Chapter on Love (13:1–8)
8. Prophecy Greater Than Speaking in Tongues (14:1–5)
9. The Firstfruits of Those Who Have Fallen Asleep (15:20–28)
10. "Where, O Death, Is Your Sting?" (15:55–58)

How Should We Read 1 Corinthians?

•1 Corinthians does not have a clearly defined structure. Unlike Romans, which presents doctrine first and then practical living in a very systematic way, this letter addresses a series of issues in church life, moving from one problem to the next. The best way to read this book is not to force it into a few major categories—which can be confusing—but to read it naturally and sequentially, one issue at a time.

• As you read, ask three questions:

1. Where does each issue begin and end? When does Paul finish addressing one matter and move on to the next?
2. In each issue, Paul presents important spiritual truths. What are those truths? These are the key points of the book and must be carefully grasped.
3. After reading the entire letter, can you identify a central theme that runs throughout the whole book？

How Should We Read 1 Corinthians?

- *I can first answer the third question:* the central theme that runs throughout 1 Corinthians is **"the practice of the gospel in the church."** The heart of the gospel is "**Jesus Christ and him crucified,**" and the church is **"the place where Jesus Christ and him crucified are put into practice."** Through the many issues of church life, Paul shows the Corinthians in very practical ways how to live out the truth of the gospel within the church.
- **To read this book well, two key emphases must be kept in mind:** first, **the gospel** (*Jesus Christ and him crucified*); and second, **the church** (*one complete body, the body of Christ*). Without holding firmly to these two emphases, the letter can seem fragmented—moving from marriage, to head coverings, to speaking in tongues, … without clear connection. When the gospel and the church are kept in focus, however, the entire book becomes clear and well ordered.

How Can the Truth of the Gospel Be Practiced in a Troubled Church?

	Issue	Practicing the Truth of the Gospel
1	Church Divisions	*"For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except* ***Jesus Christ and him crucified****."* The foundation already laid is **Jesus Christ**, and each person must be careful how they build on it.
2	Failure to Exercise Church Discipline	*"For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed."* Therefore, the old yeast must be removed, and **the wicked person is to be expelled from among you**.
3	Believers Taking One Another to Court Before Unbelievers	Those who belong to Christ should be **willing to be wronged**; if disputes arise, they should be **judged before the saints**, not before unbelievers.

	Issue	Practicing the Truth of the Gospel
4	Sexual Immorality	*"You were bought at a price."* Your bodies are **members of Christ**; therefore, do not unite them with a prostitute, but **honor God with your bodies**.
5	Marriage Issues	In Christ, **husband and wife are one** and are to live together in harmony, being sanctified in the Lord. Those who have the gift of singleness should devote themselves fully to the Lord, seeking to please Him in all things.
6	Eating Food Sacrificed to Idols	There is **one God, the Father**, and **one Lord, Jesus Christ**. Whether one eats or does not eat, consideration must be given to **holiness in Christ** and to **brothers and sisters whose faith is weak**.
7	Head Covering in Worship	In the church, **Christ is the head of everyone**. Believers should express a **proper attitude of submission to authority** in worship, in appropriate and fitting ways
8	Divisions at the Lord's Supper	*"Whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death."* Each person ought to **examine themselves** before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

	Issue	Practicing the Truth of the Gospel
9	Divisions over Spiritual Gifts	The church is **the body of Christ**. Gifts differ from person to person, just as the members of a body differ. Though there are many members, **the body is one**.
10	Pursuing Gifts without Love	“And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”
11	Emphasizing Speaking in Tongues	The church is **the body of Christ**. Speaking in tongues **edifies oneself**, but prophecy **edifies the church**; therefore, believers should eagerly desire **gifts that build up the church**.
12	Denying the Resurrection	**Christ has been raised from the dead** and has become **the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep**. The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; **thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ**.

Are the Corinthians Also Saints?

- *"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people."* (1 Corinthians 1:2, NIV)
- *"It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption."* (1 Corinthians 1:30, NIV)
- **Question:**

  Paul calls the Corinthian church *"sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy."* But are not saints supposed to be noble and holy? The Corinthians were divided, tolerated impurity, lacked clarity in truth, and were arrogant … **Can people like this really be called saints?**

Are the Corinthians Also Saints?

1. The Meaning of "Holy" Holiness means "belonging to God." To be "set apart as holy" is to be separated from all other uses and devoted exclusively to God. This act of belonging is accomplished in Christ at the moment a person believes. The Corinthians had already believed in Christ; although they were immature and troubled by many problems, they nevertheless belonged to God and therefore were saints.

- The belonging described in Scripture is **exclusive**. There is no other allegiance besides belonging to God. A priest of the Lord belongs only to the Lord and does not serve other gods. A temple of the Lord is only the Lord's temple and is not used for any other purpose. Likewise, a saint is sanctified in Christ alone, acknowledges Jesus as Lord, and serves one true God only.

Are the Corinthians Also Saints?

2. How Holiness Is Obtained *Belonging to God is not a favor that people grant to God; it is a privilege that God grants to people.* It is not that God pleads with us to belong to Him and we, after careful consideration, say, "All right, God, I will do You a favor and belong to You." **Absolutely not.** Our relationship with God does not depend on whether we are willing to belong to Him, but on **whether God is willing to accept us**. Humble and unclean as we are, we were never worthy to be God's people; yet, thanks be to God, He did not reject us but graciously granted us the privilege of belonging to Him.

- This privilege is obtained **in Christ**. Under heaven, **only Christ is holy**, and only Christ meets the standard of God's acceptance. It is not that we have become holy by our own efforts; rather, God allows us **through faith to be in Christ**, making Christ our holiness. God accepts Christ, and therefore also accepts **those who are in Christ**, sanctifying us and enabling us to belong to Him.

Are the Corinthians Also Saints?

3. The Purpose of Holiness The purpose of being made holy is service—that is, to have a share in the worship and service of God. The seraphim serve before God, crying out day and night, *"Holy, holy, holy."* Holiness is service, and service is holiness. Those who are sanctified are not meant to remain inactive, quietly enjoying heavenly blessings; rather, they are to spread their spiritual wings, act decisively, and serve the living God.

- On the day John the Baptist was born, his father Zechariah knew that this child had been chosen by God and would go before the Lord to prepare the way. He praised God, saying: *"to rescue us from the hand of our enemies, and to enable us to serve him without fear in holiness and righteousness before him all our days"* (Luke 1:74–75, NIV). These words show us that the purpose of salvation is service, and the manner of service is **Holiness** and **Righteousness**. *Holiness* means being set apart and belonging exclusively to God; *righteousness* means the restoration of true humanity and the display of God's glory. Both holiness and righteousness are obtained in Christ, so that we may be enabled to serve God.

Divisions over Baptism

- *"I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought." My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you.* What I mean is this: one of you says, *"I follow Paul";* another, *"I follow Apollos";* another, *"I follow Cephas";* still another, *"I follow Christ."* Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?
  (1 Corinthians 1:10–13, NIV)
- *"I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power."*
  (1 Corinthians 1:14–17, NIV)
- **Note:** *"***Not to baptize, but to preach the gospel***."* A so-called "Corinthian-style baptism" had caused division, as believers formed factions based on who baptized them. The gospel, however, is about unity—one Lord, one faith, one belonging to Christ. Paul reminded the chaotic Corinthian church that Christ did not send him to perform "Corinthian-style baptism," but to preach the gospel.

Divisions over Baptism

1. Turning God's Blessings into Sources of Division

- The Corinthian church was richly blessed, having **Paul and Apollos**, both servants of God and outstanding teachers, ministering among them. Yet some began to say, *"I follow Paul,"* and others, *"I follow Apollos,"* thus **turning God's blessings into causes of division**.

2. Bringing Human Division into Rites Meant for Unity

- **Baptism and the Lord's Supper** were both instituted by Jesus as **rites of unity**, bringing people who were once different into belonging to Christ and into unity in the Lord. The Corinthians, however, **introduced divisions into baptism and the Lord's Supper**, bringing human disunity into ceremonies that were meant to express unity. They were, sadly, quite capable of doing so!

The Logos of the Cross

Returning to the Source of Unity

- To resolve divisions, we must return to the source of unity. There is only one source of unity among the saints, and that is Jesus Christ. Faith comes from hearing the message, and the initial source of unity is the message of the gospel—*Jesus Christ and him crucified*. The ongoing source of unity is working together with God, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ.
  1. The Initial Source: the message of the gospel—Jesus Christ and him crucified
  2. The Ongoing Source: working with God, building on the foundation of Jesus Christ

The Logos of the Cross

For the message of the cross (logos) is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength. (1:18-25)

The Logos of the Cross

- *Faith comes from hearing the message.* When the same message is heard, the same Lord is believed. When the message heard is different, the Lord believed is different; and when the Lord believed is different, there can be no unity in the church.
- There is only one gospel message—**the message of the cross (*logos*).** To those who are perishing it is foolishness, but to those who are being saved it is the power of God.

The Wisdom of God

1. **God's Plan of Salvation Is Wisdom:** Since the world through its own wisdom did not know God, God was pleased through what the world considers foolish to save those who believe. **This is God's wisdom.**
2. **God's Savior Is Wisdom: Christ is the wisdom of God.**
3. **God's Salvation Is Wisdom:** Among the mature, we do speak wisdom—but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. We speak **God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden**, which God destined for our glory before time began.

Three Types of People

1. **Worldly People:** Those who have not believed in Christ and have not received the Holy Spirit.
2. **Carnal Christians:** Those who have believed in Christ and received the Holy Spirit, but who live according to the flesh rather than the Spirit.
3. **Spiritual Christians:** Those who have believed in Christ, received the Holy Spirit, and live in obedience to the Spirit

Working with God to Build the Body of Christ

- **The Field Metaphor**
  1. **The Field:** the church
  2. **The One Who Plants:** Paul
  3. **The One Who Waters:** Apollos
  4. **The One Who Makes It Grow:** God
- **The Building Metaphor**
  1. **The Building:** the church
  2. **The One Who Lays the Foundation:** a wise master builder
  3. **The Builders:** the workers
  4. **The One Who Inspects the Work:** God

The Church Is God’s Temple

- **The church is God’s temple.**
  - *“Don’t you know that you yourselves* (**plural**) *are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells your midst? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy that person; for God’s temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.” (1 Corinthians 3:16–17, NIV)*

The Apostles as a Spectacle

1. **God's Arrangement:** *"For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings."*
2. **The Reversal in Christ:** *"We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored."*
3. **Poverty for Christ's Sake:** *"To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands."*
4. **Our Response in Christ:** *"When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly."*
5. **How the World Sees Us:** *"We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment."*

The Corinthians Were Arrogant

- So that none of you may be arrogant in favor of one over another.
- Some were arrogant, thinking that I would not come to you. But if the Lord is willing, I will come to you soon, and then I will find out not what these arrogant people are saying, but what power they have.
- You have become arrogant and have not mourned; you should have put out of your fellowship the man who did this.
- Now about food sacrificed to idols: we know that “we all possess knowledge.” But knowledge puffs up, while love builds up.

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **What was the problem?**
  - Disputes arose between brothers and sisters, and they even took their cases to court, seeking judgment before unbelievers.
  - *"If any of you has a dispute with another, do you dare to take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the Lord's people? … One brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!"*
    (1 Corinthians 6:1, 6, NIV)

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **Reasons for the Problem**
  - <u>A failure to understand their identity</u>**:** The saints have a glorious status. They will reign with Christ in the future (cf. 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:4; 22:5). They will judge not only the world, but even angels. Such an honored people—are they not able to judge matters within the church? How, then, could they bring their cases before unbelievers?
  - *"Do you not know that the Lord's people will judge the world?" (1 Corinthians 6:2, NIV)*
  - *"Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life!" (1 Corinthians 6:3, NIV)*
  - *"Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?" (1 Corinthians 6:5, NIV)*

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **Reasons for the Problem**
  - An unwillingness to be wronged: The reason for their disputes was that neither side was willing to suffer loss, whether in material matters or in being proven wrong. Because they were unwilling to accept loss—either of possessions or of being right—they took one another to court.
  - *"The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do wrong, and you do this to your brothers and sisters." (1 Corinthians 6:7–8, NIV)*

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **The Way Forward**
  1. Brothers and sisters should treat one another with righteousness and love, thereby reducing the likelihood of disputes.
  2. When disputes do arise—especially when right and wrong are not clear—believers should be willing to suffer loss and not insist on their own rights.
  3. If disputes cannot be avoided, they should be brought before wise people within the church for mediation, and their judgment should be accepted.

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **Note 1: Disputes**: A dispute does not arise in situations that are clearly right or wrong, but in gray areas. For example, if Person A steals a sheep from Person B, the matter is clear—Person A is at fault. According to the Law in Leviticus, if someone defrauds another of property, the offender must make full restitution and add one-fifth more (Lev. 6:1–5). In such a case, Person B does not need to be "willing to suffer loss."
- A dispute refers to a situation in which both sides hold to their own claims, each believing they are right. For example, Person A is an employer and Person B is an employee. If Person B twists an ankle while working and rests for a day, and Person A deducts one day's wages, Person B may argue that the injury was work-related and wages should not be deducted. A dispute then arises. From his own perspective, Person A is willing to suffer loss and says, "All right, I will pay the extra day." From his own perspective, Person B is also willing to suffer loss and says, "All right, I will accept one day less in pay."
- If both sides are willing to suffer loss in good faith, the matter can be resolved. If neither side is willing to suffer loss and both insist on their own position, the matter should be brought before wise people within the church for mediation.

Believers Taking One Another to Court

- **Note 2: Arbitration:** Arbitration requires submission. Regardless of the outcome, both parties must submit to the decision and raise no further objections. The arbitrator must be a saint within the church who is impartial, wise, and respected by both sides. The arbitrator should render judgment according to biblical principles, and those involved in the dispute must not harbor resentment toward the arbitrator simply because the decision does not align with their own expectations.
- **Note 3: Being Willing to Suffer Loss:** Being willing to suffer loss means that the next time you see the other person, your heart is at peace and free of discomfort. If you claim to be willing to suffer loss but still feel that the other person owes you something, the relationship will feel strained when you meet again. Even if you consider yourself more spiritual and say, “I will let it go this time,” your heart may still feel uneasy. Truly being willing to suffer loss means that the matter has already been settled before God: the other person owes you nothing, and you owe them nothing. When you meet again, everything is genuinely fine—the issue has passed, and your heart is clear and at rest.

Case Study: The Lawsuit of Kuo Yi-Chun against China Evangelical Seminary

- Yi-Chun Kuo graduated from China Evangelical Seminary in Taiwan and was appointed as an assistant professor of systematic theology in September 2018. Later, the seminary discovered that she had married a non-Christian and decided not to renew her appointment beginning in July 2019. Kuo subsequently filed a civil lawsuit, claiming that she had been unlawfully dismissed because of her marriage.
- In the first trial, the Taipei District Court ruled in Kuo's favor, ordering the seminary to reinstate her teaching position and compensate her for losses. The seminary appealed the decision. In the second trial, the High Court held that freedom of marriage includes the freedom to decide whether to marry and whom to marry, and that employers may not discriminate against employees on the basis of marital status. The court ruled that the seminary's personnel action, based on Kuo's marriage to a non-Christian, was invalid. Kuo again prevailed, and the seminary announced that it would not pursue a further appeal.
- This case sparked public debate and reflection within the churches, helping believers recognize the **complexity of practicing biblical truth**, especially in the context of the twenty-first century.

Sexual Immorality

- **What was the problem?**
  - Some believers continued to live sexually immoral lives after coming to faith, even engaging in sexual relations with prostitutes.
  - *"Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?"* （6：16）

Sexual Immorality

- **Reasons for the Problem**
- **<u>A failure to understand the dignity of the body</u>:** After a person comes to faith in Christ, their body becomes honored and set apart, completely different from before. The believer's body is a member of Christ and a temple of the Holy Spirit, a place where God intends to display His glory. Sexual immorality before coming to faith defiles one's own body; sexual immorality after coming to faith defiles the members of Christ and the temple of the Holy Spirit. The root problem is that a person who has been bought at a great price by the blood of Christ and set apart as holy does not recognize the dignity of their body.
  - *"Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself?" (1 Corinthians 6:15, NIV)*
  - *"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you?" (1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV)*
  - *"The body, however, is not meant for sexual immorality but for the Lord." (1 Corinthians 6:13, NIV)*
  - *"You were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:20, NIV)*

Sexual Immorality

- **Reasons for the Problem**
- **<u>Not Understanding the Seriousness of Sexual Immorality</u>**：The seriousness of sexual immorality lies in its destruction of union. When a person is united with the Lord, they become one spirit with him. When a husband and wife are united, the two become one flesh. Sexual immorality uses one's body to unite with someone with whom one should not be united. Illicit union destroys legitimate union—it not only damages the union between husband and wife, but also undermines one's union with the Lord.
  - *"Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body?" (1 Corinthians 6:16, NIV)*
  - *"Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body." (1 Corinthians 6:18, NIV)*

Sexual Immorality

- **The Way Forward**
- **In understanding:** Christians must know that their bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit. *"Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God?" (1 Corinthians 6:19, NIV)*
- **In conduct:** Christians have been bought at a price by Jesus Christ. We are not our own, but belong to the Lord; therefore, we are to honor God. *"You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your bodies." (1 Corinthians 6:19–20, NIV)*

On Christian Marriage

- **What was the problem?**
  - Corinth was a city marked by sexual excess and moral decline. Casual sexual behavior exerted strong pressure on both the marriages of believers and those who were unmarried. The Corinthians had written to Paul, asking him for guidance on these matters.
  - *"Now for the matters you wrote about: 'It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.' But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband." (1 Corinthians 7:1–3, NIV)*

On Christian Marriage

- **Reasons for the Problem**
- **Sexual pressure:** Because of widespread sexual immorality in society, improper sexual behavior became common, leading to a lowering of sexual ethics among Christians, making them indistinguishable from the world. When the world practiced sexual immorality, Christians did the same; when the world engaged in extramarital affairs, Christians did the same; when the world pursued one-night stands, Christians did the same; when the world visited prostitutes, Christians did the same; when the world divorced and remarried, Christians also divorced and remarried.
- In multiple surveys conducted in the United States, the rates of divorce and infidelity among Christians (including Catholics) were found to be roughly similar to those of non-believers, both at around 1/3.

On Christian Marriage

- **The Attitude Between Husband and Wife**：Husband and wife are one, united in body, soul, and spirit. Paul teaches that spouses should treat one another with proper marital duty. Except for a temporary separation by mutual consent for the purpose of prayer, they should come together again. In this context, *proper marital duty* means appropriately responding to one another's sexual needs. Spouses have a responsibility to one another, seeking mutual fulfillment. On the one hand, this is God's blessing—bringing unity of body, soul, and spirit; on the other hand, it serves as protection against temptation, leaving no opportunity for Satan.
- **The Priority of Serving God**：When marriage is discussed, singleness must also be considered. Paul himself had the gift of singleness and wished that others had the same gift, so that they might devote themselves fully to serving God. The purpose of salvation is service to God, and in this respect, married believers must give attention to family responsibilities and therefore find it more difficult to serve the Lord with undivided focus. By comparison, single believers are able to devote themselves more fully to the Lord. However, not everyone has the gift of singleness; for those who do not have this gift, it is better to marry.

On Christian Marriage

- **The Way Forward**
- **Marriage as God's Provision:** Men and women have sexual needs by God's design, and these needs are to be fulfilled within marriage. To address sexual immorality and resist external temptation, the best provision is marriage: *"But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband."(1 Corinthians 7:2, NIV)*
- **Mutual Fulfillment in Marriage:** Once married, husband and wife are to fulfill their marital responsibilities. *"The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control." (1 Corinthians 7:3–5, NIV)*

On Christian Marriage

- **The Way Forward**
- **The Advantage of Singleness, Undivided Devotion to God:** A single person has an advantage in serving God, as they are able to devote themselves fully to the Lord. *"A married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband." (1 Corinthians 7:33–34, NIV)*