

## 2026 Q3 L01 - Paul's Ministry in Corinth - Discussion Leader Notes

- Guide conversation
  - Encourage discovery
  - Keep focus on Christ
  - Help participants speak more than the leader
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### Day 1 Afternoon

**Day Theme:** God's Presence in the Crucible **One memorable sentence:** What do you do when you are exhausted, terrified, and ready to quit?

#### Poll

: When faced with an overwhelming challenge, what is your first instinct? A. Push through on my own strength. B. Look for an escape route. C. Seek out a partner to help. D. Pray for a direct answer from God.

**Opening Engagement:** Imagine stepping into a bustling metropolis famous for its vice, wealth, and idolatry, completely alone and exhausted. What would run through your mind as you tried to share a message of purity and grace in such a place?

**Read the Text:** (Ask someone to read Acts 18:9-10, NKJV) "Now the Lord spoke to Paul in the night by a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.'"

#### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- The Lord speaks at night through a vision.
- Two commands: "Do not be afraid," and "speak, and do not keep silent."
- Two promises: "I am with you," and "no one will attack you to hurt you."
- The stated reason: "I have many people in this city."

#### Guided Discussion:

- Why do you think the Lord needed to tell Paul not to be afraid at this specific moment? (*Allow discussion*)
- What is the relationship between God's command to "speak" and His promise "I am with you"? (*Invite multiple responses*)
- How do you think Paul felt hearing that God already had "many people in this city" before they had even heard the gospel?
- In what "waiting room" of life or overwhelming situation do you most need to hear God say, "I am with you" right now? (*Ask follow-up: How does knowing He is with you change your approach to the problem?*)

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**Discovery Insight:** God provides His reassuring presence precisely when we feel the most vulnerable and alone. Where we only see hostility and challenges, God sees incredible potential and people ready to be reached.

**Christ Connection:** Jesus does not send us into the world to labor alone; He meets us in our deepest fears and promises His continuous, protecting presence.

**Life Response:** Identify one intimidating situation or relationship in your life this week and consciously pause to invite God's presence into it before you speak.

**Encouragement Bridge:** Ready to conquer your week? Let's take a journey with Paul through the hardest city on earth, knowing that the God of all comfort walks beside us.

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### Day 2

**Day Theme:** A God-Called Identity **One memorable sentence:** Knowing who you are in Christ changes how you endure for Him.

#### Poll

: How do you most often define your identity? A. By my profession or job. B. By my role in my family. C. By my past successes or failures. D. By my relationship with God.

**Opening Engagement:** We live in a world that constantly asks us to prove our worth through what we achieve. Consider how radically different it is to receive your identity and life mission directly from a higher authority.

**Read the Text:** (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 1:1 and Romans 1:1, NKJV) "Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother..." (1 Cor. 1:1) "Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated to the gospel of God..." (Rom. 1:1)

#### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- Paul identifies himself by his calling ("called to be an apostle").
- His calling is "through the will of God."
- He describes himself as a "bondservant of Jesus Christ."
- He is "separated to the gospel."
- He includes others in his identity ("Sosthenes our brother").

#### Guided Discussion:

- What does it mean to be "called" through the "will of God" rather than choosing a path for oneself? (*Allow discussion*)

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- How does viewing yourself as a "bondservant" contrast with the cultural desire for status and power? *(Invite multiple responses)*
- Why is it significant that Paul anchors his identity in Jesus right at the beginning of his letters?
- How would your daily decisions change if you truly viewed yourself as "separated to the gospel of God" in your workplace or neighborhood? *(Ask follow-up: What specific things would look different?)*

**Discovery Insight:** Paul grounded his identity not in his impressive education or status, but entirely in God's specific call on his life. Knowing his identity was rooted in the will of God gave him the security to face extreme hardship.

**Christ Connection:** Jesus calls each of us by name out of the darkness, completely redefining our purpose and separating us to share His incredible grace.

**Life Response:** Spend five minutes each morning this week thanking God for your identity as His child before you check your phone or email.

**Encouragement Bridge:** Your calling is secure because it comes from the will of God, not your own perfection. Walk boldly today as His chosen messenger.

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### Day 3

**Day Theme:** Tentmaking Faith **One memorable sentence:** Who says your day job can't be a ministry?

#### Poll

: What is the hardest part about sharing your faith in your daily routine? A. Not knowing enough about the Bible. B. Fear of rejection or awkwardness. C. Lack of natural opportunities. D. Feeling a disconnect between my job and my faith.

**Opening Engagement:** After utilizing deep philosophical arguments in Athens with limited results, Paul arrived in Corinth and shifted his strategy to something much simpler: the raw power of the cross, paired with a secular trade.

**Read the Text:** (Ask someone to read Acts 18:1-5, NKJV) "After these things Paul departed from Athens and went to Corinth. And he found a certain Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla... So, because he was of the same trade, he stayed with them and worked; for by occupation they were tentmakers. And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and persuaded both Jews and Greeks. When Silas and Timothy had come from Macedonia, Paul was compelled by the Spirit, and testified to the Jews that Jesus is the Christ."

### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- Paul finds Aquila and Priscilla, refugees from Italy.
- They bond and live together because of a shared trade: tentmaking.
- Paul reasons and persuades every Sabbath.
- The arrival of friends (Silas and Timothy) brings a new intensity ("compelled by the Spirit").

### Guided Discussion:

- Why do you think Paul chose to work a manual labor job in a wealthy, status-driven city like Corinth? *(Allow discussion)*
- How might working alongside Aquila and Priscilla have strengthened Paul's spirit? *(Invite multiple responses)*
- What does Paul's rhythm of working during the week and reasoning on the Sabbath teach us about the balance of life and ministry?
- How can you turn your current "tentmaking"—your day job, schooling, or daily routine—into a platform for sharing Jesus' love? *(Ask follow-up: Who are the Aquilas and Priscillas in your life?)*

**Discovery Insight:** By teaming up with Aquila and Priscilla to make tents, Paul funded his own mission and protected his motives from being questioned by the money-hungry Corinthians. Tentmaking was not a distraction from ministry; it was a bridge to everyday people.

**Christ Connection:** Jesus, the carpenter of Nazareth, meets us in our daily labor and "ordinary" friendships, showing that our everyday work can become an act of holy worship.

**Life Response:** Look for an opportunity to encourage a coworker or neighbor this week, treating your secular environment as a sacred mission field.

**Encouragement Bridge:** Find God in the daily grind today; your workplace is exactly where He wants to shine His light.

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## Day 4

**Day Theme:** A City of Vice, A Message of Grace **One memorable sentence:** No culture is too dark for the light of the gospel.

### Poll

: How does the secular culture around us most affect believers today? A. It gradually lowers our moral standards. B. It makes us increasingly materialistic. C. It causes us to fear speaking out. D. It distracts us from spiritual priorities.

**Opening Engagement:** What is the most worldly city you can think of? Ancient Corinth was the Las Vegas of the Mediterranean—a melting pot of global trade, extreme wealth, and normalized debauchery.

**Read the Text:** (Ask someone to read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, NKJV) "Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God."

### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- A clear warning: "Do not be deceived."
- A comprehensive list of societal vices (idolatry, theft, greed, sexual immorality).
- A dramatic contrast: "And such were some of you."
- Three transformative actions: washed, sanctified, justified.
- The source of change: the name of the Lord Jesus and the Spirit.

### Guided Discussion:

- Why was it necessary for Paul to list these specific sins to the Corinthian church? (*Allow discussion*)
- What is the significance of the phrase, "And such were some of you"? (*Invite multiple responses*)
- How do the words "washed," "sanctified," and "justified" counter the dirt and shame of the surrounding culture?
- In what ways do you feel the pressure to compromise your faith to fit into today's culture, and how does the Spirit help you resist? (*Ask follow-up: How can we love the people in our city without adopting its vices?*)

**Discovery Insight:** The believers in Corinth were rescued from the most dissipated lifestyles imaginable, standing as living monuments to the fact that the gospel can transform anyone. They were called to maintain their new, holy identity without compromising with the idols around them.

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**Christ Connection:** Jesus does not just overlook our past; He actively washes, sanctifies, and justifies us, completely replacing our worldly identity with His own righteousness.

**Life Response:** Identify one area of cultural compromise in your life and surrender it to God in prayer, asking the Spirit to sanctify it.

**Encouragement Bridge:** If God can win hearts in the chaos of ancient Corinth, He can definitely win your city and your heart today.

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### Day 5

**Day Theme:** Turning Rejection into Expansion **One memorable sentence:** Sometimes God closes one door just to open the one next to it.

#### Poll

: How do you typically react when someone rejects your faith or beliefs? A. I take it personally and get offended. B. I argue back to prove my point. C. I quietly retreat and stop sharing. D. I shake it off and look for someone else who is open.

**Opening Engagement:** Rejection hurts. But what happens when the rejection is public, aggressive, and aimed at the core of your life's mission?

**Read the Text:** (Ask someone to read Acts 18:6-8, NKJV) "But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, 'Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.' And he departed from there and entered the house of a certain man named Justus, one who worshiped God, whose house was next door to the synagogue. Then Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed on the Lord with all his household. And many of the Corinthians, hearing, believed and were baptized."

#### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- The opposition involves blasphemy and resistance.
- Paul's physical and verbal reaction: shaking his garments, declaring himself clean.
- A shift in audience: "I will go to the Gentiles."
- A strategic move: right next door to the house of Justus.
- Surprising fruit: the ruler of the synagogue (Crispus) and many others believe and are baptized.

#### Guided Discussion:

- What does Paul's action of shaking his garments symbolize about his responsibility and boundaries? (*Allow discussion*)

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- Why is it ironic and powerful that Paul moved his ministry right "next door" to the synagogue? *(Invite multiple responses)*
- How do you think the conversion of Crispus impacted the rest of the community?
- When faced with closed doors or hostile rejection, how can we discern when to keep trying versus when to "shake off the dust" and move in a new direction? *(Ask follow-up: Have you ever experienced a closed door that led to a greater blessing?)*

**Discovery Insight:** When Paul faced severe, abusive opposition in the synagogue, he didn't give up in despair; he simply established his ministry next door. Against all odds, this persistence led to the conversion of the synagogue ruler and a massive church expansion.

**Christ Connection:** Even when Christ was rejected by His own, He opened the door of salvation to the entire world, turning human rejection into global redemption.

**Life Response:** If you have been discouraged by a recent rejection, ask God to show you the "house next door"—a new opportunity waiting right beside your disappointment.

**Encouragement Bridge:** Never underestimate who is listening to your testimony; God's next big breakthrough might be right next door.

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### Day 6

**Day Theme:** Tears of Pastoral Love **One memorable sentence:** True Christian leadership is driven by deep love, even when it requires hard words.

#### Poll

: Why is it so difficult to correct someone you deeply care about? A. Fear of ruining the relationship. B. I don't want to seem hypocritical or judgmental. C. I don't know the right words to use. D. It's easier to just ignore the problem.

**Opening Engagement:** Have you ever had to send a severe, agonizing message to someone because you were terrified of the destructive path they were taking?

**Read the Text:** *(Ask someone to read 2 Corinthians 2:4, NKJV)* "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you."

#### What Do You Notice? (Observation Only)

- The emotional state of the writer: "much affliction," "anguish of heart," "many tears."
- The negative purpose: "not that you should be grieved."
- The positive purpose: "that you might know the love."
- The degree of love: "so abundantly for you."

### Guided Discussion:

- Why do we often associate correction with anger rather than "anguish of heart"? (*Allow discussion*)
- How does receiving a hard truth feel different when you know the person speaking it is doing so with "many tears"? (*Invite multiple responses*)
- What does this verse reveal about Paul's true motives for writing such strict instructions to the erring church?
- Who in your life loves you enough to tell you when you are wrong? (*Ask follow-up: How can you cultivate a heart that corrects others out of abundant love rather than frustration?*)

**Discovery Insight:** Paul wrote his severe letters to the Corinthians not to lord over them or cause them pain, but out of a desperate, tear-filled love to save them from their own destruction. His discipline was a redemptive process designed to restore relationships.

**Christ Connection:** Jesus' correction is never punitive for the sake of pain; it is always driven by an abundant, self-sacrificing love meant to bring us back to abundant life.

**Life Response:** Reach out to a fellow believer you have been avoiding due to tension, and take a step toward reconciliation bathed in prayer and love.

**Encouragement Bridge:** God uses our tears and our trials to comfort others, showing that a love-driven ministry seeks restoration over condemnation.

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## Day 7 Summary

### 5 Weekly Takeaways:

1. **God's Presence:** In our most terrifying and exhausting moments, Jesus promises, "Do not be afraid... I am with you."
2. **A Called Identity:** Our true worth is not found in our status or achievements, but in being called and separated by God for His purposes.
3. **Tentmaking Faith:** God uses our daily, ordinary labor—our "secular" jobs—as sacred platforms to connect with people and share His grace.
4. **Overcoming Culture:** No city or society is too wicked for the gospel; the cross of Christ has the power to wash, sanctify, and justify anyone.
5. **Love-Driven Truth:** Authentic Christian community requires us to speak hard truths to one another, but it must always be done out of anguish of heart and abundant love.

**Final Reflection Question:** Looking back at Paul's challenging but victorious 18 months in Corinth, what is one specific way God is calling you to step out of your comfort zone and be a light in your own community this week? (*Pause for responses*)

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**Closing Appeal:** We've seen how the gospel transformed a city famous for its vice into a beacon of grace. That same Jesus who walked with Paul in Corinth is walking with you today. Let's open our hearts fully to Him, allowing His grace to redefine our identities, our work, and our love for one another.