

The  
New  
Testament  
in a Year

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Week 18

1 Corinthians 6-10

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*This week's reflectors are  
**Orville James and Heather  
Weaver-Orosz.** Both are from the  
ministry team at Wellington Square UC  
in Burlington. Orville is a rabid Red  
Wings fan and Heather is a patient  
alternate presence (Go Rangers!)*

General Questions for Reflection

You might pick one part of each chapter and think about these questions.

- What does this tell me about God (including Jesus and the Holy Spirit)?
- What does this tell me about our world?
- What does it tell me about me?
- What does it say about following Jesus?
- Is there something here I'd like to learn more about?

Why not use these thoughts to shape your prayer today.

Monday

1 Corinthians 6

Having been raised in the church, among upright, 'Godly' people, it's a shock to read about this gang in Corinth. They provide a darkly shining example of Murphy's Law –'if anything can go wrong, it will'.

The Corinthian church was composed of converted idolaters, adulterers, prostitutes, thieves, drunks and swindlers (vs 9-11). It's a recipe for tension and trouble. Paul faced a huge challenge. *Think of the most 'Corinthian' television show you know –'Desperate Housewives'? 'Sex in the City'? Imagine if the lead characters became Christ followers, what problems would they encounter?*

This month's *Faith Today* magazine says "Pornography addiction is spreading ever more widely, thanks to the anonymous, affordable and accessible Internet.

Churches need to respond by ministering the power of God into broken lives". Be not discouraged. The early Christian community faced similar challenges –and the church flourished and lives were changed.

Tuesday

1 Corinthians 7

First Corinthians is Paul's careful response to a thicket of problems, some of which had been posed to him as questions in a letter (vs. 1). Many of his answers relate directly to Corinth's local situation.

*"Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are."*(7:26) This chapter gives testimony to reading scripture in its context. Some advice can be applied to our day and situation; some should remain in ancient Greece. The challenge is in the discernment.

I appreciate Paul's passionate call to a single-minded and focused following of Christ. Still, how much does this advice about marriage translate to today?

Frankly, I would love to debate Paul, or at least interrogate him and know more about his personal life experience and context. Marriage here seems a duty or last resort, sex seems 'caving in.' Years ago, when I was a rookie at ministry, marriage and more, an older wiser supervisor joyously proclaimed, "Sex in marriage is good clean fun." I'd like my supervisor to have a chat with Paul.

Wednesday

**1 Corinthians 8**

I thought we'd blown it and pulled him off course. We had a study/discussion group running in a pub. Fresh out of addictions rehab, one participant seemed to be over-indulging. I went home feeling scared and guilty. Had we lost him? Was he off the wagon?

But the next week he was back, under control, and thoughtfully engaged. Still, I'm not sure about the groups in the pub. One woman who is deeply committed to Christ, reacted with sizzling objection 'My brother is an alcoholic; Surely you're not going to do Bible study in a bar!?"

I'm torn. It's a great witness, and attracts 'seekers'; but is it giving in to 'the world'?

*Where in your life is one person's 'freedom' another's 'stumbling block'? To drink or not to drink? To wear new fashions, hip clothes? To pursue a certain standard of living?*

Thursday

**1 Corinthians 9**

Sometimes it is hard to bridge the gap between our time and Paul's. Not with today's chapter! It feels like Paul might be in the middle of any 2009 church.

Paul's a little irritated and more than a little defensive, firing off a list of strong, borderline sarcastic questions, aimed right at "those who sit in judgment" of him. He's been challenged and he doesn't like it. He's been running hard and had enough of folks who (he thinks) are trying to trip him up. Not a whole lot of gentle grace flowing here.

Is there a church today that doesn't move through tension? Don't we live in it all the time? In the daily race of being Christ's church, who among us can honestly say we've never had a grace-deficient outburst?

Living in community is hard work – it's going to be when we "do all this for the sake of the gospel". There will be moments when concepts and characters collide. But even in the tension, Paul calls us back to the disciplined training of love; to "run in such a way as to get the prize". Everybody falls into a bad day now and then. Will we let God's grace put us back on track, together?

Friday

**1 Corinthians 10**

Paul shifts right back to the debate about Christ-like consumption – challenging us with language about food, but really about life-choices of every kind. He calls up ancient examples of what worked and what didn't, and how we should live in light of that.

He reminds us that living in community is hard, but even harder in the midst of a world ready to tempt us. It's like he knew that, even with a pantry full of gluten-free fare, I've still found a bakery that lets me indulge in "sinfully good" chocolate cake. Then and now, our culture will always help us get what we want, if we just give the word.

But Paul says, lean in. Plant your feet, hold on tight, and lean on God. Hold fast to the Word. In all of its complexities, God's call comes through clearly: no matter how much you can reach, take hold of only those things that are "beneficial" and "constructive". When it comes to your spiritual diet, always ask about nutritional value.

"Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."