

1 Corinthians Session 2: Spirituality & Community (1 Cor 2-3)

(Scripture references based on NIV)

1. Key Learning Objectives

Key pointers to keep in mind as you prepare and lead the session.

To understand that:

- Anything of worth that we have is from the Lord. We have absolutely nothing that we should boast of apart from Jesus Christ.
- God has given His Spirit to us and in doing so, has tied us to Himself and given us a path to true spiritual wisdom.
- The importance of unity in the community and our roles as individuals in it.

2. Warm-up activity / Starter Question

These questions are meant to establish a baseline level of understanding or tease the themes of today's passage. You may pick one of the three. There is no need to hear from everyone or correct any opinions here.

- What are some labels that you believe to be part of your identity? Alternatively, you can play your own rendition of [This or That](#) (Every label is a potential category by which to divide ourselves).
- Is there anything that you learnt as you grew in your Christian walk that was contrary to the conventional wisdom you had learnt prior?
- For what reason(s) do you call yourself a Methodist?

3. Opening Prayer

Heavenly Father, we commit our time and fellowship into your hands. As we delve into Your Word, may we not depend on wise and on persuasive words, but may our discussions spring forth from Your Spirit that dwells in us and spurs each of us on to further discipleship with You.

4. Context

Overview of today's passage (for leaders' reference)

- *Paul chastises the members of the Church who have been inciting division in the church regarding leadership and wisdom (as seen in 1:11).*
- *Paul offers that the division in the Church demonstrates that they are lacking in true spiritual wisdom and thus compels them to seek and follow the wisdom that comes from God's Spirit rather than that of men (1 Cor 2).*
- *Paul exhorts the Church of Corinth to rightly recognise that he and they are all fellow co-laborers, united through Christ and the Spirit, with none being any greater or lesser than another (3:6-9)*
- *This study is split into 2 parts:*
 - *1 Cor 2: True spiritual wisdom can only come from God's Spirit*
 - *1 Cor 3: True spiritual wisdom should unite and build up the Church.*

Roman culture

- The Romans saw themselves as the centre of the world and they were probably the greatest Empire the world had ever seen during that time. The common expression "All roads lead to Rome" might have been an exaggeration, but it is a testament to how well-connected and extensive the Roman Empire was back then.
- Hence, the Roman Empire was one of the leaders of the world in technology and philosophy. Having assimilated much of the culture and knowledge of their constituent civilisations (most notably, Greece), the Roman Empire and their subjects prided themselves on being civilised and wise.

The church in Corinth

- The church in Corinth is believed to have been established during Paul's first visit to Corinth, estimated to be in 49-50 AD.
- By the time 1 Corinthians was written, believed to be 53-56 AD, there had been several other missionaries and teachers who had been doing ministry at the church in Corinth. As many of the Christians in the Church had come to call themselves followers of these respective teachers, factions had begun to form within the Church, becoming a cause of division.

5. Scripture Reading

Assign a few youths to read the passage aloud.

6. Discussion Questions

- 1) The Spirit is an important part of this study since the word “spirit/spiritual” is used 15 times in 1 Cor 2-3. Based on your own knowledge, what do you understand about the Spirit?**

This question is to allow youths to share what they know of the Holy Spirit in an open-ended fashion. No right answers needed here as this will be further explored in Q3.

Some fun facts about the Spirit

- *The Greek word used here is Pneuma (πνεῦμα), which traditionally means “breath” or “wind”.*
- *Historically, the “breath” was often equated to the “life” or “soul” itself and believed to be the very essence of the being.*
- *In the Bible and in this case, the term pneuma is mostly specifically designated as “holy” and taken to refer to the Holy Spirit, the third member of the Trinity.*

- 2) What did Paul mean when he said that he came to the Corinthians in “weakness with great fear and trembling” (v3)? What does this have to do with the division in the church over various leaders?**

Supporting question: How does Paul’s appearance compare to that of the ‘wise’ leaders in Corinth? Does it matter to Paul? Why?

- Paul believed himself to be unimpressive and utterly human. It must have been a daunting task to preach the Gospel to the Corinthians, who considered themselves wise. In fact, some scholars suggest that Paul was actually a poor public speaker. However, the appearance of wisdom and eloquence was not important to Paul. The preaching of Christ and His crucifixion was (v2).
- Paul's intention in saying so was to proclaim that any effectiveness of his teaching or apparent eloquence should not be attributed to himself, but to the Spirit of God at work in and through him (v4-5).
- In the same way, where the Corinthians declared themselves as followers of various leaders due to the “wisdom” in their teachings, Paul hoped to remind them that it was foolish for that to cause division. Like him, all their true wisdom comes from Christ, while any human wisdom or eloquence is but foolishness before God.

3) With reference to 2:9-16, 3:16-17, what does the spirit of a person do? Specifically, what roles does the Spirit of God play?

Spirit of a person

- The spirit of the entity allows you to understand the essence of that entity and ties you to their identity (v11).
- Paul specifies that we were not given the spirit of the world (v12). Hence, we are not tied to the world, but our identity is tied to God instead.
- God has given us the Spirit of God and as such has given us the ability to gain insight into the essence and the things of God (v12).

Roles and purposes of the Spirit of God

- Revealing God's wisdom to us (v10)
- Searching all things (v10)
- Knowing the thoughts of God (v11)
- Helping us to understanding what God has freely given us (v12)
- Explaining spiritual realities (v13)
- Helping us to accept and understand the things that come from the Spirit of the Lord (v14)
- Making judgement of all things (v15)
- Provides us insight into the mind of Christ (v16)
- Dwells in our midst and makes us holy (3:16-17)

In summary, the Spirit:

- Provides us the ability to obtain true Spiritual wisdom.
- Provides us insight into the matters of God.
- Ties us to Him and makes us holy.

4) In 3:5-15, Paul uses the metaphors of a field and a temple to describe God's people (the Church). What does this mean for how we should view the roles of various individuals in the Church?

- Everyone is called to different tasks but all these work together toward the common goal and purpose (v8, 10).
- We are called to be faithful to the tasks that we have been entrusted with and to labour carefully (v10).
- We will be judged for the quality of our individual work (v12).
- In summary, our faithful fulfilment of different roles may be as an individual, but the big picture is one of community and shared labour. We are not meant to be doing it alone nor should we be divisive about it.

5) In 3:10-17, What does it mean for us to be “God’s temple” and for God’s Spirit to dwell in our midst? What did it have to do with the issue of disunity in the Church that Paul was addressing?

- If we remember that the word used for “Spirit” here is Pneuma, that means that God’s “breath” and “life” dwells in us.
- We are called to be faithful in caring for ourselves as part of our service to God.
- If anyone harms a brother or sister, they are harming the temple of God. We are called to care for our brothers and sisters as well.
- Paul reminds the Corinthians of how precious every member of God’s people is to God and gives a warning to any who seek to harm or cause division among them, that God will destroy them in turn.
- Specifically, to the Corinthians who struggled with division and disunity, Paul gives a stern warning to those who had been causing this divisiveness.

7. Main Discipleship Takeaway

Ask the youths how they would summarise everything that has been discussed today with one sentence.

All things of worth come from God and the Spirit that He has given to us, we should be united through our allegiance to Christ.

8. Application / Reflection

Split up into smaller groups to share. Leaders are encouraged to have prepared their own thoughts and sharings for the application questions.

- 1) When Paul ministered to the Corinthians, he did so not with logic and persuasive arguments, but with his testimony about God (2:1). If you were to share about your faith and about God, what would your testimony be?
- 2) Paul addresses the Corinthians as people who are worldly rather than people who live by the Spirit, as spiritual infants and not ready for solid food (3:1-3). Would you describe yourself / your YSG as spiritual infants or spiritual people? What are some ways in which you can work together toward greater spiritual maturity?
- 3) One of the main divisions in the Church of Corinth was in who they proclaimed themselves to be followers of. What are some things that divide our Church today? Are there any steps that we can take to help foster greater unity?
- 4) As members redeemed and accepted into God’s family, God has given each and every one of us His Spirit that dwells in us. Where you are able, share with your group how the Spirit has been present and at work in your life in the past or present, or how you may have encountered Him for yourself.

9. Closing Prayer

Remain in your smaller groups and take turns to pray for each other. Where there is time, encourage members to share about specific areas for thanksgiving and petition in their lives.

- Ask God for humility to recognise that we have nothing to be proud of that didn't come from the Lord
- Ask God to bless us with community and to bless our community (small group)
- Ask God for the blessing of His Spirit and that we may be faithful in our identity as His