

# Life Group Questions

Nov 17<sup>th</sup>, 2024

King – Pastor Brody Loewen – **1 Corinthians 4:6-13**

## Note from Pastor Jonathan

Hey Life Groups!

December is right around the corner. Willingdon is getting into Christmas mode. This is a perfect season to tell someone about Jesus or invite them to church since they're primed by the season. Don't wait until Christmas. You can start praying now for God to point out people you can share the Gospel with. Let's pray and work so that more will celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

## LET'S OPEN UP (Pick Any You Like)

1. **Are there any rules or boundaries you didn't like as a child, but appreciate as an adult?**
2. **What makes someone spoiled?**
3. **What stood out to you in last Sunday's sermon?**

## LET'S DIG IN (Pick Any You Like)

4. **What happened when the Corinthians went beyond God's commands?**
5. **How does Paul humble the Corinthians?**
6. **What example does Paul set?**

## LET'S GROW (Pick Any You Like)

7. **What are some ways we might go beyond what is written?**
8. **How does Paul's example affirm or challenge your idea of what it means to follow Jesus?**
9. **How can you find examples to help you make Jesus the king of your life?**

### **1 Corinthians 4:6–13**

<sup>6</sup> I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.

<sup>7</sup> For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

<sup>8</sup> Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! <sup>9</sup> For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. <sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. <sup>11</sup> To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup> and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

## LET'S OPEN UP

### 1. Are there any rules or boundaries you didn't like as a child, but appreciate as an adult?

Did your parents have any rules you hated, but now think were a good idea? Maybe your driving instructor was too uptight for you when you were 16, but as an adult on the road, shoulder checks aren't so bad.

I really didn't like limitations on electronics. We could only watch TV for a little during weekdays. Video games were only for an hour or so on the weekends. (Behold the radness of 80s 8-bit music: <https://youtu.be/CWZZUyD-nRs>). Let's say addiction to movies and video games was detrimental to my university grades. And now as a father, I can appreciate teaching children to enjoy, but draw healthy boundaries around, electronics.

God's Word is full of His wisdom. Instead of building their lives on what God had said, the Corinthians chose to follow their own rules.

### 2. What makes someone spoiled?

Have you ever seen someone and think, "Man, they don't know how good they got it"? It could be a child who constantly wants the latest toy. Or a co-worker making way more money than you who complains about how they just don't have enough. Perhaps you know someone who talks like they're self-made, but they don't realize all the advantages they have over others.

What common traits make them spoiled? What do you think leads them to behave like they're spoiled?

Paul addresses a big issue with the Corinthians. They didn't realize that everything they had was from God. They were spoiled because they acted as if they deserved the credit.

### 3. What stood out to you in last Sunday's sermon?

We had the privilege of hearing Pastor Brody preach on this passage.

I liked Pastor Brody's question of whether or not our faith has legs. It's easy for me to be all Jesus-centered while I'm at church, whether in the office during the week or on Sundays. But is Jesus the king when I'm at home? Is he king when I just want to relax and veg out? Is he king when I'm exhausted, but I still need to love my wife and son? I still have some work to do.

## LET'S DIG IN

### 4. What happened when the Corinthians went beyond God's commands?

Paul has been telling the Corinthians to build their foundation on Jesus. What they do, who they follow, and what they believe. See things through the lens of a crucified Jesus. Listen to Godly wisdom, not worldly wisdom. Build the church up with what God cares about because He will test everyone's work. Think of the apostles as servants and stewards of God, because God is the boss and will give them a performance review. By using himself and Apollos as examples, the Corinthians can apply Paul's teaching to their specific situations.

**Go Beyond What is Written.** Paul tells the Corinthians to not go beyond “what is written.” Paul introduces four Old Testament quotes with the phrase “as it is written” or “for it is written”.

1 Corinthians 1:18–19 – For the word of the cross is **folly** 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**, and the discernment of the discerning I will **thwart**.”

1 Corinthians 1:28–31 – God chose what is **low** and **despised** in the world, even **things that are not**, to **bring to nothing** things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us **wisdom** from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, so that, **as it is written**, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1 Corinthians 2:6–9 – Yet among the mature we do impart **wisdom**, although it is not a **wisdom** of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are **doomed** to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden **wisdom** of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, **as it is written**, “What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him” —

1 Corinthians 3:18–21 – Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is **wise** in this age, let him become a **fool** that he may become **wise**. For the **wisdom** of this world is **folly** with God. **For it is written**, “He **catches** the **wise** in their craftiness,” and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the **wise**, that they are **futile**.” So let no one boast in men. For all things are yours,

You can hopefully see a theme. Each quotation reinforces the fact that God’s wisdom beats worldly wisdom and worldly wisdom is weak/useless. Don’t brag about humans or human wisdom!

**Puffed Up.** The word “puffed up” is φυσιώω (physioo) in Greek. It means to “blow up, inflate” (BDAG). There’s some wordplay here because the word for spirit (πνεῦμα, pneuma) or spiritual (πνευματικός, pneumatikos) can also refer to wind or breath. Instead of being filled with God’s wisdom, they were filled with hot air. He doesn’t want them to get full of their ego.

Romans 12:3 – For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among **you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think**, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned.

As they get full of themselves, it becomes a battle of the egos. Paul has already twice addressed the issue of people creating factions within the church. Although we won’t be covering it in this sermon series, later in Paul’s letter he’ll address how big egos lead to pride in sin (5:1-13), lawsuits among Christians (6:1-11), allowing personal freedoms to cause others to stumble (8-9), selfish communions (11:17-34), using spiritual gifts to judge importance in the church (12), chaotic gatherings (14), and more.

## 5. How does Paul humble the Corinthians?

Paul hits them with a WHO, WHAT, and WHY.

**Who sees anything different in you?** On the one hand, who says you’re special? You’re all a bunch of equally flawed humans. Paul noted that “not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth” (1:26). Most of these Corinthians were nobodies.

On the flipside, Paul's very clear that they are Christians not because they chose God, but because God called them (1:2, 9, 24, 26). The God who created the universe looked down and chose them to be His children! What an honor. But God chose everyone else in the church, too, so nobody is more special than anyone else.

So, what makes you special? God.

**What do you have that you did not receive?** Have you ever encountered a spoiled child? I've met kids who bragged about their fancy toys, video games, clothes, rich parents, and more. As a kid, it was effective at making me jealous. As an adult, it's funny to see them brag about something they did not contribute to. They didn't earn anything they're bragging about.

Same with the Corinthian Christians. Jesus died on the cross to earn salvation because the Corinthians couldn't earn it themselves (1:18). God chose them to be His followers and gave them the Holy Spirit to understand God at a deeper level (2:10-12). They didn't go on LinkedIn to recruit Paul and Apollos to be their leaders, God sent them. Paul later reminds them that their spiritual gifts are also from God (12).

If we zoom out even further, we can say that their food, clothing, and shelter are provided by God. God gave them their brains to think, eyes to see, hands to work, and tastebuds to enjoy Greek food (<https://youtu.be/QMrtD65aAYo>). They owe their whole existence to God (Genesis 1:1).

So, where did you get everything? God.

**Why do you boast?** If God picked you and every other Christian. And if God gave you everything and is responsible for everything good about you. Then why brag? There's literally nothing about the Corinthians they can brag about. They can only "boast in the Lord" (1:31).

## 6. What example does Paul set?

The Corinthians had the wrong idea of what the ideal Christian life looks like. Just like the Greco-Roman people around them, they cared about social status. They followed worldly examples.

Paul uses some sarcasm here. "Wow, Corinthians! You guys are super important. Truly big potatoes! You're practically kings!" But Paul reveals his sarcasm when he says, "But for real, if only you were really kings so our apostles could also have some of that good life!"

While the Corinthians were busy inflating their egos, Paul let them know what the apostles have been up to. While the Corinthians have been acting first in line like kings, the apostles are at the bottom of the social ladder. Paul seems to draw on the image of gladiatorial combat. They're in the ring fighting for their lives while the world watches on.

The apostles know they look foolish by following the crucified Jesus, but the Corinthians think they're so smart. The apostles know they're weak and powerless, but the Corinthians think they're so capable. The apostles are looked down on by the world, but people look up to the Corinthians.

While the Corinthians are acting like little kings and fighting to be the winning team in the church, Paul and the apostles struggle for basic necessities (food, water, clothing, shelter). They're getting their hands dirty. They're treated poorly and persecuted, but they still bless their haters and keep on trucking. When people spew hate at them, they bless and respond "in a friendly manner" (NET).

While the Corinthians think following Jesus is about living the high life, Paul and the apostles are scum and refuse. Scum is περικάθαρμα (perikatharma), referring to “that which is removed as a result of a thorough cleansing, dirt, refuse, off-scouring” (BDAG). Refuse is περίψημα (peripsema), referring to “that which is removed by the process of cleansing, dirt, off-scouring” (BDAG). Paul is saying they’re like the gross stuff the world is trying super hard to clean off. A modern version could be “We’re the gum stuck to the bottom of the world’s shoe.” I know, I know. I’m such a poet.

Paul’s example agrees with Jesus’. Jesus’ followers must deny themselves and carry their cross (Matthew 16:24). Being insulted and persecuted for following Jesus should lead to rejoicing (Matthew 5:10-12).

## LET’S GROW

### 7. What are some ways we might go beyond what is written?

The Corinthians went to worldly wisdom instead of Godly wisdom. It’s easy for us to do the same when we apply our wisdom to the church without consulting God’s Word first. Here are some examples that hopefully get you thinking.

**Cultural Background.** Every one of us comes from a culture where a whole society thinks *this* is the way to behave. For example, Western countries (like Canada and the States) more or less tell people “You do you.” You can be what you want to be and live the life you want to live. Churches influenced by this mentality have become “Burger King: Have It Your Way”-style churches. Everything is designed to simply please people. Controversial stances on sin, gender, sex, money, politics, and more are compromised or swept under the rug to make the tent big enough to fit everyone. But the church is supposed to point people to God and spread His message, even if people don’t like it.

At the same time, other cultures want everyone to be the same (like East Asian cultures). My son’s daycare teacher grew up in the Soviet Union and said she was taught not to stand out. I’ve been in churches that enforce arbitrary dress codes. But Jesus cares more about beautiful character than beautiful clothes (e.g., 1 Timothy 9:9-10). Everybody had to learn the same way, usually head knowledge through lectures. But God taught through stories (Genesis), object lessons (Jesus using fishing and farming), parables, poetry, and more. Lectures and sermons are an important way to teach, but not the only one.

**Worship Music.** It’s easy for older or younger generations to think their expression of faith is the right one. Older Christians may look down on contemporary music because they think that the only way to worship God through songs is by traditional hymns and a piano/organ. Younger Christians may automatically think older Christians who like classical hymns are just living in the past. But neither style of music is in the Bible! Amazing Grace was written over 1700 years after Jesus died. Even our English came around well over a thousand years after Paul. Check out this 1535 translation of Psalm 23 (<https://biblehub.com/coverdale/psalms/23.htm>).

Perhaps the focus should be on whether or not the words accurately point people to God and if the style encourages Godward worship or is a distraction.

**Choose Your Own Adventure.** I used to love getting these books (<https://blog.codinghorror.com/content/images/2016/01/66-Choose-Your-Own-Adventure-covers--huge-.jpg>) at the library. Each book tells a story and you get to decide how to respond in different situations. Too many people apply this to their faith.

“Pastor Brody has asked you if you ever attempted to be the king instead of Jesus. Do you ... (A) check your phone to see what you want to eat for lunch or (B) spend two minutes to pray and reflect on the question?”

“You’re in an argument and let your anger get the best of you. Do you ... (A) acknowledge wrongdoing and apologize as God commands (Ephesians 4:25-26) or (B) double down?”

“There are many programs and events at Willingdon. Do you ... (A) prayerfully seek God to understand where you need to grow and seek the appropriate opportunity to do so or (B) pick whatever looks fun and interesting”

But God’s Word is clear that we should learn to obey Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20). If we pick and choose, we think we know better than God.

### **8. How does Paul’s example affirm or challenge your idea of what it means to follow Jesus?**

I can’t speak for you, but I really wish there was a middle ground. I don’t need the Christian life to be an episode of the Lifestyles of the Rich and Famous (<https://youtu.be/2tyviyVXwp0>), but come on.

I miss *my* freedom from when I was younger, single, and had fewer responsibilities. I wish everyone in the church could see how amazing *my* vision for Life Groups is. I think *I’m* a decent husband, but why is marriage so difficult? To be honest, it’s exhausting to continually adapt and adjust myself for the sake of others.

Why can’t there be an easy path, God? Why do I need to die to myself? Why do I have to put myself last?

Looking back at my life, I can see my ideals were pretty dumb. I’m glad I did all the random things I did and learned in my single years, but I neglected more important things like building a godly character. Yes, in the past, I’ve had some great ideas for the churches I’ve worked at, but I was too focused on *my* vision to see where people were at to figure out how the vision would help them and how I could lead them toward that goal. I’m possibly a decent husband, but God wants me to be a holy, Christlike husband (Ephesians 5:25-27).

Can I trust Jesus? Do I believe these sacrifices will lead to greater results? Do I believe putting myself last will be worth it? Do I appreciate Jesus for sacrificing Himself and putting Himself last to save me?

### **9. How can you find examples to help you make Jesus the king of your life?**

Some of you may already have an example to follow. How do they point you to Jesus? Some of you may have a parent who has demonstrated a life of Christ-like humility. Do you have a pastor, elder, or Life Group leader willing to face difficulty and sacrifice to serve the church? What makes them a good example?

If you don’t have examples to follow, perhaps start seeing Jesus first. Someone who’s been working out at the gym for a while starts automatically mirin’ choice gains. Likewise, someone into makeup or fashion will automatically notice others’ blending or fits. I used to enjoy photography, so I can’t help but notice camera gear and bags. If we spend time in God’s Word and prayer learning about who Jesus is, we’ll start seeing the Jesus-like qualities in people.