

To the Church in Corinth



DailyLife
Five Oaks Church

Week 8: May 28–June 3, 2016

Day 1

May 30



Pray / Ask God to help you see the work of following him as a blessing.

BEING A CHRISTIAN takes work—the work of strengthening and training your spirit, just like being an athlete takes the work of strengthening and training one’s body. The reward is far greater, however!

In today’s portion of Paul’s letter to the Corinthians, he compares the work of the ministry to the work of a physical race. Think of the competitive sports or Olympic events you’ve seen. The athletes train as their full-time job asking their bodies to do the seemingly impossible, and apparently every moment of blood, sweat, and tears is worth it.

During the event or race, they remain focused, and their eyes do not deviate from the prize of a medal, trophy, or win. And the tears flow freely from the toughest of athletes at the end of the event as they are bestowed their prize.

Paul compares the Christian walk to this type of training. We must rule our bodies and train our spirit, keeping our eyes on the ultimate prize.



Read / 1 Corinthians 9:24–27



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

Take a few moments to think about what the prize means to you. How hard are you willing to train your spirit for that prize?

If you have ever trained your body for an event, think of the feelings it produces in you (perhaps pain, elation, or pride to name a few.) But it is always worth it, so you keep going. When have you applied this same discipline to your Christian walk and the prize you have seen as a result of strengthening your spirit?

Think of the ways in which you care for your body: the treats, the pampering, nutrition, and fitness. How can you do more of the same with your spirit?

Day 2

May 31



Pray / Ask God to help you to remember his mercies with your mistakes.

GEORGE SANTAYANA, an early 1900s philosopher, once said, “Those who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” Paul specifically warns us to learn from the mistakes of the Israelites and not repeat them.

During the Israelites’ exodus from Egypt, God did some miraculous things on a daily basis. He delivered them from Pharaoh’s hand; manifested his presence with them by a pillar of fire by night and a cloud by day, parted the Red Sea, miraculously provided food and water in the middle of the desert for forty years, and led them to the long-awaited Promised Land. However, the Israelites doubted God over and over, and consequently, almost none of the adult Israelites were allowed into the Promised Land. God had a responsibility to the Israelites, and they in turn had a responsibility to God, which they failed to keep.

Paul invites us all to find the parallel in our own lives to the Israelites’ and be careful to learn from the past so as to fully enjoy the future.



Read / 1 Corinthians 10:1–5



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

We all have areas of our lives that we would just as soon not repeat, and it may be something in the not-so-distant past. What is one area of your life that closely parallels that of the Israelites and could lead you away from God's promises?

Confess any tendency you have had to judge the Israelites or the life of anyone who seems to "fail," and then confess your own propensity to "fail" God. Ask him to mercifully help you keep your responsibility to him.

Verse 5 says that God was not pleased with his people. What area of your life do you know God is not pleased with that you would like to begin to purposefully work on now?

Day 3

June 1



Pray / Ask God to help you be able to enjoy his freedoms.

IN TODAY'S PASSAGE Paul is specifically addressing idolatry and the ungodly, unloving behaviors that accompanied it. But he digs deeper to the heart of the idol worshiper and our propensity to return to our previous idols that enslaved us to familiarity—rather than our trusting God in unfamiliarity.

The Corinthians had actual images of gods they had worshiped in the past, along with a slew of unloving behaviors to go along with this worship that were socially acceptable. Paul cautions them to continue to strengthen their spirits so as not to fall back into old patterns and behaviors.

We may not have images of gods that we worship, but the idea of eat, drink, and play is a theme running rampant in our culture. As Paul says, it is normal to be tempted. God is faithful to stand with us while we are tempted and to provide a way out of our own slavery, even if it looks as uncertain and barren as the Israelites' plight at the edge of the desert.



Read / 1 Corinthians 10:6–13



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

God provides a way out of temptation, and sometimes we don't want the out. We would rather give in to temptation. Thinking of a temptation in your life right now, how do you feel about taking the outs that God has put in place?

Sometimes the old, familiar territory looks more appealing simply because it is what we know and are familiar with. Moving forward with God into the unknown can be challenging. When you tend to slide back into this familiar territory, what pulls you?

Spend some time writing down the idols in your own life—anything that takes more of your heart than your relationship with God. This could be evidenced by how much time or money you spend on it or how you know you would react if God asked you to give it up. Confess these idols and pray that God would clearly show you the way out and give you the courage to take it.

Day 4

June 2



Pray / Thank God for the gift of Communion.

WHEN WE WORSHIP something or someone other than God, we must be aware of what is happening under the surface of our hearts, in the spiritual realm, and that God is forever fighting for closeness with us.

Paul instructs the Corinthians, in no uncertain terms, to *run* from idolatry—not tiptoe towards it, asking “How close can I get before it’s a sin?” As we run from anything that is not of God, we are running from the foe that would love nothing more than to crush us. God is fervently and jealously fighting an epic battle against this enemy on our behalf, and we cannot worship both. In Paul’s words, we cannot “drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons” (verse 21). We must pick one to fight with and one to fight against.

Communion is a physical representation of our commitment to God and remembering what he has done for us. As we enter into Communion with him, we begin to share in his life and blessings. But just as we enter into those blessings through Communion, we can also exit them by worshiping anything other than him.



Read / 1 Corinthians 10:14–22



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

What does it mean to you to share in the body and the blood of Christ at his table?

What was the result, and how did you feel about it when you ran away from something you knew was going to pull you from God?

Picture how you would react to someone trying to harm someone that you love dearly. Begin to magnify that intensity by ten, one hundred, one thousand, and more, and you've begun to grasp God's jealous fight for you. How could that affect your desires to chase after something that could pull you from God?

Day 5

June 3



Pray / Pray that God will show you how to be an example to others.

JUST BECAUSE YOU can, doesn't mean you should. Just because someone else doesn't, doesn't mean you shouldn't. Seek God in everything you do.

As we've uncovered in this week's lesson, what strengthens our spirits and draws us closer to God is neither trying to strictly adhere to black-and-white rules nor seeking gray areas in which to enjoy some of God and some of the world. Rather it is about enjoying the freedom we have in Christ and letting our behaviors follow our hearts that are full of him.

We may enjoy freedom in partaking of certain parts of the world that are not inherently evil. But if someone we are in community with is tempted by it, it is loving and glorifying to God to lay down ourselves and abstain from that to support that person in his or her desire to walk more closely with God.

Paul will tell us to copy him as he is copying Christ.



Read / 1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1



Reflect / Choose one or more of the following questions for reflection.

How can you be a better example to someone who may be copying you or looking to you for guidance? It could, for example, be a child, neighbor, coworker, sibling, or distant social media friend.

There are likely freedoms that you enjoy in your life that someone close to you struggles with. How can you selflessly lay down yourself and your “rights” for the sake of their need for support in growing their relationship with God?

Thinking of some of the decisions you have made in the recent past, how would some of them have changed had you asked yourself, “How can I best glorify God?”

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