

Subject: Established in Christ: Reflections on 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Dear Church Family,

I hope this message finds you growing in grace and walking closely with our Lord. As we begin our journey through Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, I want to share some reflections on what we explored together this week. For those interested in the teaching notes and a number of discipleship materials, please go [\[HERE\]](#).

Summary: The sermon explored how the Corinthian church—much like us today—faced the challenge of living as saints in a culture hostile to Christian values. Corinth was a wealthy, influential city known for sexual immorality and religious pluralism, yet God called His people there to be sanctified and set apart. Paul's opening words remind us that authentic Christianity isn't about blending in with the world but about being transformed by Christ's grace. This letter challenges us to examine whether we are being shaped by the culture around us or pressed into the image of Jesus Himself. The implications for our spiritual life are clear: we must intentionally pursue holiness, unity, and Christlikeness rather than drift toward worldly patterns.

Takeaways:

1. You are a saint, called to live as one**: If you have confessed Jesus as Lord, you are sanctified—set apart for God's service. This means being dedicated to holiness, looking to the Lord in all things, and actively serving others in the body of Christ.
2. Spiritual gifts are given to testify of Jesus**: Paul commended the Corinthians for using their spiritual gifts, particularly in utterance and knowledge. These gifts aren't meant to cause division or fear but to build up the church and bear witness to Christ's work in our lives.
3. God is faithful to complete what He started**: We can press on with confidence knowing that the One who called us into fellowship with Jesus will sustain us, keep us blameless, and provide everything we need to persevere until the end.

As we continue through this letter, I encourage you to prayerfully consider: Am I being pressed into Christ's image, or am I being shaped by the world? The wax seal illustration reminds us that transformation happens not by admiring Jesus from afar but by being yielded and pressed close to Him.

Let's commit together to looking more like Christ and less like Corinth.

In His grace, Pastor Jim

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

I. Introduction: The Church Should Look NOTHING Like the World

- Corinth was an economic, cultural, government, military, and sports hub with great religious diversity with Aphrodite and Emperor worship at the top of the list.
- This letter is loaded with corrections along with instruction and encouragement.
- **Thematic Summary:** Cross → Unity → Holiness → Love/Freedom → Order → Resurrection → Service

Additional Scripture References: Acts 18

II. 1 Corinthians 1:1-3: A Call to Holiness

- Beware of churches, ministries, leadership, record labels, and others plying their 'feels-good-sounds-good' gospel claiming to be apostles and prophets and those claiming they can train you up and anoint you in these areas.
- A saint is _____, _____,
_____, _____, and
_____.

Additional Scripture References: Acts 9; Acts 18:17

III. 1 Corinthian 1:4-9: Thanksgiving

- Two BIG focal points are Thanks and Grace.

Additional Scripture References: Ro 12:6; 1 Cor 12:4, 1 Cor 12-14

IV. Closing: What the Mirror Reveals

- Who or what do 'I' look like?

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Established in Christ

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

V. Introduction: The Church Should Look **NOTHING** Like the World

1. Today, we begin our journey through the Apostle Paul's first letter to the Corinthians – [a church full of real people with real life bias, priorities and struggles trying to rightly understand and apply correct doctrines and theology](#). They share the same enemies we have...ourselves, Satan, and the world's system – including those that have made their way into the church.
2. The letter was written 20+ years after Christ's death and resurrection, in 55 A.D. [The book of Acts offers us the historical blueprint for the founding and development of the church and in chapter 18 of Acts you can read about the planting of this church in Corinth](#). Paul's letters, including 1 Corinthians, move from the blueprint down into the details of living out Christ's plan for His church.
3. The Corinthians had some things to be commended for even while excesses and bad practices incorporated from the world's value system were tearing apart the church and undermining their testimony of Christ. [Thus, Paul writes the letter to encourage, admonish and correct, exhort, and otherwise more firmly establish their understanding and living out the gospel of grace](#).
4. The Greek city of Corinth was located on the Corinthian Isthmus which, [through an overland cargo boat transport hub sandwiched between two seaports](#), served as a major economic engine in this affluent and culturally influential city. [It was 8-900 miles from Jerusalem and would have taken 3-6 weeks to travel, depending upon conditions](#).

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- A. The city had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC, but Julius Caesar rebuilt it some 100 years later. [The isthmus was 4½ miles wide and using rolling logs, the seamen could save](#)

themselves the long, dangerous trip around Malea by either transporting smaller boats on the logs or the contents of bigger boats on the logs to be loaded onto other boats at the opposite-end harbor.

As a rapidly growing economic, cultural, government, military, and sports hub, Corinth was religiously diverse with the temple of Aphrodite and emperor worship being at the top of the list. There were also a Jewish community and a small Christian community to whom Paul addressed this letter.

Corinth also had quite the reputation regarding their pursuit of sensual pleasures, including widespread use of temple prostitutes in the city's daily religious rituals – indeed there was a broadly used cultural term back in the day of Korinthiazomai, which meant “to act like a Corinthian”, or to practice fornication or other sexual immorality.

B. Please have patience for this little detour, but I can't help but wonder how many of our cities remind us of Corinth. In what is also a great warning to us, it's not so hard to actually see how worldly pressures would be brought into and corrupt the church.

- i. Don't think the enemy isn't gunning for you or that you, in the ongoing battle between your spirit and your flesh, are untouchable or cannot be deceived. Instead, because of our own pride and lustful desires, our right response is surrender, submission, loving obedience, and nurturing our faith in the Jesus of the bible.

5. A general outline revealing Paul's primary focus for this church includes:

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1 Corinthians 1:1-9	Established in Christ
1 Corinthians 1:10-4:21	The Foundation is Built - Unified in Christ
1 Corinthians 5-7	Holiness Matters: Honoring God in Relationships
1 Corinthians 8-10	Living in Godly Love Brings Biblical Freedom

1 Corinthians 11-14	Orderly Worship
1 Corinthians 15	Living in the Resurrection Hope
1 Corinthians 16	Serving Faithfully

6. This outline offers a simple thematic summary of:

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Cross → Unity → Holiness → Love/Freedom → Order → Resurrection → Service

“Because Christ defeated death and therein offers us new life in Him, His church must live in unity, holiness, love, orderly worship, and resurrection hope in serving Christ and one another.”

7. This summary makes clear the church should look NOTHING LIKE the world! Yet, as we look at the church here in America and in many other areas of the world, it seems that a slow drift toward incorporating worldliness has turned into a raging rip current reinterpreting Scripture and reimagining God into man’s image. With this in mind, it seems fair to say there is much for CCA, and the church more broadly, to glean and incorporate from Paul’s letter to the Corinthians.

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VI. 1 Corinthians 1:1-3: A Call to Holiness

1. Right out of the gates, Paul makes clear his calling and Apostolic authority, which included establishing and teaching doctrine, leading, and establishing the early church. This was an authority given by God Himself at the foundation of His church wherein Christ Himself is the chief cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20). There are two big implications that come along with this opening line...Paul is one of God’s stewards of both (a) the gospel message and (b) the church’s proper organizational development and functioning here.

A. For those of you wanting to read about Jesus calling Paul to apostleship, I encourage you to read **Acts 9**. Paul (who was born Saul) was a Jew from Tarsus and a Roman citizen by birth. He was raised as a Pharisee and trained under rabbi Gamaliel in Jerusalem. So full of zeal for Judaism, he

attempted to destroy the nascent church, including consenting to the death of the first Christian martyr and hunting down Christians for imprisonment and death (Acts 7:58-8:3).

All that changed on the road to Damascus where Paul was personally confronted by Jesus who subsequently transformed and commissioned Paul into a great missionary and apostle in the 'office of apostle' which, (and here is a short but great warning) despite a growing number of people falsely claiming to be apostles today, is an office limited to only the original apostles.

Folks, since Paul's day, the church has been battling false teaching and that includes our day. Today, we must beware of churches, ministries, leadership, record labels, radio stations, and others plying their 'feels-good-sounds-good' gospel claiming to be apostles and prophets and those claiming special knowledge and that they can train you up and anoint you in these and other areas, such as:

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Deliverance ministries, spiritual warfare ministries, healing ministries, music, signs & wonders crusades, 7-mountain mandate groups, intercessory prayer movements, prosperity gospel and word of faith movement, Hebrew Roots, forms of universalism, deconstruction, and apostolic and discipleship networks pushing NAR, some of the 5-fold movement, and other false narratives.

Pray that we may have Godly discernment as a growing number individuals and groups evangelize their unbiblical views veiled with God's word.

2. There is, I think reasonable speculation suggesting Sosthenes, Paul's secretary writing this letter, was the former local synagogue ruler we read about in **Acts 18:17**. If it was this Sosthenes, he would have been known by those in the Corinthian church and that would have brought a familial feel into their receiving this letter.

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3. Verses 2-3 make it clear that Paul's audience here is the saint – or those sanctified or set apart for Jesus. *It is for those, who like Paul and Sosthenes, call Jesus Lord.* In a sense, this is the foundation upon which the whole letter is written – *who did they say Jesus was?* This is the same 'most-consequential-ever question' we to have to answer some 2,000+ years later.

A. If He is NOT Lord, one has no responsibility, duty, or loyalty to Him. *However, if He is Lord, a saint (hagios) means you are:*

- i. dedicated and consecrated to the service of God, including serving one another;
- ii. *purposing to be holy as He is holy (1 Pe 1:16);*
- iii. looking to the Lord in all things;
- iv. *a recipient of God's grace and peace; and*
- v. the things above in the context of being a vibrant part of the body of Christ.

How many of you have confessed Jesus as Lord?

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Can we put that list of things about what a saint is up on the board. All of you that raised your hands earlier...as followers of Christ, you are saints. In a moment of clarity, how would the Spirit of God say you are doing with respect to this list? *Are you looking more and more Christlike OR more and more like the world?* Just as Paul is calling the Corinthians to live as saints, he is calling all of God's church, include CC Aiken to live as saints.

4. With that in mind, let's consider v2-3 again. *The church of God. Sanctified in Christ. Called by and call on the name of Jesus. Grace and peace from God and Jesus.* While the audience was the saints in Corinth, this is really all about God – AND what our right response is to His grace poured out on us.

A. You see, the authentic church is His – and by authentic, I mean the ones that are chasing the Jesus of the Bible and not those reimagining Him and His word into their conceptions of

righteousness. The one in Corinth, the big church, the little church, the denominational church the non-denominational church, the church that sings hymns and the one that sings contemporary Christian worship music, the one that rents a school building, or meets in someone's home, the charismatic and the one sitting on their hands, the one where the pastor wears robes and the one where it is 'come as you are', and yes, CC Aiken...all of the authentic church, in all of its preferences and expressions is His.

B. May we celebrate and pray for all the bodies of Christ that are growing in and testifying of Jesus as Lord. May we not allow our preferences to get in the way of our unity in bringing Him honor and glory!

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VII. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9: Thanksgiving

1. While many emphasize the gifts that Paul notes in these verses, I think his overall thrust is actually toward our having thankful hearts for Jesus and for the gospel of grace.
2. First up, we would be wise to take the great lesson, for our own personal edification offered in almost all of Paul's epistles, where 'thankfulness' is a dominant and reoccurring theme (see Ro 1:8; 1 Cor 1:4; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3; 1 Thes 1:2; Phil 1:4).
3. Second, the big picture 'thanks' is for God's grace...a grace given to the saints in Corinth by Jesus. The rest of the passage draws out some of the elements of God's grace functioning in their body...it seems likely that Paul picked these specific elements because he intended to address them as his letter unfolded. Let's take a closer look at these elements:
 - A. The way the grammar reads in v5, contrary to those presenting Paul's words as a veiled rebuke in support of cessationist views that the gifts of the Spirit have ceased, it's clear he is greatly commending them. In particular, they are being enriched in everything by God's grace, but doing so with an emphasis on

their utterances (or speaking ability) and knowledge. Given the overall context of both this and Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, it's seems clear that Paul is referring to the spiritual gifts of speaking in tongues and knowledge, which Paul then makes clear in v6-7.

- B. V6 shares that the principal purpose of God's gifts was being accomplished – the reason for Paul's commendation was because these gifts testified of Jesus in their lives to one another and to those they witnessed Jesus to.
- C. In v7, Paul expands his initial list of gifts from tongues and knowledge as we read they "come short in no gift". The word for gift here is *charismati*, the very word Paul uses in **Romans 12:6** and **1 Corinthians 12:4** to describe the spiritual gifts.

We will talk about how these gifts function in greater detail as we get to **1 Corinthians chapters 12-14**, but for now...especially for those of us that have had bad experiences or find themselves fearful or doubtful of the gifts for one reason or another...I just want us to see Paul is not denying them the gifts, nor is he chastising them for using the gifts...he is commending them for using the gifts. Thankfully, we, like the Corinthians, don't testify of God in our weak and ineffective power and wisdom, but through the spiritual gifts He gives us.

- D. In verses 8-9, Paul closes with some reassuring promises fueling the hope of Christ in their hearts. Press in and press on...God will give you all that you need to persevere. You are made holy by the Holy One having the power, will, and wisdom to keep you blameless.

The One that called you into fellowship with Jesus is faithful in fulfilling His promises

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VIII. Closing: What the Mirror Reveals

1. Before printed letters existed, an official document was authenticated by a wax seal—hot wax pressed with a stamp bearing an authority's exact image. Interestingly, the seal and the stamp are *mirror images* of each other. The stamp itself looks nothing like the final impression—it's reversed, backward, almost unrecognizable on its own. But when it's pressed firmly into softened wax, the wax takes on the *exact* image of the stamp, perfectly right-side-up, unmistakably matching.

Here's the picture: we don't become like Christ by admiring Him from a distance, the way you might admire a stamp sitting on a shelf. We become like Him by being **pressed into Him**—yielded, softened, pressed close enough that His image transfers onto us. The world tries to shape wax with cookie cutters from the outside—molds made of trends and pressure and culture. But Christlikeness only happens one way: pressed against the *real thing*, not a passing shape.

The question isn't whether you're being shaped. *Everyone gets shaped by something*. The question is: am I, are you, pressed into Him – together, being His bride - or do we look increasingly like the world?¹

[Prayer - Christ's image and Discernment]

¹ Story was drafted on July 21, 2026 on Claude with the following prompt: Provide 3 different short sermon illustrations offering a word picture of Jesus as someone we are to look like. The point I am trying to drive home is that Christians are to look like him and not the world.

5-Day Devotional

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

Day 1: Called and Set Apart

Reading: 1 Cor 1:1-3; 1 Pet 1:13-16

Devotional: Paul opens his letter by addressing the Corinthians as "saints"—those sanctified and set apart for God's purposes. This isn't about perfection; it's about position and purpose. When Christ called you, He designated you as holy, consecrated for His service. The question isn't whether you're qualified, but whether you're yielded. Like the Corinthians, you live in a culture that pressures conformity to worldly values. Yet your identity isn't shaped by Corinth—or by your city—but by Christ.

Today, consider: Are you living as one set apart, or have you allowed the world's values to reshape your convictions? Holiness isn't isolation; it's dedication. You are called to be different because you belong to the Holy One.

Day 2: Grace Upon Grace

Reading: 1 Cor 1:4-7; Eph 2:4-10

Devotional: Paul's heart overflows with thanksgiving for God's grace working in the Corinthian believers. Despite their struggles and immaturity, he sees what God is doing in them. Grace isn't just forgiveness at conversion; it's God's empowering presence enriching you daily with spiritual gifts, knowledge, and the ability to testify of Christ. You may feel inadequate or ill-equipped, but God's grace supplies everything needed for faithful living. The spiritual gifts Paul commends aren't decorations—they're tools for building up the body and pointing others to Jesus.

What gifts has God given you? Are you stewarding them with thanksgiving, or have comparison and fear kept them dormant? God's grace is sufficient, and His gifts in you are intentional.

Day 3: Pressed Into His Image

Reading: 2 Cor 3:17-18; Ro 12:1-2

Devotional: Transformation doesn't happen by admiring Christ from a distance. Like wax pressed against a seal, we become like Jesus only when we're pressed close to Him—yielded, softened, intimate. The world uses external molds to shape us: cultural trends, social pressure, entertainment values. But Christlikeness forms from the inside out, Spirit to spirit. This requires intentionality.

Are you spending time pressed against the Word, allowing it to shape your thoughts? Are you in worship, letting His presence soften your hardened places? Are you in community, where iron sharpens iron? Everyone is being shaped by something. The

critical question is: what image is forming in you? Look in the mirror today—do you see Christ's reflection, or the world's?

Day 4: Faithful to the End

Reading: 1 Cor 1:8-9; Phi 1:3-6

Devotional: God's faithfulness anchors our hope. Paul assures the Corinthians that the One who called them will confirm them to the end, blameless in Christ. This isn't about your grip on God—it's about His grip on you. Your perseverance isn't powered by willpower but by His faithful presence. When you stumble, He steadies you. When you doubt, He reminds you of His promises. When the journey feels long, He provides strength for the next step. The same God who began a good work in you is committed to completing it. This doesn't excuse passivity; it fuels confidence. You can press forward not because you're strong enough, but because He's faithful enough.

What battle are you facing today? Remember: your God is faithful, and His promises never fail.

Day 5: Unity in a Divided World

Reading: 1 Cor 1:10-13; Eph 4:1-6

Devotional: The church—God's church—transcends preferences, styles, and cultural expressions. Paul's upcoming exhortation to the Corinthians addresses their divisions, but his greeting reminds us: we belong to Christ, not to our preferences. Whether your church sings hymns or contemporary songs, meets in a cathedral or a living room, wears robes or jeans—if Jesus is Lord and Scripture is the authority, you're family. The enemy delights when believers divide over secondary issues while the world desperately needs to see our unity in Christ.

This doesn't mean compromising truth, but it does mean celebrating every authentic expression of Christ's body. Who can you encourage in their faith today? What bridge can you build across denominational or stylistic lines? Let the world see that our unity isn't in uniformity, but in Christ alone.

Small Group Study Guide

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

Opening Prayer: Pray that the Lord would open your eyes to see and understand His word as you discuss the sermon.

Key Takeaways: Query the group for takeaways first...you may stay with one or more of those.

1. Identity in Christ: We are saints—not because of our perfection, but because we are sanctified and set apart by Jesus.
2. The Church Belongs to God: The authentic church, in all its expressions and preferences, is His. Unity matters more than our preferences.
3. Spiritual Gifts Testify of Jesus: God equips His church with spiritual gifts to testify of Christ, not for our own glory.
4. We Become What We're Pressed Against: Christlikeness comes from being pressed into Jesus, not from admiring Him from a distance.

Discussion Questions: Did the Holy Spirit prompt any questions with you? Start with those.

1. Paul identifies believers as "saints"—those set apart for God. How does this identity as a saint differ from how the world defines you? How should it shape your daily decisions?
2. The sermon listed what it means to be a saint: dedicated to God's service, pursuing holiness, looking to the Lord in all things, receiving God's grace and peace, and being part of the body of Christ. Which of these areas do you find most challenging? Why?
3. Paul mentions that the Corinthians were "sanctified in Christ Jesus." What's the difference between positional sanctification (being set apart at salvation) and progressive sanctification (growing in holiness)? How does understanding this difference help us avoid both legalism and license?
4. The sermon warned about churches "reimagining God into man's image." What are some ways you've seen the church drift toward worldliness? How can we guard against this in our own lives and church community?

5. Paul's letters consistently emphasize thankfulness. Why do you think gratitude is such a central theme in Paul's writings? How does cultivating thankfulness protect us from spiritual drift?
6. Paul commends the Corinthians for their spiritual gifts, particularly tongues and knowledge. Have you had positive or negative experiences with spiritual gifts? How does this passage challenge or affirm your current understanding?
7. Verse 6 says the gifts "testified of Jesus in their lives." What's the primary purpose of spiritual gifts according to this passage? How does this correct misuse or fear of the gifts?
8. Verses 8-9 promise that God will keep us blameless and that He is faithful. When you're struggling or feel spiritually weak, how do these promises encourage you? How can we remind each other of God's faithfulness?
9. The sermon ended with the "wax seal" illustration: we become like Christ by being pressed into Him, not by admiring Him from a distance. What does it practically look like to be "pressed into Christ" in your daily life?
10. The question was asked: "Am I pressed into Him or do I look more like the world?" How would you honestly answer this question right now? What specific areas of your life might be conforming more to the world than to Christ?
11. Corinth was known for sensual excess, economic prosperity, religious diversity, and cultural influence—much like many modern cities. In what ways does our culture pressure us to compromise our Christian distinctiveness? What specific temptations do you face?

Practical Applications: Query the group for applications first...you may explore one or more of those.

1. This Week's Challenge: Each day, identify one area where you're being "pressed" by the world (social media, entertainment, workplace culture, relationships, etc.). Intentionally replace that influence with time pressed into Christ through Scripture, prayer, or worship.
2. Saints Inventory: Review the list of what it means to be a saint (from the sermon). Rate yourself honestly (1-10) in each area. Share one area where you'd like to grow and one practical step you'll take this week.

Closing Prayer Points:

- Pray for our church and the broader body of Christ to live distinctly from the world

- Thank God for His faithfulness and the spiritual gifts He's given the church
- Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal areas where worldliness has crept into our lives
- Pray for unity in the church despite differences in preferences and expressions

Discussion Questions
1 Corinthians 1:1-9
Established in Christ

1. Paul describes the Corinthian church as having real struggles with bias, priorities, and the influence of worldly values. In what specific ways do you see modern churches, or even your own faith community, wrestling with these same pressures today?
2. The sermon emphasizes that saints are called to be set apart and consecrated for God's service. How would you honestly assess your life against the list of characteristics defining a saint, and where do you see room for growth?
3. Paul commends the Corinthians for their use of spiritual gifts like tongues and knowledge to testify of Christ. What fears, doubts, or past experiences might be preventing you from fully embracing or utilizing the spiritual gifts God has given you?
4. The city of Corinth was known for sexual immorality to the point that acting like a Corinthian meant practicing fornication. What cultural sins or behaviors have become so normalized in our society that we risk bringing them into the church without recognition?
5. The sermon warns against those falsely claiming to be apostles and prophets today. How can believers discern between genuine spiritual authority and charlatans while remaining open to how God genuinely speaks and leads?
6. Paul's letters consistently emphasize thankfulness as a dominant theme. What would shift in your spiritual life if you cultivated a heart of gratitude for God's grace as intentionally as Paul modeled?
7. The closing illustration describes becoming Christlike as being pressed into Him like wax taking the image of a seal. What does it practically look like in daily life to be pressed into Christ rather than shaped by the world's cookie cutters?
8. The sermon asks the most consequential question ever: Who do you say Jesus is? If Jesus is truly Lord of your life, what areas of responsibility, duty, or loyalty to Him might you be neglecting or avoiding?
9. Paul emphasizes unity across diverse expressions of authentic churches that chase the Jesus of the Bible. How might our preferences in worship style, denominational affiliation, or cultural expression create unnecessary division rather than celebration of the body of Christ?

10. The Corinthians were enriched in spiritual gifts but still needed correction in how they lived. How does this challenge the assumption that spiritual giftedness equals spiritual maturity, and what does true maturity in Christ actually require?

Dinner Conversation Starters

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

1. “Saints at Our Table”

1 Corinthians 1:2 talks about believers being “sanctified” and “called to be saints.” When you hear the word “saint,” what comes to mind? How does it change things to realize that, in Christ, we are called saints? In what everyday ways could our family live more “set apart” for Jesus this week? Where do you feel the biggest pull to look more like the world than like Christ?

2. Who (Really) Is Lord in Our Home?

Paul’s whole letter assumes that Jesus is Lord, not just a religious figure. If someone watched our family for a week, what would they say is really “lord” here (sports, comfort, phones, success, Christ, etc.)? What’s one area of our life where we need to surrender more fully to Jesus’ leadership? How can we help each other remember that we belong to Him, not to the world?

3. Pressed Into Christ or Pressed Into the World?

The sermon closed with the picture of wax being pressed by a stamp. What are some “worldly stamps” that try to press their image on us (social media, friends, shows, school/work culture)? In what practical ways can we be “soft wax” toward Jesus—willing to be shaped by Him? What is one concrete habit (Bible, prayer, worship, serving) that could press us closer to Christ this week?

4. Unity Without Sameness

The sermon mentioned different kinds of churches that are all truly Christ’s. How do we usually react when Christians do things differently than we prefer (music style, dress, traditions)? What’s the difference between preferences and essential truths about Jesus? How can our family show unity with other believers, even if they worship differently than we do?

5. Grace, Gifts, and Gratitude

Paul thanked God for the grace and spiritual gifts given to the Corinthians. What are some ways God has “enriched” our family by His grace? What gifts or strengths do you see in each person at this table that God could use to bless others? How could we practice more visible thankfulness to God this week (words, prayer, notes, serving)?

Family Conversation Guide for Children & Early Teens

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

AGES 5-7: SIMPLIFYING THE MESSAGE APPLICATION POINTS

1. **“I Belong to Jesus” (Being a Saint)**: Help younger kids understand that being a “saint” means “I belong to Jesus and want to live His way.”

Discussion Questions:

- (a) When other kids are mean, what does it look like to remember, “I belong to Jesus”?
- (b) If your friends are making fun of someone, what is one kind thing you could do or say?
- (c) How do you feel when you choose what Jesus would do instead of what everyone else is doing?

2. **“Jesus Is My Boss” (Jesus as Lord)**: Teach them that Jesus is the loving “Boss” (Lord) over their choices.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If Jesus is your Boss, what do you think He would say about this video/show?
- (b) How can we check if something helps us love Jesus more or pulls us away from Him?
- (c) What is one thing you like to watch or play that you think makes Jesus happy?

3. **“Pressed Like Soft Play-Dough” (Shaped by Christ, Not the World)**: Use the image of play-dough to show how hearts are shaped.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) When you play with play-dough, what happens if you push a shape into it? (Connect to being “pressed” into Jesus.)
- (b) Are you wanting this because you really like it, or because you want to be just like everyone else?
- (c) How can we ask Jesus to help our hearts be soft to Him, not just to what other kids like?

AGES 8-12: BUILDING UNDERSTANDING APPLICATION POINTS

1. **“Set Apart in My Friend Group” (Saints in Social Circles)**: Being “sanctified” means living differently for Jesus, even around friends.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What makes it hard to do the right thing when your whole friend group is going a different direction?
- (b) If you remembered, “I am set apart for Jesus,” how might you act differently in that moment?
- (c) What is one sentence you could say to (a) stop teasing or gossip kindly or (b) show kindness to the person being left out?

2. **“Who Is Lord of My Screen?” (Jesus Is Lord in Digital Spaces)**: Teach them to evaluate digital choices through the lens of Jesus’ lordship.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) When you’re online, who usually feels like the “boss” of what you watch or say—your friends, your feelings, or Jesus?
- (b) How can you tell if a video, meme, or chat is shaping you to look more like Jesus or more like the world?
- (c) What’s one practical rule or boundary we could make together (time limits, types of content, chat rules) to show that Jesus is Lord even over our screens?

3. **“Using My Gifts, Not Just My Preferences” (Unity and Gifts)**: Help them see that God has given them gifts to serve, not just to get their way.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What are some things you like and don’t like about church or your group? Which of those are just preferences?
- (b) How could you use your gifts (kindness, helping, music, tech, art) to serve, instead of just wanting things your way?
- (c) How can we respect other Christians who worship differently (songs, style) but still love the same Jesus?

AGES 11-15: DEEPENING THE CONNECTION APPLICATION POINTS

1. **“Who’s Shaping Me?” (Pressed Into Christ vs. Pressed Into the World)**: Help teens identify the “stamps” shaping them in social and digital life.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) If you look at your social media feeds, group chats, and favorite shows, whose image are they pressing you into—Christ’s or the culture’s?
- (b) What are the top 2–3 “stamps” shaping you right now (friends, influencers, trends, shows, music)?
- (c) What’s one specific change you could make—unfollow, mute, limit time, or add more Christ-centered content—to be pressed more into Jesus and less into the world?

2. **“Living as a Saint in Relationships” (Holiness in Friendships & Dating):** Being “set apart” has real implications for how they handle friendships and early dating dynamics.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) What does it practically mean to be “set apart” in how you handle crushes, dating talk, and conversations about sex?
 - (b) Where do you feel the strongest pull to “act like everyone else” just to fit in?
 - (c) If Jesus really is Lord of your body, your words, and your relationships, what is one boundary you think He would want you to set?
3. **“Unity Without Compromise” (Different Churches, Same Lord):** Teach them to value true unity around Christ while refusing to reshape Him into culture’s image.

Discussion Questions:

- (a) How can we tell the difference between: Christians who just have different styles or traditions, and Groups who are actually changing who Jesus is or what He clearly teaches?
- (b) What should we do when we see “Christian” influencers or churches reimagining God to fit culture?
- (c) How can you stay gracious and loving toward others, but refuse to let your picture of Jesus be rewritten by trends or pressure?

Tips for Parents

- Be patient and listen: Give your child time to think and respond.
- Relate to everyday life: Use real-life examples and stories familiar to your child to make abstract concepts more tangible.
- Encourage questions: Let your son or daughter know it’s okay to ask questions, even if things don’t make sense right away.
- Share personal insights: Tell a personal story about a time you experienced these themes, adapting as needed for age appropriateness.

Family Conversation Guide for Gen Z

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Established in Christ

1. Established in Christ, Not in Your Image

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 1:2; Colossians 3:1–4

Application: You are “sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints.” Your core identity is not your online persona, achievements, or aesthetic—it’s being set apart for Jesus. Your choices in groups, relationships, and online spaces should flow from who you already are in Him, not from who you’re trying to look like to others.

Scenario: Your friend group uses a group chat where sarcasm, dark humor, and roasting each other is normal. Some of the jokes cross into cruel, sexual, or mocking spiritual things. You feel pressure to join in so you’re not the “weak” or “cringe Christian.”

Discussion: When you remember that you are “set apart for Jesus,” how should that change (a) what you say, (b) what you laugh at, and (c) what you stay silent about in your group chats?

2. Jesus Is Lord, Even Over Your Feed

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 1:2–3; Luke 6:46; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Application: If Jesus is truly “Lord,” He has the right to rule over your content, your comments, your DMs, your body, and your time. You don’t just “add” Him to your life—your whole life (including digital life) belongs to Him.

Scenario: You’re scrolling TikTok/Instagram and the algorithm keeps pushing sexually suggestive content, body-obsessed influencers, and “soft” porn. You feel convicted but also curious—and it’s easy to justify: “Everyone sees this; it’s just normal now.”

Discussion: If Jesus picked up your phone and scrolled your feed and watch history, what would He see about who is really Lord in your life—and what is one specific change you should make this week because He is Lord?

3. Pressed Into Christ, Not Pressed Into Culture

Bible Reference: Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 3:18

Application: You are always being shaped by something. The sermon’s wax-and-stamp image means this: you will either be “conformed to this world” (shaped by trends, friends, and feeds) or “transformed” into Christ’s image by staying close to Him. You can’t stay neutral.

Scenario: Your friend group normalizes stuff like casual sexting, sending partial nudes, or sharing spicy memes. They joke that it’s “no big deal—it’s just the internet” or “everyone does it; relax.”

Discussion: Which specific voices (friends, influencers, shows, music, memes) are most clearly pressing their image into you right now, and what would it look like—practically—to let Jesus have more shaping power than they do?

4. Grace-Fueled Gifts, Not Performance for Clout

Bible Reference: 1 Corinthians 1:4–7; 1 Peter 4:10–11

Application: God has “enriched” you with grace and gifts—not so you can build a brand, but so you can serve the body and point to Jesus. Your talents (creativity, music, humor, leadership, tech skills) are meant to testify about Him, not just get likes, followers, or approval.

Scenario: You’re good at something (music, gaming, art, sports, content creation). You’re tempted to chase attention and affirmation online—posting mainly to flex, exaggerating your successes, or leaving out anything that might show weakness or faith.

Discussion: How could you intentionally shift from using your gifts for self-promotion to using them to serve others and point them to Christ, both in real life and online?

These points aim to empower Gen Z to live out their faith genuinely and courageously in various aspects of their daily lives, reflecting Biblical integrity, compassion, and steadfastness.