Small Group Guide - "The Gospel Changes Everything"

1 Corinthians 15:1-8

OVERVIEW

This guide is designed to help your group dig deeper into the truths presented in this sermon. The gospel is not simply the entry point of the Christian life -- it is the foundation on which we stand every day. Use these questions and applications to encourage honest conversation, personal reflection, and practical response.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- The gospel is not something we create or reshape to fit our preferences -- it is something we receive as God's message of salvation through Jesus Christ alone.
- The gospel is the foundation of our faith. Our circumstances, feelings, and performance will all shift, but what Jesus accomplished on the cross remains secure.
- The three historical realities at the heart of the gospel are that Jesus died for our sins, He was buried, and He rose from the dead on the third day.
- The resurrection is confirmed by real eyewitnesses -- Peter, the Twelve, more than 500 believers at one time, James, the apostles, and Paul himself.
- We never outgrow our need for the gospel. It is not only the beginning of our faith but the ongoing foundation that shapes how we live, how we treat others, and how we face death.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

Use one of these questions to open your time together before diving into the discussion.

1. Think of a moment in your life that changed everything that came after it -- a diagnosis, a birth, a loss, or a decision. Briefly share what that moment was and how it reshaped your perspective.
2. When you hear the word "gospel," what is the first thing that comes to mind? Has your understanding of what the gospel is changed over time?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Section 1 -- The Gospel as Foundation (1 Corinthians 15:1-2)

1. The sermon described three ways Paul expressed our relationship with the gospel -- we receive it, we stand on it, and we are saved through it. Which of these three resonates most with where you are in your faith right now, and why?
2. Paul says we are being saved, not simply that we were saved at a single point in time. What does it look like practically for the gospel to continue shaping and transforming your life on an ongoing basis?
3. The sermon warned against building our faith on circumstances, feelings, or personal performance. Which of these three do you find yourself most tempted to lean on? What happens to your faith when that foundation shifts?
4. The sermon made the point that we live in a culture that encourages people to find or define their own truth. How have you seen that mindset affect the way people around you think about Christianity or the gospel?

Section 2 -- The Content of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:3-4)

5. Paul says the gospel is "of first importance." In your own words, why does getting the gospel right matter so much? What goes wrong in a church or in a person's life when the gospel gets pushed to the edges?
6. The sermon explained that Jesus did not simply die -- He died for our sins, meaning He died in our place and for our specific purpose. Why is that distinction so important? How does it change the way you think about the cross?
7. Paul includes the burial of Jesus as part of the gospel message, not just the death and resurrection. The sermon explained that the burial confirms the reality of the death. Why does it matter that Jesus truly and fully died rather than simply appeared to die?
8. The sermon referenced Isaiah's description of the suffering servant, where he was pierced for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities, and the punishment that brought peace was placed on him. What does it stir in you to think about what Jesus willingly endured on your behalf?

Section 3 -- The Witnesses to the Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:5-8)

9. Paul lists specific eyewitnesses to the resurrection -- Peter, the Twelve, more than 500 people at one time, James, the apostles, and himself. Why do you think Paul goes out of his way to name and number these witnesses? What does that tell us about the kind of faith Christianity calls us to?

10. The sermon highlighted the personal stories behind two of these witnesses. Peter had denied Jesus three times, and James had once mocked his own brother. Yet both became bold witnesses to the risen Christ. What does their transformation tell us about the power of the resurrection and the grace of Jesus?

11. Paul describes himself as one who was "abnormally born" as an apostle -- someone who encountered the risen Christ unexpectedly and who felt deeply unworthy because of his past persecution of the church. Have you ever felt that your past disqualifies you from being used by God? How does Paul's story speak to that feeling?

12. The sermon made the point that the Christian faith is not built on inspirational stories but on what God actually accomplished in history. Why is the historical reality of the resurrection so important? What would change about your faith if the resurrection turned out not to be true?

PERSONAL REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Encourage group members to sit quietly with these questions before sharing, or use them for individual journaling during the week.

- Have you personally received the gospel, or have you simply become familiar with it? Is there a difference between the two in your own life right now?
- When life gets hard or you find yourself failing, where do you actually turn for confidence and security?
- Is there a specific area of your life -- a sin, a fear, a relationship, an anxiety -- that you have not yet brought under the light of the gospel?
- Is there someone in your life right now who needs to hear the good news of Jesus Christ? What is keeping you from sharing it with them?

PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Choose one or more of these as a group commitment for the coming week.

1. **Return to the text.** Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-8 each day this week. Let it serve as a daily reminder of what the gospel is and why it matters. When guilt, fear, or discouragement comes, remind yourself of what Christ has already accomplished.
2. **Confess what you have been covering up.** The sermon challenged each person to confess a sin that has been hidden or pushed aside. Take a step this week toward honesty -- with God, and if appropriate, with a trusted brother or sister in Christ.
3. **Take a step toward forgiveness.** If there is someone who has hurt you deeply, ask God to give you the grace to begin moving toward forgiveness. The gospel declares that we have been forgiven an enormous debt. Let that truth move you toward extending grace to others.
4. **Serve someone who cannot repay you.** Look for one concrete opportunity this week to minister to someone who has nothing to offer you in return. Let the generosity of the gospel shape your generosity toward others.
5. **Pray for one person by name.** Identify one person in your life who does not know Jesus. Begin praying for them daily this week and ask God to open a door for you to share the gospel with them. Look for that opportunity and take it when it comes.

CLOSING PRAYER GUIDE

Close your time together by praying through these areas as a group.

- Thank God for the gospel -- that Jesus died for your sins, was buried, and rose again.
- Ask for the Holy Spirit to continue His saving and transforming work in each person in the room.
- Pray for the specific person each group member identified who needs to hear the good news.
- Ask God to help your group grow not beyond the gospel, but deeper into it.

"We never outgrow our need for the gospel. When we struggle with sin, we need the gospel. When we are wrestling with guilt, we need the gospel. When life becomes overwhelming, we need the gospel. And when death comes, we need the hope of the gospel."