DIVING DEEPER DISCUSSION GUIDE

TEXT SUMMARY

The fellowship in Corinth was a dumpster fire. Their spiritual immaturity manifested itself in ugly ways: factions, lawsuits between members, gross sexual disorder tolerated by the congregation, abuse of spiritual gifts… Ugly. And yet Paul greets them as saints ("those sanctified in Christ Jesus" 1:2), and in our text, 1 Cor 3:16-17, Paul calls them God's holy temple. This speaks not to Paul's high view of the Corinthian believers but to his high view of the church.

INTRODUCTION (OBSERVATION):

1. Context: To get a sense of the flow of thought, read from the beginning of the chapter.
    - (v. 1-9) What was going on in the Corinthian fellowship that made it necessary for Paul to speak of the nature of the church?
    - (v. 10-15) How does Paul reframe his readers' understanding of the role of Christian leaders?
2. Paul repeats one assertion about that church, once at the beginning of our text, again at the end. What is it?

DISCUSSION (INTERPRETATION):

How could a collection of spiritually immature Christians like the dysfunctional fellowship in Corinth be the dwelling place of the Holy One? Yet Paul seems to think that he's not telling his audience anything new. He seems to assume that they already know who they are.

Where does this idea come from – that the people of God are His dwelling place? It is alien to pagan theology, nor can it be found in the Hebrew (Old Testament) understanding of God. So why does our text open with Paul's rhetorical questions: "Do you not know…?"

SO WHAT? (APPLICATION):

1. **In the ancient mind, a temple was not the place** where the faithful gathered, it was the place God met with man. In the Hebrew Scriptures, that place was first the Garden of Eden, then the Tabernacle in the wilderness, then Solomon's grand temple. In Jesus' day, He told the Samaritan woman (John 4) that God was looking for worshipers who met Him not in a particular place but "in spirit and in truth."
    - What does he mean when Paul twice calls the church God's temple?
    - How does Paul use temple imagery to address the sin of Christians using prostitutes (1 Cor 6:19-20)?
2. **If you think of the church as the temple of God,** that changes the way you think about other things as well. If the church is the temple of the living God…
    - …how does that affect the way you think of the church's many well-known **blunders and faults?**
    - …how does that change the way you think of the **destiny** of the church?
    - …how does that change the way you think of the **mission** of the church: to make disciples?