

**Day One: 1 Corinthians 6:1-11**

- In addressing disputes among believers in Corinth, Paul has two general objections. Describe the first one (1,6). Why does he think it's wrong to settle a dispute outside the church (2-4)? What do you think of him calling these disputes "trivial"?
- Why is Paul writing about disputes (5)? How does he think they should be settled (5)? "I say this to shame you," he says in verse 5. Why did he write that, and could anything good come from it?
- Describe Paul's second grievance (7). In exposing the church's failure to practice their faith as Jesus called them to, what rhetorical questions does Paul ask (7)? In light of something unfair that's happened to you, what is your answer to those questions?
- What does Paul say about "cheating and doing wrong" (8-11)? How do believers deceive themselves (9-10)? What makes it possible to leave behind a life of wrongdoing (11)? How might this also make it easier to let go of what's rightfully yours?

**Day Two: 1 Corinthians 9:1-18**

- What case does Paul make for his status as an apostle (1)? What seals his apostleship (2)? What prompted him to defend himself in this way (3)? What rights does he claim to have (4-6)? Describe the pictures Paul paints of those who forsake their rights (7). Which image really grabs your attention? Why?
- With what authority does Paul make these claims (8-10, 13)? How does he apply the Bible's authority to his own particular situation (11-12, 14)? At this point, it seems Paul is about to demand all these rights be given to him. However, what does he do instead (12)? What motivates him to forsake his rights (12)?
- What else does Paul have to say about the reason he is forsaking his rights (15-18)? How would you sum up his approach to taking up his cross and following Jesus? How does he challenge you in your own cross-bearing? Pray for grace to walk out this change.

**Day Three: Philippians 3:7-14**

- What does Paul make of his life's accomplishments (7)? In what ways does he justify this assertion (7-9)? This is a rich picture of the pride-melting power of Jesus' suffering. This Advent, meditate on the truth that Jesus is not just God among us, but he is also God *suffering* – both *for* us and *with* us. Open your heart and hands; allow his deeds of messiahship to melt your pride.
- How does Paul want to know Jesus (10-11)? What tastes have *you* had of his resurrection power? And how have you participated in his sufferings? At Christmastime, how can you lean into the two? Tell the Lord what you hope to attain in doing so.
- Describe Paul's next steps toward perfectly knowing Christ (12-14). Think about what he means by "press on to take hold" and "straining toward what is ahead;" he is certainly not describing an easy life. In what ways does your spiritual journey resemble Paul's? Ask the Lord help you keep your eyes on the prize.

**Day Four: 1 Peter 4:12-16**

- What should we not be surprised by (12)? Why (12)? Notice Peter begins with "dear friends;" imagine him speaking this sentence to you. What hardships surprise you? Are

you less surprised than you used to be, or are you continually mystified by hardship? Ask the Lord to speak to you about where you are on your journey.

- What should we rejoice in (13)? Why (13)? What glimpses of God's glory have you already had? Consider how suffering, which is inevitable in this life, can be like a gateway to God's glory. Pray for grace to face suffering in this manner.
- When does the Holy Spirit rest on us (14)? What sorts of suffering should believers *not* expect to experience (15)? Rather than be ashamed, how should we respond to suffering (16)? This is one way to proclaim that you've surrendered any claim to a cushioned life. How else can you live as one who suffers well?

#### **Day Five: 1 John 3:16-18**

- How would you define love? How do we *know* what love is (16)? What should we do in response to Jesus' act of love (16)? Why is this such a critical component of practicing the Christian faith? Pray the Lord would reveal where you're resistant to laying down your life for others. As he does so, what is he asking of you?
- What is suspect about the person who sees a need but doesn't act to meet it (17)? Consider those times you don't feel loving but somehow act in love nonetheless. How do these deeds impact you? What makes doing them possible? What does the Lord think of these deeds? Now, ask for more of the love of God; imagine it living inside you. This Christmas, what do you want to do with it?
- How does James want us to practice this sacrificial love (18)? Note he begins this exhortation with "let *us*..." Everyone gets to play! This Advent, what can your family or perhaps your small group do to love others? Make a plan and put it into action.