

Why Don't Christians Grow? — January 14-15, 2017
Follow-up Bible Studies

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Day One: 1 Samuel 20

- Set the scene of this text (1). Summarize David and Jonathan's initial conversation (1-4). Describe their plan (5-23). How did it unfold (24-40)? How did David react to what Jonathan did for him (41)? What were Jonathan's parting words to David (42)?
- What does this story reveal about how commitment to others, especially within a church community, creates a context for growth? How is this evident in your own life? When you are burdened, how does the mutual responsibility found in spiritual community provide relief? Pray for an increase in willingness to bear one another's burdens within your church community.
- Consider Jonathan's words in verses 4 and 42. Ask the Lord for some ideas on how he wants you to be like this: to do what it takes to see a brother or sister in Christ through to the other side of suffering. What is the first step you will take to walk this out?

Day Two: Matthew 11:28-30

- Whom is Jesus addressing (28)? What does he tell them to do (28)? What happens when the weary and burdened come to him (28)? In exchange for one's burdens, what does Jesus want to give (29)? Why does he claim this is a worthwhile exchange (29)? What does Jesus claim is easy and light (30)?
- Why do you think Jesus uses a yoke, a farming symbol, to explain his role as burden-bearer? What sort of symbolism do you think would be more relevant today? How would you describe to a friend outside the church what it means for Jesus to bear our burdens? How do you try to emulate Christ in this way?
- Today, what has you feeling weary and burdened? Lift this up to the Lord. How does he want to free you from these burdens? If you don't feel loaded down, but know others who do, pray for them now. How does God want to use you to draw them toward Jesus and his yoke?

Day Three: John 13:34-35

- What is Jesus giving to his followers (34)? Why do you think this is the first time God issues this command? Who is our model for how to "love one another" (34)? What are some specific ways you can love others as Jesus did?
- Why does Jesus insist loving like this is something we *must* do? What would Christianity and spiritual community be like if we didn't love one another in a Christ-like fashion?
- What will this brand of love communicate to the world (35)? Recall times you succeeded in obeying this command. What about times you failed to heed it? What fruit does your faithfulness to this command seem to produce, both within and outside the church?
- This text is one of several passages in the Bible to use the phrase "one another." In just these two verses, Jesus uses the phrase three times. What does this reveal about God's views on community? What does it teach us about our relational needs? How can the church grow in its "one another-ness"? What specific role do you think God wants you to play?

Day Four: 1 Corinthians 5

- Describe the specific situation Paul is addressing (1). What is his reaction to it (2-3)? What does he want the church to do about it (4-5)? What do you think of Paul's prescription of suffering plus repentance for the offender?

- How does Paul contrast boasting, malice and wickedness with sincerity and truth (6-8)? Imagine confronting a fellow believer as Paul does in these verses. How does it make you feel? How can such confrontation lead to growth for everyone involved?
- What clarification does Paul offer regarding associating with the sexually immoral (9-11)? More broadly, what are his thoughts on judging those outside the church (12-13)? Ask the Lord whether you are guilty of such judgment then spend a minute or two in silence. What do you sense him speaking? Ask for discipline and grace to refrain from judging non-believers.

Day Five: 2 Corinthians 13:5-10

- What examination is Paul telling people to do (5)? What does it mean to “test yourselves”? What sort of self-examination tactics do you employ in order to get a sense of where you stand spiritually? Why is it important that you alone shoulder the responsibility of testing yourself; why is this *not* a “one another” type of spiritual exercise? What does passing the test mean (5)?
- What does Paul claim about himself and his team (6, 8)? What is his prayer (7, 9)? Why (7)? What makes Paul glad (9)? How does he conclude this section of the letter (10)? Envision using authority to build up instead of tear down. This week, what is one thing you can do to express spiritual authority in this way?
- How do you think God feels when you do the right thing? How is doing so an expression of gratitude for salvation? How does it help both you and your spiritual community to grow? Pray that God would strengthen your resolve to do what’s right.