**1 Corinthians Week 4 Notes**

**A little different:**

This week is going to be a little different.

Im still going to give you some notes on the biblical text, because I know that the nerds among you like it, but the bible study is going to be based around a discussion and reflection format rather than the exegetical mode we have been in.

If you want to keep doing any method of group you obviously can if it works for your group.

**GROUP**

This weeks teaching was about the larger theme of chapters 3-7. I identified the idea of the community as the ‘Temple of God’ as the governing theme for the passages ahead.

As we move through those weeks I will be asking you to read and think about the specific chapters in light of this idea. (hopefully I will remember I have said this and give you questions to ask about it in each week).

The chapters over the next few weeks, have lots of context to investigate – marriage laws in Corinth, community forms and status, legal suits, and larger ‘sins’ – so we are likely to go back to some other methods of close reading.

This week then I thought it would be worth focussing on the metaphor of the temple, particularly in light of the circumstances that surround us in the world right now.

So here are some discussion points or reflections that you can do with the group:

**Tips for group leaders:**

1. Studying the bible will often be challenging. People may find new ideas that contradict what they always assumed was there. Its important that people have space to investigate and probe those ideas, and express the feelings that come with them.

I know that when I have had to rethink certain teachings I have lived my life by it can be utterly freeing to let the old idea go, but it also might come with frustration that I wasn’t given this idea earlier.

1. Have an agreement within the group that disagreement is allowed. Make part of this agreement the explicit statement that we as a group will LISTEN fully to someone’s experience before commenting. Make an explicit statement that you care for one another and value each other’s interpretations and life stories, even when they do not match. Theology and the bible aren’t really academic in this context – they are life affecting.
2. Enjoy the silence.

Too often we think that as leaders it is our job to make things flow and keep moving, but when discussing something deep or important it might take people a bit of time to process their answer, and to be bold enough to bring it forward. Try asking the question and then saying that you are going to give a few minutes before asking again to allow people to think of their answer. Silence can really be valuable when emotions and ideas have been flying around.

* This also helps the more nervous or introverted members. People who think very quickly can often start talking before they really have an answer. Confident people will step up willingly to be helpful and fill the silence. But for some people that time is key, and once it is broken they won’t step up again.
* Pay attention to who doesn’t speak very often. It might be worth asking them specifically to speak (but not without checking with them first). It may be worth contacting them outside of the group and asking whether that is just how they are happy or if there is something else going on – people with dyslexia often find reading and responding to text quickly very unnerving, so they might get more involved if they can have questions before the group to prepare or access the material differently.

1. Be bold enough to take a break

* If someone says something really important don’t be afraid to say “lets stop for a moment and get more tea” or “lets just sit quietly with that idea for a moment”

1. Think ahead in your preparation of what might come up that might be a difficult subject, or might bring up emotional answers or conflict. Decide for yourself what language or attitude is not acceptable so that you are ready to step in. It doesn’t happen often, but if you do end up anywhere very personal it means you have thought ahead about how to focus and lead the group through.
2. You don’t need loads of notes if you think beforehand of who is in the group and what knowledge they might have to share – you can then try to bring some of that out in the group discussion instead of having to have answers yourself.

*Discussion points:*

I think it would be good to start with a discussion of whether you are convinced by my interpretation of the text. We saw that some translators don’t agree, and I am not better (or worse) at this than those translators. It may be that this interpretation changes long standing beliefs, even long standing behaviours; these are worth investigating and giving space too.

* Have you grown up thinking of the ‘your body as a temple’ idea as being personal to you?
  + If so, what did you think of Charlotte’s collective interpretation of that verse?
  + Did it make sense to think of chapter 6 as an echo of chapter 3? If so, why? If not, why not? (*Its totally ok to disagree with the sermon, the point is to encourage you to think and wrestle with the ideas that are handed down by using the text)*
* What do you understand to be the function of a temple?
* Has anyone been to an ancient temple – what was it like? What seemed to be the important features? Can we learn from that?
* Do you feel connected to other Christians through Christ? If so, why and how? If not why not?
* What does it mean to be ‘members of Christ’?
  + That seems to have implications in the real world, being agents of Christ, do we want that responsibility?
  + Is there grace getting it wrong?
* What might bringing glory to god within the body look like?
* What is ‘glory’?
* What questions did the sermon bring up for you? Maybe we can start with those!

*Reflections and Sharing points:*

It may be that your group work better just listening to each other’s experience.

We can learn a lot from listening rather than engaging. Not discussing, just hearing what others experience is and then reflecting on how that relates to us as well.

* Think about the Christians you are connected to – are there many different types of connection? How do you feel about them?
* What has been you most important experience of being connected to Christ through others?
* If your emotions around this carry pain or regret, have a think about why that is?

*(don’t force anyone to share negative experience but welcome them if they do – church has not been positive for everyone and part of the challenge of the letter is us addressing where we don’t value each other properly)*

* When you think of a temple, what images appear to you?

The group could mix and match discussion and reflection. The key this week is to have time to think about the metaphor and what that might look like to us now as a church.