

# SESSION 4: 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS

## PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read 1 Corinthians 1-16; 2 Corinthians 1-6 (the chapters of Corinthians are shorter than other books so this shouldn't be overly burdensome).

## Summary of the Video: Module 6, Episode 4

Using the God, Gospel, People and Mission lenses, we'll examine 1 and 2 Corinthians.

### ***GOD: TRINITY AND ATTRIBUTES OF GOD***

Because the Corinthian letters contain lots of material that would inform our understanding of God and his nature, we'll do an exercise taking verses from these books and trying to form a picture of God. We'll do this together in our discussion time.

*Participants give their responses to Andrew Wilson's proposed "exercise" in 6:18-8:02.*

Andrew Wilson wants us to see how challenging it is to put into language the various teachings of the Bible on the nature of God. Specifically, there are some texts that sound like Jesus is "below" the Father while there are other texts in which he is clearly on an equal plane.

### ***GOSPEL: PROBLEM AND SOLUTION***

Looking at the text of 2 Corinthians 5 we ask, "What picture, image, model or theory of the Gospel is being assumed or taught in the underlined sections? What is the controlling metaphor?" (E.g. propitiation, justification, union with Christ, new creation.)

Andrew Wilson follows on from this by showing the "range of images" Paul employs in order to make his point.

### ***PEOPLE: COMMUNITY AND ETHICS, COSMOLOGY AND SEXUAL ETHICS, THE WORD—SPIRIT SPECTRUM?***

"The rationale for Paul's ethics is that the church is the place where God lives." Andrew Wilson takes us on a journey through the ethical instruction of Paul in the two letters in light of this rationale.

In a graphic, Andrew Wilson shows us perhaps how Paul perceived the world (his "cosmology"). The church is "holy, justified, washed, clean, the temple" and therefore needs judging and pursuit of further righteousness in reflection of their "place" in God's world. The "world" is under Satan's reign and therefore is unclean, unholy, and idolatrous. In light of this dichotomy, we ask how Paul approaches sin amongst professing Christians.

Sometimes we speak as if there's a tension between "Word" (doctrine, Bible, teaching) and the "Spirit" (prophetic, worship, tongues, healing) but there's not. Instead, the two ought to work

together so that we pursue “high Word, high Spirit” and run from “low Word, low Spirit”. The Corinthian letters give us at least five tests by which we can recognize if the Word and Spirit are high or low in our church.

### *MISSION: KINGDOM AND ESCHATOLOGY*

In a final chart, we see a visual depiction of how Christ’s kingdom has begun, what is left for us to do, and what we can look forward to at his return. The Corinthian letters give us insight into each of these realities. We need to think deeply about the tension of the “already” of what God has done in Christ and the “not yet” of what he is yet to do in us now and for us in the future. For example, understanding this tension helps us make sense out of suffering and setbacks in our Christian lives.

### Terms You’ll Need to Know:

Nicea and Nicene Creed—the church council of AD 325 in which the doctrine of the Trinity was put into language; the document they created is the Nicene Creed.

Shema—the central prayer and theological statement of Judaism which comes from Deuteronomy 6:4-6: “Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the Lord is one...”

### Watch Video

Watch Module 6 Episode 4 (43 minutes).

### The Church Age

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- I. The Story So Far
- II. Jerusalem, Judea and Samaria (Acts 1-9)
- III. The Ends of the Earth (Acts 10-28; Galatians; 1&2 Thessalonians)
- IV. Romans
- V. 1&2 Corinthians**
- VI. The Prison Letters
- VII. The Catholic Epistles
- VIII. Revelation

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## God: Trinity and Attributes

- The Corinthian letters have some fascinating statements about the Son and the Spirit, which have been hugely important in discussions about the Trinity across the centuries.
- **EXERCISE:** Form a doctrine of the Trinity from just the following
  - "You are Christ's, and Christ is God's" (1 Cor 3:23)
  - "Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that "an idol has no real existence," and that "there is no God but one." For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords"—yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Cor 8:4-6)
  - "But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God" (1 Cor 11:3)
  - "Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone" (1 Cor 12:4-6)
  - "When all things are subjected to him, then the Son himself will also be subjected to him who put all things in subjection under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Cor 15:28)
  - "And it is God who establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, and who has also put his seal on us and given us his Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Cor 1:21-22)
  - "Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another. For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit" (2 Cor 3:17-18)
  - "God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (2 Cor 4:6)
  - "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all" (2 Cor 13:14)

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## Gospel: Problem and Solution (2 Cor 5:11-21)

Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. But what we are is known to God, and I hope it is known also to your conscience. We are not commending ourselves to you again but giving you cause to boast about us, so that you may be able to answer those who boast about outward appearance and not about what is in the heart. For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.

For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.

Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

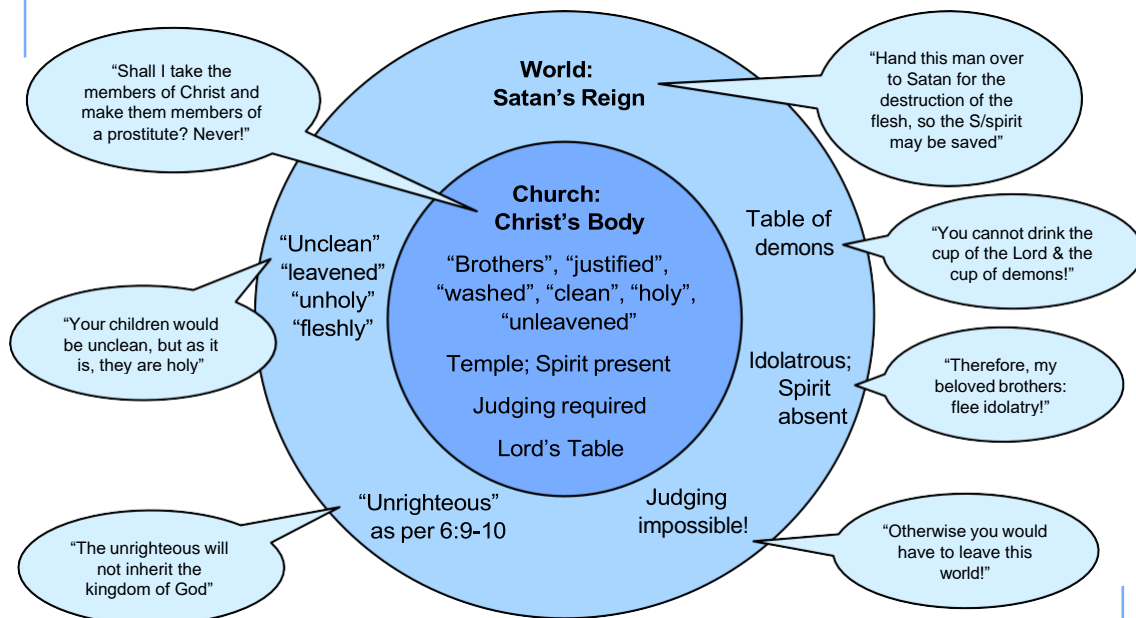
Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says, "In a favorable time I listened to you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you." Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation.

## People: Community and Ethics

- The Corinthian letters make it abundantly clear that the church is the temple of God's Spirit, and that all believers have been united together by the Spirit
  - We are the temple of God's Spirit, corporately (1 Cor 3:16; 2 Cor 6:16)
  - Our bodies are temples of God's Spirit, individually (1 Cor 6:19)
  - Nobody can say "Jesus is Lord" without the Spirit (1 Cor 12:3)
  - All of us have been baptised in one Spirit into one body, and given one Spirit to drink (1 Cor 12:13)
- This, in turn, grounds all sorts of ethical instructions, many of which have strong warnings associated with them
  - Unity and division (1 Cor 1-4). "If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him"
  - Sexual immorality (1 Cor 5; 6:9-20). "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God"
  - Litigation (1 Cor 6:1-11). "The unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God"
  - Marriage, divorce and remarriage (1 Cor 7)
  - Food offered to idols (1 Cor 8-10). "Do not destroy your brother, for whom Christ died"
  - Men and women in the church (1 Cor 11:2-16; 14:33-35). "We do not have any other practice"
  - The Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-34). "When you come together, it is not for the better but for the worse"
  - Spiritual gifts in meetings (1 Cor 12-14)
  - Not being yoked to unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14-18)
  - Generous giving (2 Cor 8-9)
  - Responding to apostolic ministry (1 Cor 4; 2 Cor 10-13)

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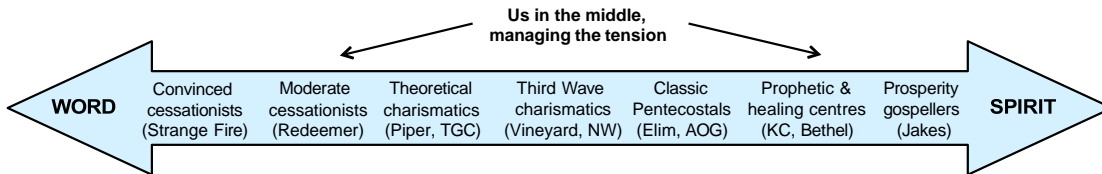
## People: Paul's Cosmology and Sexual Ethics



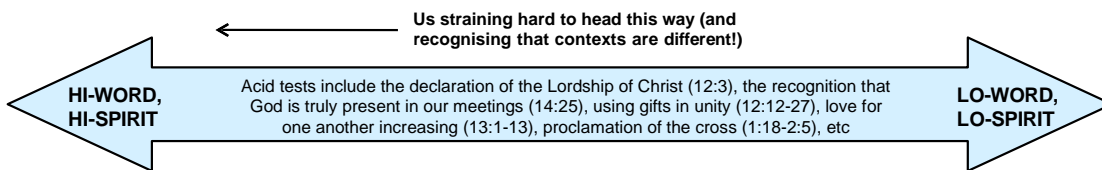
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## People: The Word—Spirit Spectrum?

Not ...

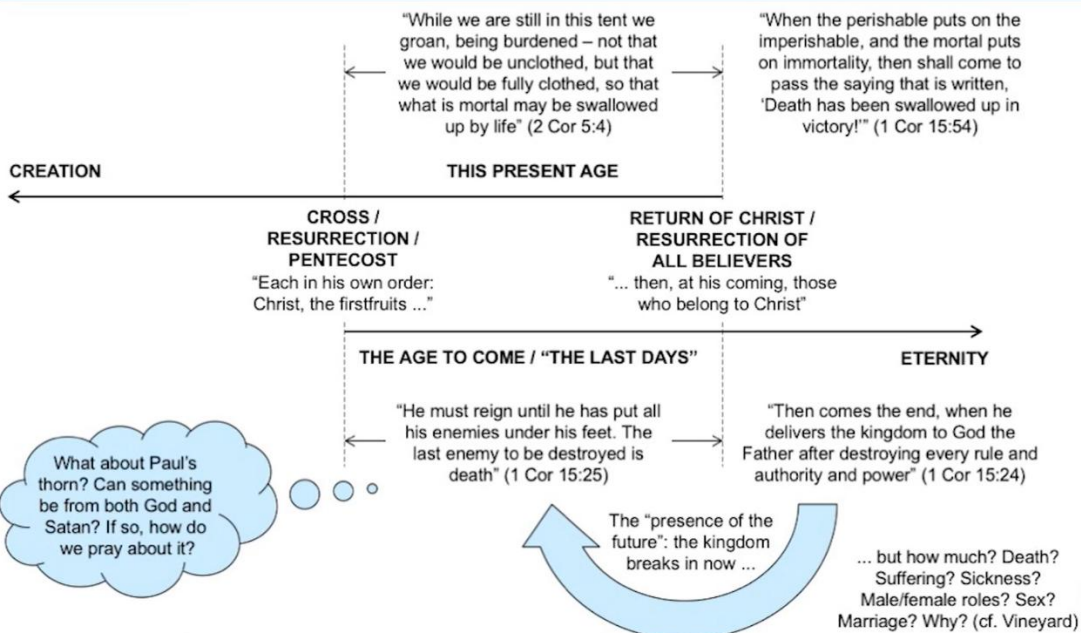


But ...



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## Mission: Kingdom and Eschatology



## GROUP MEETING:

### Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. Do the exercise from "God: Trinity and Attributes". (Allow 15 minutes for this.)
2. Andrew Wilson proposes another exercise in "Gospel: Problem and Solution". Look at the texts on that slide. What picture or image or model or theory of the Gospel is being assumed or taught in the underlined sections? What is the controlling metaphor?
3. Consider Paul's rationale for ethics in discipleship. Imagine someone has sinned and come to you for help. Use Paul's rationale to talk them through coming to grips with their sin, responding to it, and overcoming it.
4. Look at the five "tests" of the Word-Spirit slide. Discuss how well your church (or you yourself) would score in that test.
5. The NT teaches an "already" and "not yet" tension in regard to God's kingdom. Which side of the tension do the people in your church tend to emphasize? How would you suggest improving their understanding? What benefit do you see to greater clarity on this topic?

## Meditation on Scripture

1 Corinthians 6:19-20

2 Corinthians 5:14-15, 19-21

## Worship

Though we recognize that we're the temple "of the Holy Spirit", the drive of the Holy Spirit in the NT would be to make much of Jesus. So, we'll suggest some choruses here inviting the Spirit's presence, but this should be sung in response to exalting Jesus (in meditation, reading, prayer, and singing).

21. "Center"—Charlie Hall, Matt Redman

20. "Holy Spirit, You are Welcome Here"—Bryan and Katie Torwalt

17. "Spirit of the Living God"—Daniel Iverson

## Putting This Session into Practice

Meditate this week on how you are the temple of God and your Christian community is the temple of God. Each day, reflect on this reality, thank the Lord for it, and ask him to purify his temple on earth.