

Family • Faith • Holy Spirit • Mission



2026. 5.

# Small Group Preview

Jesus community where  
God's kingdom is realized on this earth

2026. 5. 3. Bothell Main Campus 2pm



시애틀형제교회  
COMMUNITY CHURCH OF SEATTLE

# The Mission of “Hesed” that Fills the Place of Loss with Hope

Dear Small Group Leader, as we arrive at the first Sunday of May, when the fresh green leaves are deepening, we begin a new month praying that just as the mountains and fields of Seattle are filled with the vitality of life, God’s life-giving power would overflow abundantly over your ministry and life.

This May, the message of the Book of Ruth that we will first encounter gives us a deep resonance. As we see how the household of Naomi and Ruth, who experienced famine and loss in life, rises again through God’s “hesed” (loving kindness), we hope that the same work of restoration will take place in the lives of the members you care for.

There may be times of “spiritual famine” when the pain of your members seems so great that it feels like there is nothing we can do for them. However, just as Ruth gleaned in the field of Boaz, when we faithfully tend the field of grace called the small group, God will surely prepare a grace of reversal. Your warm listening and even a single prayer can become a channel through which someone in despair experiences God’s lovingkindness.

In this way, the love of God flowing through the Book of Ruth comes to bear fruit as a passionate zeal for the gospel in the final part of May’s QT, 1 Corinthians 9. Just as Paul became a servant to all in order to win even one more person, the labor of love and devotion that you pour out without sparing for even one soul will never be in vain. The reason we willingly discipline ourselves and serve for the sake of the gospel is because seeing that soul return to the Lord is our greatest joy and reward.

We hope that this small group preview time will be a place of grace where God’s comfort is poured into your hearts and a holy passion for ministry is rekindled like a blazing fire. You are not alone. I and the pastors are praying for you with joined hands. For the spiritual family entrusted to us, let us once again gird ourselves with the belt of love and run through the month of May faithfully like Ruth and passionately like Paul.

We sincerely bless you, who are doing your best in the place of your calling today. We earnestly pray that God’s Spirit will be with you, and that wherever you go, flowers of life will bloom.

A servant of Christ, **James Kwon**



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

# Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 1, May 1st Scripture, P174

## Focus

Returning to God is the shortcut to restoration.

## Ice Breakers

When missionary Jim Elliot was martyred, his wife Elisabeth Elliot fell into deep despair. However, holding onto the Word, she rose again and went to the tribe that killed her husband to share the gospel. Have you ever had an experience where you did not remain in a place of despair but relied on the Word and rose again?

## Examine God's Word

Read Ruth 1:1–14 together. Circle or underline repeated words or expressions that carry important meaning.

## Understand Setting

The historical background of Ruth is “the time when the judges ruled” (v.1). This period has two main characteristics. First, because there was no king in Israel, the people did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Second, when the people sinned, they were invaded by foreign nations, and when they experienced God’s salvation through judges, they sinned again—this pattern was repeated. Ruth shows how God works and gives hope of restoration through the story of one family in a dark time marked by spiritual disorder and disobedience.

The geographical background is “Bethlehem in Judah” (v.1). Bethlehem is a combination of the Hebrew words “beit” (house) and “lehem” (bread), meaning “house of bread.” The family of Elimelech left the house of bread (Bethlehem) and moved to Moab because there was no bread (food), but there they lost their family members. However, when Naomi heard that God had provided food (lehem) for His people and returned to the house of bread (Bethlehem), God brought restoration to her family. Ruth reveals the tension between human choice and God’s sovereignty, ultimately showing that it is God who satisfies His people.

## Meditate the Text

- 1 **Observation** What did Naomi, who moved to the land of Moab with her husband and two sons, experience there? (vv.1–5)

**2** **Observation** What was the reason Naomi decided to return to her hometown of Judah? (v.6)

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**3** **Application** When you face loss or failure in life, what choice do you make? Share what areas of your life you need to turn back to God.

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### Review the Text

In difficult realities, many people try to find a way to live by relying on their own wisdom and judgment rather than depending on God. However, human wisdom cannot surpass God's wisdom, and human plans cannot go before God's will. The life of God's people is in His hands. God's care is what satisfies and sustains us. In times of suffering, returning to God is the best choice. Where there is repentance, there is grace and life.

### Pray through the Text

- 1 In dark circumstances, help me to lift my eyes and look to the Lord.
- 2 In any situation that blocks my path, help me to consider God's kingdom and will and walk the path of faith.



# Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 1, May 1st Scripture, P174

## Focus

Returning to God is the shortcut to restoration.

## Ice Breakers

Open your hearts by briefly sharing about your week, QT, and things you are thankful for. When missionary Jim Elliot was martyred, his wife Elisabeth Elliot fell into deep despair. However, holding onto the Word, she rose again and went to the tribe that killed her husband to share the gospel. Have you ever had an experience where you did not remain in a place of despair but relied on the Word and rose again?

## Examine God's Word

Read Ruth 1:1–14 together. Circle or underline repeated words or expressions that carry important meaning.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>1 In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land. So a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab.</p> <p>2 The man's name was Elimelek, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.</p> <p>3 Now Elimelek, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons.</p> <p>4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years,</p> <p>5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.</p> <p>6 When Naomi heard in Moab that the Lord had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, she and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there.</p>	<p>1 In the days when the judges were ruling, there was a famine in the land. A man from Bethlehem in Judah went with his wife and two sons to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name was Naomi, and the names of their two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were descendants of Ephrathah from Bethlehem in the territory of Judah. They went to the country of Moab and lived there.</p> <p>3 Now, Naomi's husband Elimelech died, and she was left alone with her two sons.</p> <p>4 Each son married a woman from Moab. One son married a woman named Orpah, and the other son married a woman named Ruth. They lived there for about ten years.</p> <p>5 Then both Mahlon and Chilion died as well. So Naomi was left alone, without her two sons or her husband.</p> <p>6 Naomi and her daughters-in-law started on the way back from the country of Moab. (While they were still in Moab she heard that the Lord had come to help his people and give them food.</p>	<p>1 In the days when the judges ruled there was a famine in the land, and a man of Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.</p> <p>2 The name of the man was Elimelech and the name of his wife Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem in Judah. They went into the country of Moab and remained there.</p> <p>3 But Elimelech, the husband of Naomi, died, and she was left with her two sons.</p> <p>4 These took Moabite wives; the name of the one was Orpah and the name of the other Ruth. They lived there about ten years,</p> <p>5 and both Mahlon and Chilion died, so that the woman was left without her two sons and her husband.</p> <p>6 Then she arose with her daughters-in-law to return from the country of Moab, for she had heard in the fields of Moab that the Lord had visited his people and given them food.</p>

7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the Lord show you kindness, as you have shown kindness to your dead husbands and to me.

9 May the Lord grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband." Then she kissed them goodbye and they wept aloud and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people."

10 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands?"

12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—

13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the Lord's hand has turned against me!"

14 At this they wept aloud again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth clung to her.

7 So she left the place where she had been living, and her two daughters-in-law went with her.) They began to walk back along the road to the territory of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go back! Each of you should go back to your mother's home. May the Lord be as kind to you as you were to me and to our loved ones who have died.

9 May the Lord repay each of you so that you may find security in a home with a husband." When she kissed them goodbye, they began to cry loudly.

10 They said to her, "We are going back with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Go back, my daughters. Why should you go with me? Do I have any more sons in my womb who could be your husbands?"

12 Go back, my daughters. Go, because I am too old to get married again. If I said that I still have hope. ... And if I had a husband tonight. ... And even if I gave birth to sons,

13 would you wait until they grew up and stay single just for them? No, my daughters. My bitterness is much worse than yours because the Lord has sent me so much trouble."

14 They began to cry loudly again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law goodbye, but Ruth held on to her tightly.

7 So she set out from the place where she was with her two daughters-in-law, and they went on the way to return to the land of Judah.

8 But Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return each of you to her mother's house. May the Lord deal kindly with you, as you have dealt with the dead and with me.

9 The Lord grant that you may find rest, each of you in the house of her husband!" Then she kissed them, and they lifted up their voices and wept.

10 And they said to her, "No, we will return with you to your people."

11 But Naomi said, "Turn back, my daughters; why will you go with me? Have I yet sons in my womb that they may become your husbands?"

12 Turn back, my daughters; go your way, for I am too old to have a husband. If I should say I have hope, even if I should have a husband this night and should bear sons,

13 would you therefore wait till they were grown? Would you therefore refrain from marrying? No, my daughters, for it is exceedingly bitter to me for your sake that the hand of the Lord has gone out against me."

14 Then they lifted up their voices and wept again. And Orpah kissed her mother-in-law, but Ruth clung to her.

## Understand Setting

The historical background of Ruth is "the time when the judges ruled" (v.1). This period has two main characteristics. First, because there was no king in Israel, the people did what was right in their own eyes (Judges 21:25). Second, when the people sinned, they were invaded by foreign nations, and when they experienced God's salvation through judges, they sinned again—this pattern was repeated. Ruth shows how God works and gives hope of restoration through the story of one family in a dark time marked by spiritual disorder and disobedience.

The geographical background is "Bethlehem in Judah" (v.1). Bethlehem is a combination of the Hebrew words "beit" (house) and "lehem" (bread), meaning "house of bread." The family of Elimelech left the house of bread (Bethlehem) and moved to Moab because there was no bread (food), but there they lost their family members. However, when Naomi heard that God had provided food (lehem) for His people and returned to the house of bread (Bethlehem), God brought restoration to her family. Ruth reveals the tension between human choice and God's sovereignty, ultimately showing that it is God who satisfies His people.

## Meditate the Text

**1** **Observation** What did Naomi, who moved to the land of Moab with her husband and two sons, experience there? (vv.1–5)

Her husband Elimelech and her two sons Mahlon and Kilion all died.

**Explanation** The name of Naomi's husband, Elimelech, means "My God is King." As someone whose name carried a confession of faith in God's sovereignty, Elimelech should have remained in the land of Canaan that God had given, even during the famine. However, he did not trust God and left the promised land. The Bible does not explicitly state that the deaths of Elimelech and his two sons were because they left Canaan. However, in Jewish society, having no descendants meant the discontinuation of the covenant line, so this event implies not just a tragedy but a result of unbelief.

**2** **Observation** What was the reason Naomi decided to return to her hometown of Judah? (v.6)

She decided to return after hearing that God had visited His people and given them food.

**Explanation** Naomi heard that God had visited His people. The Hebrew word for "visited" (paqad) means "to visit" or "to care for." God went to His people of Israel who were suffering from famine and had no food. What moved Naomi was not simply the reality that the famine had ended, but the fact that God had intervened in the situation of Israel. God is the one who cares for His people. Even when we leave the promised land and try to overcome hardship by our own strength and fail, God's "visitation" and "care" do not stop. Therefore, we must turn toward God. Restoration and life are found in the place God has promised.

**3** **Application** When you face loss or failure in life, what choice do you make? Share what areas of your life you need to turn back to God.

**Explanation** Guide the group members to share what areas of their lives they need to turn back to God. [Examples] "No matter the situation, I will judge with eyes of faith, not the eyes of the world." "I will listen to God's Word rather than people's words." "I will stay away from sin, practice righteousness, and live a life that overcomes evil with good."

**TIP** For richer sharing, you may use the additional question below:  
If you have an experience of trusting God and rising again in a difficult situation, share it.

## Review the Text

In difficult realities, many people try to find a way to live by relying on their own wisdom and judgment rather than depending on God. However, human wisdom cannot surpass God's wisdom, and human plans cannot go before God's will. The life of God's people is in His hands. God's care is what satisfies and sustains us. In times of suffering, returning to God is the best choice. Where there is repentance, there is grace and life.

## Pray through the Text

- 1 In dark circumstances, help me to lift my eyes and look to the Lord.
- 2 In any situation that blocks my path, help me to consider God's kingdom and will and walk the path of faith.

## Word Studies

**Verse 1** Although not directly mentioned in the text, the famine in verse 1 was most likely caused by drought. Moist air masses move from the Mediterranean Sea into Israel and continue toward the Jordan region. As these air systems move inland, the elevation gradually increases. At times, clouds carrying significant moisture pass over the mountainous region of Israel where Bethlehem is located without releasing rain, and only release rain when they reach the higher Jordan plateau. Moab was located in this highland region.

The text does not address it, but it is most likely that the famine (1:1) was because of drought. Weather systems carrying moisture blow in to Israel from the Mediterranean Sea and continue on into Jordan. As these systems move inland, the elevation of the land generally increases until the Jordan plateau is reached. At times clouds carrying significant moisture pass over the hills of Israel, where Bethlehem is located, and are not forced to release their rain until reaching the higher elevations of the Jordan plateau, where Moab was located.

**Verses 2–5** Naomi's situation after losing her husband and children was extremely difficult. She was not only experiencing emotional pain but also facing a severe economic crisis. In that society, women had almost no professions that allowed independent livelihood. At her older age, remarriage and childbirth were practically impossible (see 1:11–12). Widows were often exploited (Isaiah 10:2), or ignored and abandoned (Isaiah 1:23). Although God had given special laws to protect the vulnerable such as widows (Deuteronomy 14:28–29; 24:19–21; 26:12–13), the reality was still harsh. Naomi's future likely consisted of poverty and begging, and in Moab she had no relatives, leaving her even more isolated.

Naomi's new situation without a husband or children was difficult. Not only was she depressed as a result of these losses, she was in distress economically in a society that offered women no real independent professions apart from prostitution. As a mother of grown children, her age made both remarriage and the possibility of bearing any more children in her husband's name impossibilities

(cf. 1:11–12). Widows were often taken advantage of (Isa 10:2) or ignored and neglected (Isa 1:23), even though the Lord gave special commands regarding them and other vulnerable members of society (e.g., Deut 14:28–29; 24:19–21; 26:12–13). Naomi’s bleak future appeared to be only begging and poverty in her increasing age. Further, she was isolated from family, lacking any blood relatives in Moab.

**Verse 8** Naomi’s instruction for her daughters-in-law to return to Moab was based on a realistic assessment of their situation. She likely considered this advice to be beneficial for all of them in the long run. Although she would have to travel alone, each of them could rely on family support in their own homeland. Familiar language, culture, and family networks would be their strongest foundation for survival in such hardship. While there is no direct information about widow remarriage customs in Moab, it is likely that Moabite women would more naturally marry Moabite men rather than foreigners. In this sense, Naomi’s advice reflects practical wisdom and genuine concern for their future well-being.

Naomi’s advice that the girls return to their home in Moab was grounded in the realities of their situation. It is likely she saw her advice as advantageous for all of them in the long run. Though she would have to make the journey alone, each of them would find support in a family network in their own homeland. The familiarity of language and culture and the strength of family were their best chance for getting by in these dire straits. Although we do not know anything directly regarding Moabite views about remarriage widows, it is not unlikely that Moabite women would be more attractive as spouses to Moabite men than to foreign men for the simple reason that people, on average, choose mates from backgrounds similar to their own. Naomi’s advice was based on a sound assessment of the situation and a concern for the best future for her daughters-in-law and herself.

**Verse 13** The expression “bitter heart” here can be understood in several ways. It may mean Naomi’s sorrow over the suffering of her daughters-in-law, or that staying with Naomi would be too burdensome for them, or that Naomi’s own life is far more bitter than theirs. Since the context emphasizes the possibility of remarriage, the third interpretation seems most appropriate. In other words, her daughters-in-law still had opportunities for a new beginning, while Naomi did not. Therefore, she urges them to seize the opportunities still available to them.

Naomi’s first comment, regarding her bitterness (1:13), may be understood as saying that she was sorry that Ruth and Orpah had to suffer the calamity that had come upon her (cf. REB, “for your sakes I feel bitter”), or that the bitterness of remaining tied to Naomi’s family is “too much for [them] to bear” (NET), or that Naomi’s life is more bitter than theirs—that is, they have other alternatives and need not face the hardship she was facing. Because Naomi’s statements in 1:11–13a have focused on the potential of remarriage for the two women, the last option seems best. Like her earlier blessing on their potential remarriage (1:9), Naomi’s words here suggest that they had not lost everything as she had; they had a way out, a chance to start again and find happiness. Her lot was more bitter than theirs, and Naomi’s advice was that they take advantage of the opportunities that remained for them.

(The commentary above is adapted from Jason Driesbach, *Ruth: Cornerstone Commentary*.)



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

# Small Group Preview

Small Group Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 5, May 28th Scripture, P182

## Focus

In order to share the gospel with many people, we must respect the circumstances of different people and enter into their context.

## Ice Breakers

Hudson Taylor, for the sake of mission work in China, adopted Chinese clothing and lifestyle as they were. As a result, he was able to enter into Chinese society. If given the opportunity, which country's culture or food would you like to experience?

## Examine God's Word

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19–27 together. Circle or underline repeated words or expressions that carry important meaning.

## Understand Setting

1 Corinthians chapters 8–10 deal with the issue of food sacrificed to idols. At that time, there was a temple for the goddess Aphrodite in Corinth, and many people offered sacrifices there. The problem was that meat from these sacrifices entered the market and was distributed. Some Corinthian believers thought that idols are nothing, so eating such meat was no problem, while others felt a burden of conscience and saw it as an issue. In this confusion, Paul explains how believers should act for the sake of those with weaker faith.

Paul also uses an athletic metaphor to describe how he disciplines himself so that the gospel is his highest priority. Sports were a familiar image to the people of Corinth because the Isthmian Games were held there every two years. Events such as javelin throwing, running, and wrestling were held, and athletes trained rigorously with discipline over a long period in order to gain victory and honor. Paul compares himself to an athlete striving for a perishable crown in order to describe how he devotes himself to and labors for an imperishable crown.

## Meditate the Text

1 **Observation** How did Paul approach the “Jews, those under the law, those outside the law, and the weak”? What was the reason for this? (vv.19–23)

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2 **Observation** Why did Paul discipline his body and bring it into subjection? (v.27)

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3 **Application** Like Paul, who became all things to all people depending on his audience, share how you and your community can approach different groups who need the gospel.

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## Review the Text

Paul chose discomfort instead of freedom in order to share the truth with even one more person, and he disciplined himself, training his body and mind before the gospel. Believers must know how to restrain their own freedom for the sake of others. If we insist on comfort, the gospel loses power in our lives, but if we submit ourselves to the Lord, the gospel is powerfully proclaimed. What we need today is not more freedom, but the decision to become servants for the gospel and surrender our freedom to the Lord.

## Pray through the Text

- 1 Break my stubbornness and comfort zones, and give me a heart that humbles itself and practices self-control for the sake of the gospel.
- 2 Make me a servant who receives the Lord’s commendation and the reward prepared for me.



Embracing the members with a shepherd's heart

# Small Group Preview

Leader Usage

Living Life Weekly Bible Study 5, May 28th Scripture, P182

## Focus

In order to share the gospel with many people, we must respect the circumstances of different people and enter into their context.

## Ice Breakers

Open your hearts by briefly sharing about your week, QT, and things you are thankful for. Hudson Taylor, for the sake of mission work in China, adopted Chinese clothing and lifestyle as they were. As a result, he was able to enter into Chinese society. If given the opportunity, which country's culture or food would you like to experience?

## Examine God's Word

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 together. Circle or underline words or expressions that are repeated or carry important meaning.

NIV	GOD'S WORD	ESV
<p>19 Though I am free and belong to no one, I have made myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible.</p> <p>20 To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law.</p> <p>21 To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law.</p> <p>22 To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some.</p> <p>23 I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.</p>	<p>19 Although I'm free from all people, I have made myself a slave for all people to win more of them.</p> <p>20 I became Jewish for Jewish people. I became subject to the laws in Moses' Teachings for those who are subject to those laws. I did this to win them even though I'm not subject to Moses' Teachings.</p> <p>21 I became like a person who does not have Moses' Teachings for those who don't have those teachings. I did this to win them even though I have God's teachings. I'm really subject to Christ's teachings.</p> <p>22 I became like a person weak in faith to win those who are weak in faith. I have become everything to everyone in order to save at least some of them.</p> <p>23 I do all this for the sake of the Good News in order to share what it offers.</p>	<p>19 For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them.</p> <p>20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though not being myself under the law) that I might win those under the law.</p> <p>21 To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (not being outside the law of God but under the law of Christ) that I might win those outside the law.</p> <p>22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some.</p> <p>23 I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.</p>

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize.

25 Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

26 Therefore I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air.

27 No, I strike a blow to my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

24 Don't you realize that everyone who runs in a race runs to win, but only one runner gets the prize? Run like them, so that you can win.

25 Everyone who enters an athletic contest goes into strict training. They do it to win a temporary crown, but we do it to win one that will be permanent.

26 So I run—but not without a clear goal ahead of me. So I box—but not as if I were just shadow boxing.

27 Rather, I toughen my body with punches and make it my slave so that I will not be disqualified after I have spread the Good News to others.

24 Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it.

25 Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.

26 So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air.

27 But I discipline my body and keep it under control lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified.

## Understand Setting

1 Corinthians chapters 8–10 deal with the issue of food sacrificed to idols. At that time, there was a temple for the goddess Aphrodite in Corinth, and many people offered sacrifices there. The problem was that meat from these sacrifices entered the market and was distributed for sale.

In response, some Corinthian believers thought that since idols are nothing, eating such meat was not a problem. Others, however, felt a burden in their conscience and considered it a serious issue. In this confusion, Paul explains how believers should act for the sake of those whose faith is weaker.

Paul also uses an athletic metaphor to describe how seriously he disciplines himself in order to make the gospel his highest priority. Sports imagery was very familiar to the people of Corinth, since the Isthmian Games were held there every two years. Events such as javelin throwing, running, and wrestling took place, and athletes trained for a long time with strict discipline and self-control in order to win victory and honor. Paul compares himself to an athlete striving for a perishable crown in order to show how he labors and commits himself for an imperishable crown.

## Meditate the Text

**1** < **Observation** How did Paul approach the “Jews, those under the law, those outside the law, and the weak”? What was his reason for doing this? (v.19–23)

Paul became like a Jew, like one under the law, and like the weak in order to save as many people as possible.

**Explanation** Paul had freedom in Christ to eat any food (v.4). However, because he knew that weaker believers might stumble by seeing him eat food sacrificed to idols, he chose not to eat such food for their sake (v.13; 10:27–28). Likewise, for the sake of Jews who kept the law, he even had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3). In short, he became all things to all people, as long as the gospel was not compromised, in order to spread the gospel effectively.

Peter also confessed Jesus as the Son of God, affirming His divinity. Caesarea Philippi, where this confession occurred, was full of temples to many gods. Amidst this setting, Peter boldly declared, “Jesus is the highest king sent by God.”

**2** < **Observation** Why did Paul discipline his body and bring it into subjection? (v.27)

Because he was concerned that after preaching to others, he himself might be disqualified.

**Explanation** Paul says, “I discipline my body and keep it under control.” The Greek word used here is *hypopiazō*, which literally means “to strike under the eye,” describing a boxer hitting his opponent under the eye. However, Paul applies this action to himself. He disciplines himself so that his efforts in ministry will not be in vain. Paul is not talking about losing salvation, but about the possibility of failing to receive reward after faithful service, like an athlete who does not win the prize.

**3** < **Application** Like Paul, who adapted himself to different people, how can you and your community approach different groups who need the gospel?

**Point** Help group members reflect on what attitudes they may need to lay down for the sake of the gospel. (Examples) “Instead of waiting for others to approach me, I will humble myself and take the first step.” “Instead of insisting on my own way, I will adapt to others’ pace and approach for the sake of the gospel.”

**Question** What is one area where you need to “discipline your body” for the sake of the gospel, as Paul describes?

## Review the Text

Paul chose discomfort over personal freedom in order to reach even one more person with the truth. He disciplined himself and trained both body and mind under the gospel. Believers must be willing to limit their own freedom for the sake of others. When we insist on comfort, the gospel loses its power in our lives, but when we submit ourselves to the Lord, the gospel is powerfully proclaimed. What we need today is not more freedom, but the decision to become servants for the gospel and surrender our freedom to the Lord.

## Pray through the Text

- 1 Break my stubbornness and comfort, and give me a humble and disciplined heart for the sake of the gospel.
- 2 Make me a servant who receives Your commendation and the reward You have prepared.

## Word Studies

**Verse 19** Paul explains why he regards his apostolic calling as something like forced assignment. He was originally a free man (a status that carried significant importance in his society). However, he willingly laid down that freedom and made himself a slave to Christ. In doing so, he received the mission to serve the world through the gospel. This perspective of seeing himself as a “slave” appears repeatedly in Paul’s writings (Romans, Galatians, Titus). What is unique in this passage is that Paul describes himself as actively entering this position of servanthood. He also connects this “slavery” to one clear purpose: the mission God gave him—to bring more people into the community of faith.

Paul explains why he views his apostolic calling as conscription. Though once a free man (and that meant something in his world), he lost that freedom by selling himself into slavery to Christ with a mandate to serve the world with the gospel. Viewing himself as a slave in this way, Paul is consistent with many other places in his writing (Rom 1:1; Gal 1:10; Titus 1:1), but viewing himself as initiating this enslavement is unique to this passage. He qualifies his enslavement with the single purpose that Christ had set over his life: to add people to the Christian community.

**Verse 20** Paul applies his one unified purpose—saving souls—to two groups: Jews and Gentiles. While the purpose remains the same, his approach differs depending on the audience. Because he was raised as a Jew, he was fully capable of following Jewish customs such as dietary laws and worship practices in the synagogue. In fact, whenever he entered a new city, including Corinth, he would often begin by preaching in the synagogue and participating in Jewish festivals. However, his motivation for doing this was no longer because he was Jewish by identity. He clearly states that he is no longer under the law of the Jews. This aligns with his theology in Galatians and Romans. Christ has fulfilled the law, and Paul is no longer bound by it. Nevertheless, he still

followed Jewish customs when needed in order to help Jews receive the gospel more easily. He removed anything in his own background that might become a barrier to the gospel. Ultimately, his single purpose—helping people come to Christ—shaped all of these decisions.

Paul divides his single-purposed life into two platforms: Jews and Gentiles. For each, his single purpose morphs into different strategies. Because he was raised as a Jew, he was fully able to participate in the rigid social customs of the Jews involving a restrictive diet. He was also comfortable worshiping in Jewish synagogues, which Acts notes he did frequently when he first entered a city, including Corinth, and taking part in Jewish festivals. However, his purpose in doing so was no longer because he was Jewish nationality. In fact, with incredible clarity he asserts point-blank that he is under no obligation to Jewish law anymore, a stance that coincides with his carefully argued theology in Galatians and Romans. Christ nullified the law and released him from his obligation to it. He now practiced Judaism with people to make them more comfortable with hearing the gospel message. He wanted to remove any barriers (such as his own break from Judaism) that might blind Jews from the truth of the gospel. His single purpose to help them accept Christ drove this pragmatic choice.

**Verse 21** Paul then explains his approach to Gentiles. Just as he adapted to Jewish customs when needed, he also had no hesitation in setting aside Jewish customs when relating to Gentiles. As he argues in Galatians, he did not impose Jewish practices on Gentile believers. Because Christ has set him free from the obligation of the law, he was able to eat and live according to Gentile customs, including foods forbidden under Jewish law. He could also live in environments shaped by idol worship and pagan religious influence. All of this was done with one goal: to lead people to Christ.

In verse 21, Paul refers to the “law of Christ.” This may refer to the command to preach the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19–20; Mark 16:15–16), but more likely it refers to the command of love. Jesus identified love for neighbor as the greatest commandment (Matthew 22:39), and Paul repeatedly emphasizes this as the core of Christian ethics (Romans 13:9; Galatians 5:14). James also describes it as the “royal law” and the “perfect law” that gives freedom (James 2:8; 1:25). In Galatians 6:2, Paul explains that bearing one another’s burdens fulfills this law of Christ.

In this sense, loving unbelievers is not only about sharing the gospel but also about removing unnecessary obstacles that may prevent them from receiving it.

Paul explains his second platform. Parallel with the way he chose to relate socially to Jews, he was also fully comfortable with setting aside Jewish customs when relating to Gentiles. He certainly felt no compunction to force Jewish customs on them, as evidenced from his arguments in Galatians. Since Christ freed him from obligation to these Jewish laws, he was able to eat and socialize with Gentiles according to their customs, which involved eating pork and other things banned for Jews. This would also mean working and living under the canopy of idols and pagan gods in their cities that influence their legal and social behavior. He could do this because his single purpose was to bring them to Christ. There is only one law he obeys, Paul says in 9:21, “the law of Christ.” This may be the gospel mandate to go into all the world and evangelize, a fitting consideration in this context. More likely, however, Paul had in mind Christ’s law of loving one’s neighbor, extolled by Jesus as part of the greatest commandment and repeated as the most basic principle of Christian behavior by Paul, as well as promoted by James as the “royal” law (Jas 2:8) and the “perfect” law that gives freedom. In

Galatians 6:2, the only other place Paul refers to “the law of Christ,” he stipulates that Christ’s model of self-sacrifice in bearing the burdens of another person fulfills this law. He had already appealed to love (8:1) and Christ’s sacrifice (8:11) as key principles in resolving this tension regarding idol meat. In this immediate context, loving nonbelievers, whether Jewish or Gentile, not only leads to the desire to bring them the gospel but underlies strategies for how to do this, including the removal of unnecessary distractions that would hinder them from accepting the gospel’s invitation to believe in Christ.

# Ministry Prayer Request for January

## Major Ministry Schedule

- May the leadership of all ministry teams who plan and carry out ministry be filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom.
- We give thanks that the all-church early morning special prayer meetings have concluded in grace. May the fire of prayer in the church never be extinguished but continue to burn.
- May Sunday worship be filled with the presence of God, and may the awe and grace of worship continue into everyday life.
- May God grant abundant grace to the 50th cohort of the one-on-one discipleship mentor class, so that mature mentors may be raised up.
- Through the discipleship classes (study on the Apostles' Creed), may believers become firmly grounded in Christ and experience growth and maturity in faith.
- Through the Mother School, may mothers experience restoration and growth, and may the Father School golf tournament be conducted beautifully in the Lord.
- May You grant leadership and wisdom to small group leaders and co-leaders who serve the small groups, so that unity may be established.
- May EW members receive abundant grace in every worship service, and may small groups and leaders who can help newcomers settle be well established.

## Next Generation Prayer Points

- **Sonlight** – May the church’s heart to love and disciple the next generation grow even more. May parents encounter Jesus daily and share the gospel with their children every day.
- **Coram Deo** – May students experience the “Up” of being lifted spiritually and the “Down” of humbling themselves before God during the May 16 Recharge (Jump Up and Down) gathering.
- **NEXT** – Although the senior retreat (April 17–19) has ended in grace, may continued fellowship and love overflow afterward. Give strength and endurance to teachers.
- **EW College** – May students encounter God and experience deep fellowship through His Word.
- **NeWave** – May this become a community that knows God rightly and worships Him rightly. Also, continue to guide new young adults who need the gospel to NeWave, so that it becomes a life-filled community where the number of those being saved increases daily.



2026. 5.

# Small Group Preview

Jesus community where  
God's kingdom is realized on this earth

2026. 5. 3. Bothell Main Campus 2pm



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