



## Living in a material world, and I am NOT a material girl

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“Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test what God’s will is – His good, pleasing and perfect will.” – Romans 12:2

# Living in a material world

## Think About It

Why do you think our culture is so obsessed in having whatever they want?

Our society's motto is: "if it feels good, do it". What problem could you see as a Christian living under this motto?

## Background

Corinth was a very important city in Greece. It was a crossroads for travelers and merchants. The people built many temples for worshipping idols. They were interested in wealth and pleasure and lived a very immoral lifestyle (Doesn't that sound familiar!!!)

The Christians in Corinth had many problems. Paul wrote to them about their problems such as divisions in the Church, sexuality, food, worship and Godly behaviour. It seems like they had fallen back into the trap of living life pre-Christ.

In this series of 6 studies using 1 Corinthians 5 as the basis, Paul challenged the Church of Corinth in 6 specific areas. Today as Christians we too need to be challenged to re-evaluate how we are living in the Light of What God has done for us in Jesus.

## Read

1 Corinthians 5:9-11

1

If you were to ask 5 random people which of the 6 sins listed in 1 Corinthians 5 were the most serious, what do you think they would say?

Why?

Do you think their idea of who Jesus was would change the way they saw each sin?

In the late 6<sup>th</sup> Century AD, Pope Gregory the Great drew up a list of 7 offenses called the 7 Deadly sins. He ranked the sins seriousness according to the degree from which they offended love of another person. From most serious to least: pride, envy, anger, sloth, greed, gluttony and lust.

Today we understand that there is no Biblical list of 7 deadly sins, for God has made it abundantly clear that all sin is rebellion against God. The punishment for that rebellion is death (read Romans 3:23). But the Great news is that through Jesus we are justified (made right) by what God has done for us (His grace) (Read Romans 6:23)

2

What does Jesus OUR LORD have to say about each of these wrong ways of Living?

a) Sexual Immorality: What does this mean?

Read Matthew 5: 27-30

What do you think Jesus means???

b) Greed: How does this affect us today?

Read Mark 10: 17-25

How does Jesus want us to live?

c) Idolatry: Are we guilty of this? You may be surprised?

Read Matthew 6: 19-34

How does it affect us?

d) Slander: What does this mean?

Read Matthew 12: 33-37

How can we be more accountable?

e) Drunkenness: Why is this wrong?

Read Matthew 9: 9-13, 11:19

Isn't it fantastic that Jesus came to befriend those in the greatest need

f) Swindling: What does this mean and how does it affect us today?

Read Luke 19: 1-10 and 45-48

How does this affect others?

## **Pray About It**

Pray that we might be challenged to live lives worthy of the gospel and be challenged to change areas in our Christian walk if we need too.

# Sex sells

## Think About It

How would our modern world (and our lives) be different without our constant exposure to sex?

## Pray About It

Lets spend some time talking to God about the issues we have just discussed and commit our study of God's Word tonight.

## Read

- 1 1 Corinthians 5: 9-11  
What is Paul teaching us?

Imagine a community in which sexual immorality is rife; in which adultery, prostitution, homosexuality, theft, drunkenness and disorder are common. Welcome to the world of the New Testament. It was a world in which (at least sexually speaking) many modern people would have felt at home. It was a place in which, like the 21<sup>st</sup> century, sex was used not the way God had intended.

## Read

1 Corinthians 6: 9-11

- 2 We know that all have sinned but in verse 9 who is Paul referring to as the wicked? And what are they unable to receive?
- 3 What were some of the Corinthian Christians in their past life? Therefore define what sexual immorality is?
- 4 Why does Paul refer to these lifestyles in the past tense? What has changed for these Corinthians?
- 5 How should verse 11b affect Christians today?

## Read

Read 1 Corinthians 6: 12-20

In one Sentence, how would you sum up the main idea from this passage?

**6** In our society a much loved slogan is 'If it feels good do it'. Is Paul endorsing this belief in v 12a? Why/ why not? Explain what he is actually trying to teach.

**7** Using this passage only explain why it is not Godly behaviour to live a sexually immoral lifestyle?

**8** How are we to avoid sexual immorality? Practically discuss some wise and unwise behaviours.

Even in the Old Testament God speaks to His people about ways we can avoid sexual immorality. A very valuable understanding is to recognise that we are God's alone and that we must not even entertain the idea of sexual impurity in our minds. Remember the passage from Matthew 5: 27-30 we read last week (lets refresh Jesus teaching)

## Read

Read Song of Songs 2:7b, 3:5b and 8:4

**9** If this is important enough for the author to repeat 3 times, what do you think this verse is teaching us?

How can we apply this to our lives practically?

**10** How does Paul's conclusion (v 18-20) affect you personally?

Meditate on your upcoming week for a few minutes. Think of where you'll be, who you'll be with, what you'll be doing. In that context, what will it mean for YOU to 'acknowledge that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit and that you were bought with a price (v19-20)'

|               |
|---------------|
| Mind          |
| Tongue        |
| Eyes          |
| Ears          |
| Hands         |
| Sexual organs |
| Feet          |

**11** In order to live out our NEW lives in Christ, What do we need to remember about ourselves? (v13-17, v19-20)

### Think About It

'The imagery of being sanctified or made holy means something rather different to modern people than it did to the Corinthians. To many people today, a sanctified or holy person is an aloof, pious, religious type, who carries an air of superiority, stuffiness and moral purity (at least on the outside). However, in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, sanctified was a more straightforward sort of a word. It meant to be set apart for a particular purpose, to be special and distinctive. The Corinthians had been given a new start. They had been washed clean from the dirt of their previous behaviour and therefore called to be different from those around them, to live a different sort of life' (from 'Pure Sex by Tony Payne and Philip Jensen p. 84-85)

**12** Are we living the sanctified life?

**13** As you get older, is it easier or harder to resist temptation?

### Pray About It

Why not spend some quiet time talking to God right now and working through some of the issues that this study has highlighted in your own walk.

# Greed

## Think About It

Something to think about..... Over time and in various nations of the world, people have recorded their collective wisdom in statements called Proverbs. Have a read of each of the following proverbs.

- 1 Do you think there is any truth in them, in light of what d's Word teaches us?
  - a) *"When all other sins are old, greed still stays young."*  
(French Proverb)
  - b) *"A greedy man is always poor."*  
(Iranian Proverb)
  - c) *"Even thinking about sexual pleasure has its roots in greed."*  
(Japanese Proverb)
  - d) *"Greed keeps men forever poor, even the abundance of this world will not make them rich."*  
(Mongolian Proverb)
  - e) *"A greedy father has thieves for children."*  
(Serbian Proverb)
  - f) *"A greedy person and a pauper are practically one and the same."*  
(Swiss Proverb)
  - g) *"The poor lack much, but the greedy more."*  
(Swiss Proverb)

h) *"For a greedy man even his tomb is too small."*  
(Tajikistani Proverb)

2 When we hear the word 'Greed' what ideas spring up in our minds?

3 In the passage from 1 Corinthians 5:10, the word "greedy" actually comes from the Greek word *pleonexia*, which normally translates as 'covetous'. This has the connotation of grasping more and more, being totally unsatisfied with what we have. How is this concept broader than what we thought?

How does this idea of covetousness effect us today?

## The of Opposite Covetousness

Read

Philippians 4: 10-20

**4** Both Paul and the Philippians had learnt the secret of the best lifestyle. What is the secret and where is this lifestyle found?

**5** How can we be content no matter what the circumstances? (v12-13)

**6** In verses 14-20, where does Paul recognise that all his needs come from?

**7** How do you think that we fall into the trap of not being content and instead "lay up for ourselves plenty of good things for many years?"

If we were to ask virtually any Christian from the 'developing world' what is the most common and destructive sin in the Western church, the answer would invariably be 'covetousness'. It is not the issue of having money that is sin but the idea that we constantly need to have more.

The great 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformer, Martin Luther, set an example in this matter: 'Luther threatened to excommunicate a man who intended to sell a house for 400 gulden, which he had purchased for thirty. Luther suggested 150 as a

reasonable price. Inflation in this period had sent prices up, but the profit this man intended to make was exorbitant, and Luther, who generally called a spade a spade, rightly labeled this piece of unbridled greed a sin that called for discipline.' (quoted from p 81 The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior)

**8** Think about something in your life recently that you had desperately wanted to have? Was it a need or a want?

## Curly Question

**9** How can we balance the idea that God wants to give good things to His children (and the fact that we live in an affluent country) will not falling into the trap of living greedy and covetous lives?

**Read**

1 Timothy 6: 3-10

**10** What stands out to you as one of the key differences between false teachers and true teachers of the gospel?



**11** Where is the gain in Godliness (v6) (1 Tim 4:8)?

**12** What does it mean to be content (1 Tim 6: 6-7 also Phil 4:11; Heb 13:5)? In what areas do you feel discontentment??

Christians sometimes give the impression that poverty is good and wealth is evil. The image of a Monk, dressed in rags, is a popular symbol of spiritual virtue. On the other hand, some Christians teach 'prosperity theology' that being rich demonstrates God's kindness and blessing as he gives us life in abundance.

The Bible teaches that we need to maintain a heavenly perspective on our earthly money and possessions.

## Read

Ecclesiastes 5: 10- 20

**13** How do we enter this world? And How will we depart it? (v15-16)

**14** What impact should this have on how Christians should respond to God and His world?

**15** How should we view our possessions and therefore not fall into the trap of Greed?

## Think About It

**16** Are you struggling with desiring anything at present? If so, what aspects of your life are causing this and how might you change them?

## Pray About It

Why not spend some quiet time talking to God right now and working through some of the issues that this study has highlighted in your own walk.

# Idolatry

## Think About It

What do you perceive idolatry as?

## Read

The 1<sup>st</sup> two Commandments in Exodus 20: 1-6.

**1** What does God require of us?

Idolatry is a sin that recurs throughout the history of God's people. The first recorded instance was in the family of Jacob (Israel): note that just before he arrived in Bethel, Jacob commanded that their images be put away (Gen. 35:1-4). The first story recorded in the Bible in which Israel as a whole engaged in idolatry was the worship of the golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai (Ex. 32:1-6). During the time of the judges God's people frequently turned to idols. Though there is no evidence of idolatry during the time of Saul or David, the latter years of King Solomon set in motion a consistent pattern of idolatry in Israel (1 Ki. 11:1-8).

## Read

Habakkuk 2: 18-20

**2** a) What does the prophet Habakkuk teach us about the nature of idols in comparison to our God?

b) Why do you think humans create idols?

The New Testament also warns all believers against idolatry. Idolatry manifests itself in various forms today. It explicitly appears in the false world religions, as well as in sorcery, satanism and other forms of the occult (The relationship between idolatry and demons is seen more clearly when we realise how intricately pagan religious practices are linked with spiritism, sorcery, divination, enchantment, witchcraft, and the like (2 Ki. 21:3-6; Is. 8:19; Deut. 18:9-11; Rev. 9:21). According to Scripture, all of these occult practices involve paying homage to demons.). It is also found wherever men and women give themselves over to greed and materialism, rather than trusting in God alone. Finally, it occurs within the church when people believe that they can serve God and experience His salvation and blessings, and at one and the same time participate in the immoral and wicked practices of the world.

**3** How have you seen idolatry manifested in the lives of your friends, family, neighbours? What about your own life?

4 The Bible usually refers to idolatry as the worship of a false divine entity usually made of human hands but in Paul's writings the term idolatry interchanges with another word. What is it?

**Read**

Matthew 6: 19-24

7 a) In this passage Jesus even refers to idolatry as greed. How does Jesus do this?

b) Where instead, does Jesus want us to focus?

c) How can we focus elsewhere according to this passage?

**Read**

Colossians 3: 5-10 and Ephesians 5: 3-5

5 a) From Colossians 3 v ,7 and Ephesians 5: 3 why should we rid ourselves of such things like idolatry?

b) Why is the Wrath of God coming?

6 According to Col 3:5 & 9 Christians have a new self and a called to live a certain way.

In Ephesians 5:5, Paul puts it even stronger: that Christians who have ungodly behaviour will not inherit the Kingdom of God. How do you think we should respond to those who claim the name of Christ and live another way?

**Think about it**

*“Before I travelled to the West I had absolutely no idea that so many churches were spiritually asleep. I presumed the Western church was strong and vibrant because it had brought the gospel to my country with such incredible faith and tenacity. Many missionaries had shown a powerful example to us by laying down their lives for the sake of Jesus.”*

*On Some occasions I've struggled while speaking in Western churches. There seems to be something missing that leaves me feeling terrible inside. Many meetings are cold and lack the fire and presence of God that we have in China.*

*In the West many Christians have an abundance of material possessions, yet they live in a backslidden state. They have silver and gold, but they don't rise up and walk in Jesus' name. In China we have no possessions to hold us down, so there's nothing preventing us from moving out for the Lord. The Chinese church is like Peter at the Beautiful Gate. When he saw the crippled beggar he said, "Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk!" Acts 3:6*

*In a similar way, I pray that God might use the Chinese church to help the Western church rise up and walk in the power of the Holy Spirit. It's almost impossible for the church in China to go to sleep in its present situation. There's always something to keep us on the run, and it's very difficult to sleep while you're running. If persecution stops, I fear we'll become complacent and fall asleep."*

-- Brother Yun with Paul Hattaway,  
*The Heavenly Man* p.295-296m, Monarch Books, 2004.

8 How do you feel about this statement???. What sort of emotions does it make you feel?

- 9 a) In caring for those who live idolatrous lifestyles how should we live in regards to our freedom in Christ?
- b) Why do you think Paul is advocating living this way?

## Pray About It

Tonight there has been heaps to think about... What has challenged you the most?

Read

# Slander

## Think About It

Read 1 Corinthians 5: 9-11- What is the fourth sin that Paul brings to our attention?

This word 'slander' is from the Greek word *loidoros*, which means an abusive person. This word has the particular meaning of reviling those in leadership. It is mainly violence with the tongue. Slanders are constantly critical, running down everything and everyone in the Christian community.

The oxford dictionary says Slander means- a false report that is maliciously uttered to injury a person.

What do you think is the key message behind these slogans?

1 a) *"Your tongue can be an instrument of peace or a weapon of mass destruction!"*

b) *"Gossip- one language you don't want to learn"*

c) *"Gossip can't travel unless we give it legs"*

## The Power of the Tongue

## Read

James 3: 1-12

2 Why do you think James warns people not to be teachers? (v1)

3 Describe what sort of imagery James uses to describe the power of the tongue?

4 What does this imagery tell us about the tongue's power?

5 Verses 9-12 remind us what the true purpose of our tongues should be. What is its purpose as Christians?

## Think About It

6 Think about some of the words you've been using lately. What do they say about your heart?

## Read

James 1: 26

*God tells us here in James that we can go to Church every Sunday, empty our pockets into the offertory plate, help out with various Church activities, and do all sorts of acts of apparent holiness, but if we allow our tongues to be used for evil, than our religion is in vain. It means nothing, it's useless to us and God. All the good we do means nothing if our tongue is out of order.*

**7** Do you agree with this statement? Why then is it so important that our tongue is kept in order?

## What does Jesus Teach?

### Read

Matthew 12: 33-37

**8** Jot down your first impressions of this passage

**9** If Jesus spoke these words directly to you, what would you think? (tick all that apply)

This doesn't apply to me

- Jesus teaching is a bit to harsh
- There are some areas of my life I need to think through
- I am so thankful that Jesus has forgiven me and the Holy Spirit helps me to live God's way.

**10** How does Jesus describe what comes out of our mouth? (check out Mark 7: 20-23 also)

**11** Why does Jesus talk about our words being of significance on judgment day ? (v v35-37)

## God's Wisdom

In the Old Testament God's wisdom is recorded in the books called the Wisdom Literature: Job, Ecclesiastes and Proverbs. Read the following Proverbs and discuss how these truths work out practically today.....

**12** Proverbs 14: 3

## 13 Proverbs 16: 27-28

## Pray About It

## 14 Proverbs 10: 18-21

The world makes a huge amount of money out of gossip/slander. How? Just look at the success of gossip columns, tabloid magazines and entertainment TV shows like ET. In the Church we somehow look at slander as one of the more pleasant or "acceptable sins". I mean it's not included in the 10 Commandments, so surely it couldn't be that BIG a deal. Well, after we've had a look at the book of James, Paul's 1 Corinthians directive, Jesus own words and some OT Wisdom literature, we can't help but notice that God is saying to us over and over again how hurtful the misuse of the tongue is.

Why not draw a picture below that represents for you the power of the tongue? And remind yourself of this image in the weeks to come.....

Pray that we would keep a tight reign on our tongues

Pray that when we hear gossip, give us the courage to correct the story if we know the truth, and if we don't, give us the courage to correct the gossiper in love.

Pray that we would speak only words of encouragement rather than words of harm.

# Drunkenness

## Think About It

What do you think is the major reason people get drunk?

### Cheers, to your health

*Why do people get drunk? For Dr Robert Graham it is a rhetorical question that has no easy answers but a lot of immediate results. "On a typical day I will see people who are spewing their guts up because they've got drunk, fought with their spouse, they've taken a handful of pills, or fallen over. The order in which people do these things varies but the results are often the same."*

*He works with alcohol-affected patients at Sydney's St Vincent's Hospital and spends a significant amount of time with people coming into the emergency department.*

*After three years watching the toll of drink on the lives of the Sydneysiders he sees, Graham has developed a sort of personal relationship with alcohol. He calls it "the Enabler", and the phrase litters his conversation. "It's a term which so aptly describes alcohol and how it affects people. It enables thresholds to drop. It enables people to swear, strip, fall over, fight, drive a car when they should not, and overdose on other drugs," he says. "Drunk people do things they would never do sober."*

*Of the people presenting at St Vincent's emergency department, Graham estimates one in four situations is booze-related. Australians died at the rate of more than nine a day thanks to injury and disease caused by high-risk drinking in the 12 months to June 1997, according to a recent report by the National Alcohol Indicators Project. Most died from a stroke, cirrhosis, road injuries or suicide.*

*The same report says high-risk drinking led to 72,302 admissions to hospitals across Australia during the same period, while one in three driver and pedestrian deaths between 1990 and 1997 was alcohol related.*

*"When you tell people that 3,500 Australians die because of alcohol each year it doesn't register because they just think it only happens to old drunks in the gutter," Graham says. "But people need to realise that this is not the case. If you go around any hospital ward and take serious drug and alcohol histories, you find an underlying theme of alcohol abuse among people being treated for an extremely wide range of illnesses. We see little more than the tip of the iceberg. The more you look at alcohol, the bigger the problem seems."*

*Alcohol's health burden to the taxpayer is about \$4.5 billion a year, which amounts to between 7 and 8 per cent of Australia's total health expenditure. Spending on health promotion and prevention activities in Australia during 1999-2000 totalled \$931 million, or roughly one-fifth of alcohol-related expenditure.*

*-- Sydney Morning Herald; August 19, 2003*



**1** There are 552 references to drinking, drunkenness, wine or strong alcohol in the Bible. Obviously the Lord is not silent on the subject. Why do you think God in his wisdom has instructed Christians to not get drunk?

Paul's letter to the Church in Ephesus is a fantastic combination of Christian doctrine and Christian duty, Christian faith and Christian life, what God has done through Christ and what we are called to do and be as a consequence of this. In Ephesians 5 Paul directly challenges the Church in Ephesus with the need for Holiness. The first reason he presents is the certainty of judgment (v5-7), the second what he refers to as 'the fruit of light' (v 8-14), the third the nature of wisdom (v 15-17) and the fourth reason the fullness of the Holy Spirit (v 18-21).

## Read

Ephesians 5:8-20

- 2**
- What are your first impressions of this passage?
  - What word best captures the "big idea" of this passage?
  - In Ephesians 5:18, Paul uses the illustration of not getting drunk on wine but instead being filled with the Spirit. What do you think is the point of this illustration?

(N.B. In the Greek Religion- Dionysus the god of the vine was worshipped through intoxication. Therefore drunkenness was regarded as a means to divine inspiration).

- In 1 Thessalonians 5: 5-8, 22. Paul alludes to this idea of light picked up in Ephesians 5. What do you think his reasoning for not getting drunk is from this passage?

So why is excessive drinking a sin????

## Read

Read the following passages from the books of wisdom to find out why?

- 3**
- Proverbs 23: 29-30 P\_\_\_\_\_
  - Proverbs 23: 31-33 S\_\_\_\_\_
  - Proverbs 21: 17; 23:21 F\_\_\_\_\_
  - Proverbs 20: 1 an A\_\_\_\_\_
  - Proverbs 31: 4-7 E\_\_\_\_\_

Christians in the past have been accused of being wowsers because of their strong anti-drinking beliefs but today as more and more Christians drink maybe we need to reconsider why we do? Alcohol in itself is not evil; but it is the drinking of it in excess (1 Peter 4: 3) that displeases God. Dr Curtis Hutson gives 11 Bible principles for deciding whether or not to indulge in a practice that is questionable. If you are unsure in a specific situation why not think through these 11 principles.

- i) *Are you willing to obey God's will (John 7: 17)*
- ii) *Does it agree with all that Bible has to say on the subject (2 Tim 3: 16-17)*
- iii) *Have you prayed about it? (Phil 4: 6-7)*
- iv) *Do you have the leading of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8: 13-14)*
- v) *Does it please God? (1 John 3: 21-22)*
- vi) *Can you do it in the name of the Lord Jesus? (Col 3:17)*
- vii) *Can you give God thanks for it? (Col 3:17)*
- viii) *Does it bring Glory to God? (1 Cor 10: 31)*
- ix) *Does it offend other Christians? (1 Cor 8: 13)*
- x) *Am I fully persuaded that it is right? (Romans 14:5)*
- xi) *Do mature and Godly Christians I know agree it is right? (Proverbs 24:5-6)*

## What does Jesus Teach?

### Read

Read Matthew 9: 9-13; 11:19

- 4 Let's remember that this sin is not unforgivable. What was the whole purpose that Jesus came??

But let us recognise that once we are a part of God's kingdom we are called to be different (1 Cor 6: 9-11). Let's commit to God any areas in our life that we need to change and through the power of God's Spirit living in us let's live lives of Holiness that reflect our Lord Jesus.

### Think About It

- 5 Do you agree with the article below? Why or why not?

#### *A Little Wine for the Soul?*

*".....a significant difference between alcoholic drinks of the first century and of today has come with the advent of distilled liquors. In New Testament times the main alcoholic substance was wine (sometimes watered as a substitute for plain drinking water). Today, alcoholic drinks can be much more potent. Very often, such substances are not drunk as a beverage for the sake of taste and refreshment but as a highly concentrated drug taken for "the effect."*

*Alcohol consumption in North America clearly has reached disastrous proportions. Millions of Americans use alcohol as a drug. It is used by many not to "gladden the heart" (Ps. 104), but to escape reality.*

*Alcohol is the depressant of choice for millions who find it difficult to cope with life. Increasingly, youth use alcohol as an alternative to illicit drugs. Yet its total effect is possibly more disastrous than that of hard drugs.*

*Our society has failed to institutionalise drinking in a way that would place it within a healthful setting and define its limits. Many who drink at bars, parties, and even in the home are separated from the positive elements of life. Alcohol has become both a symbol of tragic loneliness and a factor contributing to it.*

*Christianity Today, April 3, 2000*

# Swindling

Lets recap where we have come from so far.... The Church in Corinth seems to have been extraordinarily gifted, and yet it was in danger of falling apart through internal conflict and conflict with Paul himself. It was a Church that prided itself on knowledge and wisdom, yet in fact knew little more than a 'baby' Christian would. It was a Church that believed it was 'spiritual' and yet sadly Paul is forced to describe it as 'worldly' (Read 1 Corinthians 3: 1-3). So for all its amazing gifts, the Church at Corinth seems to rate as one of the least mature of the New testament Churches.

Basically Paul's purpose in writing is to urge and threaten the Church at Corinth to 'grow up' in both godliness and maturity.

## Think About It

- 1 Do you think that we are like the Church in Corinth today? In what ways??

## Read

1 Corinthians 6: 9-11 (an extended summary of 1 Cor 5: 9-11)

- 2 What is Paul reminding us about?

What is swindling?

A dictionary definition says to Swindle: is to cheat, defraud grossly, or with deliberate intent as, to swindle a man out of his property.

In the Bible Paul is referring here to extortioners, those who seize something, robbers in any shape or form. In the ancient world these robbers were common place, stealing from public bathes and gymnasiums mainly. Today in our prosperous society we also find robbers common place thus the increase of all kinds of protection for our material belongings.

If I were to go around this room today and ask which one of you is a robber? My guess is that I would find no-one. But I want to suggest that the concept of swindling goes a lot further than the robbery of material possessions.

## Read

2 Thessalonians 3: 6-15

- 3 a) Why does Paul command Christians to keep away from anyone who is idle?  
  
b) Paul teaches very clearly from this proverb: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat", this saying is very direct (v 10). Why do you think Paul makes such a claim?  
  
c) If we become idle (lazy), how does that affect our witness as Christians? (v 8, 11-13)

- d) In our work and witness how can we swindle our employer (remember as Christians God is our overall Boss)?

## Read

2 Corinthians 8-9 (in 2 small groups)

- 4 a) What is the key theme you see in this extended passage?
- b) In chapter 8 v8-9, 9 v 6-7, 9 v 10-11, Paul tells us why we should be generous. Why are we called to be generous?
- c) The Scriptures teach that all we own belongs to God (9 v9-11) so when we are not generous how is this a form of swindling?

## Think About It

*Thomas Jefferson had this to say about swindling: 'I sincerely believe that banking establishments are more dangerous than standing armies, and that the principle of spending money to be paid by posterity, under the name of funding, is but swindling futurity on a large scale'*

- 5 Do you think this statement adequately sums up what swindling is all about in our Culture today?

## What does Jesus Teach?

## Read

Luke 19: 1-9

- 6 a) What kind of a person was Zacchaeus known to be?
- b) How do we know that he was a changed man upon meeting Jesus?
- c) What does Jesus offer this man, that he still offers us today?

*Proverbs 30: 7-9 says*

*"Two things I ask of you, O LORD; do not refuse me before I die: Keep falsehood and lies far from me; give me neither poverty nor riches, but give me only my daily bread. Otherwise, I may have too much and disown you and say, 'Who is the LORD?' Or I may become poor and steal, and so dishonour the name of my God."*

- 7 What is the overall principle for us here?

## Read

Jeremiah 7: 1- 15.

8 In the Old Testament, God is the same God who has called his people to live a different way, there false religion is worthless. What similarities can you see between this passage and 1 Corinthians 5?

This 1 Corinthians 5 passage we have been studying has the main purpose of teaching us about the seriousness of sin, both for the individual and God's people as a whole. As a result we need to take decisive action, both for the sinner's sake as well as for the Church's sake.

9 What areas in your life do we need to change?

Have a think through the following areas of disobedience again: Sexual immorality, Greed, idolatry, slander, drunkenness, swindling.

## Pray About It

Tonight there has been heaps to think about.... What has challenged you the most?