

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

Becoming Spiritually Mature
1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a series of sessions needs to have access to the "Introduction" article found at the beginning of each series (Bible Teaching #....). The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

- 1. The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.
- 2. The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)
- 3. The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader: The songs given today especially emphasize the theme of spiritual maturity. Plan to sing at least two of least during the Gathering Time.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader: Sing the songs which were sung earlier or others of the suggested songs. Emphasize their relationship to the theme of spiritual maturity.

Music Sources:

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Find Us Faithful, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

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Becoming Spiritually Mature – 13-33-03-en

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Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI # 1855882
Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

1

Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

Becoming Spiritually Mature

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Main Idea

The spiritually mature Christian life is characterized by growing openness and obedience to God, humility about one's self and one's accomplishments, and loving, harmonious relationships with others.

Question to Explore

What does a spiritually mature Christian look like anyway?

Gathering together:

Choose two or more of the following songs:

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Find Us Faithful, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI # 1855882

Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

First thoughts:

The songs suggested for today's study and worship time reflect the theme of spiritual maturity or seeking "the mind of Christ". They contain phrase such as "May all who come behind us find us faithful"; "Let It be said of us that the Lord was our passion – we were marked by forgiveness – we were known by our love and delighted in meekness".

Another song is taken from both Deuteronomy 31:6 and Ephesians 6:10 and exhorts us to "Be strong in the Lord and be of good courage." **Grace Alone** is a song which reminds us that it is God's grace which allows us to grow in spiritual maturity. As we reflect on these words, may our prayer for today be that we will seek to be faithful, to be known by our love, to be strong and of courage. Let us ask God to make us long to be like Christ.

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

2

Copy this section for the Bible Study leader.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

Becoming Spiritually Mature

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Background Text

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Main Idea

The spiritually mature Christian life is characterized by growing openness and obedience to God, humility about one’s self and one’s accomplishments, and loving, harmonious relationships with others.

Question to Explore

What does a spiritually mature Christian look like anyway?

Teaching Aim

To guide the class to evaluate how well the qualities of the spiritually mature Christian life characterize them.

Introduction to your personal study:

Two little children who are growing up in Christian homes were a source of blessing. One little girl, just 15 months old, clasps her hands together as soon as she is placed in her high chair. In fact, she may do this several times before she is ready to begin eating. She is learning to pray. A little boy, a bit older at 22 months, bows his head and says words understandable only to his loving family or he repeats the words his daddy says, “Jesus, thank you for this food”. His pronunciation is still shaky, but his intent is clear. Spiritually mature for their ages, these two will most likely grow like their older siblings and cousins until by their teens, their prayers have an amazing richness. Carefully nurtured in faith by parents, teachers and others of their church, spiritually mature behaviour may become normal behaviour.

However, most people do not have such careful nurturing. The people to whom Paul writes came from an ungodly, carnal society. Their salvation was miraculous; it was a gift from the Spirit. *“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him”* Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:9. He calls this God’s secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began (2:7).

But however wonderful the salvation experience was for the Corinthian Christians, they still had to grow up the faith. They didn’t have seventeen years from birth to teen years to accomplish this. They were immediately faced with all the temptations that had existed in their former life and they were surrounded by others as immature as they were. Soon disagreements arose and were expressed in unloving ways. Paul longs for these new Christians to have “the mind of Christ” (2:16b).

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Introduction**” article found at the beginning of this series of Bible Study and Worship sessions (Bible Teaching #.....). The person who downloaded this session should have that material for you, as well.

A careful reading of this passage can reveal what a spiritually mature Christian looks like. The spiritually mature Christian is able to accept the things that come from the Spirit of God (2:14). He is capable of making good judgments about all things (2:15), yet those who are not spiritually mature cannot figure him/her out, cannot explain him/her (2:15). The spiritually mature person has the very mind of Christ (2:16). He/she thinks like Jesus and makes decisions like Jesus.

Focusing on the Meaning:

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

2:14 Paul lays down the fundamental truth that the only person who can tell us about God is the Spirit of God. There are deep and intimate things about God which only God’s spirit can lead us into understanding. However, not everyone is sensitive to the teaching of the Spirit. There are those who are sensitive and obedient to the Spirit. This person lives in the consciousness that there are things beyond the things of this world; there are values beyond the values of this world. There is a life beyond this world.

But there are also those who live as if there was nothing beyond physical life. The values of this person are material values. Everything is judged from purely physical and material standards.

“A man like that cannot understand spiritual things. A man who thinks that nothing is more important than the satisfaction of the sex urge cannot understand the meaning of chastity; a man who ranks the amassing of material things as the supreme end of life

cannot understand generosity; a man who thinks his appetite the last word cannot understand purity; and a man who has never thought beyond this world cannot understand the things of God. To him they look like mere foolishness” (Barclay, Wm. **The Letters to the Corinthians, The Daily Study Bible.** Philadelphia: The Westminster Press. 1957, p. 32)

2:15-16 Verse 16 quotes Isaiah 40:13 *“Who has understood the mind of the Lord or instructed him as his counselor?”* We are reminded of our inadequate understanding of the mind of the Lord. At the same time we are told that we have the mind of Christ. Spiritually discerning people make judgments led by the Spirit which reflect the mind of Christ. This amazing possibility should be both our reality, our guide and our hope. Each decision we make should be measured by its reflection of the mind of Christ.

3: 1-9 Paul has given a vision of the possibilities available to the spiritual person. But he now describes the Corinthians as being unspiritual. Although they have met Christ, they have not grown beyond the earthly and physical stage. Paul says the Corinthians are made of flesh, that they have not yet got beyond human things. In fact, they are not just made of flesh as are all humans, they are dominated by fleshly things. *“To Paul the flesh is much more than merely a physical things. To Paul the flesh means human nature apart from God, that part of man both mental and physical which provides a bridge-head for sin, that part of man which answers to sin and which gives sin its change and which responds to sin”* (Barclay, p. 33). The Corinthians have allowed this lower side of their nature to dominate their outlook and all their actions.

This is a serious accusation for these were believers. However, they had let their strife, factions and divisions dominate and stifle their growth. Jesus taught *“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: “Love your neighbor as yourself”* (Matthew 22:37-39).

The Corinthians had forgotten this basic commandment. They were not loving those who differed with them. Various groups had formed with different loyalties. Some preferred Paul while others preferred Apollos, the gifted preacher from Alexandria. Others, perhaps Jewish Christians, favored Peter, the leader of the twelve, probably because they felt he was more inclined to retain some phases of Judasim than was Paul. Some piously declared: “We are of Christ, we choose him, we are his true followers”. Paul had planted the church. Apollos had apparently come later and served as teacher. Each had a particular task to do at a particular time in the development of the church. Paul is firm in his teaching that no one’s work is more important than another’s.

This is a current reality in many churches. A pastor leaves and a new pastor comes. A portion of the congregation never transfers their loyalty, prayer and support to the new pastor. New people come and do not know the former pastor. Their loyalty is to the new person. They resent those who remember and long for the past. Tensions may erupt as changes to music, leadership roles or facilities occur. Neither group is measuring

their actions by the “mind of Christ”. They are reacting in immature ways and the church cannot flourish when this happens.

3:10-15 Paul reminds the people that no foundation can endure that is not built on Christ. Paul laid foundation for the Corinthian church, but Christ was the foundation.

Now the people must build upon it. Worthy materials – gold, silver, costly stones – will lead to an enduring edifice. Less sturdy materials – hay or straw or even wood – may not endure. Eventually the day of our Lord Jesus Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:8) will reveal the worth of the building materials. Fire will consume the hay or straw and even the wood easily.

These pictures are given to help the Corinthians and readers today evaluate their own labour. Verse 15 indicates that Paul is referring to our contributions to the Kingdom, not to our salvation. *“If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.”*

The Corinthians needed to evaluate their priorities. All around them in the incredibly secular city of Corinth were lost people. However, they were spending their time and energy defending their point of view. They *“will suffer loss”* eventually. Paul desires them to change their focus to avoid such loss.

3:16 Paul emphasizes the reality that each believer serves as God temple. God’s spirit resides in that temple. What a waste if we fail to acknowledge the blessing and benefit of serving God.

In this “focal text” three kinds of people are identified: 1) The person without the Spirit (2:14). 2) The spiritual person (2:15). 3) The worldly person (3:1). The person without the spirit is the person who has nothing more than an ordinary human soul. He lives purely on the physical plane without being touched by the Spirit of God. He is concerned about survival and gratification of personal desires.

The spiritual person is the person who is caused by and filled with the Holy Spirit. He is sensitive to, guided by, and obedient to the Spirit. He makes his decisions and judgments under the influence of the Spirit. He is not understood by the person without the Spirit.

The worldly person in this context is a believer who is a mere infant spiritually. He is characterized by such things as jealousy and quarrelling. Though he is indwelt by the Spirit he lives by his own personal desires and whims.

God’s plan in enabling the person without the Spirit and the worldly person to become spiritual people is to use ministers to help. Ministers are workers in the Father’s fields and builders of the Father’s building. They are partners, not competitors. Each has his/her own gifts and responsibilities. God is the One who causes the growth to take place.

In the fields there are those who plant, those who water, and those who weed. In the building process there are those who lay the foundation, those who build on it, and those who finish it out. All the workers are necessary and interdependent.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

We are faced in this passage with a challenge to have “the mind of Christ” (216b). Even to think of such a prospect encourages us to examine our lives and aim for something more than we have accomplished. Use this opportunity for personal growth and for helping class members to imagine what their lives will be like as spiritual maturity becomes a reality.

For Personal Reflection:

What have I learned from this study?

What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

What is one action I will take this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

Becoming Spiritually Mature

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Background Text

1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16

Main Idea

The spiritually mature Christian life is characterized by growing openness and obedience to God, humility about one's self and one's accomplishments, and loving, harmonious relationships with others.

Question to Explore

What does a spiritually mature Christian look like anyway?

Teaching Aim

To guide the class to evaluate how well the qualities of the spiritually mature Christian life characterize them.

Connect with Life:

Share this: Once a person is born again he/she wants to grow in his/her relationship with God. The desire to be Christ-like becomes the motivation for every believer to continue to make progress.

This process of coming to maturity is not easy. We still live in this world with all its attractions. We still have to deal with selfishness. There is an enemy (the devil) who resists us all along the journey of life. He will do anything to distract us from making progress. We certainly need help.

Guide the Study:

Read 2:14.

Point out how believers possess the things that the Spirit of God provides – gifts, power, boldness, etc. Show how believers have discernment. We are able to distinguish between what is from God and what is from the devil.

Ask someone to read 2:15 again.

Ask the people if they are ever concerned about what other people think about them. Ask if this influences their decisions. Give opportunity for people to give examples. Point out how important it is to be motivated by what God thinks than what other people think.

Remind the people that we have the mind of Christ (2:16). Jesus really does live in us and wants to think through us and act through us. Emphasize how important it is for us consciously to turn the control of our lives over to Jesus.

Ask someone to read 3:1-2.

Observe that believers are ready to accept instruction beyond the basics.

Ask: What kind of changes they would like to see in yourselves? Give opportunity to respond. Assure them these things are possible as we turn more and more control of our lives over to Jesus.

Request someone to read 3:3.

Point out how jealousy and quarrelling are two things the enemy uses to distract and divide us. Ask them to define jealousy and envy.

Encourage thoughts on this: How are you alike and how do you differ? Give opportunity for discussion.

Note: Jealousy may have more to do with desiring another person's position while envy may have more to do with desiring another person's possessions.

Encourage another person to read 3:4-8.

Observe how each of us has a function in the church and all of us are equally important.

Ask someone to read 3:9.

Observe this: We are like a cultivated field or a garden. We are also like a building. Ask what it takes to produce a crop or to have a productive garden. Give people opportunity to respond.

Now ask: How do you think you fit in to working in God's field? Encourage them to share how they see themselves working. Ask them how they see each other. Give opportunity to respond.

Ask what it takes to build a building. Give people opportunity to respond. Ask them what place they think they have in building God's building.

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to move away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Ask the group how they see each other. Give opportunity to respond. Encourage each of them to do what they can do while recognizing it takes all of us doing what we do to complete the task.

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

Becoming Spiritually Mature **1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

How Am I Doing????

Ask yourselves what “childish” attitudes and desires you have given up over the last year? What are you working on at the moment? What do you think having “the mind of Christ” would involve.

(Remind each other that these are serious questions that could change your life!)

Teens are often critical of adults who fail to live up to the high standards which they sometimes verbally hold. Pray for a forgiving attitude. Pray that you may use “the mind of Christ” as your own measuring rod for growth.

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***Becoming Spiritually Mature***
1 Corinthians 2:14—3:16**Beginning the Service:**

Choose two or more of the following to sing as an introduction to the worship time.

Be Strong in the Lord, *The Worship Hymnal* #504; CCLI #52105

Find Us Faithful, *The Worship Hymnal* #598; CCLI # 18259

Let It Be Said of Us, *The Worship Hymnal* #597; CCLI # 1855882

Grace Alone, *The Worship Hymnal* #112; CCLI #2335524

Offering:**Praying for the World:**

Zunyi City, China has a total population of nearly 1 million which includes Miao, Dong and Tunbao minorities among the majority Han Chinese population. As the site where Mae Tse-tung took full membership in the Politburo Standing Committee and where they switched from a strategy favouring large battles and urban insurrection to rural guerilla warfare, Zunyi is awash in history and military significance. Though Christians planted churches in the 18th and 19th centuries, the political strength and atheistic base here have diluted church life. Both local and foreign Christian workers find difficulties establishing the church. As only 1 percent of the city's population is Christian, it is still mostly unreached.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God's call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to

give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

But we have the mind of Christ 1 Corinthians 2:16b

This seems to be an extraordinary statement by Paul. “But we have the mind of Christ” (1 Corinthians 2:16b). He was writing to the Corinthian church and correcting the unloving, competitive behaviour which was being exhibited. Yet in the midst of this correction he affirms, “*But we have the mind of Christ*”.

Dr. T.W. Hunt, long time professor of music at a seminary spent years understanding and writing about “the mind of Christ”. In retirement years, he taught the course which he developed to many people. He was a great man of prayer and those who studied with Dr. Hunt knew something of what it was to see a person who had the mind of Christ. Loving, kind, humble, authentic, caring, sacrificial - these would be words people might have used to describe this man of God.

How we long to understand and know and experience what it is to have “the mind of Christ”. However, Paul was not writing to people who exhibited qualities we would want to emulate. They were immature, quarrelsome, petty, short-sighted and selfish. And sadly, they were missing out on the opportunity to build something significant. The church had begun so triumphantly on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-18). Paul was “determined not to know anything...save Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Corinthians 2:2). Paul went to the synagogue and there found those receptive to the Christian gospel. Even the chief ruler of the synagogue, Crispus, believed and with his whole household professed faith in Christ. Growth continued and a firm nucleus for a church resulted and many believers came into the Christian fold.

Now, these people were divided and quarrelling. Paul reminds them they have “the mind of Christ”.

In Dr. Hunt’s book **The Mind of Christ**, he lists 14 characteristics of a servant mind. “These characteristics secure the work of God in our lives. They free God to do His work. We become a servant first not by what we do, but by what we are. Each of these characteristics apply to every servant of God.” states Dr. Hunt. (Hunt, T.W. and King, C. V., **The Mind of Christ**, Nashville, Tennessee: Lifeway Press, 1994, p. 98).

These characteristics are humility, obedience, willingness, loyalty, faithfulness, watchfulness, courage, not quarrelsome, gentleness, ability to teach, patience, meekness, goodness and wisdom.

Each of these qualities exemplifies an aspect of having the mind of Christ. Christ was humble. When offered the kingdoms of the world by Satan, he chose his father's plan which was to give his life for the sins of the world.

He was obedient to that plan and willing that it should be accomplished even though he understood the humiliation and physical suffering it entailed. He modeled loyalty in his relationships and faithfulness to God. He was watchful about the needs of others and careful to avoid temptation.

His courage was exhibited in the Garden of Gethsemane, in Pilate's courtroom, and on the cross.

When the Scribes and Pharisees attempted to trap him and to cause him to exhibit anger, he answered them calmly and firmly, gently and patiently. He did not quarrel with those who criticized him; he was always, always teaching those precepts which would strengthen his followers. He never sought power even though his followers wished it for him. He was good beyond any other and wise with the wisdom of his father.

How might these characteristics be exhibited in our life?

Can we be humble when we long for success?

Are we obedient to what we know about God's direction in our life? Do we serve willingly or do we look for only those service opportunities which put us in the spotlight?

Are we loyal to God and in our relationships to others? How is that loyalty expressed to those God has given us – our spouse, children, friends, and co-workers?

Will we be faithful over the long years of our life to the call of God or do we act in starts and stops as our mood determines. Can others depend upon us to do what we say we will do?

Are we watchful? Do we see when another is hurting? Are we careful with our words which can hurt or help? Do we avoid temptation?

Does courage mark our actions when things are tough? Do we stand up for our convictions with gentleness, patience, goodness, and wisdom.

Do we understand that we are always teaching others? Do we use our influence to teach another the best way?

Do we see ourselves as peacemakers? Can we give up having our own way for the good of the body of Christ?

These are a few of the questions which might help us grow toward spiritual maturity. For having the mind of Christ is being spiritually mature. We are no longer tossed about, but are firmly grounded in our beliefs and actively acting out of compassion and love.

Dr. Hunt's book **The Mind of Christ** contains sections which he calls "Lifelong Helps for Developing the Mind of Christ".

It is a lifelong quest. But it is also a real assurance. Paul told the Christians at Corinth that the spiritual man has the mind of Christ. May we claim that as our hope and reality. God's grace will make it so.

Call to Commitment:

Sing **Grace Alone** and/or others of the songs suggested.

Concluding the Service:

Read Psalms 118:27-29 to the church as a benediction and blessing.