

Christ, Not the World (1 Cor 4:6-21)

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[0 : 0 0] So now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, Do not go beyond what is written.

Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive?

And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? Already you have all you want. Already you have become rich. You have begun to reign in that without us.

How I wish that you really had begun to reign, so that we also might reign with you. For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena.

We have made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to human beings. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong.

[1 : 0 0] You are honoured. We are dishonoured. To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty. We are in rags. We are brutally treated. We are homeless. We work hard with our own hands.

When we are cursed, we bless. When we are persecuted, we endure it. When we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world, right up to this moment.

I am writing this not to shame you, but to warn you as my dear children. Even if you have 10,000 guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I became your father through the gospel.

Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.

Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing. And then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.

[2 : 1 0] For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk, but of power. What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline? Or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?

And that is the word of God. Good afternoon, everyone. Thank you for reading that, Venus. Yeah, what a passage. What do we make of this?

Let's ask the Lord to help us, because this is his word, and it is for us today. So, please, would you pray with me? We're going to plead to God to help us out.

Oh, Lord God, we are very, very tired, some of us. Whether it's the end of a school term, whether it's just the ongoing dramas of life.

And so we come, even not knowing what to expect from your word today. But, Lord, can we see, help us to see in the Apostle Paul, an example of Christ-likeness worth imitating.

[3 : 1 3] Help us turn away from all the world's talk that has been filling in our heads this week, puffing us up, making us more proud than we ought to be of our own selves.

Help us to focus on Christ as we sing, and to follow him, to turn away from the world, put the world behind us. Would you help us now as we hear from your word?

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. There's something beautiful about balloons. I was at a community fair yesterday. I was at my old school, so it was good fun.

And there were lots of balloons, actually, and lots of other things, you know, fun fair ride and stuff. But nothing beats the simple pleasure of a balloon. Who agrees with me? Who likes balloons? Yeah?

All right. I've actually got one here, so... I don't know. So, I mean, a couple of cents at the \$2 shop, but, you know, you bite one in, you blow it up, you knot it together, and it can entertain a child or their dad for ages and ages, right?

[4 : 13] So, all right. So I'm actually just going to have a go, all right? So... What happens if I keep going?

What's going to happen? Venus will get scared. Anything else? All right. It gets a bit bloated, but should we keep going? I don't know. What's the shape?

What's happening to the balloon itself? Okay, it's filling with air, but it's also... I mean, the shapes change a little bit. If I keep going and going, too much air, what might happen?

Okay, it might burst. At this point, I'll probably just seal it and not burst it for now. Sorry, this is point you. Leave it here for now.

I can almost hear it just slowly puffing away. Look, I bring out the beauty and perhaps the brokenness of a balloon. And everyone's going to stare at the balloon now and see what's going to happen.

[5 : 27] But it's not about the balloon, all right? But I do want to draw your attention to something in our passage. In our passage, three times in our passage, the Apostle Paul uses balloon terminology, actually.

He actually uses a very particular word to describe the beauty but the brokenness of the church in Corinth. I wonder if you noticed it as Venus was reading. Okay? Have a look again at verse 6.

It says here, right, that they should not be puffed up, literally, one over another. So, one over another.

In the original language, okay, if you look at verse 6, maybe Donald can put up verse 6 for me. These are all the same word, actually. You will not be puffed up, all right?

Puffed up. And then actually this word appears again in verse 18 and 19, talking about puffed up, literally, people. Arrogant people. And it's very interesting, right?

[6 : 25] This is a word Paul returns to, again, in only the book of Corinthians, pretty much. In chapter 8, Paul will talk about a knowledge concerning food that puffs people up while love builds up.

And then actually speaking of love, who's been to a wedding recently or in the distant past? There's often a chapter, right? The love chapter. Love is patient. Love is kind. Doesn't boast. Doesn't envy.

It's not puffed up, literally. In fact, outside of Paul's writings, almost no one uses this particular word in our passage. And so if we want to understand Paul's heart in these verses in front of us, here from chapter 4, verse 6 through to the end, we need to enter his imagination, blow up a balloon with him, as it were, to understand why he uses the word puffed up in our passage today.

And the original word, okay, in verse 6, where you see, don't be puffed up one against another, this word here is related to what the ancient Greeks called a bellows.

And a bellows is basically an old school air pump, right? And so to be puffed up is like being a soccer ball that's overinflated, okay?

[7 : 41] Or like when your stomach is way too full from dinner, okay? Or imagine if you're a surgeon, okay? I know some of you hope to be doctors and maybe some of you will be surgeons.

Imagine you're operating on a patient and you discover one of the organs of their body is so swollen that it's life-threatening. That's what the church in Corinth is like at the moment.

They are puffed up by favoring one teacher over the other, one group over the other. They're thinking now, I've surpassed God's wisdom. I know more now.

I know more. And so I'm better than you. And I wonder, could that also be the story, perhaps in a church like ours? A group of families moved to Auckland 30 years ago.

They start an immigrant church. God graciously brings family after family, right? It's like a tap that just keeps flowing. Families coming from all over the world.

[8 : 43] Lives are transformed. The church grows. And now there's not just a Sunday service. There's a Saturday service. There's an English service. There's your group, my group, their group. But without gospel humility, as we heard last week, a church like ours can become a puffed up church.

An us or them church. A place that maybe values only a certain group of people. Or a certain life stage. A certain language. A certain narrow set of theological beliefs.

Is that what we are? A church puffed up one against another? I think that's why Paul, in this last section of chapter 4, basically tells us, if we imitate the world's talk, it will puff us up with pride.

Instead, if we imitate Paul's example, that might just fill us with Christ instead. So that's a big idea of our passage. Very fairly straightforward. Imitating the world's talk puffs us up with pride.

But instead, imitating Paul's example fills us with Christ. And so perhaps if we think again to a balloon, I think what you can see is that the issue of being puffed up starts and ends our passage.

[10 : 03] So imagine a balloon, and you've got the top and the bottom of it. That's the issue. The issue is being puffed up. And in response, Paul brings up two things that we need to consider as Christians.

Firstly, his performance in Christ from 8 to 13. And then finally, his parenting in Christ. Two things, solutions to help us imitate our Lord Jesus.

Especially as we approach Easter. So I want to focus again on just those first few verses, and especially the word being puffed up. I think by using the special word, Paul wants us to actually imagine.

Imagine and camp on this picture a bit. It's actually a very striking description of what our human ego is like. Our sense of self.

How does it naturally work? Well, it's like a puffed up balloon. What does it look like to have hearts that are puffed up? Well, let's think about this a little bit more.

[11 : 10] Last week I mentioned Timothy Keller. He wrote a book called The Freedom of Self-Forgetfulness. Again, he's very helpful on pointing out what the natural condition of your ego, of my ego, looks like.

What is your sense of self doing normally? What does your self want to do all the time? See if you recognize any of these traits.

Tip Califf gives four truths about the natural condition of our ego. Our first truth is this. The ego that is puffed up is actually in reality empty. Think about a balloon, right?

We think it's full, but actually there's actually quite empty inside, isn't it? If you try to puff up a balloon with air instead of something stable or solid, there's still a bit of emptiness inside.

Doesn't matter how overinflated you go. Isn't that what we're like sometimes? In our broken state, we are always looking for a sense of identity, of worth, from something or someone other than the living God himself.

[12 : 17] Maybe a promotion at work will puff me up. What about a beautiful body in my arm? Or high marks, top grades, or just that toy I've always been eyeing all year.

Maybe that will puff me up. But look, if you and I were made with a God-shaped hole in our hearts, if God doesn't fill you up, whatever you puff yourself up with, you'll still be empty, won't you?

That's our ego in its natural condition. Firstly, it is, it's empty. Secondly, the ego that's puffed up by the world is painful. Last week, I mentioned that a healthy, gospel, humble self, right, could be like your toe, right?

It just works. You don't have to think about it all the time. Okay? So when do you notice your toe? Anyone? When do you notice your big toe, for example? Yeah?

Okay? All right. When you stub it? All right. Okay? Yeah? Okay? When, what else? When you, you drop something on it? Okay? All right. When there's something wrong with your toe, that's when you notice it, isn't it?

[13 : 31] Right? Okay? You don't usually think about your toe. I'm not like, ah, thank you, Lord, for my big toe every morning. But, when it's something wrong, we notice it. Same with my pinky, right?

Pinky, you're working great today. Thank you. I don't usually think about your pinky, but jam it in a drawer, I'll bet you you'll be thinking about your pinky for a while. look, look, God has wired our whole bodies, all of us, to cry out when it needs attention, when there's something wrong.

And so, let me ask you this. Why is your ego, your sense of self, always crying out in pain? Think about how often it cries out for attention. Always making us think about how we look or feel, how others treat us.

Actually, Paul in chapter 5, verse 6, will say, your boasting is not good. No, it's not. He's trying to diagnose that there's something wrong with our egos.

The fact that it's always sending out pain signals tells us it needs help, it needs healing, it's bloated, it's puffed up, yet painful.

[14 : 39] I'll give you an example. All right? So, you know, sadly, I'm a sinner. I argue with my wife. And sometimes, I make a, I say something silly and I have to apologize to my kids.

They have to point out something silly that I've said. My first selfish reaction is often to think, oh, my feelings are hurt. I've got to defend myself. My feelings are hurt.

But your feelings actually can't be hurt. Right? What's actually hurting? It's your sense of self. It's your ego that hurts. It keeps getting bruised and battered all the time.

It's always drawing attention to itself. There's always something deeply wrong with my sense of self. It always needs attention. It always needs fixing. Our ego is empty. It's painful.

Now, thirdly, our ego is busy, isn't it? Busy. Now, what does Paul say here in verse 6? He doesn't just say, notice, he doesn't just say, um, don't take pride and that's it.

[15 : 46] He doesn't. He actually says, don't take pride, don't be puffed up one against another. to be puffed up one against another is an incredibly busy thing to do.

Right? Because to be puffed up, actually, you need to identify someone else. You need to then compare yourself to them. That takes effort. And then you need to convince yourself, I'm better than them because dot, dot, dot, dot, dot.

What a busy life. What a busy life. And it's, I know it's hard. Some of you at high school, some of you at uni, you, you are faced with that pressure every single day from your peers.

I remember, I used to do this in high school, all right? Trying to get an edge over my classmates, trying to get one extra badge, feeling better than them when I succeeded in class, even bullying one or two in my class.

I remember one time, only I had the movie that just came out that no one else had. I had it. And then suddenly all the cool kids wanted to come over to my place to watch it.

[16 : 52] I was thrilled and then I looked down on all the other people in my class and said, ha, my ego was so busy. Busy, busy, busy, trying to puff me up in a way that only Jesus could have filled me up instead.

Can you relate? Is your ego always busy, even right now, trying to make you compare with someone? Always making you stay up late because something's wrong on the internet?

Always keeping track of who you're better than or worse than? Who's got this, who hasn't? Doesn't your ego push you to keep buying something or earning something or saying something?

It's not just a problem outside church, is it? Right? It's possible to be puffed up by your own spiritual maturity and knowledge. I've been a member of PCBC for so, so, so years.

I've had these, these, these serving roles. My member number has two digits in it. But without gospel humility, it is all hot air, just busy work.

[18 : 03] your ego, without Christ as your anchor, will forever be empty, painful, busy, and fragile. Right? Think about your ego, all puffed up, but so fragile.

I don't need to tell you what happens next. Right? What happens next? All it takes for me to, to, to, to deflate this balloon is to, and if you are not yet deflated as a person, all it takes is for someone smarter to enter your life, someone prettier to enter your view, someone more successful than you, and then you're like the balloon on the floor.

Our egos are fragile. They're fragile. And maybe you're already deflated right now. I don't know what's deflated you. I don't need to tell you how fragile it's been. That high you felt, that mark you got, that person you slept with, came and went though, didn't it?

Actually, if we skip down to verse 18 of this chapter, if you look at how Paul ends this chapter, he speaks knowing that their egos are actually fragile, right? Their boasting, he says, is all talk and no power.

The Corinthians, they're speaking as if they're culture kings and yet Paul's warning them, I'm going to come soon, Lord willing. And then he will lovingly and gently point out how fragile their egos are without filling it with Christ.

[19 : 40] That's what we are like in our natural state. I want to give you an example of someone I think who we should actually all be more compassionate and relate to.

I want you to meet Chenille. Who knows who this person is? Yeah, one or two? Yeah. Okay. Chenille is a writer for the New Zealand Herald. Chenille is an activist, was born male, but currently identifies as a non-binary gender.

I bring up Chenille because actually in the Lord's Providence last year, we ended up on a Zoom call presenting completely opposite submissions to the government, to parliament.

And in recent times, Chenille has been able to protest, to lead change that the world around Chenille applauds and appreciates.

I don't doubt Chenille's sincerity and passion. In fact, I'm grieved as I have read Chenille's story how Christians have been very unkind to this person, have not lived out the love of Christ to them.

[20 : 56] But even in reading Chenille's writings, I think Chenille is incredibly honest when writing that, even after having a global platform, after successfully campaigning for change in the world's eyes over gender, after being puffed up by the world, Chenille, in their own words, still experiences pain and grief and sadness because the issue is still in the ego, the sense of self.

Friends, whenever our identity is puffed up from doing something or banning something or changing something or fixing something, what happens is that the question that comes up is then, what now after I've done all these things?

Without an anchor in Christ, being humbled in Him, there will forever be a void in your heart and my heart. And look, Chenille's struggle is my struggle.

We are both sinners in need of a Savior. And so both of us struggle being puffed up with pride from how others value us. I have to confess sometimes I should not be thinking about how loved I am by you or how loved I am by people around me.

And yet I fall into that trap. That's what our egos are like. Puffed up in need of a solution to solve it. So how can we be filled with Christ and not puff up about in our empty selves, our painful, our busy yet fragile selves?

[22 : 32] What are some practical ways we can remedy that ego problem? Well, in between kind of this balloon sandwich, we get two possibilities.

So I want to talk about them both briefly. Firstly, one thing we can do is actually gaze at the performance of the apostles in Christ. From verse 8 to 13, one solution to our ego problem is to watch the lives of those who have suffered for Christ, these apostles.

All right? Big news for parents and kidults everywhere. Look, the Wiggles are coming to New Zealand again. All right? So hands up if you've ever even considered going to watch the Wiggles. No one here.

This is the wrong kind of church, right? You guys are probably hanging out for some other Asian superstar instead or someone else. Look, Billy and I will go, I'm sure. Look, the Wiggles are great, okay?

All right? I'm sure you've heard some of their tunes, Toot Toot, Chugga Chugga, Big Red Car. Yeah, I think they were so important to Kiwi's health and mental health that actually they got a special pass to come into New Zealand during lockdowns.

[23 : 43] I don't know if you remember that. So you get a ticket, right? And then you're the talk of the town, your nieces and nephews love you, and then you all go and have a lot of fun. Look, you may not like the Wiggles, you may like someone else, but when you get a ticket to a special event, you're excited, you want to go, you tell your friends about it.

Watching the Wiggles dance moves is one thing, but here in verses 8 to 13, Paul offers us tickets to a different kind of spectacle, doesn't he? Right?

Have a look at verse 9. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe. We've been made like a theater. We've been made like a show, a performance.

And here, Paul actually, I wonder if you noticed, he actually slips into a bit of sarcasm, right? He's trying to get through to these Corinthians who are so full of themselves, so puffed up, that he uses sarcasm.

And he challenges the Corinthians, if you think you're really wise, he's going to pretend he's so pleased with it. You're so puffed up about yourself spiritually, why don't you just step on the throne already?

[24 : 51] Why don't you just declare yourself king? Have a coronation. And when you do that, look, we'll get to join with you, but we'll be last, won't we? And here, in these verses, he draws on some of the things that people in their culture would have known.

One of this is that one of the big ticket shows, if you lived in the ancient Roman Empire, one of the big ticket items, things that you'd love to see, is to watch, okay, victorious military leaders march through the town after they've won a big fight, okay?

And what would happen is that you'd have the general and the soldiers marching through the streets, everyone's cheering, it's like they've won the World Cup or something, and then the defeated captives from the other side, they'd be marched through the streets too.

They'd be made a spectacle, that's what Paul's talking about, before they get sent to the local stadium, right, to be torn apart by animals, other gladiators for sport.

And Paul is saying, if you want to be an apostle, if you want to be puffed up, that's your destiny. That is who we are. To be sent by Jesus, you see, means to suffer with Jesus.

[26 : 09] And that's all the pride and puffery and division and arguing in the church in Corinth, they had lost sight of this important truth. If you follow Jesus, you will suffer like Him.

They're brought into the world's lies that following Jesus brings you comfort and riches and glory right here, right now. There is a day coming when all will be made right, but the Bible doesn't promise that to every believer.

So Paul has to say to them, right, verse 10 to 11, look at us, chosen ones. Right this moment, Paul speaks in the present tense, right this moment, I'm hungry, I'm thirsty, I've been working at this letter all day, I've been wearing the same clothes every day, I get treated brutally by people around me.

I'm homeless, this is still happening to us, and you still want to boast about yourselves, Corinthians? Come now, church, if you're so proud of who you are, if you're so high and mighty about your spiritualness, your special connections, connect with this, follow Jesus, and you are the scum of the earth.

Those are hard words, aren't they? Right? Scum here, all right, the word kind of means something like the gunk in your oven, or the grip between your teeth. That's yuck stuff.

[27 : 38] That's what it looks like if you're an apostle, says the Bible. And if you don't believe Paul, maybe you need to talk to people who have suffered, who get criticized, okay?

We had Nazian Simeon here last week actually ask them how much hate mail they get, right, from people who know they're Christians and don't like it. Ask all the people in our church, even here, whose parents keep criticizing them for even committing to church each week for putting Jesus first.

And yet, Paul says, by being reviled, cursed, we bless, and we are persecuted, we endure it. By doing this, they show truly the quality of Christ, don't they?

Don't they? We live in a world that actually is pretty much a pain pleasure society. We want pleasure, we avoid pain. That's the world we live in, right?

So that's why it says, avoid suffering. It says, mask it from others, even at church. Don't tell people you struggle. But Paul knows that what our puffed up egos need the most is to see Jesus, even through our suffering.

[28 : 55] Live doubt as we follow him through our pain, through brothers and sisters, we tell each other that Christ is enough even when it hurts.

And so look, the more we gaze at the sufferings of people like Paul and Christ, don't our petty arguments about church motions and committee members, don't they just fade into the background?

If we truly gaze at the sufferings of Paul and others like him, when we follow Christ and not the world, we get to see the Messiah, the promised one that Paul loved and gave up everything to serve.

And so can I suggest a very practical thing you can do this Holy Week is to think deeply, to meet people, talk with people who have suffered for Jesus, truly suffered.

That's what this week should be about, is it not? We can gaze at the cross. We watch the greatest show on earth when we come to the cross, don't we? And we say and see how much Jesus loved us, how he was treated like the scum of the earth himself.

[30 : 15] He was pierced for our transgressions, for our boasting, for our selfishness. The hymn writer Isaac Watts put it this way, when I survey the wondrous cross, on which the prince of glory died.

My riches gain I count but loss, and pour contempt on all my pride. So make the most of all the different opportunities we have to come to the cross, put our pride aside, and gaze at the suffering of Jesus.

Jesus. And if not the suffering of Jesus himself, we can also gaze and remember the suffering of our brothers and sisters this Easter. Do you know that right now this holy week is one of the most violent times in the world?

Religious violence goes up and up and up. This is a very tense time. And many of our brothers and sisters will be killed. They will suffer deeply just for calling upon the name of Jesus.

Remember that. Take your eyes off your petty arguments. Don't waste your long weekend puffing yourself up with pleasure. Make time. Maybe you know someone at church who is struggling right now.

[31 : 35] Struggling to stay afloat. Go see them. Send them a text. Maybe pause with that brother who's been scarred by suicide or sexual temptation.

Sit with them. Pray with them. Get to know people in our church and even people outside our church. There are church families this Easter who have no pastor.

They're struggling to lead themselves and they're trying to make everything work as a church. These moments may not end up on your CV. But God can use it to burst our pride and make us more like Christ.

How can you and I stay puffed up if we truly know the sufferings of people in North Korea who follow Jesus, worshipping in caves while we sit here with air con?

How can we be puffed up after we remember our brothers and sisters in Ukraine? Or in the church in Russia where they're harassed by police every day because they don't tow the country line?

[32 : 39] Or those who are praying and fighting and dying for God's image bearers in Myanmar where there's a civil war and it's actually Christians who are trying to fight for freedom for that country.

Still proud? Still proud of ourselves? Well finally, very briefly, Paul tells us of another remedy for our pride and selfishness and that is the parenting of Paul in Christ.

The parenting of Paul in Christ. We see this in verse 14 to 17, don't we? Paul slips back into father-child language. We've actually seen him call them babies in Christ but now he goes back to this language.

In last week's passage, remember I said there were actually five different commands or steps towards gospel humility. Interesting, in our passage there's actually only one explicit command and that's in verse 16.

Can you see that? Therefore I urge you to imitate me. I urge you to imitate me. And so here is another window into Paul's parent heart.

- [33 : 47] He's not trying to shame the Corinthians when he points out their problems. He loves them deeply. And it's from this love he says to them and to us, you need parenting.
- Your pride is stunting your growth. Son, daughter, can I show you a better way? So imitate me, says Paul. Hang on, hang on.
- William, didn't you just say last week Paul had become so gospel humble he thinks of himself less? What's this doing here then, right? Asking the Corinthians to be imitators of him?
- Isn't that the opposite of what he told us last week? Well no, because look at the context. What's the very next verse tell us? What does he send Timothy to remind the Corinthians of?
- His way of life in Christ Jesus. Jesus. Not Paul's sinful nature. We don't want to imitate that. Don't imitate that from each other. We want to imitate the way of life in Christ Jesus from each other.
- [34 : 48] That's the key, isn't it? And this can only happen because the fruit of Paul's godliness, right, his willingness to suffer for Jesus, all of that is not a work he does to earn his way into heaven.
- All of that is an overflow from a heart that is rooted in Jesus as his savior, his redeemer, his king. And if that's the case, Paul can be confident.
- He says to broken egos like yours and mine, he says, come along, imitate me as I walk in the ways of Jesus. And if this is how our egos will be filled with Christ instead, then here's the question I want to ask you.
- Who are you letting imitate you and your ways in Christ? Who gets access to you warts and all? Who gets to watch you repent and believe in the gospel daily?
- If no one does, how can you make that happen? Maybe it's opening up your life one step at a time.
- [36 : 00] Being willing to sit down with someone for a coffee. Inviting people over to your house and just being real, right? Maybe you could send an encouraging thing God's been teaching you these past months.
- Send it to someone else. Be honest. This is how God has been convicting me. Maybe you can reach out to that person who you know needs an example, a godly example, and say, let's meet, let's read something from the Bible together.
- This is me pleading with you here, PCBC English. If you've been a follower of Christ for more than five minutes, there is someone else here that needs you, that needs someone worth imitating in the ways of Christ.
- Can you be that person? What fruits of the Spirit are worth imitating in you, and how will you share them? Think about that. Think about who you can be a spiritual parent to.
- In this church. You might say, no one's ever shown me how. I have no training yet, I can't do it. I don't have a job title, I don't have a serving role.
- [37 : 11] Don't worry. Think back to the parent language. If you're a parent, actually no parent says, I'm going to wait until I finish my uni degree in parenting, then I'll start loving my kids.
- Does it work that way? No. Parents are made. They're not just born, they're not qualified. We're never qualified, we're still learning. And so if you have the same heart as Paul, you see people around you and they go, they need a parent.
- I don't feel qualified, but Lord help me. Think of all the spiritual infants among us that could benefit. Catch the Father's heart for these people around us.

The ones that are going to be coming through into our midst as they grow up. And then go ahead, share the gospel, share your lies with them. imitate me, says Paul, and my ways of life in Christ Jesus.

It's quite poignant, isn't it? Paul, remember, he's writing from a different city, he can't be with the Corinthians physically. And so he's saying really, right, I can't be with you physically, beloved.

[38 : 17] But look, I can at least send Timothy to you, show you the ways of Christ. That's spiritual parenting. And likewise, Jesus says to us, I can't be with you physically right now, but let me send you my Holy Spirit, dwelling in people of God here at BCBC.

And you, and you, and you, and go, go make disciples of all nations. Teach them to obey everything I've taught you, says Jesus.

Because what the Corinthians needed to learn, what we need to learn to, is that if we imitate the world's talk, it's just going to puff us up with pride. But if we imitate Paul's example as he follows Christ, that will fill us up, that will make us people worth following, worth leading others towards the love of Christ.

Let's pray. Father God, we are not enough on our own, but the Lord Jesus Christ is enough for us.

And so help us to decide daily, even right now, to follow him and not turn back. In Jesus' name we pray. Amen.