

**Date:** June 11-12, 2022

**Title:** *Happier: Warned and Encouraged*

**Scripture:** 1 Corinthians 10:1-22

**Speaker:** David Bowens

Good morning beautiful people. As always, it is an absolute blessing to be together. I want to say hello to our campuses, our Butler campus. I want to give a special shout-out to my folks in the Strip District. And I also want to give a special shout-out to the first weekend of our Southpointe campus home gathering. Can we get a hand clap of praise for that? It is such a blessing to be a part of a church that is continuing to spread the impact of the gospel throughout the region of Pittsburgh.

Let us pray as we prepare our hearts to hear the Word of God. Lord, we thank you for this day that you have blessed us to see. We thank you for the gift of your word that you have given us to help us understand and grow in our relationship and our understanding of who you are. Father, today I pray that what I have prepared accurately reflects your heart in your word. Father, I pray that this word would be a seed that is deeply implanted in the hearts of the people under the sound of my voice, that they might grow closer toward you, and gain a greater understanding of who you are and who you've called us to be. In Jesus name, we pray. Thank God. Amen.

Well, if you know me, you guys know that I am a father of five. And before I had any children, I thought when you had kids, they would be some amalgamation of traits from just mom and dad. But when we had our five, when I met them, and as they grew up, what I realized is I don't know where they come from.

There are some traits that I saw that I was like, listen, me and Mom, we're pretty chill, we're pretty calm, but I don't know where you got that one from. Lord, help us. But at the same time, one of my sons, specifically my son Seth, is a beautiful kid, full of joy. Big, beautiful smile, big dimples. Lovely, huggy baby, just loves to be hugged and loved knowing.

But he also has what I like to call the dark side. He is incredibly competitive. And me and his mom, we like to have fun, but we can take a loss. It's not the end of the world. Him, it is as if the world is over. If he loses playing a video game or where they can be outside playing basketball, he devolves into a puddle of tears and insults. It's ugly. It gets really ugly. And this just happened recently on Friday. I hear him screaming at the top of his lungs, yelling at his siblings. And I call them upstairs and the first thing I hear him say is I can't Connect 4.

Bro, you have to calm down. There's no reason in the world that you should be this upset. And what I had to remind him was, listen, that competitive nature that God has put in you is a good thing, and it will be good for what God intended you for. But you can't let it devolve into this ugly thing that hurts the people around you.

In that, I had to encourage him in what God has given him so that he wouldn't think it was an ugly thing in and of itself, but still warn him of the downfalls of making that thing so important that he injures and negatively affects those around him. You see, today I have been tasked with the topic of Warned and Encouraged, and in this series, we have been walking through the book of First Corinthians.

And I just want to give you guys a little background information so that we understand the context in which Paul is engaging the church at Corinth. This letter is a letter of correction from Paul to the church sacraments about their betrayal of the Gospel of Christ and life in the spirit. The geological background of Corinth at this time is after lying dormant, Corinth was founded by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. as a Roman colony because of its strategic location for commerce.

And by the time of Paul, which was about 100 years later, it had become the largest city in Roman Greece. By ancient standards, it was a relatively new city, but it had quickly attracted people from all over who had recently acquired wealth. It was also very religious. All the immigrants brought their deities while at the same time morally decadent. So those who had become believers from this diverse population, both slave and free, Gentile and Jew, both brought a lot of their prior baggage with them into the Christian faith. And that word Gentile simply means non-Jew.

This letter is in response to a letter that was sent to Paul from the Church of Corinth, where they expressed their disagreements with him in context to the way in which they should live as followers of Christ. So, Paul engages the carnality of the church, and the word carnality simply means a life lived, consumed by satisfying the desires of the flesh. The dictionary defines carnal as the opposite of righteousness, and we see carnality in the church when the value systems of the world infiltrate, thus making us less effective in the world for the sake of the gospel.

In Chapter Ten, Paul begins by giving examples to the readers of the history of the people of Israel, who, when they were free from the bondage of the Egyptians by God, and found themselves in the wilderness following Moses to the promised land, and during that time, on several occasions, they had rebelled against Moses and God. He uses these examples to express some warnings to help the church at Corinth see the errors of their ways and their consequences.

We pick up in First Corinthians ten verse six, "Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." And what we see coming next in the text is four warnings. And those warnings are, do not become idolaters, do not commit sexual immorality, do not test God, and do not grumble.

Let's begin with the first warning. Just do not become idolaters. We see this in First Corinthians ten and seven, "Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: "The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in revelry." What Paul is referring to here is in Exodus 32 where Moses was on Mount Sinai for 40 days and 40 nights receiving instruction from God for the people of Israel.

Now, interestingly, enough, God himself actually wanted to meet the people himself. And God had told Moses to have the people consecrate themselves for two days. They wash their clothes and there was to be no physical intimacy among other things, in preparation for meeting God. And on the morning of the third day, God was going to come down to meet them.

And when God came down, He came down on the mountain of Sinai as a fire. And there was so much smoke, there was a cloud that consumed that space and there was thunder. And Moses called the people out to come to meet God. And when Moses and the people were drawing closer to the base of the mountain, there was a trumpet blast that was sounding and it was getting louder and louder.

And Moses spoke to God. And when God spoke back, he spoke back in thunder. Now, I don't know about you guys, but I don't even like regular thunder so I can only imagine the terror that they felt at this experience. And it is reflected in scripture because it says, they say to Moses, hey, Moses, we don't want any parts of this. You will speak to God and come back and tell us what he said because if he speaks to us, we will die.

So, while Moses was up on the mountain the people seem to have forgotten their experience with God because a little over a month after that, they go to Aaron who is Moses's brother, and ask him to make gods to go before them. See, while they were traveling in the wilderness with God, God was literally leading them as a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. So, what they're asking him is to physically build a structure to put in the place that was literally intended for God by clear definition, an idol, anything that we put in the place that was intended for God.

They did this because they did not know what had happened to Moses. So, Aaron gathers the gold from the people and fastens it into an image of a calf. The next morning, the people celebrated a sacrifice for the idol. The people sit down to eat

and drink and get up to indulge in revelry. That's where we see what Paul references in that verse. When we hear things like this it can be hard to see this today because maybe we don't physically bow down to statues or we don't pray to inanimate figures, but we are always worshiping.

The question we have to ask ourselves is what are we worshiping? And that word worship can be tricky. Especially in this day and age and in the context of Scripture. Because in the original text of Scripture, Hebrew in the Old Testament, and Greek in the new, there's no one word that exclusively translates to the word worship. And so today I want to use one of the Greek words to help us gain some understanding of the word worship.

And that Greek word is *proskyneo*, which means to bow down in reverence. And so, if we consider it this way, then let's ask ourselves these questions, like, what are we bowing to? What are we submitting ourselves to? What consumes our mind, our time, our resources? These are things that we have to pay attention to especially if we are in Christ.

It doesn't mean everything we think about or everything we spend money on is things that we worship. But what motivates us, what is really consuming large amounts of our time, and what is causing us to respond and act and engage? This does not go for blatantly sinful things. This also goes for good things as well. Things like our families, things like our careers, things like our marriages.

These are all good things that God has given to us to steward well for His glory. And what we realize and should realize is if we do it in the way that God has called us to do, like loving our wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself for it, wives are called to respect their husbands. And then in our careers, we are to work as unto the Lord and not as unto human masters.

If we do these things, what we will find is peace and understanding, and success in the way that God intended. And everything we do then becomes an act of worship to God. You see, when we attempt to replace God with some temporal thing, we may find some brief moments of satisfaction or pleasure, but they are short-lived when placed in the context of eternity.

And even in this life, my experience at the end of placing anything before God has almost always been one of emptiness and separation from Him. We were made to be in a relationship with God and glorify Him and worship Him and Him alone. I would venture to say we can draw a direct line from the objects of our worship that are not

God directly to our struggles with sin, looking for fulfillment in temporal things might distract us, but they'll never make us happier.

Warning number two, do not commit sexual immorality. First Corinthians 10:8 says, "We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died." It is believed that Paul references what happens in the Book of Numbers we see play out from chapters 22 through 31, where the Moabite King Balac saw the Israelites and what they had done to the Emirates.

Now Israel needed passage through the Emirate lands. So, they sent a message to the King of the Emirates. However, the King of the Emirates came out with his army to confront Israel. They go to war. Israel wins and takes over all of the Emirate's lands and the surrounding villages. Because of this, Balac was afraid and got together with the Midianites.

And they sent for what could be considered a prophet for hire by the name of Balaam. He asked Balaam to put a curse on the people of Israel, but God would not allow him to do so. And upon multiple attempts to see if God would allow it, He always came back with a blessing for Israel. And even then, reading it originally, Balaam looked like a pretty good guy until we read later in Numbers that he was the one that advised the Midianites and Moabites to entice Israel away from God with their women.

And because of this, the Israelite men began to indulge in sexual immorality with the Moabite and Midianite women. Scripture says in Numbers 25, verse three, and the Lord's anger burned against them. And because of this, there was a plague that was beginning to spread among the people. And so, the Lord instructs Moses to gather all the leaders of the people and to have them execute every man who aligned himself with the false gods of the Moabites and Midianites. Upon completing this, the plague was stopped, but not before a great number of lives were lost.

Based on our understanding of the environment of Corinth at this time, there are so many different cultural and religious beliefs and different perspectives of moral standards that many of the people have found themselves with some amalgamation of beliefs, leading them to feel like the standards of following Christ, according to the disciple's teachings are too rigid.

The problem with this perspective is it assumes we know what's best for us. Many of us can attest to how untrue this really is. How many of us have spent time trying to find pleasure and satisfaction, only to come across some temporal distraction to an eternal issue, and that eternal issue is we were meant to be in relationship with God

and to glorify Him with every part of who we are. And that includes sex. Everything God created was good. This means sex is good. Thank you, Lord.

And because God created it, this means He knows the best use for it. According to Scripture, the best use for it is within the confines of marriage between a man and a woman. This is God's design for us to help us enjoy another level of intimacy and to be fruitful and multiply after we have committed to one another in holy matrimony.

One of the problems we have is we live in a world of comparison, a world that tells us you've got to try it before you buy it. You see, the problem with that idea is we tend to make value judgments on a whole person based on one thing that was meant to enrich and never actually be the prize. What I believe would make us happier in the context of sex is trusting the design of the one who said its purpose that we might experience the fullness God intended for all of us and glorify Him in it.

Warning number three, do not test God. And we see this in First Corinthians 10:9, "We should not test Christ, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes." With this warning, Paul speaks of something we find recorded in Numbers 21 verses four through nine when the Israelites are going from Mount Horeb by way of the Red Sea in order to pass the land of the Edomites who were very hostile towards Israel. That journey was arduous, and the people began to resort to a phrase that you will hear if you ever read Exodus or Numbers very often.

And that phrase is, "Why have you taken us out of Egypt to die in the wilderness?" Now, at this point, the people have been in the wilderness for many years and they are coming toward the end of this wilderness journey, and they still have the same complaint that was raised at the very beginning, almost as if God had not continually preserved, protected, and provided for them along the way. So, with that, the Lord sends poisonous snakes among the people and they bite them so that many Israelites died. God was clearly not happy with these people testing him.

And this kind of reminds me of a little something when I was a child, not the snakes part. I don't mess with snakes, but the testing part. And many of us parents know that as kids when we go out, the kids can get a little braver when they're out with their friends and different company. And so, my parents, when we would act a little bit outside of character which our parents would enjoy, they would do something right as we were beginning to get into something we shouldn't. They would look at us, give us a stern point and say, don't try me. And we knew immediately that it was time to get back in order. You see, you can only use the phrase, don't try me if the person on the receiving end already knows what you mean.

This means they, at the very least, had a lapse in judgment and forgot who they were in context to the power dynamic. This phrase often happened when we talked back to our parents or responded in a way that was perceived as disrespectful. Today I do the same thing, but I phrase it in a question with my kids. I say things like, excuse me? Or who are you talking to? When my kids hear this, they know immediately it is time to course correct. They recognize their lapse in judgment and respond accordingly.

We see this when people do things like blame God for the trouble in their lives, when much of the trouble in our lives is caused by our own hands, our own sin. But we have the audacity somehow to place the blame on God. Now, some of the trouble in our lives isn't our own sin. It's the sin of others and how it impacts us. But then there are the occasions when God just wants to get the glory out of our lives. We see a few of these in Scripture.

One of these we see with Jesus and the blind man in John nine verse two where the disciples asked God specifically, who sinned that this man was born blind, and Jesus tells him no one sinned. This is so that the hand of God can be seen in this man's life. And then another person we can consider is Job, who in Scripture was considered blameless, upright, and honors God. But even in this, he lost a lot. And if you don't know the story of Job, Satan goes before God asked God, hey, the only reason why Job worships you is because you protect Him and you provide for him. If you remove that protection and let me get at him, he'll curse you.

So, God removes the protection, but he tells Satan the only thing you cannot do is take his life. So, Satan then goes and takes all of Job's riches and his children most precious. And then he curses Job's body with boils, painful boils all over. And then Job's wife says to him, why don't you curse God and die?

The beautiful thing about Job is in the midst of all of that loss, upon being informed of the loss, he laid down to worship God and said, blessed is God who gives and takes away. He understood the dynamic at that moment. But that's just not the end of the story, because Job then engages with three of his friends and those friends are accusing him of doing something that Scripture affirms was not accurate and that he did not do.

So, at the end of this engagement, he then demands an explanation from God Almighty. Now, wouldn't you have it? God appears. And not only does He appear, God begins to engage Job, but He never actually answers Job's question or gives him a solid explanation. What he says to Job is were you there when I laid the foundation of the earth? Were you there when I called the sun to rise? Were you there when I hung the stars in the sky?

What I believe God was doing was reminding us all of who He was in context to who God was and helping Job to see that he does not have the universal perspective to see what God is doing or the right to question Him. This is what I consider the lapse in judgment that Job had at that moment.

Because if we really knew the awesome, all-powerful, overwhelming, unfathomable, all-mighty power of God, I doubt we'd ever consider splitting our lips in His direction in a way other than honor and reverence. However, we hear it every day on social media. If God is a good God, then why are there people starving? Why are children homeless? Why is there so much brokenness?

My response to this is sin. It wasn't God's choice. It was ours. From the very beginning of humanity, we chose sin. But thank God for His love for us that while we were regularly choosing sin, Christ died for us. And if we accept Christ in our hearts, this life is not the end. We will get to experience the fullness of joy that God offers and His justice in eternity.

Warning number four, do not grumble. We see this in First Corinthians 10:10, "And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel." Here Paul is referencing Numbers 16 where Korah took 250 of the leaders of the Israelite people and they came together against Moses and Aaron challenging their leadership. And because of this, God had the Earth open up and swallow Korah and all those associated with him, and the 250 leaders died by fire from the Lord.

The crazy thing about this is the very next day the Israelite community grumbled against Moses and Aaron saying that they killed the Lord's people. And this is because Korah was a Levite, and the Levites were specifically set apart to perform the work of the Lord's Tabernacle and to minister to the people. So, all of the people of Israel would have seen the Levites as the Lord's people. And because of this grumbling, the people gathered in opposition to Moses and Aaron.

And while this was happening, suddenly the glory of the Lord appeared and God calls a plague to begin consuming the people. And about 14,000 of the Israelites died that day. So, it was clear that the people of Corinth were grumbling in their letter to Paul about their disagreement with the standards they were called to in Christ. And because of this, Paul was warning them about the mistakes of their forefathers in hopes that they would not continue in the same vein, because these actions come with consequences.



When we grumble against the leadership God has put in place over us, we in essence grumble against God. No, I'm not saying the fallible human leadership is God. What I am saying is how we engage them, even if we disagree, we have to be mindful of how we approach that. Are we going around spreading our own seeds of dissension if we disagree with the decision that has been made? Or do we go and talk directly to those who it may involve concerning those decisions? Do we express our different perspectives as if our perspective is the only correct possibility, or do we engage with humility and respect for one another, leaving room for understanding?

One of the major problems with grumbling is it is poisonous. It destroys communities. And when you have strong members of any community grumbling against the leadership, it causes or it can cause a rift that really negatively impacts those of lesser understanding. It also poisons any sound judgment. Most of us know when we let something fester in our own minds, it tends to only get worse and often without ever actually engaging with the object of our issue.

I know this personally from early on in my marriage, whenever me and my wife would get into disagreements, I would just shut down. I wouldn't respond. I wouldn't say anything. And then on top of that, in my own mind, it's just got worse. I added things that either were or were not there and multiplied my own issue, creating resentment and distance from a relationship that was God ordained to draw us closer to one another as a reflection of God's love for the church.

You see, grumbling does not make us happier. It usually puts us in a darker space. However, if we engage our concerns in the spirit of love, respect, and humility, looking for understanding and not just to be right, we find the beauty of the community God intended. Even if we decided to go our separate ways, there would be no unnecessary animosity or damage done.

Paul concludes these warnings in this passage in First Corinthians 10:11-12. "These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!" Paul is expressing to the people his concern through these warnings, wrapping them up with engaging the pride of those who feel like they're in good standing with the Lord because the temptations and trials are going to keep coming.

Be reminded of the people of Israel who were freed from bondage by the hand of God. Led in the wilderness by a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. They saw God divide seas so they can walk across on dry land. They saw God win war after war

for them. They even experienced God coming down to meet them and speaking with Paul.

And even still with all of these experiences, they fell. So, to assume that we are above stumbling would be a horrible mistake. We have to be mindful and intentional in context to our walk in the Lord. The blessing is we have encouragement, and that encouragement is we are not alone.

First Corinthians 10:13, "No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to mankind. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can endure it." I'm so thankful to God for this because I know on many occasions, I have seen the way of escape and choosing to take it and have been reminded of this passage. But I know in just as many, or maybe even more occasions where I have seen the way of escape and chosen not to take it and fallen into sin.

However, I know the thing is we have to trust the Lord when we are tempted to grumble or to test God or toward sexual immorality in any form or put anything in the place that is reserved for God and God alone. We have it affirmed in Scripture that not only are these things common to man, but the Lord will also provide a way out so we can endure it.

That is the beauty of the Gospel community because we can hold one another accountable. The Word of God tells us that we are overcome by the blood of the Lamb. That is Jesus and the Word of our testimony. That is the experiences that we go through, our trials and tribulations that we go through, and the strength of the Holy Spirit that God has brought us out of. And now we have experience and examples to teach and encourage and inspire our brothers and sisters in the faith.

You see, the series that we are currently in is entitled *Happier*. And hearing all these warnings and just one encouragement may not make you feel that way currently, and I can understand this. But because we tend to think the absence of restriction would make us happier, what we may not realize is sin is the thing that actually robs us of our joy, peace, and satisfaction. God knows exactly what is best for each of us and if we trust him and submit our lives to him, we would find it in him.

The next portion in Paul's letter to the Church of Corinth is in verses 14 through 22 of chapter ten when Paul again informs the people to flee idolatry. And he brings up the issue that people were eating meat sacrificed to idols at their festivals and fellowshiping at the table of these idols. And because of this, they should not eat at the Lord's table or what we call communion. Communion is what we have been

called to take part in, in remembrance of Christ and His suffering on the cross on our behalf. The wine or juice represents the blood that was shed for us, and the bread represents His body that was broken for us.

And we are instructed in Scripture that as often as we do this, we are to do this in remembrance of Christ. Paul was engaging them on the issue of how we approach the sacred. We cannot just approach the Lord or things set apart specifically to honor the Lord with no care or concern for the posture of our own hearts toward God. This is why when we take communion here, we often take time to give the chance to examine our hearts and to confess our sins to the Lord so that we might approach and partake of the Lord's table in a way that honors Him.

When we do this flippantly and without care or concern, Paul warns us in First Corinthians 10:22. "Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he?" And I can't speak for anyone else. But I don't want to arouse the Lord's jealousy against me. Idolatry, sexual immorality, testing God, and grumbling. None of these things yield happiness or joy. But when we trust in the Lord and His design and will for our lives, what we do find is direction, peace, and joy.

Even in the midst of trying times, James one verses two and four, tells us, "Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance. Let perseverance finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything."

Let's pray. God, we thank you so much for your Word that you have given us. God, I pray that this word is deeply rooted in the hearts of your people and that it may bear fruit in their lives. But Father, I also pray for those who may not know you that something that was said today would impact them in a way that might draw their hearts closer. And we pray and ask all of these things for your glory, and we desire your will above all else. In Jesus' name, we pray. Thank God. Amen. God bless you.