

PAUL'S FIRST LETTER TO THE CORINTHIANS

Lesson One: Introduction & Opening Verses

CORINTH was the leading city of Greece when the Apostle Paul arrived sometime between A.D. 50 and 52. It was a major commercial center with an estimated population of 250,000 free persons, plus as many as 400,000 slaves. Located just off the narrow isthmus that connected mainland Greece with the Peloponnese, Corinth was a crossroads for travelers and traders alike. The city had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. but quickly rebounded and once again became a bustling metropolis.

AUTHOR & DATE: The Apostle Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians near the end of his three year stay in Ephesus around the year 55. He had founded the congregation in Corinth a number of years earlier during his second missionary journey.

PURPOSE FOR WRITING: The city of Corinth was plagued by the unbridled immorality common to large commercial cities as well as the gross idolatry common to Greek culture. Like any Greek city, its citizens were also very interested in philosophy and placed a high premium on wisdom.

In a setting like this, it's not hard to imagine why problems quickly arose for a young and gifted, but also spiritually immature Christian congregation. Paul wrote this letter to instruct the Corinthian congregation in its areas of weakness and to correct several doctrinal errors and sinful practices that had sprung up among the membership.



Paul approaches the difficulties in the congregation with a true shepherd's heart, making it clear that the only solution to problems caused by sin of any kind is the grace of God in our Savior Jesus Christ.

OUTLINE:

- I. Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1-9)
- II. Divisions in the Church (1:10-4:21)
- III. Moral and Ethical Problems in the Church (5-6)
- IV. Instruction on Marriage (7)
- V. Instruction Questionable Practices and Christian Freedom (8:1-11:1)
- VI. Instruction on Public Worship (11:2-14:40)
- VII. Instruction on the Resurrection (15)
- VIII. Conclusion (16)

1. How does Paul assert his authority right from the start? Why was this important for him to do, considering the various issues he is about to address in his letter?

2. As Paul greets the Corinthian congregation in vs. 1-3, he indicates how we are to view the church and its members. What characteristics does he bring out? List and explain them below:

SOSTHENES: It seems likely that Sosthenes was a member of the Corinthian congregation who had joined Paul in Ephesus and could substantiate the reports Paul had received about the problems they were having. This may be the same Sosthenes who was the synagogue ruler in Corinth. He had been brutally beaten before the court of the proconsul Gallio after a failed attempt by the Jews to charge Paul with a crime (See Acts 18). He may also be a convert of one of Paul's co-workers, Apollos. If this is the case, Paul deliberately adding "*our brother Sosthenes*" to his greeting would have been a strong testimony against the

3. Where does the emphasis clearly lie in the first nine verses of this letter? (Hint: Note the repetition in these verses) What does this teach us about how we address difficult problems that arise amongst Christians?

Lesson Two: Divisions in the Church

1:10-17 A CHURCH DIVIDED OVER ITS LEADERS

1. In these verses Paul laments that the church in Corinth was being divided into factions based on loyalties to various spiritual leaders. As you consider Paul's words here, discuss the following questions: How important are a pastor's personality, preaching style, gifts, and abilities? What happens when too much emphasis is placed on the personal qualities of a congregation's minister?
2. How united did Paul desire the Corinthian congregation to be? How united does God desire us to be today? Where does such unity come from?
3. Why does Paul say, "*Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel*" (vs. 17)?

APOLLOS: Native of Alexandria (Egypt), a Christian Jew who was an eloquent preacher at the time of the apostle Paul's missionary journeys. The chief biblical passage about Apollos is Acts 18:24–19:1. From Alexandria, Apollos went to Ephesus in Asia Minor. Enthusiastic in spirit, learned and cultured in his ways, well versed in the OT Scriptures, and instructed in the way of the Lord, he began to speak boldly and openly in the synagogue there. Apollos knew and preached accurately about the coming of Jesus but knew of it only from the message of Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist. Priscilla and Aquila, Paul's friends and former associates, heard Apollos speak in Ephesus and realized that he had not heard what had happened to Jesus. They took him aside privately and explained the way of God to him more accurately.

Soon after this instruction, Apollos left Ephesus for the Roman province of Achaia in Greece with letters from the Ephesian Christians, urging the disciples in Achaia to welcome him as a Christian brother. On arrival, he vigorously and publicly refuted the Jews, using his great knowledge of the OT Scriptures to prove that Jesus was the Messiah. Paul considered Apollos's work in Corinth, capital of Achaia, so valuable that he described him as waterer of the seed that Paul had planted as the founder of the church (1 Cor 3:5–11).

[Excerpt from *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*]

1:18-2:5 CHRIST CRUCIFIED IS GOD'S POWER AND WISDOM

4. Why is the "*message of the cross*" such foolishness to our natural human reason? What does our reason tell us when it comes to our salvation?

8. Who are the “*mature*” to whom Paul is referring in vs. 6? Is Paul trying to make a distinction between different classes of Christians? (See 1:18,24)

9. Vs. 7 – In what sense is God’s wisdom, “*secret*”? (2 Corinthians 4:6)

10. What doctrine is taught in the second half of verse 7?

11. Contrast the “*spirit of the world*” with what is revealed to us by “*the Spirit who is from God.*” (Note especially vs. 12)

12. What doctrine is taught in vs. 13 and why is it such a comforting teaching for us as Christians?

“THE LORD OF GLORY”



“The story is told of Raphael, the Italian Renaissance painter, who was commissioned to paint a portrait of the Lord Jesus. ‘He obtained a New Testament and day after day was seen, brush in hand, with it open before him, every feature riveted and every thought absorbed; until suddenly one day he slipped upon his knees, and cried, “My Lord and my God!” The picture was never painted, but God had stamped an image on Raphael’s soul that would never be obliterated.”

-Prime, D. (2005). *Opening up 1 Corinthians*. Opening Up Commentary. Leominster: Day One Publications.

13. What implications does verse 14 have for what we teach concerning a person's conversion? Whose power is at work? What role does the person play?

14. What does it mean that we, as believers, "*have the mind of Christ.*" (vs. 16; See John 15:15)

3:1-23 THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS

The Corinthians wanted Paul to give them some "meaty" spiritual teachings to chew on, but their fascination with worldly wisdom and their continued squabbling over which leader to follow demonstrated that they were not ready for anything but the basics of Christianity. They wouldn't be able to digest "*solid foods.*" They were still "*mere infants in Christ.*"

15. Explain what Paul means in vs. 1-4 when he describes the Corinthians as "*mere men.*" Contrast what it means to be "*spiritual*" versus "*worldly.*"

"SERVANTS OF CHRIST"

'The apostle was anxious to be rightly accounted of, and well he might be; for ministers are not often estimated rightly; as a rule, they are either gloried in, or else despised ... It would be for the advantage of the Church, for our own benefit, and for the glory of God, if we were put in our right places, and kept there, being neither over-rated, nor unduly censured, but viewed in our relation to our Lord, rather than in our own personalities.'

-Charles Spurgeon

16. The Corinthian's cliquishness was distorting their view of the Christian ministry. What three points about the Christian ministry does Paul make in vs. 5-9 that every parishioner and minister ought to keep in mind?

17. Whether it was Paul or Apollos serving the Corinthian congregation, what needed to remain the solid foundation on which they built?

Describe the difference between a minister building on this foundation with precious materials versus shoddy materials.

***Note: We will discuss the public minister's special relationship to God, the accounting he will have to give on the last day, and the "reward" he will receive more thoroughly when Paul brings it up in more detail in chapter four.

18. Once again Paul raises the subject of human wisdom (vs. 18-23). What are the dangers of human wisdom? The fruits of spiritual wisdom? Read James 3:13-18 and see if you can identify in 1 Corinthians 3 the bad fruits of human wisdom that James mentions.

A NOTE ON PURGATORY

"The Catholic Church cites verses 14 and 15 in support of its doctrine on purgatory. But these verses do not apply, for several reasons. The fire, for example, is the fire of "the Day," of judgment day. And it is the *works* of the *minister* that are being tested; it is not believers who are being purified by fire."

-The People's Bible: 1 Corinthians, p. 39

19. How do each of the following "belong to us" as believers?

"*the world*" (See 1 Timothy 4:3-5)

"*life*" (See Psalm 31:15)

“death” (See 2 Tim 1:10)

“the present” (See Philippians 4:4,11-13)

“the future” (See Romans 8:17)

20. What is Paul’s final answer the Corinthians’ desire to follow a leader? (See vs. 23)

4:1-21 THE NATURE OF TRUE APOSTLESHIP

21. Vs. 1-5 – As an apostle, who was Paul ultimately accountable to? What was the number one requirement of his apostleship?

How would you characterize Paul's attitude toward human judgments concerning his ministry, both his own and those of the people he served?

What difference in attitude do these verses suggest we should have as Christians between how we view the call into the public ministry and a hired position in the business world?

22. Paul is being sarcastic in vs. 8. The Corinthians thought that they had arrived as Christians, but what was the reality? What does Paul say in vs. 7 about how we are to view our talents and abilities?

23. Of what does Paul remind the smug, self-important Corinthians in vs. 9-13? (See Luke 9:23,24; Matthew 5:3,6; 1 Corinthians 1:31)
24. What can we learn from Paul here in these verses about how to approach pointing out the sins of our fellow Christians? What is our motivation? What kind of tone should we have? What are we trying to accomplish? Any other insights? (See also 2 Corinthians 7:8-11)
25. What exactly does Paul mean when he writes in vs. 20, "*The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but power*"?

Lesson Three: Moral & Ethical Problems in the Church

INTRO: It may seem that Paul is changing topics rather abruptly from his instruction on human wisdom and divisions in the church to the moral and ethical problems with which the congregation was struggling. But in reality, Paul is simply making his point even more clear: the Corinthians were not as wise and strong and noble as they thought they were. A truly mature and wise Christian congregation would demonstrate its maturity and wisdom by dealing with these problems before they caused even more damage. Once again, Paul points the Corinthians to Christ and to the power of the gospel as the only solution to the sins plaguing their congregation.

5:1-13 DEALING WITH A CASE OF INCEST

1. What seemed to be the attitude of the members of the Corinthian congregation toward the incestuous relationship of this man with his step-mother?

How does this same sinful attitude continue to manifest itself in the church today?

2. What do these verses have to say to the person who insists, "What I do in my personal life is none of the church's business"? (See also 1 Corinthians 12:25,26; Matthew 18:15-17; Ezekiel 33:7,8)
3. Explain what Paul means when he says, "*Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord*" (vs. 5). What was Paul instructing the Corinthians to do? For what purpose?

What additional insights into the nature of how we carry out church discipline do we gain from verses 4 and 11?

What was the final result of the instruction Paul gives the Corinthian congregation here in these verses? (See 2 Corinthians 2:6-8)

4. What point is Paul making about the Christian life with the illustration drawn from the Passover in vs. 7-9? (See also Romans 12:1-2, Ephesians 4:22-24, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

“GET RID OF THE OLD YEAST.”

Luther’s Small Catechism,

“What does baptizing with water mean?”

It means that our Old Adam with his evil deeds and desires should be drowned by daily contrition and repentance, and die, and that day by day a new man should arise, as from the dead, to live in the presence of God in righteousness and purity now and forever.”

5. In light of verses 9-11, explain what is meant by the phrase, “There is a great difference between the church being in the world and the world being in the church.”

6. A more natural rendering of the Greek into English in vs. 1 might be, “*How dare you take it before the ungodly for judgment!*” Paul is outraged at the Corinthians’ behavior. Why was this matter of lawsuits such a troubling issue? What sinful attitudes did it reveal among the members of the congregation?

What does Paul mean when he says, “*You have been completely defeated already*”? (vs7)

7. What does Paul suggest as a better alternative to taking a fellow Christian to court? (vs7)

“If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself,’ you are doing right.”

-James 2:8

Is Paul saying that a Christian should never take anyone to court? What would you do if another Christian did something against you that you felt was worthy of taking legal action? (See also Matthew 5:38-40; 16:24; Romans 12:17-21; 1 Peter 2:21-23)

8. What does Paul mean when he talks about Christians judging “*the world*” and even “*angels*”? (vs. 2,3; See also 1 Timothy 2:11,12a; Jude 6)

9. Consider the various vices Paul lists in vs. 9,10. Are we to consider these particular sins worse than others? What point is Paul making? (1 John 2:3-6; Hebrews 10:26-28)

What is the significance of Paul using the past tense in vs. 11 when he writes, “*And that is what some of you were*”?

10. For Discussion: Paul is pretty blunt and to the point in these verses. Does the church today deal with sin in the same way? Or is there a hesitation to confront wickedness and call it what it is? If there is this hesitation, why do you think that is? How do we overcome it?

11. How would you define Christian freedom? How were the Corinthians abusing their freedom in Christ while quoting the popular saying, “*Everything is permissible for me*”? (See Romans 6:1-4,6,7,12-14)

Give examples of similar attitudes exhibited today both within the church and outside the church:

12. List and explain the reasons Paul gives here in these verses for Christians to “*flee from sexual immorality.*”



“He has redeemed me, a lost and condemned creature, purchased and won me from all sins, from death, and from the power of the devil, not with gold or silver but with his holy, precious blood and with his innocent suffering and death.

All this he did that I should be his own, and live under him in his kingdom, and serve him in everlasting righteousness, innocence, and blessedness.”

**-Luther’s Explanation
of the 2nd Article**

Lesson Four: Instruction on Marriage

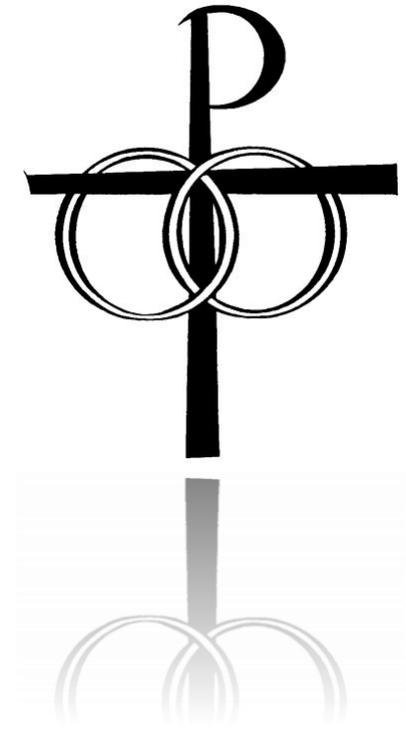
INTRO: As we move into chapter seven, Paul begins addressing some specific questions posed by the Corinthians in their letter to him. From the answers Paul gives in these verses we can surmise what some of those questions were: Is it wrong for a person to remain unmarried? Are sexual relations okay within the bonds of marriage? What about divorce? Paul answers these and many other questions as he gives instructions to the married and unmarried alike.

7:1-16 CONCERNING MARRIED LIFE

1. It seems likely that Paul had urged marriage rather strongly while he was in Corinth because of the loose sexual morals that were so prevalent throughout the city. In response to Paul's urging the Corinthians wondered whether it was wrong for a person to remain unmarried. What is Paul's response?

What is Paul wishing for in vs. 7? What is he not wishing for?

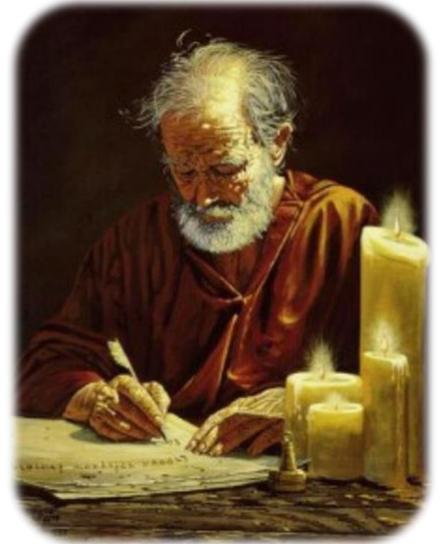
2. Compare what Paul writes here in verses 1-7 with what he writes in Ephesians 5:22-33. What general principles concerning the marriage relationship does Paul teach in both passages? How do these principles compare to modern day modes of thinking concerning marriage and sexuality?



7. Vs. 25-28 – We do not know for certain what “*present crisis*” Paul is referring to in vs. 26. Some commentators suggest that it may have been a famine and resulting food shortage in Corinth, a problem which did affect numerous Greek states in the 40’s and 50’s AD. If this was the case, why might it have been wise advice from the apostle for those who were single to remain single?

8. Vs. 29-31 – Imagine that a friend of yours has come to you for some guidance in life. Take what Paul says here in these verses and put it into your own words and offer your friend some advice.

9. Vs. 32-35 – How would you answer someone who points to these verses as evidence that Paul encourages people to live a monastic life? What is the difference between monasticism and what Paul is talking about here?



“I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord’s mercy is trustworthy.” (vs. 25).

In addressing the Corinthians’ question about those who were unmarried, Paul wants to make it clear that he didn’t have any morally binding directives from the Lord. Thus they would not be sinning if they decided to marry. His godly advice as an apostle, however, could be trusted. Paul was not making some arbitrary rule as a harsh lawmaker but rather offering his pastoral judgment as someone whose life continued to be under the influence of God’s amazing grace and mercy. The Corinthians could be sure that he had their best interest at heart.

10. In vs. 36-38 Paul continues to give his advice to the unmarried in the congregation considering the “*present crisis*.” Describe the situation (Note also the footnote in the NIV).

In general, what kind of factors should a Christian person keep in mind when making decisions about things that are not expressly commanded or forbidden in God’s Word?

11. Paul addresses one final scenario: a widow contemplating getting remarried. What counsel does the apostle give?

10:1-13 WARNINGS FROM ISRAEL'S HISTORY

15. Review the historical references made by Paul in these verses. What message is he trying to convey to the Corinthians by citing them? (Exodus 14, 32; Numbers 25, 21, 14, 16)

16. How did the Israelites passing through the Red Sea and Moses' role as Israel's leader picture the Sacrament of Baptism and the work of Christ?



17. Whether we are talking about Old Testament believers making their way to the promised land of Canaan or New Testament believers making their way to the promised land of heaven, who is it that guides and protects us along the way? Again, why does Paul point this out? What warning is there here for us?

18. What encouragement does Paul give the Corinthians and us even as he issues these rather severe warnings? On what does Paul's encouragement focus? (See vs. 13 and also Hebrews 2:18; James 1:2-4)

19. In light of the history lesson Paul has just given the Corinthian congregation, what was the only sensible thing for them to do?

20. In warning against involvement in idol worship, Paul draws parallels between participating in idol worship and participating in the Lord's Supper. What do we learn about our participation in the Lord's Supper from these verses? (See also Matthew 26:26-28)

21. With whom were the Corinthians sharing this same type of intimate communion if they participated in idol worship? What warning does Paul give in this regard?

22. Christians living in 21st century America are no longer confronted with the exact same situation that Paul was originally addressing in these verses. We are not tempted to participate in idol feasts at pagan temples. How can we apply Paul's instructions here to our own lives? (Some additional passages to consider: 1 Corinthians 15:1,2; Romans 16:17-19; Matthew 6:24; Ephesians 5:5)

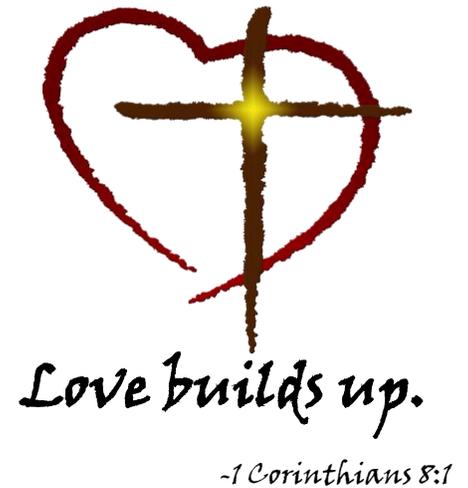


“What is the bread? The body of Christ. And what do they become who partake of it? The body of Christ; not many bodies, but one body.”

***-Chrysostom
Early Church Father
in late 4th Century***

23. Vs. 23, 24 – When deciding whether or not to participate in a certain activity, what questions ought a Christian consider other than, “Do I have the right to do it?”

24. Vs. 25, 26 – What reason does Paul give for why it is okay for the Corinthians to buy and eat meat sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience? How might we apply this same principle in a broader way as we live our Christian lives and seek to do God’s will?



25. Vs. 27-30 – Explain the two scenarios described in these verses and explain why a person would go ahead and eat in one situation and refrain from eating in another.

26. In verse 33 Paul writes, “*I try to please everyone in every way,*” but ultimately his goal was something greater than just pleasing people. What was that goal?

27. These verses give us a good summary of what Christian freedom is all about. Review the various points Paul makes in the space below:

Christian freedom is freedom to...

Vs. 24 –

Vs. 26 –

Vs. 31 –

vs. 33 –

vs. 1 –

**SERVE ONE
ANOTHER
IN LOVE**
GALATIANS 5:13

Lesson Six: Instruction on Public Worship

Introduction: Paul's brief words of praise to begin this chapter remind us that although he has had to correct the young Corinthian congregation on a number of issues, he is still dealing with a group of Christians. Paul is thankful that the Corinthians have continued to keep his words and example constantly before their minds. As Paul noted in chapter one, the Corinthian congregation had been blessed by the Lord in many ways. However, while Paul is generally grateful for their adherence to his teachings, he must still call them to account for the various ways they were going astray. These issues will continue to demand the Apostle's attention for the remainder of the letter.

11:2 – 16 ON COVERING THE HEAD IN WORSHIP

1. What role has God established for man? When did he establish it? How does when God established this role influence the way we view Paul's instructions here in these verses?

In what manner is a man to carry out his leadership role in his family and in the church? How does he abuse the role that God has given to him? (See Ephesians 5:22-29; Luke 22:24-26)



2. Vs. 7 – Why was a man to leave his head uncovered during worship? What was the significance of this practice? (See also Genesis 1:26-28)

3. Vs. 9 – What role did God establish for woman at creation? (See also Genesis 2:18,21-23; Ephesians 5:22-24)

4. In vs. 3 Paul lists three parallel relationships. How does this parallelism help a woman to understand her role as helper? (See also Galatians 3:28)

How does vs. 11 add to this thought?

“...because of the angels”

Paul does not explain this for his readers, but several interpretations suggest themselves: Angels veil themselves before God (Isaiah 6:2) and thus are an example for women; angels who observe Christians at worship are offended by women who violate proper decorum in worship.

(Peoples', p. 103)

5. What was the significance of a woman wearing a head covering during worship in the 1st Century Greek and Roman culture in which Paul lived? What message would a woman be sending if she decided to worship with her head uncovered?

6. Although the practice of women covering their heads in public is no longer prevalent in our modern-day culture, how can we apply the eternal principles that Paul lays out for us here to our lives and to the way we worship?

7. The *agape* meal, which became a popular practice in the early Christian church, was a simple meal of brotherly love that preceded the celebration of the Lord's Supper. This meal was not instituted by divine command, but was a voluntary expression of Christian love and unity.

The People's Bible gives the following description:

"Before the early Christians celebrated the Lord's Supper, they ate a common meal, the so called *agape*, a simple meal of brotherly love. The food was prepared either at the home or at the place of meeting, according to the circumstances. 'Before eating, the guests washed their hands, prayer was offered, and the Scriptures were read. After the meal a collection was taken for the widows and orphans, the kiss of charity was given, and communications from other congregations were read and answered.'"



Unfortunately, abuses soon started to creep into the celebration of this meal. What were they? How did these abuses demonstrate that some of the members of the congregation had completely lost sight of one of the primary purposes for celebrating the Lord's Supper?

8. Vs. 23-26 – If the Corinthians were going to celebrate the Lord's Supper in a proper manner, they needed to understand what the Lord's Supper is. Paul reminds them of what the Supper is all about in verses 23-26. Summarize what Paul writes here in your own words and give a simple definition of what the Lord's Supper is.
9. Vs. 25 – What did Jesus mean when he said, "*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*"? What is this *new covenant*? What was the old covenant? (See Jeremiah 31:33,34)

15. Considering what you already know about the members of the Corinthian congregation, what kind of problems do you think they were having when it came to the proper understanding and use of spiritual gifts?

How does Paul combat these sinful attitudes in verses 1-6?

16. Vs. 7 – For what purpose does the Holy Spirit bless the members of his church with spiritual gifts?

17. Explain each of the spiritual gifts Paul lists here:

“message of wisdom”

“faith”

“message of knowledge”

“gifts of healing”



I believe that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with his gifts, sanctified and kept me in the one true faith.

-Luther's Explanation
of the 3rd Article

“miraculous powers”

“distinguishing between spirits”

“prophecy”

“speaking/interpreting tongues”

18. Does God still give spiritual gifts to his church today? Why might the kind of spiritual gifts listed here in these verses have been more important during the time of the Apostles?

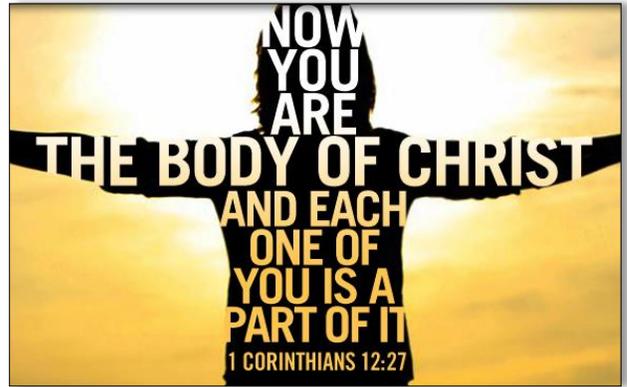
How can we distinguish between legitimate gifts of the Spirit and fraudulent ones?

12:12-31 UNITY AND DIVERSITY IN THE BODY

19. In verses 12,13 Paul points to Baptism as the most basic foundation for the church’s unity. How does baptism create such unity? What does baptism clearly have the power to do? (See also Matthew 28:19; Galatians 3:27-29; Ephesians 4:4-6; John 7:37-39)

We were all
baptized
by one Spirit.

20. Summarize Paul's point in verses 14-20. To which group of people within the congregation does Paul seem to be directing these verses?



How would you use these verses to encourage someone who feels as if they have nothing to offer the body of Christ?

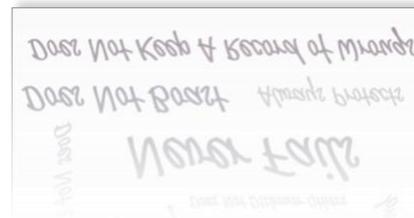
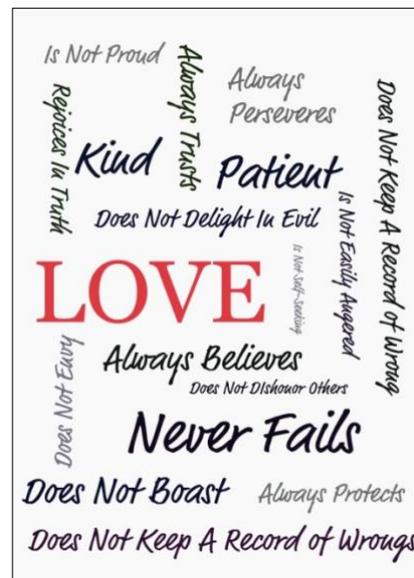
21. Paul continues his analogy of the body in vs. 21-26. To which group of people within the congregation does Paul seem to be directing these verses? What point does he make? (For an additional thought see also 2 Corinthians 12:9,10)
22. For discussion: What do you feel is a bigger problem in the church when it comes to the proper use of spiritual gifts: sinful pride or false humility?

Take a moment to jot down the gifts, talents, and abilities with which the Lord has blessed you and how you might use them to serve God and others:

“The most excellent way...”

“The harmonious functioning of the body, the vital oil which keeps every ligament working smoothly, is supplied by Christian love. Without Christian love, even the most extraordinary spiritual gift is worthless...Thus Paul’s great discourse on love forms the heart of his discussion of the gifts of grace...Viewed even more broadly, it could be said that chapter 13 crystallizes and encapsulates one of Paul’s chief concerns from the outset. All of the congregation’s problems are symptomatic of a lack of love...The structure of 1 Corinthians 13 has been nicely summarized: vv.1-3 urge the absolute *necessity of love*; vv. 4-6 describe the *character of love*; and vv. 8-13 illustrate the *permanence of love*.” (Concordia Commentary: 1 Corinthians, Gregory Lockwood)

26. Vs. 1-3 – Is Paul just being poetic in these verses or does he really mean that all these amazing gifts are “*nothing*” without love? What point is Paul trying to get across? (See Psalm 51:16,17; 1 Corinthians 14:12)



27. The Greek word used for love in these verses is the well known “*agape*.” How would you define *agape* love? Take into consideration the characteristics Paul lists here in these verses as well as the following passages: John 3:16; John 13:1-5; Romans 5:8; Luke 23:34a; 1 John 4:10

Where does this kind of love come from? Where does it not come from? (See Galatians 5:22-26)

28. Scan the list of love's characteristics in verses 4-7. What stands out? Is anything missing? Other observations?

29. Explain Paul's point in vs. 8-12:

30. Why do you think that out of "*faith, hope, and love*", Paul points to love as the greatest?

31. The focus throughout this chapter is on two particular spiritual gifts: tongues and prophecy. Let's define what we mean by each.

Tongues:

Prophecy:

32. Paul uses several different analogies here in these verses, but what is his main point of emphasis throughout? What was the most important thing for the Corinthians to remember when it came to using the gifts of both tongues and prophecy?



33. What does Paul have to say in verse 20 to those who demand some kind of charismatic experience before they are convinced of their status as a child of God? In contrast, where do Christians properly look for such assurance?
34. Vs. 20-25 – Contrast the effect that too much tongue-speaking without interpretation in a congregation would have on an unbeliever who walks into the church service versus the effect of a congregation focusing on prophecy and proclaiming the Word of God:

35. What general guidelines for how we conduct our own worship services can we glean from these verses?

36. What does Paul teaching here and elsewhere concerning a woman's role in public worship? (See also 1 Timothy 2:13,14)

How do we answer the objection that Paul is simply giving his own opinion here or that his instructions only apply to the 1st century church and not our modern-day worship services?

Lesson Seven: Instruction on the Resurrection

“If there is any historical foundation for our Christian faith, it must include the fact that Jesus Christ rose from the dead. If that is true, then all else we believe as Christians on the basis of Scripture is true, and all else we reject as Christians on the basis of Scripture is false. The difference between truth and error, faith and unbelief, world and church, heaven and hell, hope and despair depends on this central event in history—Jesus Christ rose from the dead on Easter morning.”

-Carleton A. Toppe, *The People’s Bible: 1 Corinthians*

15:1-11 THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST

1. Paul begins by reminding the Corinthians of the gospel facts on which their faith was founded. Identify them:

What does it mean that all these things happened “*according to the Scriptures*”? Give some examples:

2. Why does Paul list so many people to whom Christ appeared after his resurrection? Why is it significant that Jesus physically appeared to his disciples before he ascended into heaven?

3. To whom did Paul owe his faith, his apostleship, his faithful service, everything? How can we emulate Paul’s attitude in our Christian lives?

“The Apostle’s satisfaction with his own labours ‘from a human point of view is as the joy of a child who gives his father a birthday present out of his father’s own money.’”

-Concordia Commentary: 1Corinthians,
Gregory Lockwood

15:12-34 THE RESURRECTION OF THE DEAD

The original Greek of vs. 29 allows for several translations/interpretations:

- 1) “*over the dead*” – I.e. over the graves of the dead as a testimony to the power of their baptisms and the eternal life they were enjoying; to strengthen the faith of the believers left behind in the reality of the bodily resurrection
- 2) “*on account of the dead*” – Those left behind were influenced by the good example of the faithful departed and encouraged by the fact that they were now in heaven and thus desired baptism for themselves.
- 3) “*on behalf of the dead*” – The baptism of a living person somehow benefits the person who has died; “vicarious” baptism.

What does the Bible have to say about vicarious baptism?

Whether Paul is referencing a good practice or a heretical one, what point is he making?

9. Vs. 30-32 – How does our faith in the resurrection of the dead give Christians a different perspective than most people on the “pains and pleasures” of life here on earth? (See also Mark 8:34-38; Romans 8:18)

10. As Paul begins his description of the resurrection body in vs. 35, why do you think that he addresses his readers so sharply with the words, “*How foolish!*”?

11. What two main points is Paul making in vs. 37, 38 about our resurrected bodies as he compares them to a seed that is planted in the ground and grows up into a plant?

12. How do vs. 35-41 help you to answer the concerns of those who may be worried that the Lord won’t be able to raise up a body that is badly decomposed or that has been cremated? (See also Psalm 135:6, Ephesians 3:20,21)

13. What will our resurrected bodies be like according to vs. 42-44?



14. What else do we learn about our resurrected bodies in vs. 45-49? (See also Philippians 3:20,21; Colossians 3:4)

15. Vs. 50-52 – So far we’ve been talking about the resurrected bodies of those who die before Christ’s return on Judgment Day. What will happen to the bodies of those who are still living when Judgment Day comes?

Why is such a change necessary?

16. Vs. 53-57 – How has Christ taken away death’s sting?

HINTS OF GRACE:

If you pay attention to the way that the Bible speaks, you’ll notice that little hints of God’s grace are sprinkled throughout the Scriptures, even when the word “grace” isn’t used. Notice that Paul says here we will “*inherit*” the kingdom of God, indicating that heaven is not something we earn, but a gift freely given by the Lord. Though Paul doesn’t expand on this theme here in 1 Corinthians 15, it is one that can be found in various places throughout the Bible.

17. Vs. 58 – How ought Christ’s resurrection and his victory over sin and death affect the way that we live our lives as Christians? What does Paul mean when he says, “*Stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord.*”

Lesson Eight: Conclusion

