



# A STUDY OF I CORINTHIANS

Includes Introduction and 30 lessons with  
Study Guide prepared by

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The city of Corinth was located about 70 kilometers south-southwest of Athens at the base of Acrocorinth, a 575 meter high mountain which served as a lookout for the city. In the days of the Apostle Paul it served as the capital for the senatorial province of Achaia. The city had previously been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilding had been forbidden. The residents of old Corinth were made slaves or executed.



After a hundred years, the city was rebuilt in 46 B.C. by Julius Caesar. The newest inhabitants were largely freed slaves who looked at Corinth as a new opportunity, veterans from military service in Rome, indigenous Greeks, and immigrants from across the empire many of whom were tradesmen and labourers. The old city of Corinth was Greek, the new city was decidedly Roman even though it was still geographically Greek. The official language of Corinth in the first century A.D. was Latin and Roman law prevailed.



The city sat on the southern side of the narrow isthmus which connected the mainland of Greece to the Peloponnese. The isthmus is only 8 km wide at its narrowest point.

Corinth had two harbours. To the east about 14 km away was the Saronic Gulf and the town of Cenchrea. To the northwest only 2.5 km away was Lechaëum on the Corinthian gulf. The isthmus was so narrow that often cargo was carried from one side to the other and if

the ship was small enough, the entire ship was pulled the 7 kilometers to the other side. This saved the long trip sailing around the Peloponnese and sailing around the southern coast of the Peloponnesian peninsula was long and dangerous. Because of this strategic location, Corinth was a vital link in transportation of goods and it reaped economic benefits.

In the first century Corinth had a population of about 80,000 and was a commercial and religious center and was known for its bronze artisans and well as for pottery which were exported widely. The agora or marketplace in Corinth was one of the largest anywhere and the city itself was the largest and most prosperous in Greece.

The city was made up a few very rich people with the vast majority being very poor (1 Cor. 1:26). The agriculture around Corinth was poor, but overall the city was an economic powerhouse.

Because of the strategic location for commerce travelers brought a considerable amount of wealth as well as a great number of religions. Archaeologists have uncovered evidence of more than two dozen temples, altars, and shrines. Greek philosophies and mystery cults from Egypt and Asia were prominent within the city.

Corinth held colony status within the Roman Empire. This made Roman laws supreme and Latin the official language even though most of the population spoke Greek. In some ways, Corinth was even more important than Athens as the lead city of Achaia. It is said to have been the most Hellenistic of all the cities of the New Testament.

One of the most famous sporting events of the ancient world was the Isthmian games which were second in importance to the Olympics. These games were held every two years and contributed to the prestige and economy of the city. This is the background of Paul's writing in 1 Cor. 9:24-27 where Paul uses athletic illustrations and emphasizes the imperishable crown that Christians will receive. The crown given to the winners in the Isthmian games were made from withered celery plants.

Ben Witherington writes about the honor-shame cultural orientation of the Corinthians. The Corinthians craved public recognition and an honorable reputation. In Corinth, boasting had become an art form. This brings about problems in the church with boasting and false pride.<sup>1</sup>

There were many who were wealthy and they paraded their wealth for everyone to see. Social status was vitally important, so people would do everything they possibly could to get ahead and to get recognition. Their basic lifestyle surrounded trade, business, and looking for success. Corinthians looked to gain wealth because their wealth could help them to acquire social standing.

Stephen M. Pogoloff says that the Corinthians looked not for truth, "but for applause and success ..."<sup>2</sup> People were more concerned with being successful than being ethical. According to Thiselton, "The pragmatic criterion of becoming a winner in the marketplace, sometimes with a sacrifice of personal integrity, made its impact on Corinthian rhetoric."<sup>3</sup>

It is amazing to see how much Corinth in the 1<sup>st</sup> century resembles the western world in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Both are concerned with status, immigration and trade, and are highly individualistic. Style wins over substance and feeling over truth. Both cultures are pluralistic and the church is compromised when it falls into step with the society around it.

## **Religion in Corinth**

The primary religion was the worship of Aphrodite or Venus, the goddess of love, beauty, and fertility. Some say that the temple of Aphrodite held 1,000 prostitutes and worship involved having a sexual relationship with a prostitute. Prostitutes considered Aphrodite their patroness. Roman historians claimed that "Not every man which visit Corinth" because one had to be of high character to overcome the temptations to sin in that city. Others say that the number of prostitutes is

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<sup>1</sup> Witherington III, Ben. *Conflict and Community in Corinth: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995.

<sup>2</sup> Pogoloff, Stephen M. *Logos and Sophia: The Rhetorical Situation of 1 Corinthians*. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992.

<sup>3</sup> Thiselton, Athony C. *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: NIGTC*.

highly exaggerated though certainly sexual immorality was rampant. Other prominent religions in the city were Poseidon the god of the sea; Isis, god of religion, Aesclepius, the god of healing, and the emperor of Rome was also worshipped.

The 1,000 temple prostitutes seem to have been a part of old Corinth that was destroyed in 146 B.C. The new Corinth of the 1<sup>st</sup> century had only a small temple of Aphrodite. Still, we know that sexual immorality was a rampant problem in the city from the writings of Paul. Though the temple worship of Aphrodite may have not been prominent, there was a flourishing trade in prostitution as was true of nearly every ancient port city.

Also in Corinth was the temple of Apollo the god of prophecy, a temple of Asklepios, the god of physical, emotional, and mental health, a temple for Hera Argaea, the goddess of marriage, and a temple for Tyche, the god of fate or luck.<sup>4</sup> Mercury, Jupiter, Poseidon/Neptune, Zeus, and Isis were worshipped and the imperial cult was found in Corinth.

Along with the religion of the travelers, Corinth was filled with every sin imaginable. Sailors who passed through Corinth helped to give Corinth the name “Sin City.” In fact the term *korinthiazeshai* was coined to refer to sexual immorality in old Corinth. Literally the word *korinthiazeshai* means to act like a Corinthian. New Corinth was also a sinful city, but probably no more so than other seaport cities. The church in Corinth struggled to live faithfully in such a sin-saturated society. (This seems true today around the world as the church fights the same temptations that are found in the world around them.)

Drunkenness was a major problem in the city and Corinthians were ridiculed in the plays of the day as being drunkards. Venereal diseases plagued the city. The sins caused the city to be known as the most sinful city in the world.

## **The Authorship of 1 Corinthians**

Paul is virtually unattested as the author of 1 Corinthians. Not only does he name himself as author in 1:1 and 16:21, he has been recognised throughout history as the author of 1 Corinthians. This letter was probably written between A.D. 53 and 57 and the most likely time was the spring of A.D. 54 or 55.<sup>5</sup>

## **The Church in Corinth**

The church in Corinth probably was established around the year A.D. 50 by the Apostle Paul shortly after he began the churches in Philippi and Thessalonica at the end of his Second Missionary Journey. He arrived in Corinth from Athens. When Paul arrives he meets Aquila and Priscilla who had come to Corinth from Rome when Claudius forced Jews to leave the city. He was soon joined by Silas and Timothy.

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<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> Terry, Bruce. *A Discourse Analysis of First Corinthians: Literary Concerns*. [http://bible.ovu.edu/terry/dissertation/2\\_2-lit.htm](http://bible.ovu.edu/terry/dissertation/2_2-lit.htm)

We can reliably date the start of the church in Corinth because Gallio was appointed proconsul in the summer of A.D. 51 and Paul appeared before him probably later that year (Acts 18:12). In Acts 18:11, Luke records that Paul had been in Corinth for one year and six months when Gallio brought Paul before the tribunal.

Why would Paul spend so much time in Corinth when he clearly spent less time in other churches he started? 1) The church was especially troubled and vulnerable to the world around them; 2) Corinth was a major hub for travel and commerce. If he could reach people in Corinth, they could carry the Gospel around the world; 3) Corinth was a good place for Paul to practice his trade of “tent-making.” 4) The city had a high rate of immigration and when people move, they are often more open to accepting new ideas. 5) Large Jewish population.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians from the city of Ephesus where he stayed from A.D. 53-56. (1 Corinthians was probably penned in 54 or 55 A.D.) He had heard bad news about the immorality within the church. The apostle Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians that we do have any longer. It was written prior to 1 Corinthians according to 1 Cor. 5:9-12. This lost letter is often referred to as the “previous letter.” In this previous letter Paul had instructed the Corinthians not to associate with sexually immoral people in the church.

The letter we know as 1 Corinthians comes as a response to reports from Chloe’s household about infighting in the church (1:11) and well as other problems. In 1 Cor. 7:1, we see that the Corinthians had written to Paul posing questions about how to handle various problems.

The church is made up mostly of people of a poor economic background (1 Cor 1:26), though there were some who had some wealth. We note that Gaius is a host to Paul and the whole church (Romans 16:23), so he must have some financial means. Erastus (Romans 16:23 also mentions Erastus as being the city treasurer, so again we have a man with some financial means and a responsible government position.

It is likely that some of the problems faced in Corinth come from a disparity in incomes or the problems show that people of wealth were involved. In the instance of lawsuits, it has been suggested that only the wealthy could have afforded to bring lawsuits. Furthermore the problems concerning the Lord’s Supper in Corinth may have something to do with a difference of financial and social standing. Those who had to work could not make it early to the supper, while those who were wealthy went ahead and ate without waiting for the others. Apparently a number of the problems the church faced came from a tension between different social and economic classes. It is clear that the haves had no trouble humiliating the have not’s at the Lord’s Supper.

The values of Corinth as a whole were opposed to the message of the cross. Whereas the message of the cross is one of love, selflessness, and seeing every person with equal worth; the desire for social standing destroyed the fellowship and Christian witness of the church. (Note 1 Cor. 1:26-31).

When we look at the names in 1 Corinthians as well as other New Testament books that mention members of the church in Corinth we can say that it was mixed with Romans, Greeks, and Jews. Latin names included Fortunatus, Quartus, and Gaius; Greek names were Stephanas, Achaicus, and Erastus, and Jews were Aquila and Prisca. In 1 Cor. 12:13 Paul lists people within the church as being Jew, Greek, slave, and free (1 Cor. 7:20-24 teach us that some of the members of the church were slaves. The city may have been 60% slaves in the first century.)

The church had a multitude of problems that Paul addresses in 1 and 2 Corinthians. Some of these problems included sexual immorality, divorce, lawsuits among the members of the church, food sacrificed to idols, misuse of spiritual gifts in the church, and problems associated with the Lord's Supper. Some within the church were also questioning the authority of Paul.

### **Corinthian House Churches**

The church met in various houses around the city since there would have been no place for the church to meet publicly. Church buildings did not come into popularity until the 3rd century. Murphy O'Connor says that from the 14 males listed in the church in 1 and 2 Corinthians there were probably about 50 members in the church. It is probable that the whole church came together infrequently (Rom 16:23, 1 Cor. 14:23,) but usually met in smaller groups in the homes of members. The size of the homes simply did not allow for large crowds in one place.<sup>6</sup> So, we should envision a number of house churches that received Paul's correspondence instead of one large congregation.

Corinthian Christians would have met in the homes of more affluent members. From homes that have been excavated we know something of the structure of the homes. In the homes were located private rooms for sleeping, offices for the head of the house; a section probably for the women and children; apartments for slaves; rented rooms; on the street side a shop or two, perhaps a tavern or even a hotel, sometimes connecting with the atrium; and centrally located, a dining room.

Those who attended the church meeting entered the house through the door leading to the atrium. The atrium had a large opening in the roof that let in light and allowed rain to fall into a pool below. The pool) could have been used for washing hands before dinner and also for baptisms.

The church community gathered in a room where people could recline for a meal. The dining room itself would have been furnished with couches. After dinner, a more formal time of worship was held in the office or study. If the group was large, people stood in the atrium.<sup>7</sup>

### **A Proposed reconstruction of Paul's Relationship with the Church in Corinth**

1. Paul visits Corinth and plants the church (Acts 18).
2. Paul departs Corinth and goes to Ephesus.
3. While in Ephesus Paul writes the "Previous Letter" mentioned in 1 Cor. 5:9. We don't know many details, but he wrote to them about problems associated with sexual immorality.
4. Paul receives a letter requesting answers to questions from the church. About the same time Paul is brought news by some of Chloe's people concerning problems in the church. (1 Cor 1:1; 11:18)
5. Paul pens 1 Corinthians to deal with the various issues that troubled the church.

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<sup>6</sup> Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*. Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 2002. p. 182ff.

<sup>7</sup> Taken from <http://gbgm-umc.org/umw/corinthians/house.stm> on 24 July 2006.

6. (1:11; 11:18). Paul also writes in response to a letter brought to him by Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:15,17). This letter seems came to Paul in response to his previous letter.
7. Paul's painful visit
8. Paul's "severe letter"
9. The writing of 2 Corinthians
10. Paul's anticipated visit.





### Problems in the Corinthian Church

1. Church division
2. Sexual immorality
3. Lawsuits among believers
4. Questions about celibacy and marriage
5. Food sacrificed to idols
6. Mistreatment of the Lord's Supper
7. Misunderstanding of spiritual gifts
8. Orderly worship
9. Misunderstanding of the resurrection body
10. Financial giving

### Greeting 1:1-2

The author identifies himself in 1:1 and 16:21 as the apostle Paul who along with Sosthenes is sending this letter to the church in the city of Corinth. We do not know anything with certainty about Sosthenes though it is quite possible that he is the same Sosthenes who was the ruler of the Corinthian synagogue in Acts 18:17. From 1 Corinthians 16:8 we know that Paul wrote this letter from the city of Ephesus. The date of writing was about the year A.D. 55. Paul planted the church in Corinth during his second missionary journey as recorded in Acts 18.

Paul asserts his apostolic authority in 1:1 identifying his call from God. He wants his readers understand that he writes from a position of divine authority and therefore they should obey his words.

1. **How did Paul identify himself and why might it have been necessary for Paul to stress his apostolic credentials to the church at Corinth? (see also 1 Cor 4:3)**

### A Description of Christians 1:2-9

Paul addresses the the Corinthian Christians as 1) **the church of God** that is in Corinth. In spite of fact that the church was divided, immoral, unloving, and confused, they were still identifiable as the church.

2. **What is the church?**

3. **To whom does the church belong?**

Christians are 2) **a sanctified people**. The word sanctified means “*to be made holy*” and indicates a past action with continuing effect. To be made holy is to be separated from the world and to Christ. Sanctification indicates a changed position. It is a change from a position of sin and lostness to one of holiness and salvation.

Christians are sanctified by the blood of Christ. Hebrews 10:10 puts it this way: “*...we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*” The offering of Jesus Christ brings us to salvation when we are baptised into him. We are cleansed of sin, change our position to being in Christ, and are made holy.



Because of this new position we can one day stand before the Lord in judgement and hear him pronounce us **not guilty**. Our guilt has been borne by Christ as he died on the cross in our place. 1:8 says that Christ will “*sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.*”

#### 4. What difference does it make to your life to know that you have been sanctified?

Christians are **3) called** to be **4) saints**. The call came God through those who taught them the good news about Jesus. They are called by Jesus Christ through his Word. The word “saint” comes from the same root word as sanctified. A saint is one who is set apart to God so every Christian is a saint.



Christians are part of a **5) unique fellowship**. Verse 2 addresses the Corinthian Christians as those who are “*called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” There are many Christians in every corner of this world. The fact that we are not alone gives us great comfort. We are a part of a unique, large, and growing worldwide fellowship of all those who have obeyed the gospel. We are truly brothers and sisters.

#### 5. In what ways have you benefitted from the unique worldwide fellowship that we enjoy as Christians?

As Christians, **6) Christ is our Lord**. To call Christ our Lord is to say that he is our master and we are his servants. To call Christ Lord is to declare his ownership of us.

In verse 4, Paul makes one of the most beautiful statements that one Christian can say about another . . . *I give thanks to my God always for you ...*” Paul had taught the Corinthians the gospel and even though the church had many problems, he was thankful for their position in Christ. The Corinthian church had many deep and difficult problems and Paul is not commending them on their actions. He is instead voicing his thanksgiving to God concerning them.

Paul is thankful because the Corinthian Christians were **7) recipients of God’s grace**. God’s grace provides Christians with a salvation that is undeserved; however the grace of God here seems to refer specifically to the spiritual gifts that the Corinthian Christians had received.

Verses 5-7 teaches that Christians are **8) a people who have been given every necessary spiritual gift**. In these verses we read, “*that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge—even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— so that you are not lacking in any spiritual gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.*” Notice all the inclusive words used in this passage. Christians have everything necessary to live for Christ.

Though the Corinthian Christians had been spiritually destitute, now in Christ they were “enriched.” They were enriched in “all speech and all knowledge.” This may well refer to the gifts of speaking in tongues, prophecy, and knowledge that were available to some in the first century church. Paul will address the misuse of these gifts in chapters 12-14.

Though we may not have these spiritual gifts available to us today, God always provides everything necessary for his people to live abundant spiritual lives.

**6. In verse 8 we read that Christ will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of the Lord Jesus Christ. How does God sustain the Christian?**

**7. Is the end in 1:8 the end of time or the end of our lives?**



The Christian will be sustained “guiltless” or “blameless.” This means that there is no indictment that can be brought before the judge against the Christian. Because Jesus pays the penalty for our sin, there is no sin, infraction, or crime with which to charge the Christian.

Christians are **9) a waiting people**. We are waiting for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ. This refers to the Second Coming of Christ. The word wait has the idea of waiting patiently, but persistently, and with great anticipation.

**7. How does living in expectation of the Second Coming influence our lives?**

Christians are **9) a people who serve a faithful God**. Verse 9 emphatically states: “*God is faithful.*” As Christians are lives are built on the faithfulness of God. We can trust him completely. It is the faithful God who has called Christians to him and to his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.



## Battling Division 1:10-17; 3:1-9

There is nothing as difficult and demoralising to a Christian than to face division within the church. Division causes churches to be weak and members to be unproductive and unhappy. Division causes the church to lose all effective witness for Christ in this world.

**1. Were you ever a part of church that was divided? Describe how this affected you. How effective was the church in evangelism and other important matters?**

**2. How did Paul learn of the division in the Corinthian church? (1:11)**

One of the primary reasons Paul writes to the Corinthian church is to tackle the subject of division. He begins to address division here and does not finish the topic until the end of chapter four. While a group of Christians may not agree on everything every time, the church can and must live in unity. This was the great prayer of Jesus in John 17 and should be the prayer of every Christian.

In this lesson we will ask three questions about division and unity. Let's begin by reading 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 and 3:1-9.

### I. Why Does Division Exist?

The reason division exists is largely found in chapter three. Here we see three specific reasons why there was division in the Corinthian church.

**A. Members of the church were spiritually immature. (3:1-2)**

**3. How does Paul describe the Corinthian Christians in 3:1?**



Though there is no way to avoid beginning our lives in Christ as spiritual infants, it is necessary that Christians mature in their faith. The Corinthian Christians were still not ready for solid food. They were immature and they were not spiritual people. In 2:14-15 Paul contrasts “natural” and “spiritual” people. The natural person does not understand or accept the things of the Spirit of God while the spiritual person uses discernment and allows himself to be led by God's Spirit which lives within him.

**4. How can Christians develop spiritual maturity?**

**B. Members of the church were fleshly. (1:11; 3:3)**

To be fleshly is to be governed by the urges and desires of the body. Christians ought to be governed by a devotion to God and be led by the Spirit.

**5. What signs of fleshliness does Paul mention in 3:3?**

In 1:11, Paul says that it was reported that there was quarrelling in the church. The word quarrelling denotes discord, strife, arguments, anger, and contention. These quarrels led to division in the church. Quarrelling is one of works of the flesh (2 Cor. 12:20; Gal. 5:19-20; 1 Tim. 6:4).

**C. Members of the church had a divided or misdirected loyalty. (1:10-13; 3:4-5)****6. Describe the divided or misdirected loyalty found in 1:11,12 and 3:4,5?**

Our devotion must be to Jesus Christ and not to any man. Our allegiance is not to the evangelist or the elders. They are mere men who are frail, human, and capable of disappointing. Though we love and respect our leaders and our brothers and sisters, our ultimate loyalty and devotion belong to Christ alone. The Corinthian Christians had factions among them with some claiming to be loyal to Paul, others to Apollos, still others to Cephas, and finally some who claimed to be loyal to Christ.

At first reading we might conclude that those who said they followed Christ were the “right” ones, but that would be a misunderstanding of the problem. There was a contentious party spirit in the church and those who claimed to follow Christ were just another splinter group. In 1:10 the word translated as “division” is the Greek word “*schismata*” from which we get the English word “schism.”

**7. Define schism and answer what might cause people to place their allegiance in a man or a particular schism?**

The appeal to unity in the church is based on the Lordship of Christ. Paul stresses that he is only a man and was not crucified for them. They were baptised into the name (or by the authority of Christ) and not Paul. Paul expresses his gladness that he did not baptise many because that might have given them greater reason to boast in him. Our allegiance is to Christ alone who is our Saviour and Lord.

**II. What Can We Do to Avoid Division?****A. Recognise that God expects unity in the church. (1:10)**

In 1:10 Paul makes his appeal for unity on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. Any argument, bickering, fighting, or quarrelling in the church conflicts with the expressed will of God.

**8. Define the word “appeal” found in 1:10. (Note: The KJV uses the word “beseech” and the NASB translates the word as “exhort”)**

**B. Members of the church must stand in agreement. (1:10)**

Paul appeals to the Christians that **“all of you agree.”** The Greek is even more specific. Literally Christians are to **“say”** the same thing. How destructive it is to the witness of the church in this world if Christians are not saying the same thing. While every Christian is an individual, we can agree to stand in unity because we have one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one Bible, one message, one hope, and one goal. We ought to be able to say the same thing.

**C. Members of the church must get along. (1:10)**

It should be easy for church members to get along. We are to have no schisms. The Greek word *schismata* originally referred to ploughing the ground or tearing something into two parts. Webster’s dictionary defines the word “schism” this way: “a split or division in an organised group or society, especially a church.” What a sad commentary that church splits stand as one of the primary definitions for the word “schism.”

**III. What is the Description of a Unified Church?****A. A united body working together without seeking personal glory. (1:17; 3:6-9)****9. Describe the roles of Christian workers in the development of the church.****10. What is God’s role in the development of the church.**

It is Christ who died to purchase the church through his blood. He is Saviour and Lord and we are only his servants. Christians must not get caught up in who gets any credit since we are all working together to serve the Lord and build his church. We read in 1 Cor. 3:8, **“He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor.”** A crop will not grow without being planted, but likewise it will not grow without water and cultivation. All Christians who work together are necessary for evangelism and the health of the church. Any credit or any wages that are paid will come from the Lord and not from men. Our desire is only to serve Christ and to see his church prosper.

**B. Members of the church must understand that we work with God. (1:17; 3:9)**

Paul was sent to preach and not to baptise (1:17). This is not to downplay the essential role of baptism in conversion (Acts 2:38; Romans 6:4), but to say that while the proclamation of the gospel is vital, the one who administers baptism is not important. Further, it is Christ who sent Paul to share the gospel, not with clever words, but with the message of the cross.

In 3:9, we read this amazing fact: Christians are God’s **“fellow workers.”** What a wonderful truth that we work with God to accomplish his will of reaching this lost world (Mark 16:20; 2 Cor 5:20) and that we are **“God’s field”** and **“God’s building.”** We work with him to build the church and we are a part of the church he is building. It should be our great hope and great labour to see a church that is mature, united, and active in sharing the gospel.





## The Message of the Cross 1:18-31

In a recent survey article Josh McDowell says that *“while 51 percent of evangelical Christians did not believe in absolute truth in an earlier survey, the percentage escalated to 62 in 1994. In 1999, it jumped to 78 percent. “You know what it is now?” asked McDowell. “One of the most staggering statistics in history of the church... 91 percent said there is no absolute truth apart from myself.”* The article goes on to describe a lowered morality that is present today even amongst those who call themselves Christians; especially because of the pervasive influence of the internet where 2.5 billion pornographic emails are circulated each day.<sup>1</sup>

In 2006, former president of Kentucky Christian College, Dr. Keith Keeran described trends that were impacting incoming students at the school: 1) Declining level of Bible knowledge. Declining regard for Biblical authority. 2) Decline in spiritual and moral values including lower expectations of high moral standards in top leadership positions. An inability to clearly identify "sin." 3) Declining family values despite popular rhetoric. Growing breakdown of the family unit. 4) Increasing potential for legal challenges to Christian values. Increasing incidence of anti-Christian bias. 5) Rising student demand for personal counselling. Dr. Keeran was writing from the perspective of a Bible college president looking at incoming students who should represent the "cream of the crop" morally, ethically, and spiritually.

The Church today has some serious problems. We have been influenced by the world. Rather than being the salt of the earth and the light of the world which allows us to influence the world, we have allowed the characteristics of the world to dilute the purity of the church. We see problems within the church today which weren't even serious problems within the lives of non-Christians fifty years ago. Sure, the church is better than the world, but the church is not as strong morally or spiritually as it was a generation ago and it is constantly slipping.

The answer to the declining morality in the world and in the church is the message of the cross. It is a message which can change the world. Read now 1 Corinthians 1:18-31.

Verse 18 begins with the word “for” showing it is the end result of what was written in the previous verses; that is the power of salvation is in the cross not in eloquent or wise speech. Let us now look at three lessons surrounding the message of the cross.

### **I. The Message of the Cross Seems Foolish to the World**

- 1. Describe the reaction of the world to the cross from verses 18; 22-23.**
- 2. Describe the reaction to the cross you have seen from people in the world.**



<sup>1</sup> <http://www.christianpost.com/news/apologist-josh-mcdowell-internet-the-greatest-threat-to-christians-52382/>

The message of the cross is synonymous with the gospel. Death is the necessary penalty for every person since the wages of sin is death (Rom 3:23), but on the cross Christ died in our place as an atoning sacrifice for our sin. The cross, the most hideous instrument of death, became a beacon of hope and life.

To the Jews the cross was a stumbling block. They viewed the cross as shameful. To die on a cross was the worst death possible reserved for the vilest of criminals. They believed that to die on a cross showed that one was under God's curse. To think that the Messiah would come and die on a cross was scandalous and unbelievable.

The Corinthians, with their Greek background, lived in a world where thought and reason were important. They had no faith in God. They were masters of their own destiny. The Corinthians loved to speculate and debate various subjects. They believed themselves capable of figuring out the difficulties and important questions about life. Human reason was sufficient to make the right choice in any decision. They needed rational evidence for what they believed before they would believe it. To them the message of the cross was unbelievable, irrational, and foolish.



The Greek word used for foolishness is *moria*. It is the word from which we get the English word moron and means foolish, absurd, irrational, or filled with nonsense. In today's world the message of the cross continues to be seen as foolishness or even moronic by many.

### 3. Why do many people see the cross as foolish?

## II. The Message of the Cross Is Powerful to the Christian

### 4. How does Paul describe the message of the cross for the Christian in 1:18 and 1:24?

In verse 18, Paul writes about those who are “being saved” showing salvation as a process. Christ paid our penalty on the cross, those who accept his offer of grace by faith are baptised into him, and await their final reward.

In **verse 20** Paul asks four questions, *“Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”* Throughout history man has always thought himself quite intelligent and independent of the need for God. Today, scholars, philosophers, scientists, and politicians think they have answers to modern life, but do they? Are we any better off than our parents and grandparents? There have been advances in medicine, but people still die. There is more crime and greater fear than in past generations. We are wealthy, but unsatisfied. Never before have so many people needed counselling. We have not been able to eliminate physical abuse, alcoholism, or drug use from society. Many people are profoundly lonely and unhappy. The answer to all these problems is in the message of the cross. It is the message of the cross that brings hope and joy and POWER to our lives.



Salvation comes to believers through the “folly” of preaching. The world views the message of salvation made possible by the cross of Christ to be folly (1:21). Jews wanted signs (miracles) while the Greeks wanted wisdom (a philosophically satisfying message), perhaps like what had come from Plato, Socrates, and Aristotle. Instead the gospel offered the message of a crucified Lord.



5. What does 1:26 tell us about the background of the Corinthian Christians?
6. How did God shame the wise with what is foolish and the strong with what is weak?
7. Read 1:29-31 and describe how a Christian should and should not boast.

### **III. The Message of the Cross Should Motivate Christians to Evangelism**

The word “perishing” in 1:18 should sear our consciences. Our world is lost and our world is perishing. Many of our friends, neighbours, family members, and co-workers are dying without hope.

8. What pictures come to your mind when you think of the word “perishing?”

This passage provides us with two of the most important lessons in evangelism. **First, people come to know Christ through the proclamation of the gospel.** While this may seem like the most obvious statement about evangelism, Christians can act as if they don’t believe it is true.

9. What does 1:21 say leads people to salvation?

Bible preaching, Bible teaching, and Bible study still lead people to Christ. Gimmicks and programs are not what lead to salvation. Peoples lives are changed by the message of the cross. We need to be active in sharing the message of the cross as found in the Bible.

**Second, the message of the cross is still powerful.** You do not need to be a scholar to share the message of the cross. You do not need to be the smoothest speaker to share the message of the cross, because the power of the cross is in the message not the messenger (1 Cor 1:17). We do not lead people to Christ by our own abilities, or our personality, or our programs. People are won to Christ through the message of the cross.



Christians sometimes try to “dress up” the gospel message in an attempt make it seem more relevant or acceptable to our modern world. We can act as if we believe people will respond to the gospel only if we make it glossy enough and professional enough and palatable enough.

10. What are some ways in which our methods could obscure God’s message?
11. How has the message of the cross changed your life and how can it change the lives of people in this world?



## Proclaiming Christ Crucified 2:1-16

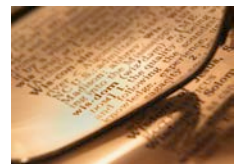
In the previous lesson we learned that the message of the cross is foolishness to the world, but the power of God to the Christian. We also were reminded that the power of the cross is not in the messenger, but in the message. In chapter two, Paul will expand on these thoughts.

First, let's look at how Paul describes his own ministry and his method of preaching. (1 Cor. 2:1-5)

### **I. Paul's Preaching is not Based on the Wisdom of Men**

#### **1. How does 2 Cor. 10:10 describe Paul's appearance and speaking ability?**

In 1 Cor. 2:1, Paul says that he did not come with "lofty speech" or "wisdom." One who spoke with "lofty speech" would have strong oratory skills. The Greeks were impressed with fancy speech and their own philosophers could wax eloquently, but Paul's speech was different. His speech is common and understandable and he did not try to "dress up" his preaching in a way that would impress his listeners. The word "wisdom" indicates speech that would be philosophically enticing to the Greeks. As in the previous chapter, the power of the cross is in the message and not the messenger.



What Paul did proclaim was the "testimony of God" which would have included all that God had done to make salvation possible to the Corinthians (and all others).

In verse 2, we read that Paul had made the decision "to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." Paul deliberately, intently, and rationally made the decision about how he would preach to the Corinthians. "To know nothing" indicates that Paul was not interested in the orators, philosophers, or poets of the Corinthians. He was not interested in their architecture or statues and he had no interest in their laws and customs. Paul's only interest was to preach "Jesus Christ and him crucified" which included the good news of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus along with how he brings salvation to all who obey and follow him.<sup>1</sup>

#### **2. Why does Paul say he came in "weakness, fear, and much trembling?" (See also Acts 18:1-12 (especially 18:9-10); Gal. 4:13,14; 2 Cor. 10:10; 12:7)**

#### **3. Describe Paul's preaching (2:4)**

#### **4. Why did Paul employ the methods he used in his preaching? (2:5)**

<sup>1</sup>Reese, Gareth L. New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians. Scripture Exposition Books: Moberly, MO, 2004, p. 64-65.

## II. The Wisdom of this World Comes to Nothing

Since the creation of man wisdom has been sought. Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil because they wanted to gain wisdom. They wanted to know what God knew. Solomon asked God in 1 Kings 3 for wisdom to rule Israel and God granted his request. Even today Solomon is best known for his great wisdom. People still want to gain wisdom today. They want to know how to make judgments. They want the ability to make wise decisions. The most accessed sites on the internet are search engines; especially Google. This is because people are constantly and relentlessly in search of information.

There are wide differences of opinion on how a person can best gain wisdom. Yoga, mysticism, and secular humanism teach that they can lead to wisdom. Universities promise to shape your mind into something greater than it is. Hinduism, and even American Indian shamanism are popularly studied today as ways to gain wisdom.

People may desire wisdom, but we see they have failed as crime continues to increase, people are unhappy, and the world is confused. Wisdom has escaped their grasp. Christians think differently about wisdom than non-Christians. In fact, we cannot think the same way. 1 Cor. 2:6-16 teaches us about true wisdom and it explains why we cannot think the same as people in the world.

### 5. Who received the wisdom that Paul taught? (2:6)

### 6. What will become of the wisdom and the rulers of this age? (2:6)

The apostle Paul wrote nearly 2000 years ago, but it sounds like he has been reading one of our newspapers or watching the ABC. The wisdom of this age and the rulers of this age are coming to nothing.

Experts abound in our world today. Monthly magazines feature articles on how to lose weight, yet statistics show that Australians are heavier than ever before. Experts tell us how to build better relationships while marriages are dissolving all around us at an alarming rate. Experts tell us how to find love, but our world is a lonely place. Communication has never been easier with a telephone in every home, a mobile phone in almost everyone's possession, email and Facebook at everyone's fingertips, but with all these communication tools people are more disconnected from others than ever before; with families failing to talk, and people so busy that there is no time to develop deep relationships. Sometimes the wisdom of this world does not seem so very wise.



### 7. Why don't people in this world readily accept the wisdom of God? (2:14)

Non Christian people are incapable of understanding spiritual matters as we do because they do not have the Spirit of God dwelling within them. We should not be surprised when our non-Christian friends and neighbours do not understand us. We should not be surprised when our school teachers try to lead us to inaccurate conclusions about the creation and morality. We should not be surprised by the way in which people around us live.

### **III. The Wisdom of God is Revealed to us by His Spirit**

#### **8. How is God's wisdom described in 2:7?**

The word “impart” in verses 7 and 13 (sometimes translated as revealed) tells us that the wisdom we receive as Christians comes supernaturally. The “we” of verse 7 refers to the apostles as the Spirit guided and inspired their writings. So, God's supernatural revelation comes to Christians through the prophets and apostles by the power and inspiration of the Holy Spirit. To say that the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God tells us that nothing is hidden from the Holy Spirit.

#### **9. What is the meaning of 2:11?**

Why does Paul call God's wisdom “secret?” Before God created the world He knew that man would sin and that man would need to be redeemed. God knew Jesus would have to die even before he created the world, but people did not understand God's plan.

The prophets spoke of the coming of the Messiah throughout the Old Testament, but no one knew the exact details of His coming. They prophesied many things that are easy for us to understand now that they have come to pass, but they proved to be impossible to understand previously. For these people this wisdom was hidden or secret.

The rulers in New Testament times did not understand this “mystery” or the “secret wisdom.” They went so far as to “crucify the Lord of glory” according to verse 8. Verse 9 goes on to teach, “But, as it is written, ‘What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him.’”

#### **10. What has God prepared for those who love him?**

The point Paul is making is that man cannot discover God through his senses. We cannot discover God's wisdom through our eyesight or hearing or smelling or feeling or tasting. Try as we might we cannot discover God in any way except through his revelation of himself to us. Thanks be to God that He has revealed Himself to us.

#### **11. How has God revealed his wisdom to Christians? (2:10)**

#### **12. How has God spoken to us by his Spirit? (2 Peter 1:20-21)**

We cannot discover God's wisdom through our senses or our feelings, but we can discover it through his Word. Too many times people want to base spiritual decisions on feeling, but our feelings deceive us.

#### **13. What do 1 Cor. 2:12-13 and Acts 2:38 teach about the Holy Spirit?**

The one who is spiritual (1:15) is able to make wise decisions based on truth while the natural man cannot understand him. The non-Christians in Corinth thought themselves wise, but they were in no position to instruct God; on the contrary it is the Christian who knows the mind of Christ as they are led by his Spirit and are taught through his revealed Word.



## Living a Life of Significance 3:10-17

In the first nine verses of 1 Cor. 3, Paul has been writing about the terrible problem of division in the church. Division had stunted the growth of the Corinthian Christians and prevented them from moving on to solid spiritual food. They lived with jealousy and strife in a manner that Paul called fleshly. While they argued over who they would follow (Paul, Apollos, Peter, or Jesus), Paul reminds them that any growth that comes to the church is from the blessing of God.

In this lesson, we will see how Paul instructs Christians to live and within these teachings we see keys to building a life of significance. (1 Cor. 3:10-17)

### **I. If You Want to Live a Life of Significance, Use Your Gifts to the Build the Church**

In 3:10, Paul uses the word “grace” to describe the gifts that God had given him. These gifts or “grace” were abilities that enabled Paul to accomplish those tasks that God had entrusted to him.

Paul was empowered by the Holy Spirit in extraordinary ways as an apostle, and while we may not have these same gifts today, Christians are blessed by God with talents that they can use for his service. Some in church are blessed with musical abilities, others can write or draw, and still others are blessed with the grace of wise counsel, encouragement, teaching, or great compassion. Some are good at planning, some at working with children, while still others excel in hospitality.

Paul was an expert church builder who planted churches in his missionary endeavours. Paul spent 18 months in Corinth where he preached and established the congregation while others followed and built upon what Paul started. In Corinth it was Apollos who followed Paul while in Ephesus it was Timothy. It is clear that Paul accepted this as the natural order of church building.

In 1 Cor. 3:5-8 Paul wrote that each person had been assigned a task to do by God. Paul was given the job to plant the seed, Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow.



#### **1. What does Paul call himself in 3:10 and why does he use this description?**

#### **2. What foundation did Paul lay and how did he lay it? (3:10-11; 2:1-5)**

In this building (the church at Corinth), Paul serves as the master builder who builds on the foundation of Jesus Christ and him crucified. Others like Apollos continue to build on the foundation that has been laid. Likewise today we can live lives of significance as we work together to build the church on the foundation of Jesus Christ using the blueprint God has given to us in his revealed Word.



## **II. If You Want to Live a Life of Significance, Consider the Eternal Benefits of Church Building**

Much of our time is spent on insignificant projects. These ventures or undertakings have no lasting value because one day they will be burned and will cease to exist. Paul points this out in verses 12-15.

There has been some controversy about what Paul means in these verses. What are these items of gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, and straw? Some say they are people since 3:9 makes it clear that Christians are the building. Those who take this view believe the verse means that some people who are led to Christ will remain faithful while others will not. If one led to Christ falls away and is lost the one who taught him does not lose his reward.

Others believe that these items of gold, silver, and precious stones refer to those things we do for Christ and that the wood, hay, and straw are our other accomplishments on this earth. All we do here will be lost, but those things that we do for Christ will endure for eternity.

Another way to interpret these verses is to say that the gold, silver, and precious stones, wood, hay and straw refer to building methods employed by the Christian worker with the gold, silver, and precious stones representing the power of God and the wood, hay, and straw representing the wisdom of men.

### **3. What is “the Day” in 3:13? (See also 1 Cor. 1:18; 5:5; 2 Cor. 1:14; 1 Thess. 5:1-8)**



### **4. How will each man’s work be tested? (3:13)**

### **5. What will happen to the man whose work survives the fire? (3:14; 1 Thess. 2:19-20)**

### **6. What happens to the man whose work is destroyed by the fire? (3:15)**

### **7. Do these verses (3:8, 11-15) teach that there are levels of reward in heaven?**

### **8. What does this passage teach about our methods of church planting and building?**

Verse 10 contains the warning to those who build on the foundation or work with the church that they are personally responsible for how they build. Therefore they must be careful not to cause division, and they must build on Jesus Christ instead of utilising “plausible words of wisdom” (2:2-3). They must build faithfully using the blueprint for the church that God has provided within his Word.

Those Christian workers who proclaim faithfully “Jesus Christ and him crucified” will produce a work that leads men and women to Christ. At the final judgment their work will continue to exist as men and women spend eternity with the Lord in heaven (1 Thess 2:19).

The teacher who builds on man’s wisdom will find that his work does not endure and is lost. Here Paul does not have in mind false teachers, but rather teachers who through ignorance or carelessness utilise methods that are not grounded solely in Jesus Christ and him crucified.

### **III. If You Want to Live a Life of Significance, Recognise the Seriousness of Church Building**

What we have already covered in this lesson should convince us of the seriousness of church building, but the importance is stressed in another way in verses 16-17 where Paul writes, *“Do you not know that you are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.”* Later in 1 Cor. 6 Paul will write that a Christian's personal body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, but here he is talking about the congregation at Corinth. The church is a temple of God and anyone who destroys the church will be destroyed themselves.

Paul has turned his attention from church leaders to the congregation. The word “you” in verses 16-17 is plural. He is now speaking directly to the members of the church at Corinth. The word temple is the Greek word *naos* which “is the place where the true God reveals His presence, and bestows his blessings and is worshipped.”<sup>1</sup> A congregation of Christians is “a temple” and here God's Spirit dwells.

The word translated as destroy means to bring harm, corruption, damage, or defilement. Earlier Paul had written about the sin of division which could greatly harm the church. False doctrine, selfish motivations, and the desire for power could also harm the church.

**8. What are some other ways one might destroy God's temple?**

**9. What penalty is attached to destroying God's temple?**

**10. How is God's temple described in 3:17 and what does this mean?**

**11. Reflection question: Consider your life today. What are you doing to build the church? What could you do to make your life more significant for Christ?**

Nothing could be of greater significance than using our lives to lead men and women to Jesus Christ. This is the only endeavour we can undertake that will last forever. Let us build using the grace that God has given each of us, building only on the foundation of Jesus Christ according to what is recorded within the Bible, and let us do all we can to promote growth, spiritual health, and unity in the church.

<sup>1</sup>Reese, Gareth L. New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians. Scripture Exposition Books: Moberly, MO, 2004, p. 112.





## Making a Self Assessment -- 1 Corinthians 3:18-23

Paul began chapter three speaking about division in the church and concluded in verse 17 that God would bring to destruction anyone who destroys the church. The Corinthian Christians must be involved in church building; not church destroying. Their labours in church building should involve the use of their gifts as they considered the eternal benefits of church building and as they contemplated its seriousness.

1 Corinthians 3:18-23 serve as a transition from Paul's thoughts about division in the previous verses and his comments on leadership beginning in chapter 4. In these verses Paul addresses the topic of how a Christian should think about himself. (These verses closely mirror Paul's thoughts in 1 Cor. 1:18-31).

### **I. Think Honestly**

Verse 18 begins with a strong imperative: "*Let no one deceive himself.*" The tense of this phrase in the original language indicates that this is a command for the Corinthian Christians to stop doing something that they were doing. They had been and still were in the process of deceiving themselves. They had convinced themselves of untruth. Apparently the Corinthian Christians had a lofty view of themselves and the leaders of their faction within the congregation. They thought themselves right and all others wrong. Self deception may be the most common type of deception.

- 1. How were the Galatians deceiving themselves? (Gal. 6:7-8)**
- 2. List some examples of how people deceive themselves today.**
- 3. Describe some reasons why people deceive themselves.**

### **II. Consider the Origin of Your Wisdom**

In the second phrase of verse 18 we get to the heart of the problem: the self-deception was causing the disunity within the Corinthian congregation. Human wisdom caused the Corinthian Christians to measure one teacher against another and to choose to follow the one they reasoned to be superior. The "wisdom" they used came from "this age" indicating that it was humanly derived. Using the wisdom of the non-Christian world around them was not an indication of real wisdom, but rather showed them to be ignorant in the most important and true wisdom.



This passage points us back to the end of chapter one where Paul teaches that the “*word of the cross is folly*” to the unsaved and that God will “*destroy the wisdom of the wise.*” Human wisdom and God’s wisdom are very different. Human wisdom brought disunity by promoting factions in the church.

The way that one becomes “wise” is to become a “fool” according to verse 18. Paul is teaching that if a person depends on the wisdom that is found in the world, he will fail. Instead, true wisdom has its origin in God and in his instruction; which the world finds foolish.

#### Biblical Paradoxes

1 Cor. 3:18 -- To become wise, one must become a fool.

Matt. 10:39 -- To find your life, you must lose it.

Matt. 20:26 -- To become great, you must become a servant.

2 Cor. 12:10 -- When I am weak, I am strong

#### 4. How does one become a fool so that they might become wise?

#### 5. How does God regard the wisdom of the world?

Paul quotes from Job 5:13 in verse 19: “*He catches the wise in their craftiness.*” No matter how wise a man might believe himself to be, he is “caught” by God who knows all. This verse goes so far as to say that it is man’s own craftiness that leads to his capture. The very wisdom in which he revels brings him to ruin.

Next Paul quotes Psalm 94:11: “*The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile.*” Again we are reminded that nothing is hidden from God and nothing escapes the mind of God (even to the thoughts of a man). Man’s wisdom is futile or useless because it has no power and leads to destruction.

### III. Be Careful About Your Boasting

In verse 21 Paul gives another imperative: “*Let no one boast in men.*” As in verse 18, the grammar of the original language indicates they were to stop the boasting they were still doing. Clearly the boasting was about their factions as one claimed to follow Paul, another Apollos, and another Cephas (see also 1 Cor. 1:12).

#### 6. What is boasting?

#### 7. What might have prompted the Corinthians to boast in “men?”

#### 8. Is it ever right to boast? (1:31)

Boasting in their relationship to certain men was in fact limiting the blessings available to them. The last phrase of verse 21 says, “*For all things are yours.*” They could lay claim to every promise of God, every good and perfect gift from God was theirs, and no promise or revelation was for the exclusive use of any faction. No teacher could give them a blessing from God that was not available to every Christian. Every teacher (Paul, Apollos, and Cephas) had something significant to share, the world (God’s creation) was available for all to enjoy, life was theirs to live in abundance, death held no terror for they would go to be with the Lord, and all blessings present or future were theirs.

#### **IV. Remember Whose You Are**

The greatest self-assessment the Corinthian Christians needed to make was to see themselves as a possession of Christ. Paul writes in verse 23, *“and you are Christ’s.”* No one should align themselves with any Bible teacher or any leader against another. Christians do not belong to earthly leaders, no matter how much we love them or they love us. Christians belong only to Christ.



In 1 Cor. 1:12, some in the church said, *“I follow Paul,”* another *“I follow Apollos,”* still another said *“I follow Cephas,”* and finally some said, *“I follow Christ.”* Paul now sets the record straight. You do not belong to any man or to any faction; you belong to Christ.

#### **9. What does it mean to belong to Christ?**

Paul is not teaching that God the Father is superior to Christ when he says *“and Christ is God’s,”* but Christ did submit himself to the Father while on earth to accomplish his will.

Each Christian should assess himself and his relationship with Christ. We should honestly evaluate our lives and not deceive ourselves. We should determine to follow the wisdom of God as revealed to us in his word and refuse to follow any ungodly wisdom found in this world. We ought to be careful about our boasting; not promoting or following any man, but boasting only in God and what he has done. And finally we should always remember that we belong to Christ. He is our Lord and he is our Saviour.



## A Lesson on Leadership -- 1 Corinthians 4:1-5

The division in the church at Corinth had at the core worldly wisdom that was used to place one teacher above another teacher. Paul has just rebuked the Corinthians in the previous verses calling on them to think honestly about themselves and their leaders, to consider the origin of their wisdom, to be careful about their boasting, and to remember that they belonged to Christ and not to a human leader.

Paul turns his attention to himself (and by extension other leaders like Peter and Apollos) to provide teaching about how a teacher should regard themselves and how the Corinthians should regard their leaders.

### I. Leaders are Servants

Paul begins chapter four with the instruction to regard himself, Peter, and Apollos first as **servants**. The word “*regard*” calls on Christians to think about their leaders and to have a reasonable estimate of them.

The most common words for servant in the New Testament are the words *diakonos* which means servant or minister and *doulos* which is usually translated as servant or slave. The word Paul uses in verse one is the word *hyperetes* and means attendant or under-rower. The word picture is of a servant in the lower regions of a large ship who rows beneath the passengers above. Under-rowers were unnamed and unseen, but were vital to the navigation of the ship. The multiple rowers had to undertake the backbreaking work together and laboured under the direction of the captain.



In this illustration of a servant, the leaders were the under-rowers, the captain was Christ, and the ship was the church. We do note that they were servants “*of Christ*.” They laboured under his direction, for his purposes, to build his church. Under-rowers do not set the direction, but give their effort to carry out the captain’s course.

1. Describe what it must have been like to have been an under-rower in a first-century Greek ship.
2. What are some reasons why Paul might describe himself as an under-rower?
3. How does this definition of leadership contradict the factions being set up by the Corinthians?

## **II. Leaders are Stewards**

A *steward* was responsible for a master's house and belongings, but he was not the owner of the house or belongings. For Paul to call himself a steward indicates that he had a great responsibility to guard and use what had been entrusted to him, but that he was not the owner or originator of what had been entrusted to him. Paul was a steward of the "*mysteries of God.*"

**4. Would you say that a steward was a position of great responsibility? Why or why not?**

**5. To whom was a steward subordinate?**

When the Bible uses the word "mystery" it refers to a truth that cannot be known except by a revelation from God. These mysteries are undiscoverable by human efforts or reasoning. Man cannot know the method whereby he might find salvation apart from the direct instruction from God through his Word.

**6. Name some of the "mysteries of God."**

## **III. Leaders are to be Faithful**

Perhaps the most important quality of a steward is faithfulness or trustworthiness. The steward is to be "found" faithful indicating that an examination has taken place and the conclusion has been reached that the steward has handled those things that have been entrusted to him in a trustworthy, honest, and reliable manner.

**7. To whom was a steward to be found faithful?**

**8. What would constitute faithfulness as a teacher or leader in the church?**

## **IV. Leaders Will be Judged by God**

The judge of whether or not Paul (or any other leader) was to be found faithful was God alone. In fact, Paul makes the following declarations:

- A. It really didn't matter if the Corinthians judged him as faithful
- B. It really didn't matter if a human court found him innocent or guilty
- C. It really didn't matter how Paul judged himself
- D. It really does matter how God judges.



The Corinthian Christians had been judging between Paul, and Apollos, and Peter, but Paul declares in verse 5 that they are not to pronounce judgment before time. The tense of the original language indicates that he is instructing them to stop doing something they were in the process of doing. Stop judging! The time in verse 5 refers to the Second Coming and the final judgment.

**9. What if any lessons do we learn in 1 Cor. 4:4 that could be applied to those who claim to let their conscience be their guide?**

**10. 1 Cor. 4:5 along with Matt. 7:1 are used by some to claim we cannot make any judgement of others as Christians. Read 1 Cor. 5:5, and 1 John 4:1 and discuss how we can reconcile their teachings.**

#### **V. Lessons Concerning the Judgment**

The word “therefore” in verse 5 tells us that Paul is bringing this particular thought to a close. He has given reasons why making judgements about leaders is improper and then gives three teachings concerning the judgment.

1. God will bring to light things hidden in darkness (See also Hebrews 4:13)
2. God will disclose the purposes of the heart
3. God will provide the commendation.

**11. What do the teachings about the judgement above tell us about God?**

**12. What is meant by “the purposes of the heart?”**

**13. Why is God alone capable to flawless judgement?**





## The Call for Church Unity -- 1 Corinthians 4:6-21

Paul has spent the past five verses talking about the role of leaders and how they should be viewed by the congregation. Leaders are servants and stewards, they are called to faithfulness, and they will be judged by God alone. Now Paul's attention is turned directly to the Corinthian congregation with an impassioned call for unity. He does this by warning them not to be arrogant, rebuking them strongly, and admonishing them as a spiritual father.

### **I. A Warning Against Arrogance**

Previously in 1 Corinthians, Paul had described himself and Apollos as stewards, servants, under-rowers, farmers, and builders. He and Apollos are humble examples that the Corinthians should imitate. He instructs the Corinthians not to ***“go beyond what is written”*** meaning that their self-assessment should be in accordance with what is taught in Scripture. Paul has demonstrated his faith in Scripture by quoting the Old Testament in four places (1:19, 31; 3:19, 20). He warns the church not to be ***“puffed up”*** or arrogant. If they follow Scripture they will not be filled with pride and they will avoid the partisan factions that had been harming the church.

The Corinthian Christians had no reason to boast in self because all they had comes from God. This lesson is driven home by three questions: 1) *For who sees anything different in you?* -- All Christians are gifted differently by God. 2) *What do you have that you did not receive?* -- No Christian should feel superior to another because all that anyone has comes from God. 3) *If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?* -- Again the Corinthian Christians had no reason to boast because God had provided all they had.

1. **How did Paul and Apollos demonstrate their own lack of arrogance and pride?**
2. **What are some of the reasons why Christians boast and what reasons can you provide to prove this is wrong?**

### **II. A Sarcastic Rebuke**

3. **What is sarcasm and what is its purpose?**

Verse 8 is a continuation of Paul's previous thought about being “puffed up” as he now attacks the arrogance of the Corinthian Christians with a series of sarcastic questions. Through these questions Paul forcefully challenges the Corinthians to look at themselves and the divisive way in which they have been behaving.



#### 4. What sarcastic questions does Paul ask in verse 8 and what is the purpose of these questions?

If the Corinthian Christians were what they thought they were (kings) then Paul would like to reign along with them and if they had possessed the spiritual maturity and blessings they thought they did then Paul would have been pleased for them and would want to be like them.

Paul viewed himself and the other apostles, not as kings, but far differently as he describes in 9-13. The word translated as **“exhibited”** means “to display as on a stage, or in an amphitheater, to place in public view -- before the eyes of the world.”<sup>1</sup> They were as men sentenced to death and history teaches that every apostle besides John (who died in exile) was martyred. The world, angels, and men looked on as the apostles suffered humility and execution.



#### 5. What three ironic or sarcastic statements does Paul make in verse 10 and what do they mean?

a.

b.

c.

The apostles were men of acquainted with suffering as Paul describes in verse 11-13. They were, even as Paul wrote, going without proper nourishment and clothing as they traveled about (compare 2 Corinthians 11:27). They were **“buffeted”** or beaten severely and had no homes. Even as they endured such difficulty it was necessary for them to work with their hands to provide as best they could for their own needs. When persecuted the apostles they responded with grace.

#### 6. How did the apostles react to being reviled, persecuted, and slandered?

#### 7. According to verse 13, how did the world view the apostles?

### **III. A Fatherly Admonishment**

Lest we think that Paul is overly harsh in his writing, we see his heart of love in verse 14 and following. His desire was not to make the Corinthian Christians ashamed, but to bring a change in their behaviour.

#### 8. How does Paul refer to the Corinthians in verse 14?

In the remainder of the chapter shows how Paul admonishes, teaches, and encourages the Corinthian Christians with the great hope that they might change their arrogant attitudes and develop Christian unity.

**First is a Warning**

Paul admonishes (sternly corrects while showing the proper course of action) the church in Corinth. Paul's purpose was not to bring sorrow and shame, but to see corrected action. The previous verses in chapter four are also a part of the warning or admonishment.

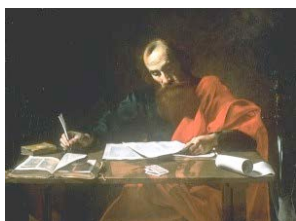
**Second, is the Example of a Spiritual Father**

Paul describes how he serves as an example to the church. He is not their guide or tutor, but their father. Any Christian teacher who provided Biblical instruction could be a tutor, but a person could have only one father. Though tutors may be loved, respected, and important to one's spiritual growth, only one person could be a spiritual father; the one who introduced them to Christ. Paul was the spiritual father of all the Corinthians since he planted the church in Corinth (vs. 15).

As an example Paul encourages the Corinthian Christians to imitate him. He is not trying to further develop factions in the church, but to encourage these Christians to live like he lived.

**Third, is the Provision for Further Teaching**

Timothy was sent to the church in Corinth (Acts 19:22) to provide additional teaching and admonishment. Timothy was Paul's beloved son in the Lord because he had led Timothy to Christ. Timothy was "*faithful*" so Paul had confidence in both his ability and his integrity. Timothy's role would be to remind the Corinthians of how Paul lived among them as an apostle and preacher of the gospel and to remind the Corinthians of what Paul had taught.

**Fourth, is the Hope of a Future Visit**

Paul wanted to come to them after Pentecost (1 Cor. 16:8), but that did not happen (2 Cor. 1:15ff). We note that Paul places his desire to visit within the scope of God's will. "Our best plans are sometimes vetoed by the Lord when doors are closed, finances are exhausted, sickness intervenes, projects are not in a condition to be abandoned, obligations to others must be fulfilled, etc, etc."<sup>2</sup>

**9. Why would the belief that Paul was not coming cause some to be arrogant? (vs. 18)**

**10. What is the difference between "talk" and "power" in verses 19-20 and where should this power be evident?**

**11. What two possibilities existed for how Paul would react to the Corinthians when he visited and what would determine which he would choose?**

Unity is vital in the church and all Christians must avoid any attitude of arrogance by realising that all good things come from God and not self. Christians must be ready to change behaviour when admonished truthfully from Scripture. Unity will be developed as Christians plant their lives and faith firmly in the Scriptures living lives that powerfully attest to faithfulness in God's Kingdom.



## Caring Enough to Discipline -- 1 Corinthians 5:1-13

Chapter five introduces the new subject of how the church responds to a Christian brother who is caught up sexual immorality. These topics are relevant because we live in an age where most sexual relationships are viewed as acceptable in the world and by even many in the church. The idea of church discipline to deal with unrepentant sin is biblical and necessary, but generally neglected. While the idea of discipline is unpleasant it is sometimes essential to for the purity of the church and the restoration of the Christian who is caught up in sin.

The specific problem in the Corinthian church is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 5:1, ***“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife.”*** The word translated as “reported” carries the idea of an accurate and well known account. The word translated “sexual immorality” is the Greek word “*porneia*” which covers all types of sexual sin. What was going on in Corinth was considered so perverse that even the non-Christian world around them did not tolerate this type of conduct.

The woman in 1 Cor. 5 was almost certainly the stepmother of the man in verse 1 since she is not called his mother. The relationship of the man and his stepmother would have been considered incest and was illegal in the Roman world and condemned under Jewish law (Leviticus 18:6-18; Deuteronomy 22:30) carrying with it the penalty of death. The sinning man was member of the church and it is quite possible his father was a Christian and still living (2 Cor. 7:12). We can conclude that his stepmother was not a Christian since she is not mentioned in the disciplinary action. The word ***“has”*** in verse one is important because it indicates the sin had been going on for some time and it was still happening.

Perversely the church was pleased with their tolerance. Paul rebukes them in verse 2 as ***“arrogant.”*** They had been proud of their wisdom which was worldly and now they are proud of their tolerance which also shows their worldliness.

### **I. Discipline is Needed to Protect the Church**

The reason the church needs to react quickly and strongly to sexual immorality is because the church is at risk. If sin is allowed to continue unchallenged in the church it will affect the entire body of Christ. Paul puts it this way in verse 6, ***“Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”***

**1. How does leaven work and how does this illustrate the potential danger of sexual immorality in the church?**

**2. How can we be sure that the church in Corinth was aware of the sin in their midst?**



The teaching is clear: “The church must deal with sin or the entire church can be harmed. The nature of sin is to grow, infest, spread, and corrupt. Sin needs to be removed from the church so that the entire church is not brought to ruin.



In verses 7 and 8, the yeast is sin and this sin has the potential to work through and destroy the entire church. As with yeast, a small amount has a far reaching influence. In Christ, Christians have been forgiven and cleansed of the sin that marked their old lives. Christ died to pay for sin so that Christians become a new batch without yeast. The festival Paul mentions in verse 8 is the Christian life which is to be lived without sin (yeast.)

### **3. What do verses 2 and 6 tell us about how the church was reacting to the sin in their midst?**

Paul was shocked about how the Corinthians tolerated the terrible sin of sexual immorality in the church. Not only did they allow the sin, but they were proud of their acceptance. This sin was so terrible that even the pagans did not condone this type of behaviour (vs. 1).

### **4. In what ways do churches tolerate sin today?**

### **5. What are some of the ways in which the church can be affected by sin amongst the members?**

### **6. How is the response of the church different to the sin of a Christian and a non-Christian? (vss. 9-11) What, if anything, does this say anything about the involvement of churches in social and political causes?**

## **II. Discipline is Needed to Protect the Sinning Christian**

In verse 5, Paul instructs the Corinthian Christians to “*deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*” The phrase “*deliver this man to Satan*” simply means to turn him back over to the world where Satan exerts his authority. This man was to be put out of the church. As harsh as this might seem, the purpose of this discipline was to bring him back to God, not push him further away. This was meant “*for the destruction of the flesh*” or to help the man rid himself of the sin which entrapped him.

The very act of putting the man out of the church should bring the sinning brother to his senses. He should mourn his lack of fellowship and desire to be restored through repentance. The great desire for man is that the man would be saved.

### **7. What was the situation of Hymenaeus and Alexander in 1 Timothy 1:18-20 and what was Paul’s response to them?**

### **8. Read Matthew 18:15-17 and 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15. What do these verses add to an understanding of church discipline.**

Disciplinary action is not easy in the family or in the church. In the church, the desire is never to harm anyone, but to save them from certain destruction. The alternative to discipline is to allow a person to continue in sin and to be forever lost. Churches have allowed their desire to avoid confrontation and discomfort to permit some who might have been restored to remain lost. This is one of the most unloving acts we might imagine.

Many Bible students believe the man mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 is the same man we read about in 1 Corinthians 5. Please read those verses and answer the following question:

**9. What response was the church to have to a brother who repented?**

**III. Some Essential Elements in Church Discipline**

There are a number of important teachings surrounding church discipline in 1 Cor. 5.

- A. (vs. 2) The church must be united in the disciplinary action.
- B. (vs. 2) Christians should mourn sin in the church. Great shame should be associated with this type of sin. It hurt the church as a whole, their standing in the wider community, and threatened the very salvation of the people involved.
- C. (vss. 2, 5, 13) The church should have put this man out of their fellowship. A man who sins so wilfully, publicly, and unrepentantly must be removed from the fellowship of the congregation. The goal is to see the man repent and to be restored to fellowship. The Corinthian church is instructed to *“deliver this man to Satan.”*
- D. (vss. 3-5) Full apostolic authority stands behind church discipline. Paul says in vs. 5 that he has passed judgment on the matter and instructs the church to act. This action is also taken in the power of Jesus Christ (vs. 5)
- E. (vss. 4-5) Church discipline should take place in the assembly. This allows the entire church to know and understand why discipline is taking place and shows their unity in condemnation of the sin.
- F. (vss. 9-11) Serious wilful sin requires disfellowship.

**10. What would the outcome of church discipline if the entire church is not unified in the discipline?**

**11. How do we identify which sins are so severe that they require disfellowship? (vs. 11)**

**12. How would you answer someone who says that we have no right to judge another? (vss. 12-13)**

**13. Why are churches often wary of practicing church discipline?**





## Settling Disputes in the Church -- 1 Corinthians 6:1-11

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul instructed the church to practice church discipline in a case of gross sexual immorality. This discipline was designed to protect the church from the spreading and permeating influence of sin and to bring restoration to a man who was on his way to destruction. The man's sin was well known within the church and non-Christian community and would greatly damage any positive influence the church might be able to have for Christ. The pagan world would have criticised the church for a type of immoral behaviour that even they did not condone.

In chapter 6 the subject of the divisive and damaging affects of lawsuits amongst church members is introduced. Here is a problem that needed to be handled quickly within the boundaries of the church instead of in public courts of law. 1 Corinthians 6:1-11 provides helpful teaching about how the church should handle internal grievances, disputes, and conflicts.

### I. Grievances Amongst Christians Should be Handled Within the Church

The problem is clearly stated in 1 Cor. 6:1, ***“When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints?”*** Church members were taking each other to courts of law to settle their disputes. It is not hard to imagine the damage that was done to the reputation of the church by their litigiousness. Paul's question is asked with an air of disbelief, shock, and outrage that the Corinthian Christians would go to the courts of the world to solve problems within the church.

The Corinthians were known for their love of the lawsuit. William Barclay wrote: *“The Greeks were naturally and characteristically a litigious people. The law-courts were in fact one of their chief amusements and entertainment...In a Greek city every man was more or less a lawyer and spent a very great part of his time either deciding or listening to law cases. The Greeks were in fact famous, or notorious, for their love of going to law.”* The Corinthian Christians were continuing what had been a part of their lifestyle prior to their conversion.

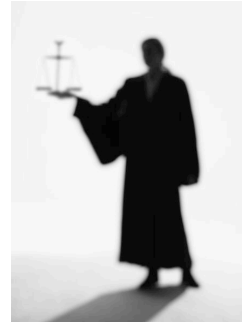


Though Christians today may not often take one another to court, the same type of damage to the witness of the church can take place when Christians gossip to non-Christians about a problem in the church. A problem within the church or with a fellow Christian is not something we share with neighbours, non-Christian friends, or family. When Christians are involved in disputes they need to be kept within the church and handled within the church.

- 1. In verse 7, Paul says the Corinthian Christians had already been defeated. What does he mean?**

**2. Does Paul teach that a Christian should *never* be involved in a lawsuit or in the courts? If there is an appropriate time, when would it be? (See also Acts 25:11)**

The lawsuits that were taking place in Corinth were not criminal in nature. In verse 1, Paul uses the word “*grievance*” which has to do with disputes that concern money or property. When criminal activity is involved a Christian could be compelled to testify in a court of law against another Christian. Since we are to obey civil law and to submit to those in authority this would be perfectly acceptable. This is quite different from taking a brother to court over a personal grievance. Christians should utilise the law when purchasing property, signing contracts, etc., but Christianity should never be used as a cloak to defraud another.



Christians must handle their own internal grievances. Paul gives two very interesting proofs that Christians are more than capable of settling disputes. First, in verse 2 he says, ***“Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases?”*** The problems Christians are fighting over are trivial compared to the fact that saints (Christians) will judge the world.

What does it mean to say that Christians will judge the world? We know that Jesus told his disciples in Matt. 19:28, ***“Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*** We also know that all Christians are given this assurance in 2 Timothy 2:12, ***“if we endure, we will also reign with him.”*** It is impossible to be specific about how Christians will judge the world since we cannot be sure. Perhaps Christians will be with Jesus when he judges and can lend a hearty agreement to the chorus. It is also possible that Paul has the present Christian life in mind which demonstrates to the world that it is possible to live a righteous life.

If verse 2 is difficult, verse 3 is even more so as Paul writes, ***“Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life!”*** We can surmise that the angels in question were those who had previously sinned (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). We can only speculate as to how Christians will judge angels. We do not know if this is an active or passive judgement. Perhaps again, Christians will voice approval of God’s judgment or judge angels by living a holy life. While we may not know in this life exactly what Paul has in mind in 1 Cor. 6:2,3 we can say with certainty that it proves that Christians are fully competent to handle problems that arise between brothers without the intervention of a pagan judge.

Contentious matters can be judged within the church by those with standing (vs. 4) and a wise one (vs. 5). This judgment or arbitration will generally come through the direction of the elders. They may at times consult with another wise person in the church who has expertise in certain issues.

**3. Why would any Christian prefer to go before a secular judge instead of having the matter decided within the church?**

**4. Describe any instances you have seen where a grievance between brothers was decided by leaders within the church.**



## **II. Be Willing to Be Wronged**

Most disputes in the church will never get to the point where an arbitrator is needed if Christians are willing to be wronged. Paul sternly rebukes the Corinthian Christians in verse 7 when he asks, “*Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded?*” This teaching flies into the face of modern life where everyone demands their rights and people are taught not to allow anyone to do anything that might inconvenience them in any way. This scripture teaches that personal rights are not paramount.

**5. What could be more important than the rights of an individual Christian?**

**6. What does Matthew 5:38-42 add to a discussion about individual rights?**

**7. What does Philippians 2:5-8 teach us about Jesus and his rights?**

No one in the church should trample over another. Provision has been made in the past two chapters for the well-being of Christians. We have learned: a) If there is a dispute we can attempt to work it out; b) if it cannot be worked out we can find arbitration in the church; c) If someone is a swindler church discipline is appropriate; d) Church discipline is also indicated for those who are engaged in immorality, greed, or slander. God has made provision for the protection of individual Christians, but he also calls on them to be willing to be wronged for the good of the church.

## **III. Remember Who You Are**

**8. What kind of people were the Corinthian Christians before their conversion? (Define the list of sins with your answer)? (vss. 9-10)**

Any wilful and habitual sin is disobedience to God and makes one unrighteous. The fact that the Corinthian Christians were defrauding one another placed them into the category of unrighteous and makes them unfit for the kingdom of God.

**9. What does Paul say about the destiny of the unrighteous?**

**10. What three action words are used in verse 11 to describe the conversion of Christians?**

To be washed is a reference to baptism (Acts 22:16); Christians are sanctified at the point of baptism into Christ; and are justified at the same time. To be sanctified is to be set apart to God and to be justified is to be viewed as sinless by God. We note that God the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit all have a part in this washing, sanctification, and justification.

The Corinthian Christians were divided in many ways. The division caused by grievances between brothers can be overcome within the church as mature Christian leaders arbitrate disputes, as Christians are willing to be wronged, and as Christians remember their position outside of Christ and what they have gained in Christ.



## You Do Not Belong to You (1 Cor. 6:12-20)

When God in his infinite wisdom created man, he created both male and female. God made man a spiritual, physical, and sexual being. Since God is unlimited in knowledge, power, and authority we can know with certainty that he created man as he wanted man to be.

Along with the nature of man, we learn that God owns man. Paul says it this way in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, *"Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."* We could paraphrase this to say, *"You do not belong to you."*

There is a common statement or belief in society says: *"My body is my body and I will do what I want with it!"* This may mean that I get a piercing or tattoo over the objections of my parents. It can mean that I can smoke, or drink to excess, or overeat and say that it is nobody's business but mine because my body is my body. This belief leads to sexual relationships outside the bond of marriage. People will say, *"We are consenting adults and it's my body, I will do what I want. Besides, we are not hurting anyone."*

1. What are some of the ways you have observed people living as if their bodies were their own?

### I. The World Teaches Complete Sexual Freedom

In Corinth 2000 years ago and in Australia today, complete sexual freedom is accepted as an inalienable part of our life. Corinth was a sinful city. Geographically it lay on a very important trade route on the narrow isthmus which separated Aegean Sea on the east from the Adriatic Sea on the west. It also separated northern and southern Greece. Because of its location great numbers of people passed through the harbors of Corinth. The constant passage of people brought with it various religions, lifestyles, and sinful practices.



In Corinth's past the Temple of Aphrodite was the base for a thousand priestesses. These priestesses were simply temple prostitutes that serviced the men who lived in and passed through Corinth. Prostitution was accepted and even encouraged.

The Roman leader Cato is quoted congratulating a young man as he departed from a brothel, *"When your sexual passions are strong, it is better to have sex with a prostitute than another man's wife."*<sup>1</sup>

The Corinthian Christians came from this unholy background and continued to accept this lifestyle. They viewed sexual relations as natural just as eating. Since we eat whenever we are hungry we should engage in sex whenever the urge strikes us.

In **verse 12** Paul quotes what the Corinthians were saying. They said, *"All things are lawful for me."* The Corinthians were misunderstanding what Paul had said. Paul did tell them that Christ came and the Law of Moses had ended. He taught them about the freedom that we have in Christ.

The Corinthians seem to have misinterpreted Paul to mean that they could do anything that they wanted. They also said, *"Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food..."* In other words, I eat when I get hungry. God made my stomach and made food to remove my hunger. Paul even taught that they could eat whatever foods they wanted to eat. The Corinthians brought this same logic into their sexual lives. They thought, "God created us as sexual beings, we should feed the urge however we want."

This was the normal Greek philosophy in the first century. Sex is simply a biological function, so do whatever you want. **"Isn't this what society says today?"**

2. How does it change society to view sex is a simple biological function?
3. What does modern society say about sexual freedom?
4. What are some of the affects of sexual freedom upon society and the church?

The world teaches complete sexual freedom. The Bible answers in **verses 12** and **13** by saying that *"not all things are helpful"* and *"I will not be enslaved by anything"* and *"the body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body."* Human sexuality is natural and it is a blessing within marriage, but there are limits on it. All sexual relationships outside of the bond of marriage are always wrong.

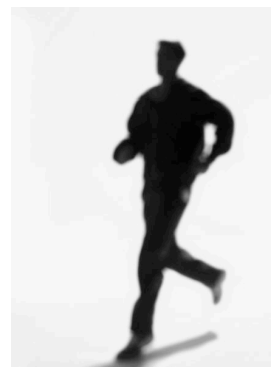
## II. The Bible Teaches to Flee From Sexual Sin

**Verse 18** says, *"Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body."*

You have probably heard it said that all sins are equal, but sexual sin is more serious than many other sins because sexual immorality harms churches, destroys families, devastates children, and leads to lying, deceit, and humiliation.

5. Why does Paul say to flee sexual immorality instead of fighting it or holding on and resisting it?

6. Give a Bible example of someone who fled from sexual temptation.



Sexual immorality can be so enticing and so deadly that when confronted with this temptation the wise man will FLEE! The main reason why sexual sin is so terrible can be understood when we realise that God owns our bodies. Paul writes in **verse 19** that *"you are not your own."* Verse 20 adds, *"You were bought with a price."* In other words, YOU DO NOT BELONG TO YOU!

<sup>1</sup>Oster, Richard. *The NIV College Press Commentary*. College Press, Joplin, MO, 1995. p. 142

In all other sins we may use our bodies to commit a sin, but we do not become one with the sin. We may become intoxicated, but we do not become one with the bottle. We may steal, but we have not joined ourselves to those things we have stolen. When we join in a sexual relationship we are exposing our whole self to another. Body, spirit, and that which is most intimate within us. We are taking that which belongs to God and joining it intimately in sin.

Human sexuality is very profound. The Bible describes this as becoming one flesh. In the context of marriage this is a beautiful, fulfilling, bond which strengthens marriage, honours Christ, and gives us enjoyment. Outside of marriage a bond still takes place. The two still become one flesh, but the union brings dishonour and often pain, and sorrow. Sexual union is so profound that the Bible describes it as a mystery.



### **III. The Bible Teaches that We Belong to God**

#### **7. How do the following verses in 1 Corinthians 6 show that we belong to God? (v. 13, 15, 17, 19, 20)**

God teaches that we belong to Him. In our worship of God our bodies have special significance. With our tongues we praise God. With our hands we serve the Lord. With our minds we know the Lord. With our hearts we love the Lord. To take the body that He has given us and use it to sin sexually is grievous to Him. When we become Christians we unite ourselves with Christ. Verse 17 says we become one in spirit with Him. Imagine what the scripture is telling us there. When we become Christians we become a part of Christ.

Physically God has designed us so that a man and a woman can become one flesh. This is holy and proper within the context of marriage. Spiritually God has designed us so that man and God can become united. We become a part of the body of Christ. God's Holy Spirit lives within us (Acts 2:38). We belong completely and wholly to Him who loves us and who died for us. This makes our bodies a holy place.

In the Old Testament God's glory could be found in the Holy of Holies. Today God's Holy Spirit is found within Christians. **WE ARE** his temple. Can you imagine a priest in the Old Testament taking a harlot into the temple for an immoral sexual relationship? Of course not; yet today when a Christian takes his body, which belongs to Christ, and unites it with another who is not his or her spouse, he is taking the very temple of God and uniting it in sin.



**Verse 19** is used to condemn smoking and many things as an abuse of the temple of the Holy Spirit, but that is not what is being taught here at all. The defilement is spiritual when a person takes the temple of the Holy Spirit and unites it in sexual immorality. The Christian must live a holy life because he belongs to God and not to himself.

#### **8. What reason does Paul give to prove that we belong to Christ and not ourselves? (vss. 19-20)**

#### **9. How can we glorify God in our bodies? (v. 20)**





## The Place for Sexual Intimacy In Our Lives (1 Cor. 7:1-7, 25-28, 32-38)

Paul writes in chapter six about the destructive nature of taking our bodies which belong to God and joining them with a prostitute. It is a grievous sin where the Christian takes his body and uses it as an agent of sin. In chapter seven Paul moves on to a discussion of the proper use of sexual intimacy. Verse 1 tells us that he approaches this subject because the Corinthians had questions about it.

The world of first century Corinth had a perverted view of sex. For them sex was open and available while morality was lax and the proper use of the marital relationship was skewed. Likewise, today's world devalues the sexual relationship. Sexual intimacy should be a holy, beautiful, satisfying part of marriage. Instead, today it is paraded around as a self-seeking physical pastime with no moral obligations or responsibility attached. It can be entered into by anyone, with anyone, at any time. But what does the Bible teach?

### I. Singleness is Acceptable

Paul answers a question posed to him by the Corinthian Christians by saying, ***“It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.”*** Literally, Paul is saying that if you are able as a single person to live a celibate life then you ought to do so. If God has gifted you in such a way that you are able to keep your passions in check and do not need a spouse then it is perfectly acceptable to remain single. This advice goes even for those who are already betrothed (vs. 25-28).

It is important here to note that even if the Lord has not spoken on a subject previously (as in verse 25) the words of the apostles and recorded in Scripture are equally binding as if the Lord himself had spoken them (see Luke 10:16).

The apostle Paul indicates that he was unmarried at the time he wrote this passage. Paul teaches that if you are able to remain single and remain pure then it is perfectly acceptable to remain single. In verse 7 Paul describes the ability to remain celibate as a gift. Some people have this gift while others do not. Neither the gift of singleness or being married is “better” as both are allowable by God.



The single life is certainly preferable in some cases. Without a spouse a person can devote more time to God. A single missionary can go into more dangerous locations than might be prudent to take a spouse and children. A single person has less distractions and can devote more time exclusively to God. A single person can live with less money, in a smaller home or apartment. These factors can make it easier for a single person to serve the Lord effectively. For those who are single and do not feel it necessary to marry, and who can thrive without the need for sexual intimacy then it is perfectly acceptable and even preferable to remain single.

### 1. When is it necessary to marry? v. 2, 36

2. What advantages do single Christians have in their service for the Lord? (vss. 32-35)
3. In what way does the unmarried do even better according to verse 38?
4. Why do married people often push the unmarried into finding a spouse?

## II. Sexual Intimacy in Marriage

Sexual intimacy is not something for us to be fearful of discussing in the church. In this lesson we will attempt to discuss honestly and biblically the place of intimacy in marriage, giving it the honour it deserves.

We should preface all our statements about intimacy by saying that it is only a part of marriage and it is a part that cannot work if there are other problems in the marriage. If one spouse is abusive, either physically or verbally there will be difficulty with intimacy. Sexual intimacy will not work when there is a lack of respect or consideration in the marriage. It will not work if there is unfaithfulness in the marriage. Intimacy is a part of marriage; indeed a large part, but you must be a kind loving sharing spouse in other areas if you expect to be loving in the bedroom. With these thoughts in mind let's note four points about sexual intimacy in marriage.



### First, Sex was designed by God

This is a rather simple statement with profound implications. God created all that is; and God created us as He wanted us to be. God created us male and female. God created us with the need for intimacy. God created us to enjoy intimacy. He made sex essential to continue the human race and then he commanded mankind to be fruitful and multiply.

### 5. What facts do we learn about marriage in Genesis 2:18-25?

In Genesis 1:26-31 the Lord made man and woman in His image. He told the man and woman to be fruitful and multiply. And in verse 31, God says that His creation was “very good.” The man and the woman, their bodies, and their sharing of the sexual relationship is described as very good.

### Second, Sexual Intimacy in Marriage is Required



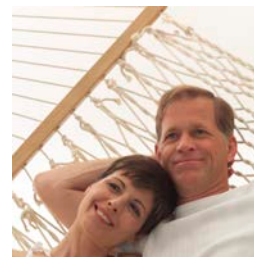
If you are gifted by God with the ability to remain celibate then do not marry. If you marry then you are not permitted to remain celibate. While there are medical reasons why some people cannot be physically intimate, for healthy married men and women physical intimacy is required.

In 1 Cor. 7:3 the Scripture says, ***“the husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.”*** Marriage is designed for the fulfilment of each partner in the marriage. Sexual intimacy is not a right we demand from our spouse, but rather an exclusive gift that we give to our spouse that is precious and holy.



**6. How would you answer those who say that sex is only for the procreation of children?****Third, Sexual Intimacy in Marriage is to be Mutually Given**

Paul raises the standard for women in verse 4 as he teaches an important principle. He makes it clear that the man's body is not his alone just as he makes the same statement for the woman. In the first century women were rarely if ever placed on an even plane with men. They could be considered objects to use and abuse. Paul is completely evenhanded as he handles this subject and shows that there is to be complete equality in sexual intimacy.



Sexual intimacy in marriage is to be mutually given. The husband fulfils the needs of the wife even as the wife fulfils the needs of the husband. This giving in marriage builds the relationship stronger. Paul shows that intimacy is not something to be demanded, but that it we freely give to our spouse.

This intimate relationship is not only pleasurable, but it is necessary. Sexual intimacy is to be mutually given. Sexual intimacy requires effort. Men must learn to compliment and love their wives if they desire the best of physical relationships. In marriage we are to spend a lifetime learning how to love and please our spouse.

When Paul writes in verse 4 that our spouse has authority over our body he is saying that we relinquish control. We allow someone to touch, care, and caress us. We give ourselves totally to another. Nothing expresses itself in this life so intimately as the giving of oneself totally to his or her husband or wife.

**Fourth, Sexual Intimacy is to Be Continuous Throughout Marriage**

In verse 5 we learn that the only reason why sexual intimacy can be set aside given is for a short mutually agreeable time of prayer. There may be times in our lives when we need to spend a day or two or three in intense prayer. This may be in times of distress or when faced with a great decision.

**7. What is an acceptable reason for a temporary cessation of sexual intimacy in marriage?****8. What stipulations are given to guide this cessation of intimacy in marriage and what are the dangers of long periods lacking sexual intimacy?**

Sexual intimacy in marriage is a beautiful, joyous, wonderful blessing of God which can help to draw two people closer together and closer to God. Sexual intimacy outside of marriage is a grievous sin and truly shows that you do not honour the person you are with and that you are willing to dishonour God. The place for sexual intimacy in our lives is within the bounds of marriage.



## Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage Part 1 (1 Cor. 7:8-11, 39-40)

The topics of marriage, divorce, and remarriage are important, controversial, and complex. For this reason we are going to divide 1 Cor. 7:8-16 into two lessons. Marriage is the most intimate of human relationships. In marriage we share our hopes, dreams, desires, and our very selves. Marriage can be happy and joyful or it can degenerate into a miserable and painful existence.

Most people enter their marriages with great hopes and expectations imagining a wonderful and happy life with their spouse. Most believe their marriages will endure the difficult testing that may come as love holds them together. Yet as much as we hope for marriages to succeed we are reminded that a high percentage of marriages in Australia fail. Every church and every family is touched by divorce.



Probably no one in this world hates divorce as much as those who have gone through it. And though God designed marriage, and hates divorce, he does not hate divorced people. God loves those who have endured the agony of divorce as much as those who have intact marriages. In the church we need to love and minister to those who have suffered the tragedy of a broken marriage.

### 1. What are some of the consequences of divorce and how can the church minister to those who have suffered a divorce?

Divorce was prevalent in Corinth in the first century. It is said that some people were married and divorced a dozen times or more. Because of all of the problems surrounding marriage, divorce and remarriage the Corinthians appealed to Paul for answers to their problems. Now in 1 Corinthians 7 Paul answers some of the Corinthians questions about marriage. In the previous lesson we learned that marriage is not mandatory and that singleness is acceptable. We also learned that sexual intimacy is reserved for marriage.

As we move on to what Paul has to say about marriage, divorce, and remarriage we need to understand an important fact: Paul does not address every specific situation that people may face today. He does not write about abusive marriages. He does not write about those who are married to alcoholic spouses. He does not write about those who contribute nothing emotionally or physically to the marriage. Paul addresses specific questions that were asked him by the Corinthian Christians. Still, this passage provides some guidelines for our understanding of marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

### I. A Word to the Unmarried

In **verses 8-9** Paul speaks to those people are not at this time married. He tells them, ***“To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single as I am. But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”***

These verses tend to be somewhat controversial. We know of course who widows are. They are women whose husbands have died. The word **unmarried** is somewhat more difficult to understand. The word can simply refer to people who have never been married, but the word can also be used to refer to widowers or those who are divorced. It seems most likely that the word here points to widowers or to those whose spouse deserted them when they became Christians. To allow a blanket permission for marriage after divorce would contradict other biblical teachings.

## 2. What are the teachings of 1 Cor. 7:8-9, 39-40 and 1 Timothy 5:14 concerning widows?

## 3. Why might it be better, in some cases, for widows or widowers to remain single.

Paul says that he is single in verse 8. At the time Paul wrote this verse he was unmarried, but it is likely that he was married at one time in his life. It was assumed that Jewish men would marry. It is believed that Paul had been a member of the Sanhedrin and Sanhedrin members were apparently required to be married. If Paul was indeed married at some point we do not know what happened to his wife. She may have died, or deserted him when he became a Christian.

Paul says that it is good not to marry, but he does not say that remarriage for those whose spouse has died is bad. He does not even say that it is better to remain unmarried. As Paul teaches 1 Cor. 7:7, it is a gift to be able to remain unmarried. If you have that gift then it is good to exercise it, but if you do not have the gift to remain unmarried and your spouse has died then you should remarry.

## II. A Word to Those Married to a Christian Spouse

In **verses 10-11** Paul clearly says, ***“To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife.”***



## 4. Why doesn't Paul allow any exceptions for divorce between two Christians?

## 5. What does Jesus teach about marriage in Mark 10:6-9?

As we would expect, Paul agrees with Jesus when he says that the wife must not separate from her husband and then he goes on to say, ***“But if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband . . .”*** Paul expects for married couples to stay married and to live together until parted by death. He does not expect separation and divorce, but he knows it will sometimes happen so he wants to hold open the possibility for reconciliation as long as possible. There are instances of reconciliation in marriages where it seemed impossible.

Paul does not give any permission for remarriage to either party where both husband and wife are Christians. The Bible is so restrictive because God wants us to make every effort possible to reconcile. He knows that once divorce and remarriage take place, then reconciliation is impossible. If you are a Christian who is married to another Christian, you must remain married. If you separate then you must either be reconciled to your spouse or you must remain unmarried.

## 6. What does Jesus teach about divorce in Matthew 19:9?

## 7. Does Jesus teach that adultery must bring the marriage to an end?

Jesus allows for divorce and remarriage for the innocent spouse when there has been unfaithfulness in the marriage and this the only exception given to the Christian. Adultery breaks the marriage vow and allows the innocent party to remarry. God doesn't expect that a person ought to be bound to a partner who is sexually active with another person. This defrauds the innocent party and exposes them to disease, abuse, and humiliation.

If a marriage partner so abuses their spouse as to involve themselves sexually with another person then the innocent party is free to divorce and marry again. There are often truly innocent people in divorce and the Lord provides for their protection.

God's allows for divorce and remarriage when the marriage bed has been violated. His standards for divorce are so strict because He takes marriage so seriously. God knows divorce is painful. When God created Eve and brought her to Adam, the man said in **Genesis 2:23**, *"This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."* Then verse 24 adds, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh."*

Marriage makes a man and woman one flesh. This joining is a unique and profound and spiritual mystery. In marriage we are united with another person in body, mind, and spirit so separation cannot come without great pain.

## 8. Describe some of the reasons why divorce is so painful.

Marriage is a glue that binds two people together. In woodworking sometimes we take two pieces of wood and glue them together. We can place those pieces of wood in a vice to as the glue sets and bonds. When we take those two pieces of wood out of the vice they are indeed joined. They cannot be easily separated. A wedge and hammer may be required to divide the pieces of wood and when they are separated they are not separated cleanly. Pieces of wood from each board are stuck to the other. Pieces from each board have been ripped away. These two pieces are not restored to their original condition. Marriage is much the same way. It hurts to be torn apart.



The Scripture teaches that marriage is permissible, though not always recommended for those whose spouse has died. The Scripture also teaches that if a Christians is married to a non-Christian they should not separate, but if they do, they should not remarry. In the case of marital unfaithfulness the innocent party is free to divorce and remarry, though they are not required to divorce the guilty spouse.

## 9. What are some ways the church can work to prepare Christians for marriage and strengthen existing marriages?





## Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage Part 2 (1 Cor. 7:12-16)

In the previous lesson we discussed the only reason given by Paul or Jesus for divorce among Christians was marital unfaithfulness. Paul said: *“Don’t separate, but if you do then reconcile.”* His statement is clear and concise. God wants the door held open for any possibility of reconciliation with one’s spouse. Sometimes a relationship that appears to be damaged beyond any hope of repair is healed and restoration comes.

In the previous lesson in verses **7-11** of **1 Cor. 7** Paul addressed his comments to the unmarried; particularly widows and widowers. The teaching was to stay unmarried if you can, but if you cannot then marry. People who have never been married, and those whose spouse has died are free to marry any Christian.

In the situation of Christians who are married to Christians Paul gave no permission for divorce and remarriage, though Jesus added permission in Matthew 19 for those whose spouse was unfaithful. Neither Jesus or Paul demands divorce when adultery has taken place. If the sinning spouse is willing to repent, and the offended spouse is willing to forgive; reconciliation is possible; however the innocent spouse is permitted to divorce and even remarry. In verses **12-16** moves Paul moves on to discuss marriage between Christians and unbelievers and when divorce is permitted.

### **I. Marriages Outside of Christ are Still Valid Marriages**

All marriages are legal and binding in the eyes of God whether they are among Christians, or non-Christians, or in a union between Christians and non-Christians. The admonition for intimacy is still binding in all marriages. The demand for faithfulness in marriage is still binding. The call to love and honour one another is still present in all marriages. The Hebrew writer says in **Hebrews 13:4**, *“Let marriage be held in honour among all . . .”*



Apparently some new Christians were concluding that since they were married to unbelievers they were free to leave. Paul wants them to realise that marriages are valid and binding whether they are with Christians or unbelievers.

### **II. A Marriage Between a Christian and an Unbeliever Who Desires to Remain Married**

Marriages between Christians and non-Christians often work and sometimes work well, but they do have additional obstacles. Since Christians are advised not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers in 2 Cor. 6:14 we can conclude that no Christian should marry a non-Christian. Paul addresses the situation where one partner within an existing marriage becomes a Christian while the other does not. While this is not the ideal marriage it is possible to make it work and if the unbeliever desires for the marriage to continue, the Scripture teaches not to divorce.

1. What stresses are placed on a marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever?
2. How should a Christian spouse respond to the stresses place on their marriage to an unbeliever?

To the Christian married to an unbeliever, Paul gives the advise in verses 12-13 to not divorce their spouse if the unbeliever is willing to remain married. This should convince us of the high regard that the Lord has for marriage.

Corinth was a wicked pagan city. Idols were worshipped along with a myriad of pagan gods. Many of the Christians would have spouses who were involved with these false religions, yet Paul says if they will live with you then do not divorce. In other words, “Don’t initiate a divorce.

**Verse 14** we have a most interesting verse. *“For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”*

What is Paul teaching in verse 14? Is he saying that an unbelieving spouse becomes a Christian through a Christian spouse? Certainly not. What Paul is saying is this: The unbeliever and children in a home where one member is a Christian are in a far better situation than people who have no Christian witness in the home. The unbeliever does not automatically become a Christian because the spouse is a Christian, but the loving daily witness of Christ may lead that unbeliever to Christ.

A great number of husbands or wives have come to Christ because of the patient love of a concerned Christian spouse. The children as well have a witness to Christ in the home. Many times children will become Christians and stay Christians when only one of their parents provided a Christian witness in the home. Any home with even one Christian within its walls is different and it is blessed.



3. What steps might a Christian take to win an unbelieving spouse?
4. How should a Christian handle the situation where their spouse never becomes a Christian, but wants to stay in the marriage?

Another point that Paul wants to impress upon the Christian is that an unbelieving spouse does not defile the Christian. In chapter six Paul had written that when a person joins their bodies with a prostitute they become one with the prostitute. Some in Corinth evidently thought a Christian would be defiled by an unbelieving spouse, but Paul says the opposite is true. The Christian serves to sanctify the non-Christian spouse and their children. Paul clearly teaches that when a Christian is married to an unbeliever they should not divorce a spouse who is willing to remain with them.

5. List some reasons why a Christian should remain married to an unbelieving spouse.



### III. A Marriage Between a Christian and an Unbeliever Who Desires to Depart

Paul next moves on to a marriage where one spouse becomes a Christian and the other does not and the unbeliever does not want to stay in the marriage. (These verses do not speak the situation where a Christian marries an unbeliever which would contradict biblical teaching.)



**1 Cor. 7:15** says, *“But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace.”* The person who becomes a Christian should allow their unbelieving spouse to leave if that is their desire. They should not initiate the divorce, but should put no barrier in the way of the unbeliever who wants to leave the marriage.

#### 6. What part does peace play in divorce in 1 Cor. 7:15?

The word for separates in the Greek refers to divorce and Paul says the believer is not “enslaved” or “bound” in such situations. This phraseology means that the Christian whose spouse departs is freed from the marriage bond and is free to remarry. God allows remarriage in this case of desertion. Paul tells us that God does not bind the Christian in such a marriage because He has called us to live in peace.

#### 7. What might be the results (for the Christian, unbeliever, and any children) if the Christian refused to allow the unbeliever to depart the marriage?

Being unequally yoked in marriage with an unbeliever can be very difficult for both parties. The Christian desires to share their faith with their spouse and have them respond to the gospel while the sinful lifestyle of the unbeliever discourages and distresses the Christian spouse. The unbeliever is angered when they see that they are no longer the focal point of the life of their spouse.

If a non-Christian marriage partner desires to leave it may be impossible to hold on to them anyway and in this case the Christian’s influence is gone. That is why Paul writes in **verse 16**, *“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”* As much as a Christian desires to see their spouse become a Christian, it is largely outside of their control.

### IV. A Recap of New Testament Teaching on Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage

1. Single Christians may remain unmarried if they are able to resist the temptation to be involved in sexual activity. This is a gift and is not given to all.
2. Christians who have never been married are free to marry another Christian.
3. Widows and widowers are free to remain single or to marry another Christian. Remaining single may be preferable for some, but marriage is acceptable and is necessary if sexual temptation would lead to sin.



4. Christians who are married to other Christians must not divorce. In cases of separation, the Christian must remain single so that future reconciliation is possible.
5. Christians may divorce and remarry if their spouse has been involved in adultery. Divorce is not required, but is permitted.
6. If a person becomes a Christian and their spouse remains an unbeliever, but desires to stay in the marriage, the Christian is to remain in the marriage. The Christian must not leave the person and must not initiate a divorce.
7. If a person becomes a Christian and their spouse remains an unbeliever, but wants to leave the marriage, then they should be allowed to leave freely. In this case the Christian is not enslaved or bound. They are free to divorce and remarry.

God views marriage as a sacred commitment. Because of this, Christians must only marry other Christians. One who becomes a Christian after marriage should stay with their spouse if possible.

Only three reasons are given for remarriage in the New Testament. All of them are for extremely severe situations. They include: the death of a spouse, adultery, and desertion.

Here are a few other pertinent thoughts: Those who have divorced can and must be productive in the church. Any who would stand back and cast stones must be very careful. Even when sin has taken place we must be willing to forgive even as Christ would forgive.

When people have divorced and remarried apart from God's teaching we must understand that forgiveness is offered and restoration can take place. When a person remarries without a valid scriptural reason they have sinned, but they do not live in adultery forever. This sin can be forgiven as any sin and their second marriage is still recognised by God. Remember that Jesus said to the Samaritan woman in John 4 that she has had five husbands. This indicates that each one was a valid marriage.

Divorce is a painful experience. We want to avoid it in the church. We want to build strong families. However we acknowledge that remarriage is possible in some cases and forgiveness and restoration is possible in every case.



## Live as a Christian Whatever Your Circumstances (1 Cor. 7:17-24; 29-31)

At first reading, it appears that verses 17-24 have been placed right in the middle of a discussion about marriage and divorce and that these verses are totally unrelated. The truth is that these verses are here as further confirmation that Christians can live for Christ whatever their circumstances. If you are single, don't marry unless necessary. If you are married, don't divorce. If you are circumcised, don't try to remove the marks of circumcision. If you are a slave, don't let it bother you, but take the opportunity for freedom if available.

The key word in these verses is “*called*.” God has called Christians from the world to him. When people come to Christ, they have all sorts of entanglements in this world. Though Christians are forgiven of their sins, many of the old entanglements remain and in the first century these included marital status, whether a man was circumcised or not, and whether one was a slave or free.

1. How many times is the word “call” or the word “called” used in 1 Cor. 7:17-24?
2. Who are the called? (See also 1:2, 9, 24)
3. Why wouldn't God want Christians to remove themselves from all their entanglements when they came to Christ?

### I. Lead the Life the Lord Has Assigned

The word “*assigned*” in verse 17 indicates that God is involved in daily life. The Greek word translated as “*assigned*” means “given, imparted, apportioned” and “speaks of assignment of circumstances and talents by Christ.”<sup>1</sup> This does not remove freewill from man, but says each person is gifted with certain talents and abilities by God and each person is born in a specific place, in a specific family, at a specific time. We do not choose where and when we will be born and what talents we possess. We do not choose some of our circumstances, but we do choose how to live within our circumstances. In **Acts 17:26** we read, “*And he made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined allotted periods and the boundaries of their dwelling place.*”



4. Is the Scripture teaching that we should never try to improve our lives or change any circumstances? What does it mean to “lead the life the Lord has assigned to him?”

<sup>1</sup>Reese, Gareth L. *New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians*. Moberly, Missouri: Scripture Exposition Books, 2004. p. 246.

Paul's teaching was universally true. He didn't teach one rule in one church and another rule in another church (vs. 17).

Now Paul moves to an example to show that one should remain in the circumstances he is in when he becomes a Christian. In verse 18 if one is already circumcised when he is called (becomes a Christian), then he should not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. On the other hand if he is not circumcised then he should remain uncircumcised.

There are two possible ways to understand this teaching on circumcision. It is possible that Paul is saying not to leave your community; if you are Jewish Christian don't relocate away from your family and friends or if you are Gentile do not move into a Jewish community. More likely Paul is teaching not to be ashamed of whether or not you were circumcised because it had no bearing on matters of faith.

There was a surgical procedure that restored the looks of of uncircumcision. The Apocrypha mentions this in 1 Maccabees 1:14-15, *"So they built a gymnasium in Jerusalem, according to Gentile custom, and removed the marks of circumcision, and abandoned the holy covenant. They joined with the Gentiles and sold themselves to do evil."* (RSV)

A Jewish Christian in a gymnasium might wish to hide his heritage or some Gentiles might desire to look Jewish. Paul teaches the Corinthian Christians to live the life they have been assigned. He goes on to teach in verse 19 that it is unimportant whether or not a man is circumcised, but whether or not a man keeps the commandments of God.

#### **5. Why does Paul keep stressing what he does in verse 20: *"Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called?"***

Next Paul moves to slaves. If one was a *"bondservant"* when called, he should not be concerned. The high number of slaves in the Roman world of the first century means that many who came to Christ would have come as slaves. In fact there were far more slaves in the first century Roman Empire than free men. Some slaves did menial labour but others had good educations and responsible jobs such as doctors, writers, government officials, midwives, teachers, artists, and other skilled occupations.<sup>2</sup>



Most slaves were not walking around in chains, but were legally bound to serve another. Some people who could not pay debts were sold into slavery while others were captured during a Roman conquest. It was often possible to legally gain freedom after set periods of service or by purchasing freedom. The act of gaining freedom as a slave is known as *manumission*.



#### **6. Why does Paul tell slaves not to be concerned if they remained in slavery? (vss. 21-22)**

#### **7. If one should remain in the condition he was in when called, why does Paul say in verse 21 to gain your freedom if the opportunity arises?**

<sup>2</sup>Ibid. p. 250.

**8. What circumstances or entanglements do people today face that causes them to believe it will be difficult for them to live as a Christian?**

## **II. The Lord's Bondservant**

If one was a slave when they came to Christ, they gain true freedom. Conversely if one was a free man, when he comes to Christ he becomes the Lord's bondservant. All people find freedom from sin, Satan, fear, and eternal punishment in Christ and all Christians belong to the Lord. This demonstrates the equality of all men in Christ, for all belong to him and are his servant no matter what their other circumstances in life.



**9. What does it mean to be the Lord's bondservant?**

In verse 23, Paul writes that Christians have been bought with a price. For this reason they should not *"become bondservants of men."* There are two possible ways of interpreting what Paul is saying. It was possible in first century Corinth to sell oneself into slavery. Perhaps Paul is teaching not to engage in this practice, but to stay in the condition you are now in. The second possibility is that Paul is talking of spiritual slavery. The one who belongs to Christ will live for him and not engage in the lifestyle of those around him.

**10. Why was it necessary for Paul to repeat the same teaching in 6:20 and 7:23 (*you were bought with a price*)?**

Verse 24 again teaches the idea of a man remaining in the condition he is in when called to the Lord. This is the same instruction given in verses 17 and 20 and clearly encourages each Christian to realise that what is important is that he or she remains faithful to the Lord and that the problems and entanglements of this life do not have to separate a person from the Lord.

In verse 29-31 Paul stresses the shortness of time remaining, meaning that life is short and the Christian's primary view is on how to serve the Lord in this life. The present world is passing away and the Christian lives with eternity in view.

Living as if one had no wife is not meant to contradict what Paul has written earlier in the chapter. He simply is stressing that the life of the Christian must to be totally consumed with thoughts of marriage, or mourning or rejoicing, or enterprise.

These verses stand in the middle of a section on marriage. God can use man in whatever condition he is in when he comes to Christ whether he be single, married, or divorced. While there may be some circumstances that prevent us from filling certain roles in the church, every person can serve the Lord.





## Limiting Christian Liberty (1 Cor. 8:1-13)

People often utter statements like, *“I can do whatever I want and no one can tell me what to do.”* Most people know what they believe and are willing to stand up for their rights. They believe certain things and no one will change their minds.



In the Christian life we can generally do what we want to do. Christianity is not a list of things you can't do, but rather Christianity allows us to live life to the fullest. Being a Christian makes life more enjoyable not less.

A lot of people misunderstand the Christian life viewing it as a religion of *“thou shalt nots.”* Christianity should not be viewed in such a negative way. Living for Christ is freedom. Our life in Christ frees us from fear. It frees us from guilt. It frees us from ignorance. It frees us to help others. Life in Christ brings us fellowship, and friendship, and belonging, and satisfaction.

Still, as we live for Christ we need to understand that in all of our freedom we need to consider other people. We do not live in a vacuum, but exist in a world filled with other people. In exercising our freedom in Christ we are concerned with other people.

There are things we know not to do as Christians because the Bible is specific about them. There are other actions that the Bible does not directly address. How can we decide whether or not to do something when there is no clear Bible teaching about the matter?

### 1. Name three things the Bible clearly prohibits and then name three questionable matters.

#### I. The Problem in Corinth

In chapter eight Paul is answering a question that the Corinthian Christians had asked him about. The problem concerned eating meat that had been offered to idols. Corinth was a pagan city that was filled with the worship of a great number of false gods. For every false god there was an idol and a temple in which to worship this idol. There were idols for every part of life on earth. There were idols for the sun and the moon. There were idols for war and love. There were idols for the earth and the sea.

When meat was sacrificed to these idols some of it was consumed in the fire and part of it was kept by the priests as payment for their services. The meat that the priests received was far more than they could use themselves so they would take what was left over to the marketplace to sell. The meat that was sold in this manner was highly regarded by the people because it had been blessed by their gods. It was certainly the best meat that was available in the city. Often times the meat was consumed in the idol temples and could be in celebration of a birthday, marriage, or commercial activity. To refuse to attend a banquet such as this would remove the Corinthian Christians from their normal social life.



The question that arose among the Christians was whether or not to eat this meat or to dine in the temples. Some said, *“Of course we can eat this meat. These idols are simply wood and stone. They are not alive. They mean nothing.”* Other Christians said, *“We must not eat this meat because it has been used for the worship of a false God and this taints the meat. Furthermore, when someone sees this Christian eat the meat it looks as if he is also worshipping this false god.”* And so we have the dilemma. Should the Christians eat this meat or should they resist eating this meat? While this specific problem may not be present in any churches in our country, the same type of questions exist within churches.

## 2. How do questionable matters affect the church and individual Christians today?

### II. Recognise that Love is More Important Than Freedom

Paul writes in verse 4, *“Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”* An idol was just wood or stone so an idol could not defile the meat because there was nothing real behind the idol. (This is not entirely true -- see 1 Cor. 10:20). Many of the Corinthian Christians understood this, but while they possessed knowledge they used it arrogantly. Paul warns these Christians in verse 1, *“knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.*



## 3. What are good definitions for “puffs up” and “builds up”?

When knowledge puffs up, or makes one prideful, or arrogant he feels superior to other Christians and this prideful knowledge can make one Christian devalue another.

## 4. What are some ways in which “knowledgeable” Christians can sometimes act arrogantly?

There is nothing wrong with knowledge and Christians should consistently try to gain a greater understanding of God through a study of the Bible, but it is also important that they understand that knowledge can be harmful if used with the wrong attitude. Paul had previously written about the arrogance of some in the Corinthian church in 1 Cor. 4:6,-7, 18. Their problem was not a lack of knowledge, but rather a lack of love.

Verses 2 and 3 tell us, *“If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.* The one who is “puffed up” with knowledge does not really possess the knowledge that he needs, but is enamoured with himself. He needs to love God and then he will love others more than himself.

## 5. What do we learn about God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 6?

## 6. What is the difference between the words “from” and “through” in verse 6?

**III. Understand That Your Rights Are Less Important Than Your Brother's Spiritual Condition**

In verse 7, Paul informs the Corinthians that not everyone possesses the knowledge that caused some to be “puffed up.” Some had been formerly associated with idol worship and it harmed their conscience to eat the meat that had been sacrificed to idols.

**7. Define the word “conscience”?**

**8. How is the conscience trained?**

**9. Is it wrong to violate our conscience? (Rom 14:23)**

Eating food sacrificed to idols did not bring one closer to God and not eating this meat did not take one further from God (vs. 8). Therefore the deciding factor is that it harms the conscience of a brother who is weaker. In verse 9 this “right” or “liberty” to eat meat sacrificed to idols is addressed. The fact is that no Christian has the right to do something (even if it is not wrong) if it is going to harm another Christian.

**10. Why is the Christian whose conscience was harmed by eating the idol meat called “weak”?**

**11. What is a stumbling block?**



According to **verses 11-13** a Christian can destroy the faith of a weaker brother through an insistence on his rights. In this case something that is not inherently wrong has become a sin. Paul says to harm the faith of a weaker brother is to sin against that brother and to sin against Christ.

There is a difference between something that may irritate or annoy another and something that truly causes them to stumble. Our styles of music or dress may make another Christian unhappy, but it does not harm their faith. Paul is not teaching that we should stop every single thing that may offend another person or that we should give in to everyone who complains about something. He does teach that if we are involved in an activity (even if it is not wrong) which harms the faith and conscience of a brother then we must stop or we are sinning.

**12. What is the difference between annoying a brother and causing him to stumble?**

**13. How do we know that other Christians are valuable? (vs. 11)**

**14. What is the meaning of “destroyed” in verse 11?**

**15. What principle is taught in 1 Cor. 8:13?**



## An Example of Leadership (1 Cor. 9:1-23)

There is an oft repeated phrase, “*Do as I say and not as I do.*” Those who utter this phrase (and really mean it) exhibit a lack of leadership ability and probably also lack character. A true leader will lead by example. A true leader will ask no more of another than he is willing to give himself. A true leader will act as he expects others to act.

In chapter 8, the apostle Paul wrote that Christians should be willing to give up their rights if they would cause another Christian to stumble. Paul does not expect Christians to give in to every person who complains when they don’t get their way, but he does expect Christians to do those things that will build unity in the church.



In the dilemma discussed in 1 Cor. 8, some in the church thought it wrong to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols while others did not. Paul tells the Corinthians that there is nothing wrong with the meat, but in verse 13 of 1 Cor. 8 he says, “*if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.*” Paul not only expected the Corinthian Christians to give up their right to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols; he also showed that he has given up many of his own rights.

Some within the Corinthian church were challenging Paul’s authority. He writes in verse 3 using the legal terminology of a trial as he makes his defense (*apologia*) against their examination. As an apostle, an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord Paul did have authority. He had laboured tirelessly in Corinth. If anyone should listen to Paul it was the Corinthian Christians, yet some in the church were questioning Paul. In this chapter he provides an extraordinary example of leadership.

### 1. What does Paul call the Corinthian Christians in verses 1 and 2?

#### I. The Rights That Paul Gave Up

There are three rights outlined in verses 1-6 that belonged to Paul. **The first is the right of financial support.** In verse 4 Paul says that he has the right to eat and drink. What he is saying here is that he had the right to be supported physically by the Christians. They were obligated to provide for his financial and physical needs. He elaborates on this in verses 7-14. The right to financial compensation for preaching the gospel is clearly seen here.

Beginning in 1 Cor. 9:1 Paul asks 16 rhetorical questions.  
Please list them below.



Six illustrations are used by Paul to prove that a Christian worker had the right to be paid for the work he did for the gospel. In verse 7, soldiers that fight in battles for their nation don't have to pay their own expenses. When soldiers are sent to fight, they aren't sent a bill for their plane fare, weapons, and so on. They are serving so those they serve provide for their needs. Also in verse 7, the person who plants a vineyard expects to eat from the fruit and if a person tends a flock he should be able to expect some of the milk. These examples in verse 7 are from human authority

In verse 9 Paul moves to Scriptural authority. The ox is not to be muzzled while he is treading out the grain (Deut. 24:4); in verse 10 those who plow, plow in hope. Those who thresh do so in hope of sharing in the crops. Finally, in verse 13 those who work in the temple are to be compensated by the part of the gifts that the people offered to the Lord (Numbers 18:8-20). Even the Lord said that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel (Matt. 10:9-10).

## 2. What is taught in 1 Cor. 9:11, 14 and how does this relate to verses 7, 9, 10, and 13?

## 3. What is taught in 1 Timothy 5:17-18?

Essential Paul says, "I worked with you. I taught you. I shared with you. I have the right to be cared for financially by you!" But, Paul gave up this right. **The second right that Paul gave up was the right to bring along a believing wife** (vs. 5).

The other apostles brought wives along, just like Peter, and the brothers of Jesus. Paul was not married (at least at this time) and so he does not exercise the right to bring a Christian wife on his missionary journeys.

**The third right that Paul gives up is the right to earn a living without taking another job.** This teaching is found in verse 6 and relates closely to the first right of financial compensation. Physical labor was despised by the Greeks. They had slaves for this kind of work. They spent their time amusing themselves in literature, sports, and leisure, and philosophy, but Paul worked as a tentmaker working with animal hides. He certainly had the right to earn his living by preaching and teaching alone, but he gave up that right and chose to work as a tentmaker.

## II. The Reason Paul Gave Up His Rights

### 4. According to verses 19 and 22 why did Paul give up his rights?

Paul's greatest desire was to win the lost and preserve those who were already in Christ. Paul would give up any right, any comfort, and exert any effort to lead the lost to Christ and to strengthen the Corinthian Christians. Paul had given up the right to bring along a Christian wife, or even to have a wife. Without a wife and family he had greater freedom to travel and preach and would need less money.

### 5. According to verse 12 why did Paul give up the right of financial support?

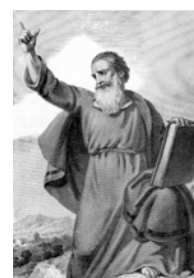


Paul knew that in some way he would be criticised or the church would be hindered if he took money from them. Therefore, Paul willingly and lovingly gave up his right for financial support. He was not asking for this right to be reinstated. In verse 15 he makes it clear that he is not asking, and does not desire their financial support.

**6. What does 2 Cor. 11:7-9 say about financial support Paul did receive?**

**7. Describe what preaching the gospel meant to Paul? (vs. 16)**

Paul says, “I must preach the gospel. I am compelled to do so. Even though I could demand to be compensated by you, I will never do it. I give up that right!” Most people hold no rights dearer than to be paid for their work and to have a family, yet Paul gave up those rights so that he might be his most effective in preaching the gospel and winning the lost. This truly should emphasise and demonstrate to the Corinthians that they should be willing to give up any right if it did anything to hinder the gospel.



In verses 17 and 18 the idea is that if Paul preached because of his own will he would could gladly claim wages, but he preached because God had specifically called him and selected him. He was compelled to preach and was under divine woe if he did not. His preaching then is a stewardship entrusted to him by God. The reward he receives is being able to offer the gospel free of charge instead of demanding his right to be paid. His real compensation is winning the lost as seen in verses 19-23.

Paul continues to show how he gives us his rights in verse 19. Though he was free from all men (they didn't pay him), he became a servant to all in order to win them to Christ. In verses 20-23 Paul now begins to list some of the groups to which he gave up his rights and thus became a slave.

**8. List the four groups to which Paul gave up his rights, and so became like one of them. (vss. 20-22)**

One would think that the Jews and those under the law in verse 20 would be the same group. The distinction is probably in those who were very law conscious and those who were not. There were those Jews who tried to keep the Law of Moses faithfully and others who were more concerned with the traditions. Paul tried as best he could, and when it did not violate his faith in Christ, to not bring offense to all those to which he preached.

**9. If the Jews and those under the law refer to various groups of Jews, who would be identified in verse 21 as those outside the law?**

To the weak, he became weak meaning that he gave up his rights if it would bring offense to another Christian. Paul did all that he could, accommodating culture and tradition, so long as it did not conflict with the teachings of Christ.

**10. What was Paul's ultimate goal in accommodating others? (vs. 23)**



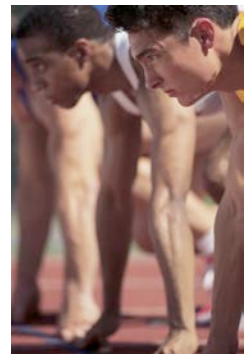


## Warnings Concerning Disqualification (1 Cor. 9:24-10:13)

Paul has been writing about the need to give up rights so that a Christian brother will not be discouraged in his faith; and then he shows that he has given up rights that belonged to him as an apostle of Jesus Christ. Now he moves to the very real possibility of falling away as Christians and gives Old Testament examples of those who lost their faith in God. All this is still within the context of the problem of eating food sacrificed to idols.

### **I. It is Possible to be Disqualified as a Christian (9:24-27)**

The example of running in a race is one that the Corinthian Christians would have clearly understood. Throughout the Roman Empire, sports were popular and Corinth was no exception. In fact, just outside the city of Corinth every two years the Isthmian Games were held. These sporting contests were second only to the Olympic Games in ancient Greece. It is probable that Paul was in Corinth at the time of the games as they were held in April/May A.D. 49 and 51.<sup>1</sup>



In an athletic competition not every contestant wins; in fact in most events there is only one winner. The point is not that to live as Christians, others must lose, but that it is possible to fail and not receive the victor's prize. In fact, Paul said that he himself had to discipline his body and keep it under control lest he be disqualified.

To win the race required the athlete to exercise self-control or go into strict training. Each participant in the Isthmian Games was required to train for ten months. The word translated as athlete in the NIV is the Greek word *agonizomenos*; in other words the competitor agonises through the difficult training. Self-control is needed to endure the training program and to be ready for the contest. This idea is a continuation of the thought in the preceding verses of voluntarily giving up one's rights.

- 1. What are some ways in which athletes must practice self-control if they hope to win?**
- 2. What are some ways in which Christians must practice self-control if they hope to win?**

In verse 27, Paul says I discipline my body and I keep it under control. Some groups have taken this verse to mean that Christians should inflict pain upon themselves, or practice asceticism, but that is not the idea that Paul is trying to stress. Paul continues to use athletic metaphors to say that he rigorously works to control the impulses of the body, and does only those things that will keep him from being disqualified in the Christian race.

<sup>1</sup>Murphy-O'Connor, Jerome. *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology*. Collegeville, Minnesota: The Liturgical Press, 2002. p. 15.

The word translated as “disqualified” refers to a person “who for whatever reason was not permitted to compete in a contest.”<sup>2</sup> In this case, the race is the Christian life, the prize is heaven, and disqualification would mean eternal hell.

The illustration of running aimlessly is that of an undisciplined runner and the boxer who beats the air is one who doesn’t land blows against his opponent. This indicates a futility in a flawed effort in the competition. To win the Christian prize requires:

1. Being present in the race v. 24
2. Purposeful running v. 24, 26
3. Self-control v. 25 (self-denial or giving up one’s rights)
4. Effort aimed toward the goal of an imperishable prize v. 25
5. Disciplined effort vss. 26-27

**3. Does working for the Lord mean we cannot be disqualified? Support your answer from verse 24.**

## **II. Examples from Israel’s History (10:1-13)**

**4. Why are the Old Testament examples recorded for the Church? (10:6,11)**

**5. Does the church today pay enough attention to the truths found in the Old Testament? Explain why you answered this way.**

The word translated in 1 Cor. 10:6 as “examples” is the Greek word *typoi*. Paul shows four examples or types of behaviour that can be seen in the Corinthian church. Each of these activities led to disastrous results for Israel and what the Israelites did was a type of what was going on in Corinth. Specifically Paul lists four actions.

1. They were idolaters (vs. 7)
2. They were sexually immoral (vs. 8)
3. They tested the Lord (vs. 9)
4. They grumbled (vs. 10)

**6. How many times is the word “all” used in verses 1-4 and why is this significant?**

**7. Who are the fathers in verse 1? Whose fathers are these people? (Rom 4:11; Gal. 6:16)**



**8. How is baptism similar to the crossing of the Red Sea? (vs. 2)**

**9. What did God provide for the needs of Israel in the desert? (vs. 3, 4; Ex. 16-17)**

<sup>2</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 153-154.

The Israelites walking across the Red Sea on dry ground is a type of baptism. With the cloud above and the waters on each side the Israelites were surrounded by water. Stepping into the water required faith, but refusing to step into the water would have assured death. The water separated the Israelites from the Egyptians while baptism separates the believer from the world. The ancient Israelites were baptised into Moses as they recognised him as their leader and submitted to the Mosaic Law. Christians are baptised into Christ and recognise him as Lord.

Jesus was with the Israelites in the desert (showing he existed before Bethlehem) and that he followed them and provided for them. Still with all these blessings the Israelites complained, many turned to idolatry, and most died in the wilderness. These events as well as the following ones from Israel's history serve as examples for the church.

### 10. Paul was the Israelites “desired” or lusted after evil. What does this mean?

Verse 7 tells us that some of the Israelites were **idolaters**. They sat down to eat and drink as they “participated in a feast in honor of the idol, the golden calf.” Here they ate the food sacrificed to the idol. They got up to drink and rose up to play. The idea of playing was their “wild, naked dances that concluded the feasts to the idol.”<sup>3</sup>



In verse 8 some of the Israelites were **sexually immoral**. The penalty in one instance for their immorality was that twenty-three thousand died in one day (Numbers 25:1-9). In Numbers we find that twenty-four thousand died. How do we handle the apparent discrepancy? Paul writes about how many died in one day where Numbers does not say one day, so most must have died on one day with others dying a day or more later.

The next example found in verse 9 is that of those who **put Christ to the test**. The Corinthians were testing him by their conduct. The Israelites tested him by their sinful lifestyle and lack of thankfulness. In Numbers 21:5,6 venomous snakes came and killed many.

The final example in verse 10 is that of **grumbling**. The reference to grumbling is probably from Numbers 16 where 14,700 died in a plague. This plague was caused by the destroyer who was God's agent to punish the wicked.

Again Paul repeats that these things happened as examples. They are recorded in Scripture of the benefit of God's people. The end of the ages is the last period of history; that is the church age or the time between the resurrection and the second coming of Christ.

### 11. Explain the warning of verse 12.

### 12. What lessons do we learn about temptation in verse 13?

God's people are warned that it is possible for them to be disqualified or rejected and lose their eternal reward. This is demonstrated by the destruction that came upon the Israelites in the Old Testament when they engaged in idolatry, sexual immorality, putting the Lord to the test, and grumbling. All these sins were present in the Corinthian church. These warnings should motivate them to change and they are encouraged that God will never put upon them more than is possible to overcome.

<sup>3</sup>Reese, Gareth L. *New Testament Epistles: 1 Corinthians*. Moberly, Missouri: Scripture Exposition Books, 2004. p. 337.



## Overcoming Idolatry (1 Cor. 10:14-22)

In the previous lesson, we learned the destructive outcomes of idolatry on the Israelites. As 21st century Christians we may believe ourselves to be immune from the sin of idolatry, but that may be because we do not understand the nature of idolatry.

### I. What Is Idolatry?

In **Exodus 20:3-6** God says, *“You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself a carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. You shall not bow down to them or serve them, for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing steadfast love to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.”* These verses form the first of the ten commandments. God does not permit man to place anything in the place that rightly belongs to him.

While most Christians would agree that idolatry is a grievous sin, they don't really see themselves as tempted by idolatry. They believe idolatry was a sin of an unsophisticated people hundreds or thousands of years ago. These people they believe were uneducated, superstitious, and easily misled. On the other hand, in our scientific, enlightened modern age we know much more, are educated more fully, and understand more completely. Idolatry is not on our list of sins we need to conquer.



As 1 Cor. 10:7 recounts the idolatry of the Israelites it was in the form of a golden calf. So in our minds idols are usually man made objects of wood, stone, or metal. We see however that the characteristics of idolatry are found around us today.

First, in Idolatry the Idolater attempts to Reduce the Power or Nature of God.

God is omniscient, omnipotent, and omnipresent. He is all knowing, all powerful, and ever present. God has not beginning and no end. God is Creator and not part of the created. We cannot hold God or limit God, but idolatry attempts to do just that. The Israelites cried out to Aaron for a god and he made a golden calf trying to reduce the all powerful God into an image that they could see, and touch, and hold. A God that can be reduced to a manufactured object loses much of his awe and fearfulness. When people create their own gods or try to recreate the God of the Bible they make Him into what they want Him to be.

1. **What are some of the ways in which people try to reduce the power or nature of God today?**



## Second, Idolatry can be a Substitute for God.

For some of the world's people this substitute is a graven image of some sorts, but it can also be things like money, sex, or power; anything that substitutes for the place reserved for God in our lives. Some Christians place their preacher or an elder or other leader in the place of God following him blindly wherever he leads. It can be religious legalism that relegates our faith to a list of do's and don'ts. These do not require a love and obedience to an almighty Creator.

### **2. What are some of ways people substitute what properly belongs to God to someone or something else?**

## **II. Flee From Idolatry**

Verse 14 begins with the word “therefore” indicating that what Paul is about to write is based upon what he has just written; namely the danger associated with idolatry. The sin of idolatry is so pervasive and so serious that Paul instructs his readers to “flee” just had he had previously said of sexual immorality. This is a strong word that indicates running or escaping. The same word is used in Matthew 2:13 when Joseph, Mary, and Jesus were told to flee to Egypt.

Paul refers to the Corinthians as “beloved” and then appeals to them as sensible people. The Corinthian Christians are urged to think about what Paul said. Is it reasonable? If so they should listen and judge what he says.

Paul presents an argument against idolatry by appealing to the Lord's Supper. In verses 16 and 17 we learn that when a Christian partakes of the Lord's Supper they become participants in the body of Christ. They show that they are in fellowship with him and with one another. In the Lord's Supper we share in a remembrance of Jesus Christ who died for us. In the Lord's Supper we share with other Christians in a celebration of our faith and of our hope and we demonstrate that “we who are many are one body.”



The broken bread refers to the fact that the bread was broken off of a loaf either by one person before distributing it or the Christians broke off a piece of a loaf as it was passed to them. We do note that at the Last Supper, Jesus himself took the bread, broke it, and handed it to his disciples. This “breaking of bread” is symbolic of the broken body of Christ.

### **3. Should Christians today “break” the bread or is it sufficient to have pre-cut bread or multiple pieces?**

### **4. What was the significance of having “one” bread or loaf in verse 17?**

Next Paul moves to the example of Israel. Portions of the Old Testament sacrifices were eaten by the priests and the worshipers (Deut. 12:18, 27; Lev. 3:3). This showed those who ate to be participants in the altar. The point is that those who eat of the meat sacrificed to idols become a part of the idol or involve themselves in idolatry.



The food sacrificed to idols is nothing and the idols themselves are nothing. While the idols may be just wood, or stone, or metal there are demons who stand behind the idols. “Pagan people understand that they are offering up their sacrifices to the spirits which the images represented...idols do represent unseen spirits, evil spirits, demonic spirits. Even though the pagan gods have no real existence, Satan does. In worshiping idols men are worshiping Satan.”<sup>1</sup>

Just as those who participate in the Lord’s Supper are participants with Christ; those who eat meat sacrificed to idols are participating with the idol and by extension demons.

**5. What does it mean to say that God is jealous?**

**6. What does Paul mean when he asks in verse 22, “are we stronger than he?”**

**7. What applications can we make to 21st century Christians from Paul’s teaching in 1 Cor. 10:14-22?**

<sup>1</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 166.



## Making Godly Decisions (1 Cor. 10:23-11:1)

What does it cost? . . . Do I really want it? . . . Do I really need it? . . . Do I really want to do it? . . . How do I feel about it? . . . Will it bring me pleasure or make me happy? These are the types of questions that come into our minds when we make decisions. Generally we consider what we want and how it will affect us.

While the questions above are fair questions to ask they cannot be the entire criteria we use in our decision making as Christians. Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 10 that even though some things may be lawful to do, they are not profitable. There are some things that may be legal, but not helpful. As Christians our decisions must be made not solely on how the decision will affect us, but also how it will affect others.

These verses form the end of the topic concerning the eating of food sacrificed to idols. Paul has shown that an idol is nothing. There is only one God and he is not represented in idol worship. While the food itself is not contaminated a Christian should refrain from eating the meat because the faith of a weaker brother might be harmed. Additionally, a Christian should flee from idolatry and eating this meat shows a Christian to be participating in an activity associated with an idol and demons.



Now Paul continues in a similar vein by asking: “Is it helpful? Does it build up others?” Does it glorify God?

### **I. Limitations on Christian Freedom**

Paul makes two statements of fact and then provides two limitations. First he says, “*All things are lawful*” and then says “*but not all things are helpful.*” Second he says, “*All things are lawful*” and then says “*but not all things build up.*”

1. How do we know if something is lawful or not?
2. What kinds of things are not helpful?
3. What does it mean to be “built up?”

The principle to remember is that even if something is lawful, it is not permissible if it harms a neighbour. Paul says that no one should “*seek*” his own good, but rather his neighbour’s good. The tense of the verb “seek” shows that it is a continual process. A Christian is to continuously seek how he can best help others live for Christ.

## II. Application for the Corinthians

1. Meat in the marketplace. Since there is nothing wrong with the meat itself a Christian could buy meat in the marketplace as long as he did question the origin of the meat. It may or may not have been sacrificed to idol, but the meat was not contaminated even if was used in idol worship.

If they questioned the origin of the meat and found that it had been sacrificed to an idol their conscience could be harmed. The conscience is that part of a person which commends or condemns a person in their decisions.



**Meat Market in Corinth**

Photo used with permission from BiblePlaces.com

In verse 26, Paul gives the reason why the meat was good to eat. It is part of what God has created. God’s creation is available to his people to use and enjoy. So long as a Christian purchased the meat and did not know if was from the temple of an idol he was free to eat and enjoy it. There was no need to try to determine the origin of the meat.

2. Meat in Private Homes.

Verse 27 gives the same rationale for eating meat in private homes. If a Christian is invited to eat in the home of an unbeliever, and he decides to accept, he should eat the meat served without asking the origin of the meat.

### 4. What lessons do we learn about Christians associating with non-Christians in verse 27?”

If the host at the meal informs his Christian friend that the meat had been offered to an idol in sacrifice the Christian should refrain from eating. If he eats the meat, it might be interpreted that he is condoning idol worship. Paul understands that eating the meat might not harm the conscience of the believer, but it could harm the conscience of the unbeliever. A Christian should be willing to limit his liberty when it could harm the conscience of another believer or an unbeliever.

### 5. Why would an unbeliever be concerned with whether or not a Christian ate food sacrificed to an idol; especially if he were serving the meat?

A Christian might say, “I am thankful for the meat and eat it with thankfulness.” However it is not acceptable to eat this meat that could harm the faith of another. The Christian may be “denounced” for eating this meat. The Greek word translated as denounced is the word *blasphēmoumai* which is where we get the English word blaspheme. The Christian may be blasphemed, slandered, or or maligned. A Christian must be willing to limit his liberty for the sake of others.

**III. Limiting Liberties the Glory of God**

- 6. Why would it not be possible to eat the meat, a host says was sacrificed to an idol, to the glory of God?**
- 7. What is the “glory of God” as it is used in verse 31?**
- 8. What three groups does Paul urge the Corinthian Christians not to offend?**

Paul’s entire purpose in this section is to say that eternal destiny of others is so important that Christians must be willing to limit their liberties. It should be the heart’s desire of every Christian that men and would be saved. Paul stresses that he had given up liberties and that the Corinthian Christians should imitate him even as he imitates Christ.

- 9. What liberties did Christ give up?**
- 10. Provide some practical examples of how the teaching of 1 Cor. 10:23-11:1 can be applied today.**



## Propriety in Public Worship (1 Cor. 11:2-16)

Paul begins a section now which will address order within the church. A number of problems were destroying the oneness Christians should have in Christ. In verse 2 Paul complements the Corinthian church. In the midst of rebuke and instruction Paul pauses to say, ***“I commend you...”*** His commendation was based on the fact that they remembered him and the traditions he had taught them.

The word “traditions” or “teachings” is used here to signify those things taught and passed on to the Corinthians by Paul that they ought to follow. From this verse of commendation, he quickly turns to the topic of head coverings. These verses have been controversial in the church and some have even brought conflict between men and women. To some in today’s world the biblical relationship between men and women has been deemed condescending and inappropriate.

These verses and others have been used to criticise the Apostle Paul as being biased or anti-female. In this and all his New Testament letters we must understand that Paul is not providing a personal opinion, but is writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. These are in fact the very Words of God.

### **I. Defining the Word “Head”**

To understand 1 Cor. 11, it is important that we are able to define the Greek word *“kephale”* which is translated as “head.”

1. The most common meaning of the word “head” is the literal physical part of person that sits upon his shoulders.
2. Second, and more important for our discussion, is the word’s figurative or metaphorical use in the New Testament. It is obvious from a reading of 1 Cor. 11:3 that the word can be used metaphorically.
  - A. There are those who take what we might call “feminist” views. The most radical of these views do not believe the Bible is authoritative in any way. Those who espouse, what Cottrell calls, Biblical Feminism believe in the authority of the Bible, but understand the Bible to teach an egalitarian view of women. The egalitarian view is that there is complete equality between men and women and therefore there can be no differentiation in roles in the church. For those who hold this view “head” means source and not authority. Those who hold these views sometimes disregard those Scriptures which do not agree with their views while others reinterpret Paul’s teachings to their benefit.<sup>1</sup>
  - B. The word “head” or *kephale* is used nine times in verses 2-16. When used metaphorically, the word should be understood to mean “leader.” or “authority.”<sup>2</sup> This view seems to best fit the Scriptural context.

<sup>1</sup> Oester, Richard E., Jr. *The College Press NIV Commentary: 1 Corinthians*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 1995. pp. 255-259.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.



## II. The Doctrine of Headship

Headship does not mean superiority. In 11:3, God is said to be the head of Christ, yet we know them to be equal in power, knowledge, honour, and glory. Jesus told Philip in **John 14:9**, “... *Whoever has seen me has seen the Father...*” and the Hebrew writer says of Christ in **Hebrews 1:3**, he is “*the exact imprint of his nature...*” Christ was not inferior to the Father and women are not inferior to men. Headship does not mean superiority.



Headship does mean leadership. When Jesus walked upon this earth He voluntarily placed himself in subjection to His father. Jesus prayed to the Father and fulfilled the will of his Father. Christ willingly sacrificed himself on the cross in obedience to the Father. In the home, husbands are to lovingly lead their wives and in the church men are to serve in the positions of leadership.

### 1. What makes the egalitarian view so popular in the church today?

## III. The Setting of 1 Cor. 11:2-16

Most have understood 1 Cor. 11:2-16 to be instruction for corporate public worship assemblies. Ferguson however disagrees saying that in verse 17 we have a transition moving from commendation to rebuke and the setting seems to change when Paul writes “when you come together.” Verses 2-16 are all part of a commendation, but some according to verse 16 may have been critical of those who kept the traditions.<sup>3</sup>

Though these verses are used by some as support for allowing women to pray, prophecy, preach, or teach in the assembly, it is quite possible what was going on was not in the assembly. It is important to remember that no Scripture will violate another Scripture and in 1 Cor. 14:33-34 Paul clearly says that women are not permitted to speak in the assembly.

In verses 2-16, then Paul could be speaking of any time of praying or prophesying whether public or private. Cottrell takes the praying and prophesying of verses 4-5 to include miraculous gifts of prophecy and tongues (with tongues being a kind of prayer.)<sup>4</sup>

We also note the word translated as “practice” in the ESV and NIV is often translated as “custom.” This leads us to believe that Paul is talking about a custom among the Corinthians and that the head coverings he discusses are not for all Christians in all ages.

### 2. How far can a Christian go to accommodate the culture around him?

## IV. Teachings on Head Coverings

Headship means that men submit to God. The head of every man is Christ so men voluntarily submit to God. Part of this submission was that a man will not worship with his head uncovered. For a man to cover the head in first century Corinth showed him to be in subjection to another. Slaves wore head

<sup>3</sup>Ferguson, Everett. *The Church of Christ: Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996. p. 342.

<sup>4</sup>Cottrell, Jack. *Headship, Submission, and the Bible: Gender Roles in the Home*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 2008.

coverings and free men when bare headed. If a man covered his head it signified his loyalty was to a human rather than to Christ.<sup>5</sup> Other commentators believe that there are other reasons why Paul taught a man should not have his head covered such as the fact that the Jews covered their heads in worship and that it was a current style of women and not men.



James Coffman makes an interesting case that the entire section on head coverings does not refer to a specific piece of cloth that one placed on their head, but to hair. The Greek literally says “having something down from his head” and the something is neither stated or implied. This he says fits contextually with verse 14 when Paul says that a man should not have long hair.<sup>6</sup> We may never know exactly the first century dress and hair styles perfectly enough to be dogmatic about our understanding.

In verse 6, Paul turns his attention to wives. In this case a wife was to pray or prophesy with her head covered. It was the custom of first century Greek women to cover their heads in public as a sign of their femininity and submission. To go out in public without a head covered signified that she might be an immoral woman. This would bring dishonour to her head (that is her husband). If a woman does not wear a head covering, she might as well go out with all her hair cut off. While there is no biblical teaching against women shaving their heads, in first century Corinth this could indicate that a woman was mourning, a slave, or immoral.<sup>7</sup>

### **3. Do these verses teach anything about how Christian men and women should dress today?**

The word glory (vs. 7) originally meant how a person was thought of by others; it is the opposite of shame. In the New Testament the word is primarily used for God and means not just how he is thought of by others, but the fact that he has inherent worth and majesty. Still the older idea is sometimes used and is in mind here. When a man prophesied with his head uncovered brought glory to God, his head while a woman who covered her head brought glory to her husband, her head.<sup>8</sup>

Christians need to act within their culture in such a way to bring glory to God. A man who disregards local customs does not honour God and a woman who brings shame to her husband has dishonoured her husband and her God.

### **4. Why does it matter what people in the world think of Christians?**

### **5. How would a wife who brought glory to her husband, bring glory to God?**

The relationship of man to the Creation is another reason for Paul’s teaching. Verses 8 and 9 are a reference to Genesis 2:22-23 where the woman is created from the rib of man. Man came first in the Creation order and was made from the dust of the earth by God. Woman was created second, and was created out of the man and for the man. The Creation order itself testifies that the husband is the head of the wife and is to lead in the home and in the church. This is a part of God’s original plan.

<sup>5</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 177.

<sup>6</sup>Coffman, James Burton. *“Coffman Commentaries on the Old and New Testament”*. <<http://www.studylight.org/com/bcc/view.cgi?book=1co&chapter=011>>. Abilene Christian University Press, Abilene, Texas, USA. 1983-1999.

<sup>7</sup>Ibid. p. 178

<sup>8</sup>Cottrell. Ibid. p. 239-246.

## 6. What significance is there to the fact that man and woman are both created in the image of God?

Verse 10 says that the wife should have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. The head covering shows the wife to be under the authority of her husband. To disregard the head covering in that culture would have dishonoured her husband and showed his lack of leadership in the home. There are many ideas about what Paul means when he mentions the angels. One of the most reasonable explanations is that Paul is referring to those angels who rebelled against God and were cast into hell (2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6). They serve as an example to all who refuse to follow those in authority. The woman who wears a head covering shows herself to be in subjection to her husband.

## V. The Male-Female Relationship

All should understand that men are not superior to women. Paul states in verse 11 that men and women are not independent of each other. Every person on the earth is here through procreation that was not possible without both man and woman. Whereas the first woman may have come out of man, all subsequent men have been born from a woman.



Beyond that, Paul uses the phrase *“in the Lord”* in verse 11 showing that man and woman are in equal need of salvation and equally entitled to share in salvation. While men and women are dependent upon each other both are dependent upon God.

## VI. Concluding Statements on the Subject of Head Coverings

### 7. What is meant by the phrase “judge for yourselves” in verse 13?

Paul’s concluding remarks shows that men and women are to act like men and women within their culture. Women wore long hair while men did not. It would be wrong for either to dress like the opposite sex. In the first century in men wore short hair styles and it was not considered masculine to wear long hair. Conversely long hair was considered feminine and for a woman to have short hair was thought to be manly. Men and women need to act like men and women within their culture.

### 8. How is this teaching applicable today?

### 9. What is Paul’s teaching in verse 16?



## Teaching on the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:17-34)

In the previous lesson in 1 Cor. 11:2-16 Paul provided a commendation. In verse 17 he moves to a new topic and says in this instruction I have no commendation. Then he writes what are some of the saddest words in the New Testament concerning the church when he says, ***“when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.”***

What a terrible and discouraging thing to say to a church . . . *“Your meetings do more harm than good.”* Yet their lack of unity and misuse of the Lord's Supper harmed the church and their witness in the world.

### **I. A Lack of Unity Makes the Meetings of a Church Harmful (vss. 17-19)**

In verse 18 Paul addresses the Corinthians, ***“when you come together as a church.”*** Christians are “the church” all the time, but there are times of public assembly. The specific occasion of the meeting in the church at Corinth was the Lord's Supper which is our primary purpose for gathering on the Lord's Day (Acts 20:7). The Lord's Supper should be a time of unity, but in Corinth it was not. Later on in verse 29 Paul says that anyone who partakes of the Lord's Supper without discerning the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.

The church is the body of Christ. When a person shares in the Lord's Supper without considering Jesus and without considering the church they are in error. The Lord's Supper should be a time of unity instead of a time of disunity.



In Corinth there were divisions in the church. The Greek word for division is *schismata* from which we get the English word schism. We discussed this problem early in 1 Corinthians as the church had divided up into factions. In 1 Corinthians 11, we begin to see division on financial or social grounds. Paul says that those who are genuine will be seen through the factionalism.

#### **1. What should make the Lord's Supper a time of unity within the church?**

### **II. A Lack of Consideration of Others Makes the Meetings of a Church Harmful (vss. 20-23)**

It is important that we set the context in this passage. It was the Lord's Supper that was involved in this controversy, but Paul tells the Corinthians that they were not even eating the Lord's Supper because of their thoughtlessness. In Corinth, the Lord's Supper was the climax of a combined meal the Christians shared before the Lord's Supper. This dinner or feast is sometimes known as the *Agape* meal. This was a first century pot-luck as members brought food to share amongst themselves.



There was nothing wrong with sharing the Lord's Supper in the context of a meal. In fact, it was during a meal that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper in the upper room. The problem with this meal was that the wealthier members were eating the best of foods and eating in abundance. While some were gorging themselves, others were going hungry. The wealthy were even starting their meal before the poorer Christians even arrived.

The problem with getting drunk at the meal was also addressed here by Paul. Not only were some of the wealthier Christians inconsiderate of others, they actually drank to the point of intoxication. In this state it would be impossible to share properly in the Lord's Supper.

**2. How can Christians today be inconsiderate of brothers and sisters in Christ?**

**3. What four questions does Paul ask the Corinthians in verse 22?**

**4. Some have taken Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians that they had houses to eat and drink in to prohibit eat together as a church. Is this what he is teaching? Explain your answer.**

**5. What would it mean to "despise the church of God? (vs. 22)**

**6. Explain why those who had nothing would be humiliated? (vs. 22)**

### **III. Remembering the Life and Death of Jesus (vss. 23-26)**

The Apostle Paul "received" the instruction about the Lord's Supper from the Lord himself and he had "delivered" this instruction to the Corinthians. In the Upper Room Jesus shared His Last Supper with his disciples. This event is recorded in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. This meal came shortly before Jesus was tried and executed. What Jesus provided for His disciples was a concrete and tangible way to regularly remember Him.



Jesus gives them two specific elements to use to remember Him. The first was unleavened bread which was used to remember His Body. With the bread, he broke it symbolising his life that was broken by death, his separation from the Father, and that all those who partake are sharing in his one body. Though it was common for those who were crucified to have broken bones we know that Jesus did not (John 19:33,36). When Jesus instructs his followers to remember His body, He means more than just his flesh and bone; He wants them to remember His very life; all that He did and all that He said.

**7. Describe what each phrase means in verse 24: "This is my body;" "which is for you;" do this in remembrance of me.**



The second element was the cup which was utilised to remember the blood of Jesus. Before consuming the bread and the cup, Jesus gave thanks. When believers partake of the cup they are reminded of Christ's blood that was shed to provide redemption for man.

His blood brought about the new covenant according to verse 25. A covenant is a promise or a contract or a testament. In this case, it the Christian age in which man can receive forgiveness through the shed blood of Jesus. The Law of Moses passed away when Jesus died, paid for the sin of man with his blood, and rose again.

Please notice the most beautiful words in verse 24, this sacrifice is ***“for you.”*** This sacrifice is for YOU and it is for ME. it would not be inappropriate to insert your own name there. This is my body, this is my blood which is for \_\_\_\_\_.

The Lord's Supper is to be proclaimed until the Lord comes again. These verses shake us from any possibility of partaking of the Lord's Supper in a casual manner. We are proclaiming the Lord's death when we share in this meal. We are saying to ourselves all those around that the death of Jesus Christ is not something that we will forget. More than at any other time in our week our minds are centrally focused on the fact that the death of Jesus Christ provides the opportunity for our redemption. Further, we are saying that we believe that Jesus is coming again just as he promised.



The frequency of the Lord's Supper is not directly discussed here, but simply the phrase “for as often...” is used in verse 26. No place in the pages of the Bible are we directly told how often to share in the Lord's Supper. We make our decision to meet around the Lord's Table on a weekly basis because that is what was done in the churches in the New Testament.

#### **8. Since the first century church took the Lord's Supper weekly, why would Christians today wish to partake less often?**

#### **IV. Remembering Fellow Christians (vss. 26-34)**

When we read **verses 27-34** in context, it becomes clear that the Lord expects Christians to remember each other when sharing the Lord's Supper. Verse 29 teaches that eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper without recognising the body, brings judgment. The context of the entire chapter makes it clear that the body of Christ in question here, is the church.

We are to remember each other, as well as Jesus when we share this supper. Verses 17-22 tells us that there was a major problem surrounding the Lord's Supper in Corinth. The people were making a mockery of the *agape* meal and the Lord's Supper by neglecting to remember each other. Because of this **verse 17** says one of the most damning things that can be said to a church, “... ***when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse.***”

The Lord's Supper was designed as a time of unity. **1 Cor. 10:17** reminds us, “***Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.***” As Christians we are taught to pray alone, and read God's Word alone, and meditate alone, and share our faith as individuals, but never are we asked to take the Lord's Supper alone. The Lord's Supper is always shared within the community of the church. When we meet around this table together we are all agreeing that Jesus Christ died for us and that He is coming again.

Verse 27 warns Christians not to take the Lord's Supper an unworthy manner. Because of the solemnness of the sacrifice our Lord made, each Christian must remember the death of Jesus and what it means to him. To casually take of the Supper makes one guilty.

Due to the seriousness of taking the Supper and the guilt that can come who takes unworthily, a man is called on to examine himself. While this is an individual examination, the Lord's Supper is a corporate event in the church. When Jesus first instituted the Supper in the upper room, he was surrounded by his disciples. The Lord's Supper is not an individualistic introspection alone, but also a communal declaration of our faith in the atoning death of Jesus and his promise to return.

In verse 29, Christians are called on to "discern the body." This word carries the idea of evaluating and tells us that Christians need to think about the body of Christ. While we may think about his physical body which was crucified at Calvary, Christians also consider his body today which is the church.

**9. What are the two warnings of verse 27 and 29 and how do they differ?**

**10. What penalty arose in verse 30 for taking the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?**

**11. According to verse 31 how can one escape being judged concerning their partaking of the Lord's Supper?**

**12. What is the purpose of the discipline of the Lord surrounding the Lord's Supper? (vs. 32)**

In verses 33-34 Paul reverts to speaking about the *Agape* meal and instructs the Corinthian Christians to think about each other. Wait for each other (probably some had to work past the time when the wealthier could begin gathering together.) There were other problems in the church, probably surrounding the Lord's Supper, which Paul hoped to address on a subsequent visit.

The Lord's Supper should be a unifying event within the church as we reverently consider what Jesus did for us and all our brothers and sisters in Christ. May we use it to grow closer to Christ and to one another and never abuse it so that we are judged or that our meetings do more harm than good.



## Teaching on Spiritual Gifts (1 Cor. 12:1-11)

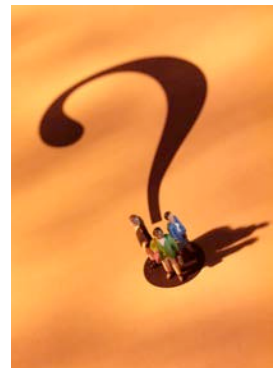
Paul now moves on to the new topic of the use of spiritual gifts in the church. This will be his focus for the next three chapters. This is an important topic of which Paul does not want the church to be “uninformed.” Gifts that had been given to some in the church were be misused and Paul wanted to instruct and inform the church about these gifts.

It was from this idolatrous background that the Corinthian Christians had come. In verse 2, Paul reminds them that they had been led astray by mute idols. The Corinthians left a polytheistic, animistic, pagan world and they were sometimes confused if something was from God or not.

### 1. How does a person’s background before coming to Christ sometimes influence him after he becomes a Christian?

In the midst of all the chaos that existed in the pagan city of Corinth, the Christians had difficulty knowing what was from God and what was not from God. Distinguishing these matters was not an easy task for these Christians because in many of these idolatrous religions there were what might be called “counterfeit” gifts. They are counterfeit because they contained some of the same elements that are found in Christianity.

These pagan religions had their own temples and worshipped their gods. Baptism was a part of the life of some of the religious groups while others had celebrations that some might appear similar to the speaking in tongues. Some groups claimed to prophecy, or work miracles, or heal the sick. The Christians, who would have received their gifts through the laying on of Paul’s hands, were confused and Paul writes to clear up any confusion.



### I. Does it Honour Christ?

Certainly chaos and division and confusion are not from God and cannot honour Christ. Anyone who claims to have a gift and is not honouring Christ, must not have a gift from the Holy Spirit. In verses 4-6 Paul says that there are varieties of gifts, varieties of service, and varieties of activities, but there is only one Spirit, one Lord, and one God.

While these false gods are gods of disorder, God is a God of order and love and unity. According to verse 3 some in Corinth were claiming to be from God, while blaspheming the name of Jesus. How or why this could happen we don’t know for certain. The opposite of this equation is that anyone who claimed that Jesus was Lord was indeed doing so through the Holy Spirit.

## 2. What is it impossible to say in the Spirit of God?

The Greek word *anathema* is translated in the ESV as “accursed” and means to be delivered up to divine wrath.<sup>1</sup> The word Lord indicates sovereign authority. He is our ruler, and creator. We owe to Him all our allegiance. It is true that someone can say with his lips that Jesus is Lord and not mean it in his heart. The Bible is not teaching us that mere lip service means that something comes from Christ, but anyone who is from God will speak well of him.

What the Bible is teaching is that the one who is speaking by the authority of the Holy Spirit is going to bring honour to Jesus Christ. Those who claim to have gifts from the Holy Spirit are going to be acting in a way that will bring honour to Christ. This was a good test in the first century and it is a good test in the late 20th century to ask if something brings honour to Christ. If it does not, then it cannot be a gift from the Holy Spirit.

## II. A Variety of Gifts



In verses 4-6, Paul mentions the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who stand in complete unity. All miraculous spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit and though they were varied they all came from the same Spirit, and though they were utilised in various ways they served the same Lord and God.

Verse 7 is a key verse for this section. “*To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.*” Every gift given by the Holy Spirit was given to build the church. Any purported gift that does not help to build the church cannot be from God.

## 2. What does the phrase “common good” mean?

## 3. What gifts are listed in verses 8-10 and what did they accomplish?

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

<sup>1</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 198.

G.

H.

I.

Every gift (Greek word is *charismaton*) that is from the Holy Spirit has the same source of power. It is he who gives to each one the gift he individually wills. These gifts were given in the New Testament through the laying on of the hands of an apostle, but it was the Holy Spirit who apportioned the gifts as he desired. Every gift was given for the building up of the church.





## One Body with Many Members (1 Cor. 12:12-31)

The human body is one of the most marvellous of God's creations. God created our complex bodies so that we can enjoy the wonder of life. The body is an organism made up of many parts with all of the parts working together to make one unit. Separate from the body each part is lifeless and useless.

Each person has only one body which cannot be subdivided. For instance, our arms are wonderful tools, but if we were to remove an arm from our body, it would cease to function and would be useless. Furthermore, even though our body would continue to live, it would lose some of its function without the arm.

How many specific parts there are in the human body, I do not know. In fact, I suppose no one knows. Physicians study the human body for years, but still lack knowledge of exactly how every part functions. The more we learn about the body, the more we realise that there is much that we do not know.

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul likens the church to a body. In fact, the church is not like a body. The church IS a body. The church is the body of Christ. In this body we find many members. Each member is useful and needed. Without any one, the body loses some of its function and becomes less able to work and do that for which it was designed.



When we read 1 Cor. 12:12-31 we are struck with the humour with which Paul writes as he describes talking hands and feet and eyes. Some of these members feel inferior, some feel superior, and they debate their necessity. While Paul may or may not have meant to be comical he did intend to stress the absurdity of any members feeling inferior or superior. There is great damage that can be done by holding these two opinions.

The entry point into this one body comes through baptism (vs 13). When one is baptised into Christ he becomes a part of the body of Christ whether he is a Jew or Greek, slave or free. Each one receives the indwelling of the same Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38) and the miraculous gifts that came to some in the New Testament through the laying on of the apostles' hands also came from the one Holy Spirit.

### 1. In light of the problems in the Corinthian church, why does Paul stress the oneness Christians have in Christ?

#### I. The Danger of Feeling Inferior

In the illustrations that Paul uses in verses 15 and 16, the foot feels inferior. The foot feels like it is not a part of the body because it is not the hand and the ear felt insignificant because it was not an eye.

In verses 17-19 Paul shows the foolishness of this thinking. If the whole body were an eye it wouldn't be able to hear, but if the whole body were an ear it would have no sense of smell. God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part there would not be a body. Each part of the body is important to the body.



2. Why might one Christian feel inferior to another?
3. Why is it foolish for one Christian to feel inferior to another Christian?
4. Who decided what gift any Christian would receive?
5. Explain the meaning of verses 19-20.

## II. The Danger of Feeling Superior

Just as dangerous and perhaps as common is the feeling of superiority in the body and Paul addresses this problem in verses 20-26. Here the eye says to the hand that he has no need of the hand and the head says to the feet that he has no need of the feet.



It is extremely illogical to feel superiority in the body. The eye can do very little without the hand. The eye can see an object, but without the hand it cannot be picked up. The head may feel superior to the feet, but the head cannot get from one place to another without the feet. Likewise, in the body of Christ, no person should feel superior to another.

We note the arrogance of these members who say, "I have no need of you." It is very possible that this attitude of arrogance is what caused the other members to feel inferior. No Christian is superior because none can make up the body alone.

6. Why might one Christian feel superior to another?

In verse 22 Paul speaks of the parts of the body which seem to be weaker and calls them indispensable. We see our hands, feet, eyes, and ears, but inside our body are our heart, liver, and lungs. We can live without a hand, foot, eye, or ear, but we cannot live without some of the parts that work out of sight.

7. When had Paul previously spoken of weaker members and what is the connection?

In verse 23 Paul writes of the body's less honourable and unpresentable parts. These parts are treated with special modesty. We take more care of them by clothing them and preventing others from seeing them. Though they may be considered to be less honourable or unpresentable, in essence we give much greater attention to them.

8. Describe how some parts of the body of Christ (the church) are seen while others go unseen.

### III. Interdependence Within the Body

It is God's desire that the less visible members of the body are given honour and that all parts of the body work together. Each member is to care for the other member (vs. 25). The members of the body are interdependent because together they make one body (vs. 27). In verse 26 Paul writes, ***"If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honoured, all rejoice together."***



When members of the church do not see the value of each other the church becomes divided. In verse 25 Paul speaks of the danger of division in the body. This is the third time that he has spoken of the problem of division in 1 Corinthians (1:10; 11:18; 12:25). The church is a body with interrelated members and each of these members must work together.

9. Describe how the whole body suffers when one member suffers and how the whole body rejoices when one member is honoured.

10. In verse 27, Paul does not say the members of the church are "like" a body. He says they \_\_\_\_\_ a body.

Within the church God appointed ***apostles***. These men were witnesses of the resurrected Lord and were empowered by God to aid in the establishment of the church and through the power of the Holy Spirit to pen the words of the New Testament. They were chosen by Christ (Luke 6:13; Galatians 1:1). ***Prophets*** served in the early church to receive direct revelation from God to pass on to the church. This was particularly important before the New Testament was written. The ***teachers*** were able to understand God's word and pass along that information to others.

***Miracles*** were sometimes present in the first century church to further the work of the church. This gift (as other supernatural gifts) was given through the laying on of the hands of an apostle (Acts 8:18; 1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Tim 1:6; Acts 6:1-8; 19:1-7). ***Healings*** provided physical restoration of health to those with ailments.

The gift of ***helping*** and ***administrating*** may not have been supernatural, but they were still given by God. Perhaps here Paul has in mind deacons and elders in the church. ***Various kinds of tongues*** was a supernatural gift that allowed one to speak a language they did not know.

We cannot be sure why Paul enumerates these gifts as he does. Are they in chronological order or order of importance, or simply a listing? It is true that some parts of the body are more visible and perhaps even more vital to the life of the body. The apostles were instrumental in the foundation of the church, but that does not take away from the importance of other members. It is also significant that in this list tongues are listed last. Though they seem to have been coveted in Corinth, it is one of the least important gifts.



Just as within the human body there are many parts that make up one whole body, within the church not all members have the same gift. In the early church there were apostles, prophets, teachers, miracle workers, healers, those who spoke in tongues, and those who supernaturally interpreted tongues. Paul asks rhetorically if all possessed any one of these gifts. The obvious answer is no, since no one was given all gifts.

This is important to note because even today there are groups which claim that a person “must” have certain gifts including “speaking in tongues.” As we will see in a future lesson this gift seems to have passed away, but even in the first century church not every one spoke in tongues because they were not given the gift.

Paul urges the church to earnestly desire what he calls the higher gifts. And then promises to show a still more excellent way. Later he will teach that love is the superior gift. It should be the great hope of all Christians to use their various gifts to bring glory to God.

**11. What are the most important lessons we can we learn from 1 Cor. 12:12-31?**



## The Supremacy of Love (1 Cor. 13:1-13)

1 Corinthians 13 is perhaps the best known chapter in all of the New Testament. It is read at most weddings, and when we read it, we are struck by its beautiful poetic ring. This chapter has been called the love chapter because in it love is described in vivid and beautiful terms.

1 Cor. 13 stands in the midst of a section about spiritual gifts and the misuse of these gifts in Corinth. In this chapter, the Apostle Paul teaches that any spiritual activity that is devoid of love is useless. Any righteous act that a person may do must be done within the context of love or it is without value. Then Paul describes what love is and what love does.

The Corinthian church was a church that lacked love. The Church in Corinth was divided. The people look each other to court and sued one another. Their marriages were unstable. They were prideful. They even showed a lack of love for each other in the way they shared in the Lord's Supper.

The Corinthian Church was a divided, un-loving church where the some members acted with superiority thinking that their spiritual gifts were better than others and that their value was greater than others within the church.

### I. Spiritual Activity Without Love is Useless

Verses 1-3 provide an impressive list of spiritual activities which the Apostle Paul declares useless without the presence of love. In verse 1 he writes, ***“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”***

Some of the Corinthian Christians had the gift of tongues which allowed them to speak in a language that they had not studied. No place in the New Testament do we read of anyone speaking in the tongues of angels. Paul does not say that anyone **can** speak in the tongues of angels, but that **even if** one could it would be nothing without love. Paul uses superlative language to press the point as far as it can go. Even if you could speak in every language, even the language of angels, without love, it would be distracting and irritating like a noisy gong or clanging cymbal.



The point of the apostle Paul is that those gifts which the Corinthians eagerly desired were worse than useless. They desired these gifts of tongues so that they might boast, yet their tongues speaking was nothing but an irritating racket. Corinth was a pagan city which worshipped many Gods. In these pagan temples often gongs or cymbals were found near the entrance. When a worshiper would come to worship, he would bang the gong to attract the attention of the god. Spiritual acts without love are no more useful than the sounding of a pagan gong.

#### 1. Define the word “nothing” as Paul uses it in verses 2 and 3.



Next, the scripture goes on to the gift of prophecy and faith in **verse 2**, ***“If I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.”*** In chapter 14 Paul will speak of prophecy as the greatest of the spiritual gifts, yet without love the one who can prophecy (speak on behalf of God including revelations about the future) is nothing. Furthermore the one who can fathom all mysteries and the one who has all knowledge is nothing without love. Together, mysteries (which is truth revealed supernaturally by God) and knowledge (which is all a man might learn from observation and study of Scripture) comprise all that a man could possibly know. Even a man who literally knows everything would be useless without love. The one with the greatest of faith is nothing without love. Paul is trying to stress that if one had the totality of all possible spiritual gifts and did not have love, it was all useless.



Finally, in **verse 3** Paul says, ***“If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.”*** Now we have some of the greatest acts of sacrifice imaginable. In the first case a man gives away all his worldly wealth and in the second case he is martyred for his faith. Still, giving up everything one possesses and even his life is nothing without love.

- 2. Why are all these great spiritual acts and acts of sacrifice and service useless without love?**

## **II. Love Described**

Verses 4-7 provide us with a description of love rather than a definition. Some have suggested that these verses describe love much like someone would peel the petals back from a beautiful flower. Each one is unique and beautiful and together they form the entire beautiful flower. Love is described as an action, not a feeling. It requires commitment.

- 3. Verses 4-7 are a description of love, not a definition. Please define *agape* love in one sentence.**
- 4. List all the three descriptive words and phrases concerning love from verses 4-6 that say what love is or does.**
- 5. List all the eight descriptive words and phrases concerning love from verses 4-7 that say what love is not or does not do.**
- 6. List the four verbs in verse 7 that describe love.**

### III. Love Endures Forever

Love is contrasted with the miraculous gifts of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge because they are temporary while love will endure forever. Prophecies will pass away. Tongues will cease. Knowledge will pass away. Love never ends.

Paul says in **verses 9-10**, *“For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away.”* Our task is to determine two things. First, what is “in part” and second, what is “perfect.” Then we can determine when the gifts listed in verse 8 will pass away.

The word translated as “perfect” in verse 10 is the Greek word *teleion* and means complete or mature. The word *teleion* in verse 10 is in the neuter gender. This shows us that Paul is writing about a “thing” not a person. This is important because some have contented that “perfect” refers to Christ and his second coming. If this were the case “perfect” would have been in the masculine gender.<sup>1</sup>

#### 7. As Paul writes in verse 10, had “the perfect” arrived yet? How do you come to this conclusion?

The perfect had to arrive before the second coming because Paul says that “faith, hope, and love abide.” When Jesus comes again, there will no longer be any need for faith or hope because we will see Jesus face to face. That which Paul calls perfect must come between the time Paul writes in 1 Corinthians and the second coming.

That which is complete or mature is contrasted with the partial knowledge and prophecy the Corinthians currently possessed. This leads us to conclude that which is perfect or complete refers to the full revelation of God to man or the New Testament Scriptures. Once the Bible is complete there is no need for the gifts of prophecies, tongues, and knowledge.

The knowledge of the Corinthian Christians was incomplete since most of the New Testament had not yet been written. Even if a Christian had been gifted with prophecy or knowledge their part was incomplete and all Christians together still had an incomplete knowledge. The “in part” then refers to an incomplete knowledge or revelation. During this time then prophecies, tongues, and knowledge are active.

We know that the miraculous gifts in the New Testament were given by the laying on of the apostles’ hands (Acts 6:6-8; 8:6, 17). Those who received any of these gifts could not have lived far into the second century. “Early New Testament literature outside the New Testament indicates that the miraculous manifestation ceased in the early second century. This was the time when the early Christians were assembling the books written by the apostles.”<sup>2</sup> It is interesting to note that the later New Testament books do not include miraculous gifts. 1 Corinthians was an early book written about 55 A.D. Charles Dailey has put together a chart showing all miracles recorded in the New Testament happened prior to 60 A.D.<sup>3</sup>

#### 8. Why would the early church prior to the complete New Testament need miraculous gifts?

<sup>1</sup>Cottrell, Jack. *The Faith Once for All: Bible Doctrine for Today*. Joplin, Missouri: College Press, 2002. p. 302-303.

<sup>2</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher’s Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 220.

<sup>3</sup><http://charlesdailey.net/32-mirac.pdf>

Verses 9-12 serve as an explanation of why prophecies, tongues, and knowledge cease while faith, hope, and love remain. The explanation is made through the use of three illustrations.

The first illustration is that of childhood. We think and reason differently as adults and outgrow the need for childish ways. In the earliest days of the church prophecies, tongues, and knowledge were needed, but these have been put away not that maturity has come.



The next illustration is that of a mirror. Prior to the completion of the New Testament the Christians did not have a clear view of God's complete revelation, but now the mirror is clear.

The final illustration is that of knowing in part and then knowing fully. Again, the idea is that prior to the completion of the Scripture it was impossible to know God's complete revelation to man.

**9. What three virtues remain after perfect comes? (vs. 13)**

**10. Why is love the greatest virtue?**



## **Prophecy and Tongues in the Corinthian Church (1 Cor. 14:1-25)**

Paul has just shown in the previous chapter that prophecies, tongues, and knowledge would pass away, but in the meantime the Corinthian church needed to know how to deal with them. It seems that the church was most interested in tongues, but it was less important than other supernatural gifts; especially prophecy.

### **I. A Comparison Between Tongues and Prophecy**

Love should be the paramount desire of the heart of every Christian, but in first century Corinth, Paul urges the Christians to desire spiritual gifts and particularly prophecy. It is clear that prophecy is a greater gift because a truth was being conveyed to the church whether it be a prediction of a future event or more likely a truth revealed to the church as they laboured for the Lord before the writing of the New Testament.

The misuse of tongues in the assemblies in the church is the focus of Paul's teaching. He stresses that prophecy is greater than tongues because without an interpreter one speaks to God and not to men since men don't understand foreign languages, but God understands any language. Because no one understands him, what he speaks is a mystery.

The one who prophecies speaks in a language all can understand and he provides a message from God that will build, encourage, and console Christians. The tongue speaker builds himself, but the one who prophecies builds up the entire church.

**1. Is Paul discouraging the speaking in tongues by the Christians in first century Corinth? (Explain your answer)**

**2. Could all the Corinthian Christians speak in tongues? (1 Cor. 12:30)**

### **II. The Useless of Tongues Without Interpretation**

Tongues in the assembly of the church had no value unless they provided a revelation, knowledge, prophecy, or teaching. This could only happen in the presence of one who could interpret. The goal of all spiritual gifts is that the church may be built up (vs. 12).

**3. What is meant by a distinct note of a flue or harp or an indistinct sound of the bugle?**

**4. How can we know that tongues speaking involved intelligible languages? (vss. 9-11)**

### III. The Limited Value of Tongues

Speaking in tongues was of little personal value unless the person is able to interpret what he has said. For this reason Paul says in verse 13 that one should pray for the ability to interpret what he is saying. If one prays in a foreign language he doesn't understand he has not been able to engage his mind and the exercise is personally fruitless. In verse 15 Paul shows that it is possible to control this speaking in tongues, so when he was in the assembly with no interpreter, he would pray and he would sing in a language all could understand. If not, verse 16 says no one will be able to agree because they will not know what is being said.



Paul is not against speaking in tongues. He does it himself, but if there is no one in the church to understand, he would rather speak five intelligible words that would instruct than ten thousand that no one would understand.

5. **What would have been the effect on the listeners in the church if someone spoke, prayed, or sang in a language that no one understood?**
6. **What is the meaning of the word “Amen” in verse 16?**



Tongues also had a negative effect on those who were outside the church. Paul begins by warning the Corinthians Christians, in verse 20, not to be children in their thinking. Children are attracted to that which appears exciting, but the focus on tongues speaking had become detrimental in Corinth and those who misused the gift demonstrated their spiritual immaturity. While Christians should be like children in their innocence, they should be mature in their thinking.

The Old Testament reference in verse 21 comes from Isaiah 28:11-12. Here is a warning to Israel that they would be overrun by a people speaking a foreign language. They did not listen to the prophets who spoke in a language they could understand, so God would punish them as they were overcome by an army speaking a foreign language.

Verse 22 says that tongues were a sign to unbelievers, but what does the sign mean? It does not seem to be positive because verse 23 says an unbeliever hearing the commotion would think them mad. On the Day of Pentecost, God used languages spoken by the apostles to speak to people in their own languages to great benefit and used in this way they were fruitful. In Corinth, the tongues speaking was detrimental since the unbelievers did not understand.

7. **Why is prophecy more valuable than tongues speaking for the believer as well as the unbeliever according to verses 22-25?**
8. **What are the effects of prophecy in verse 24-25?**



#### **IV. Orderly Worship**

In verse 26 writes about using tongues in the public worship; he says “when you come together.” Paul has shown that tongues speaking had limited value to one’s self, other Christians, and to the unbeliever. Now he describes how spiritual gifts are to be used in the church assembly. Verse 26 makes it clear that the church gatherings involved many people in many ways; some of which were miraculous and some of which were not. A hymn and lesson were not miraculous while a revelation, tongue, or interpretation were. The overarching teaching is this: ***“Let all things be done for building up.”***

##### **9. What guidelines does Paul give for tongues speaking in the church assembly? (vss. 27-28)**

Guidelines for prophecy are also provided. Only two or three prophets were permitted to speak and then there was to be a time of pondering over what was said. It was possible to have a false prophet, so listening and then weighing what the prophet said with Scripture and previous prophecies will help the church determine if what he says is true.

If a revelation comes to one while another is speaking, the one speaking should stop and allow the other to speak. Then those who have a revelation should take turns so that all may learn and be encouraged. A prophet could control himself according to verse 32. Even when God had revealed something to him, he could wait his turn and speak. God expects order in the church for he is not a God of confusion, but of peace.

##### **10. According to verse 31 what was the purpose of prophecy?**

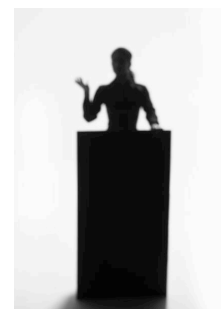
##### **11. What does it mean to say that God is a God of peace and not confusion?**

#### **V. Teaching Regarding Women in the Assembly**

As Paul begins his teaching concerning women in the assembly, he lets the Corinthians know that this is his universal teaching in all the churches. Today many want to dismiss this teaching entirely claiming that either Paul is anti-women or he did not write these verses, but since Paul wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, these are not his personal opinions and there is no compelling reason to doubt these verses were penned by Paul.

Paul gives this instruction to women in the context of the church assembly; an assembly that had been marred by the misuse of tongues and prophecy. The silence is not a complete lack of speech at all times, but was referring to public speaking in the church assembly and most particularly the use of tongues and prophecy. Note how Paul had written about speaking in 13:1; 14:2, 3, 5, 6, 13, 19, 21, 23, 27, and 29. In each of these verses the speaking was in tongues or prophesying.

In chapter 14 Paul had told two groups to keep silent previously. The first is in verse 28 where the tongue speaker was to be silent if there was no one present to interpret. The second is in verse 30 where a prophet is to be silent if a revelation comes to another prophet while he is speaking. In both cases to be silent simply means to not talk.



Paul is not commanding absolute silence in all matters at all times, the saying of the “Amen” in verse 16 or singing in the assembly are certainly acceptable, but he does prohibit a public speaking role in the church for women. Paul doesn’t just prohibit speaking in tongues or prophesying, but makes a more blanket statement and specifically addresses the asking of questions. “In this instance it would be questioning that disrupted the assembly or challenged the authority of the speaker (as in the discerning of the prophets), or the type of questioning used among the Jewish rabbis as a method of teaching.”<sup>1</sup> Previously when speaking of head coverings Paul had taught women to act in a way that would bring honour to her husband and show herself to be in voluntary subjection to him. In chapter 14, the speaking and asking of questions seemed to undermine the authority of her husband.

How can we harmonise this teaching with 11:2-16 where women were prophesying. First, it is probable that 11:2-16 was not in the public assembly because in 11:17 Paul moves to a new topic and says, “when you come together,” indicating that previously he had been addressing behaviour that was not in the public assembly. Second, there could be assemblies that were not the assemblies of the entire church.

Not only does Paul say that this is a universal teaching for all churches, he says that the Law also said that women should be in submission. This does not stem from a cultural setting, but goes back to Genesis 3:16 where part of the penalty for Eve’s sin in the Garden was that a husband would rule over his wife. So this teaching goes back to the order of creation and the penalty for sin. In the Old Testament the leadership of worship in Israel was led by men.

### **12. What does 1 Timothy 2:8-12 say about women in church assemblies?**

### **13. What reason does Paul give for not allowing a woman to ask a question in the public assembly? (vs. 35)**

The word ask in verse 35 is the Greek word *eperotao* which is a strong word virtually signifying a demand. Paul is saying to go home and demand an answer from your husband. Apparently the women were demanding answers from speakers in the assembly and Paul says, do that at home. “He is not forbidding asking questions in humility.”<sup>2</sup> Paul’s goal is to see order in the public assemblies of the church.

It is important to note that these verses (nor the teaching in 1 Timothy 2:11-15) do not prohibit women from teaching men outside the church assembly or from women teaching women.

Paul closes chapter 14 by reminding the Corinthians that they were not unique. His teachings are the same in the churches. He calls on the prophets among them to confirm his teaching and if one does not agree then he is not recognised as a prophet. As he has consistently written, prophecy is better than tongues, but tongues may be used in the proper context so long as everything in the church assembly is done decently and in order.

### **14. How can the church today make sure that all things are done decently and in order?**

<sup>1</sup>Ferguson, Everett. *The Church of Christ: A Biblical Ecclesiology for Today*” Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1996. p. 342.

<sup>2</sup>Redick, Dave. Women Speaking in the Assembly Part 2: 1 Corinthians 14:34-35. <http://preacherstudy.com/pdf/women2.pdf>





## The Resurrection of Christ (1 Cor. 15:1-34)

1 Cor. 15:1 begins with the word now showing that a new section has begun. Paul wants to remind the Corinthian Christians of his past teaching to them. It was vitally important that they held on fast to the truth or the word he preached to them. Paul is showing that Bible teaching or Bible doctrine is important. If the Corinthians did not hold on their faith will have been in vain.

### I. The Centrality of the Gospel Message

In **verse 3** the apostle Paul impresses upon his readers that the gospel is of *first* importance. There is nothing else in all of the world more important than these facts: One, Christ died for **our** sins. Two, He was buried. Three, He resurrected on the third day. Four, He was physically seen by many after his resurrection. These things happened in accordance with the Scriptures (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22:22).

1. Why does Paul say that the gospel message is of first importance?
2. What did Paul receive, how did he receive it, and how did he deliver it?
3. What is the importance of the word “our” in verse 3?

There is nothing in all the world more important than the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Without these truths there could be no salvation, the church could not exist, our lives would have no hope. It is a humbling, personal, and deeply penetrating thought to know that Jesus Christ died for “our” sins. His death was not an afterthought. **Verse 3** makes clear that all of this was prophesied. **Verse 4** again tells us that these things were according to the scriptures. Jesus came to this earth with the full knowledge that He would die. He came because He loves us, and He desires to redeem us.



To impress upon his readers the absolute certainty of the death of Jesus Paul says that He was buried. For a moment it might appear as if God had lost. Jesus was dead. He was buried. But this was not the end because he rose again! That victory over death confirmed that He was the Son of God. That victory over death proves that He can raise others from the dead.

To stress the absolute certainty of his resurrection Paul writes in **verse 5** that Jesus appeared to Peter and then to the twelve. in **verse 6** Jesus appeared to more than 500 people at the same time. In **verse 7** Jesus appeared to James, and to all the apostles and in **verse 8**, he appeared to Paul, though it was unique with Paul. He appeared to Paul on the road to Damascus after his death, burial, and resurrection. Paul was not an original apostle. That is why he writes that he was one who was “*abnormally born.*”

#### 4. Why was it important for Paul to list all these resurrection appearances of Christ?

## II. The Wonder of God's Grace

#### 5. Why does Paul call himself the least of the apostles in verse 9?

Paul says in **verse 10** *"By the grace of God I am what I am."* Paul would boast only in what the Lord had done in his life. There are two specific elements of God's grace described in these verses. First, there is God's saving grace. This is why Paul who says that he is the least of the apostles, and does not even deserve to be called an apostle, can still receive salvation. God's grace is a saving faith. A graciousness that will extend to anyone, no matter what their background.

The second element of God's grace in these verses is his enabling grace. Paul writes in verse 10 that *"his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is in me."* Paul is saying that any abilities, talents, or opportunities he possessed came to him through the grace of God. This teaching keeps the Christian humble because God is the one who provides all gifts and it helps the Christian to be confident knowing that we do not rely upon our own strength.

#### 6. How did the Corinthian Christians come to know the gospel? (vs. 11)

## III. The Resurrection of the Dead

Some in Corinth were denying that Christians will be resurrected. To deny that Christians will be raised with Christ has dire repercussions. **Verse 12** makes it clear that this false teaching was coming from within the congregation when Paul writes, *"... some of you say there is no resurrection of the dead."* To deny the resurrection cuts at the very heart of the Christian faith.

There are at least seven consequences for denying that Christians will be raised from the dead.



- a. If there is no resurrection for Christians, then neither was Christ raised. (vss. 12, 13, 16)  
*For more instruction about the Christians resurrection see 1 Thess. 4:16; 2 Cor. 4:14.*
- b. If there is no resurrection, then preaching is useless. (vs. 14)
- c. If there is no resurrection, a Christian's faith is useless. (vs. 14)
- d. If there is no resurrection, then all who proclaim the gospel are liars. (vs. 15)
- e. If there is no resurrection, there is no forgiveness for sins. (vs. 16)
- f. If there is no resurrection, those Christians who have died have perished forever. (vs. 18)
- g. If there is no resurrection, then Christians of all people on earth are most pitiful. (vs. 19)

#### 7. Why would anyone claim to be a Christian and then deny the resurrection?

Paul corrects those who falsely claim there is no resurrection, by saying emphatically, ***“But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead.”*** Christians will be raised because Jesus has been raised. Christ is the ***“firstfruits”*** of those who have died.



“Firstfruits” is an agricultural illustration. Before the Israelites harvested the crops they were to bring in a sample which represented the harvest, to present to the priests as an offering to the Lord. This is what Paul teaches the resurrection of Christ represents. He is the first of great harvest that will follow. He is the first to rise again, completely victorious over death, but he is not the last.

There were instances of over people rising from the dead, such as Lazarus or the son of the Widow of Nain, but these people died again. Jesus is the first to die and rise, never to taste death again. Death came to this world through a man; and that man is Adam. So the resurrection of mankind is made possible through the resurrection of a man; and that man is Christ.

Verse 23 teaches that Christ is first to be resurrected and all who die in Christ will follow. The Christian will face death, but Christ is the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. His victory assures the possibility of the Christian’s victory.

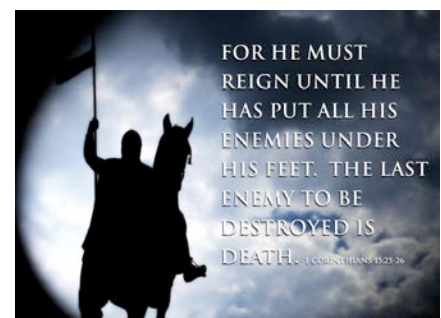
The resurrection of Jesus is important because in the resurrection Christ destroys death. Christ has partially destroyed death now. He has destroyed the fear of death. Christians do not need to fear death because we know that death is not the end. Christians do not need to fear death because we know that what is to come is far greater than what is here now. Christians do not need to fear death because Jesus has shown that he can conquer death.

The final victory over death will arrive when Jesus comes again. When Jesus returns death will be completely and forever eradicated for the Christian. For all of man’s ingenuity and curiosity and inventiveness, man has been completely powerless to conquer death. There has not been a single advancement by man since the beginning of time in our ability to conquer death. While we live on this earth we face an endless cycle of birth, life, and death. All are touched by it, all experience it, all are humbled by it. Yet Jesus showed that death can be conquered and when he comes again he will deal the final defeat of death.

#### **8. What does it mean to your life to know that death will not have the final victory?**

#### **9. When will Christians be raised? (vs. 23)**

Paul writes that at the Second Coming, the end will come; that is the end of time. When Jesus returns he will deliver the kingdom to God the Father. This will be the completion of all that he came to do and accomplish. Christ came to earth, died for man’s sin, rose again, will come again, and will hand over his kingdom (including all Christians) to the Father. This will mark the end of every rule, authority, and power in this world including that of Satan and his demons. Currently Christ is reigning in heaven at the right hand of God as prophesied by David in Psalm 110:1. At the Second Coming death will be destroyed finally for all Christians.





In verses 27 and 28 we learn that God placed all things under the authority of Christ and all things are in subjection to him including death. Only the Father is not in subjection to the Son. While on the earth Christ voluntarily submitted himself to the authority of the Father. When Christ returns all his enemies will be destroyed and the present age will end. At this time Christ will have completed his work of redemption. He will surrender the authority that had been given to him (Matt. 28:18). To say that God may be all in all is to say that he will rule as the only Sovereign over all the universe.<sup>1</sup>

In verses 29-30 Paul gives another reason to believe in the resurrection of the dead. Some people for some reason were being baptised for the dead. There are many theories about what Paul had in mind here, but we are only left to speculate. There are those who believe that this was a proxy baptism, so that a person was baptised for someone who was already dead to secure their salvation. If this is what they were doing we can be certain this is not an acceptable practice for it would violate free-will as well as the promise that it is appointed to man once to die and then to face judgement (Heb. 9:27).

It is far better to assume that the people were being baptised because of someone who had died. Perhaps they knew that the only way they would see a Christian friend or family member who died, was for them to become a Christian. Because of this, they were baptised because they were motivated by someone who had already died. It could also mean that they saw that people had died and knew their end was also death, so they prepared for that death through baptism. Paul was not condoning their actions, whatever motivated them, but is pointing out the futility of baptism if there were no resurrection.

#### **10. How did Paul show that he believed in the resurrection in verses 30-32?**

The idea of eating and drinking because death was coming makes perfect sense if there is no resurrection. Why submit oneself to righteous living, persecution, and discomfort if death marks the end of life?



**Eat, Drink, and Be Merry!**

#### **11. What does it mean to be deceived and how are people deceived?**

Paul calls on the Corinthian Christians to wake up. They were listening to false teachers who were leading them astray as they denied there would be a resurrection for Christians. This false teaching was sinful and it was a sin to believe it was true. The false teachers and those who denied the resurrection were so misled that they were said to have no knowledge of God.

#### **12. What is the resurrection the focal point of the Christian faith?**

<sup>1</sup>Smith, James E. *Teacher's Commentary: The Encounter Epistles 1 & 2 Corinthians*. Lulu, 2010. p. 258.



## The Resurrection Body (1 Cor. 15:35-58)

There are many things that cause us fear in this life. We may fear people, circumstances, or illness. The greatest fear that people experience is usually the fear of death. We fear our own death and we fear when the death of someone we love is near. To many death is the great unknown. Since no one we have known in this life has died and returned to tell us what to expect some of what we face is unknown.

What happens to us after death? What will life be like for us after this life is finished? These are important questions that the scripture answers for us. This lesson is not a message of defeat. It is a message of victory over death. It is a message that tells us that we have not and cannot be defeated by death.

### I. Christians Will Receive a New Body

The Apostle Paul makes it clear that the body that Christians will have after death will be different from their present physical bodies. In **verses 36-40** the contrast is made between a seed and the plant it will become.

It is amazing that a kernel of wheat or some other grain can become a stalk of corn. The body that is sown is far different from the body it becomes. Unless one knows what plant will come from a seed, they could not look at the seed and envision what kind of plant it will become. Furthermore, it is necessary for the old body to die so that the new body might live. Just as the seed must die for the plant to grow, our spiritual bodies can come only after the death of our physical bodies.



The new body will be a different kind of body. There are many kinds of bodies according to Paul. Animals have bodies, birds have bodies, fish have bodies, but they are very different from one another. The sun and moon and stars all have a certain splendour, but they are all different. It is easy to look into the sky and distinguish between the sun, and moon, and the stars. They all light up the sky, but their differences are easily seen and they are remarkable. Likewise, the new body we will receive will be far different from the bodies we now inhabit.

1. **What two questions are asked in verse 35?**
2. **Why must a seed die for a plant to grow and what point is Paul trying to make? (See also John 12:24-26)**
3. **Who decides what kind of body each plant, animal or person will have and how is the choice made? (vs. 38)**

#### 4. Which is greater the seed or the plant it becomes?

### II. Contrasts Between the Old and New Bodies

This new body will be an everlasting. Verse 42 tells us that the body that Christians have now is *perishable*. It will age, deteriorate, and die. Solomon says in **Ecclesiastes 3:20**, our body will return to the dust. But when it is raised again, it will be imperishable.

#### 5. What contrasts does Paul make between the current earthly body and the future body? (vss. 43-44)

Physical bodies are designed to live in this physical world. They are suited for life here, but they are not suited for life in heaven. In heaven Christians will need a spiritual body and that is exactly what the Lord will give us.



In verses 45-49 the bodies of the first and second Adam are contrasted. The first Adam was that man that God created in the garden of Eden. He had a natural body and because of sin, he died. The second Adam is Jesus Christ who arose from the dead, victorious over death, and possessing a new body. It is this type of body Christians will receive.

#### 6. Why can't our physical body live in heaven? (v. 50)

### III. Death Loses Its Power

Paul calls death and the resurrection a mystery in verse 51. A mystery in the Bible is something that we cannot know except God reveals it to us. The mystery is this: Christians will sleep (die) unless they are alive at the Second Coming, but when Jesus comes again all whether dead or still living will be changed.

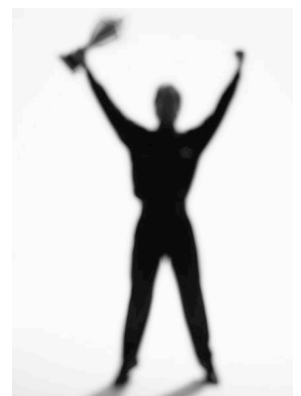
#### 7. How long will it take for God to change the Christian's body to a new one? (vs. 52)

#### 8. When does Paul say the change of the Christian's body will take place?

#### 9. How and when is death swallowed up in victory?

#### 10. What is the sting of death?

#### 11. Why is the law called the power of sin?



In verse 55 the Scripture actually mocks death. “O death, where is your victory?” “O death, where is your sting?” Death does not have the victory; death does not win because Christians will live again and have a body that is imperishable. Though it may seem that death is the great enemy that robs our life and joy, in Christ we understand that it is only that part of life that we must go through before we can gain our new body. The present body is just like the seed in **verse 36**. It must die before the new can come. Death is frightening if we do not know what to expect, but we do know what to expect. While we may not know every detail we know what is important.

#### **IV. Working for the Lord is Not in Vain**

**Verse 58** is an important verse, *“Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.”*



Thanks be to God, however that nothing we do for Him is in vain. No work you do for the Lord is without value or merit. This verse impresses upon all people the value of working for the Lord. While the future reward is great, God expects his people to work for him while on this earth.

**12. How does a person remain steadfast and immovable?**

**13. How does 1 Corinthians 15 encourage you as a Christian?**



## The Church Collection (1 Cor. 16:1-4)

Paul begins a new topic in verse 16 and it is final major teaching in the letter. Following this instruction on giving, he moves to his travel plans, and closes with some final instructions to the church.

### I. Giving Should be Regular

Paul gives three important lessons about financial giving in the church. First, he says that **Giving Should be Regular**. In **verse 2** we find the instruction, ***“On the first day of every week . . .”*** Christian giving should be regular and collected on the first day of every week. This particular offering was for the needs of the poor Christians in Jerusalem. 2 Cor. 8-9; Romans 15:25-27; and Acts 24:17 also speak of giving to these poor saints.

In the first century and even in many parts of the world today it is typical to be paid daily. This was necessary before refrigeration and easy access to banking. The emphasis is not so much that giving is to be done every Lord’s Day, but that the gifts are collected on the Lord’s Day and that Christians should give regularly.

If you are paid monthly, God probably does not expect you to break up your gift into four or five parts so that you can give an equal amount each week. The point is that you should give regularly as you are paid.

To give regularly demands planning so Paul says, ***“each of you is to put something aside and store it up...”*** In a poor church where people were paid daily, it took planning and discipline to hold back something each day so that they could give. Regular giving demands preparation. And first, is the preparation of self. In 2 Corinthians 8:5 Paul writes about the giving of the Macedonians and says that they gave themselves first to the Lord.



We also learn in this passage that regular giving should be saved and collected by the church. While it is perfectly acceptable to give to worthy organisations the primary obligation of Christians is to give to the church and those in need. The church is God’s arm of evangelism and benevolence in the world and the local church is where we become a part of that arm. The church allows our regular giving to be combined with others into something that can make a difference in our community and around the world.

**1. Why was the collection to made on the first day of the week?**

**2. Why does giving require planning?**



## II. Giving Should be Proportional

Second Paul writes that Giving Should be Proportional. In **verse 2** we learn that a man's giving is to be "*as he may prosper . . .*" God does not expect anyone to give beyond what they are able to give. God expects the person who makes a thousand dollars a week to give more than the man who makes five hundred. And he expects the man who makes five hundred to give more than the man who makes two hundred and fifty.

### 3. What does Mark 12:41-44 teach concerning the gift of a poor widow?

We can expend much time and energy trying to determine just how much to give. We can try to bind a percentage on to people, but to do so is to be unfaithful to God's Word. Giving should not be viewed as a duty so much as it is a privilege. We are able to worship God in our giving. People often speak of the "*tithe*" though this word is not used in the New Testament.

In the Old Testament Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek. Jacob promised to give God a tenth of his possessions if God would protect and prosper him. In the law of Moses a tithe was required, but there were other required offerings as well. It has been estimated that approximately 23% of the income of the Jews was to be given in some fashion as an offering. However, we cannot take these Old Testament examples to bind a percentage of giving on Christians today. Ancient Judaism was a national religion so some of these gifts were really a governmental taxation. It has often been suggested that since our blessings are so much greater than those who lived in the Old Testament our giving should be greater and 10% is a minimum with which to start. Perhaps God does not call on Christians to give a specific percentage because he wants us to give freely, lovingly, and generously. We are to decide within our hearts what to give.



### 4. How would you advise another Christian who asked you what percentage of their income was appropriate to give as an offering to the Lord?

## III. Giving Should be Protected

Third, Giving Should be Protected. The gifts to be collected in Corinth were going to help the poor Christians in Jerusalem. Paul had also requested money from the churches of Galatia as well as from those in Macedonia and Achaia. In the first century Jerusalem was a very poor city. It was overpopulated, subject to famine, and Christians were persecuted for their faith. Many had lost their homes and possessions and because of their faith they were incapable of gaining a job.

The giving that Paul requires has a beneficial purpose that could easily be understood by all. Of course the gift itself would have pleased and honoured God, but these funds were used to help meet the legitimate needs of others. One of the primary purposes of New Testament giving is benevolence.

### 5. What is the teaching of Galatians 6:10?

The parable of the Good Samaritan teaches us that we are to care for anyone we can, even though the call to help fellow Christians is even greater. Benevolent aid was taught and practiced by Jesus and by the early church. One is struck in Acts 2 by the desire of the early church to care for one another. They shared with one another. They sold their possessions so that they might share with one another.

The gift the Corinthians were giving was cross cultural as Gentile Christians in Corinth assist Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. The oft heard phrase: “*Charity begins at home*” doesn’t fit well with the lifestyle of Jesus or the example of New Testament giving. In fact, the New Testament records giving directed towards benevolence, evangelism, and the support of Christian workers.

Our primary purpose in giving is not to make ourselves comfortable, but to praise and honour a living God who desires the world to hear His gospel. Our energies and our giving should be focused on this goal.

Giving should also be protected in its’ administration. Handling and distributing the Lord’s money is serious business. Those who give to the church can and should expect that these gifts will be used wisely and carefully. In **verse 3** Paul instructs the Corinthians to appoint men to handle the money. Entrust the gifts to those who are honest and trustworthy and wise. This was especially important in a age when they could not electronically transfer funds or write a check. The money was gold and silver coins and would have to be physically transported from one place to another.

**6. From your observation, how do most churches use the money they collect?**

**7. What are the main lessons we learn about giving and the use of money collected?**



## Closing Remarks (1 Cor. 16:5-24)

1 Corinthians draws to a close as Paul makes some final remarks about his plans, the plans of others, and some final words of exhortation to the church.

### I. Paul's Travel Plans

As Paul draws his letter towards a close he expresses his desire to visit the church again. His original plan was to visit Corinth and then travel on to Macedonia. After that he planned to return to Corinth and then travel to Jerusalem.

Though Paul desired to visit Corinth after going through Macedonia, he was not sure what would happen. The word that he used is translated as “perhaps” in verse 6. Then in verse 7 he goes on to say, ***“For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.”*** Paul wanted to make a substantial visit, not just a brief one. Still, the Apostle Paul with his close relationship with the Lord used words such as perhaps, if and hope. In no way does this show a lack of faith, but it does demonstrate an attitude of flexibility and shows his complete reliance on the Lord as he planned his activities.



Plan as we might, pray as we can, and trust as we should we still find that sometimes plans will not work out exactly as we anticipate. Sometimes, what happens shows us that there is a much better way. On the Apostle Paul's second missionary journey he wrote that his plans were to ***“return and visit the brothers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are”*** (Acts 15:36). While they were able to go to many of these places the Holy Spirit specifically forbade them ***“to speak the word in Asia”*** or ***“to go into Bithynia”*** according to Acts 16:6,7. Instead, God sent them to Macedonia where they were the first to preach the gospel in Europe.

1. **Where was Paul and why was he going to wait there until Pentecost? (vss. 8-9)**
2. **How can it be that there was both an open door and many adversaries? (vs. 9; 15:32; 2 Cor. 1:8)**

### II. The Proposed Visits of Timothy and Apollos

3. **How were the Corinthian Christians expected to treat Timothy if he was able to visit? (vss. 10-11)**

4. What do we learn about Timothy in verses 10-11?
5. Did Paul wish for Apollos to visit the Corinthians?
6. Why hadn't Apollos yet made the trip to Corinth?

Previously in chapters 1, 3, 4 Paul had expressed that some in the church followed a faction attributed to Apollos. While Apollos would have been appalled at this factionalism, he may have felt that a visit would have been more detrimental than beneficial. Paul was also named as one of the factions, but we see that Paul and Apollos were close and no division or party spirit existed between them.

### **III. Final Instructions**

7. What five short instructions are given in verses 13-14 and what do they mean?
8. Who were the first converts in Achaia?

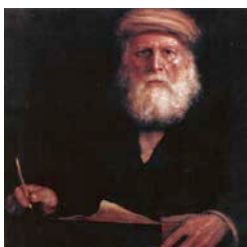
Paul called on the church to listen and be subject to men like Stephanas who was faithful in service. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come to Paul and helped him. These type of people should be recognised for their service.

In 1 Corinthians there is no instruction to the elders or any other leaders in the congregation. We are left to speculate if there were too few men qualified to serve as leaders in this factionalised, immoral, and confused congregation. There were families like that of Stephanas who were worthy of following, but perhaps no one or too few met the qualities needed in shepherding the church.

Paul sends greetings from the churches in Asia. Paul was currently in Ephesus which was the capital of the Roman province of Asia.

9. Who were Aquila and Prisca (or Priscilla) and what was happening in their house?  
(See also Acts 18)

The holy kiss was a common greeting in first century Gentile churches and is mentioned here in verse 20 as well as Romans 16:16; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26; and 1 Pet. 5:14. Though a few churches have adopted this in modern life there is no reason to conclude that it was anything other than a warm culturally acceptable greeting.



10. Why did Paul find it necessary to say that he had written with his own hand?

Perhaps accounting for the factional spirit found in Corinth, Paul's last words are harsh. Love was the greatest of all gifts and Paul calls on all to exhibit love. Any who did not love the Lord were to be cursed. This is literally calling on the wrath of God upon that person.

The great hope of the church is in the Second Coming. Paul had written about the resurrection and the Second Coming in chapter 15. Now he says with earnest desire, ***"Our Lord, come!"*** It should be the hope of every Christian that the return of Jesus would come.

**11. What does it mean to ask that the grace of the Lord be upon them?**

**12. Why does Paul pen the final sentence assuring the Corinthians of his love in Christ for them all.**

**13. What is the meaning of the word Amen?**