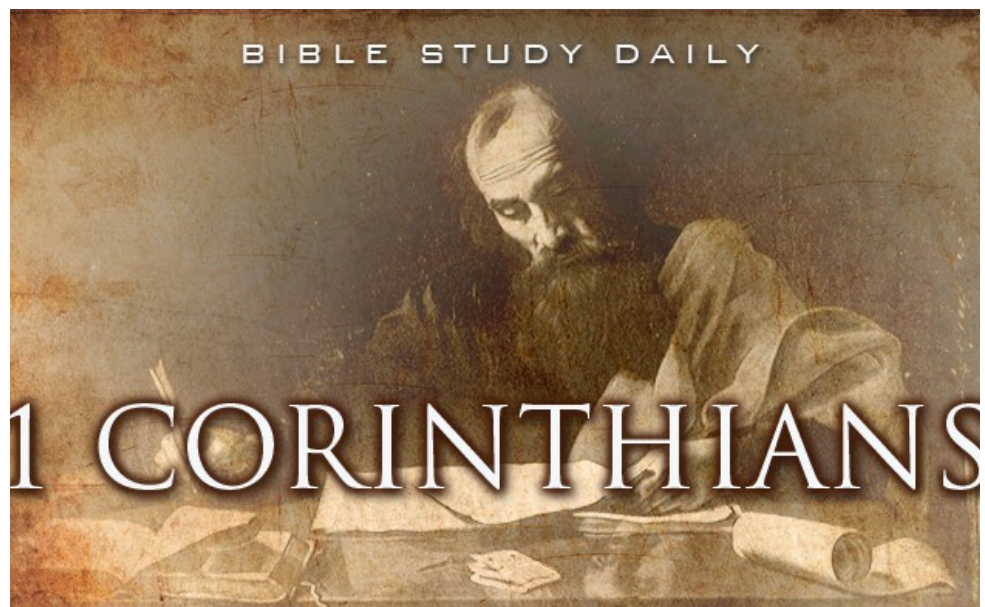




BIBLE STUDY DAILY



This document contains the introduction to the book of 1 Corinthians as well as my study notes for the book.

Name

The title “1 Corinthians” comes from the intended audience designated in 1:2, “To God’s church in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus.” The opening description as well as the body of the epistle makes it clear that Paul’s intended audience in Corinth is both Jewish and Gentile Christians.

Author

Paul claims authorship of 1 Corinthians, in [1 Corinthians 1:1](#), and [16:21](#). Indirect internal evidence of Paul’s authorship is contained in his first person arguments (1:12-17, 3:4, 6:2, 6:22).

External sources also acknowledge Paul as the author of the epistle to the Corinthians. Among them are Clement of Rome, Polycarp, Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian.

Genre

Epistle

Literary Form

The epistle to the Corinthians is a personal letter of exhortation and instruction.

Time Frame


The epistle of 1 Corinthians was written during the last year of Paul’s third missionary journey while he was in Ephesus. In all likelihood this was in the spring of A.D. 56 prior to Pentecost ([1 Corinthians 15:32,16:8](#), and [Acts 20:31](#))

Emphasis

The emphasis of 1 Corinthians is on: 1) addressing issues of concern in the church, and to bring unity to the believers. 2) addressing issues of spiritual liberty and the exercise of spiritual gifts, 3) confirming and defending the doctrine of the resurrection.

Outline

- Introduction and Thanksgiving (1:1-1:9)
- Issues of division within the church (1:10-4:21)
- Issues of immorality within the body (5:1-6:20)
- Answering questions from the Corinthians (7:1-14:40)
 - Questions about marriage
 - Issues of Christian liberty

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- Women in public worship
 - The proper celebration of the Lord's Supper
 - The exercise of Spiritual gifts
 - Questions regarding the Resurrection (15:1-15:58)
 - Final thoughts and conclusion (16:1-16:24)

What I Noticed Today (1 Corinthians 1-4)

1 Corinthians 1

In verses 1-9 Paul greets and give thanks for the brothers in Corinth.

In verses 1-3 Paul establishes his authority as an apostle emphasizing it was God's will. He also emphasized the church in Corinth was God's church.

Note: Sosthenes may have been Paul's amanuensis (a literary assistant who took dictation). This may also be the same Sosthenes who had been a ruler in the synagogue (Acts 18:17).

In verses 4-9 Paul offers a prayer of thanksgiving for the grace of God upon the believers in Corinth.

It was through God's grace that they were enriched in speech and knowledge. Their testimony is confirmed by the fact that they do not lack any spiritual gifts. God was faithful in His call to the Corinthians bringing them into fellowship with His Son.

1 Corinthians 1:10 -4:21

Paul addressed the issue of division among the believers in Corinth.

In verses 10-17 Paul urged the brothers in the name of Jesus Christ that they agree amongst each other, be united with the same conviction.

Note: There are ten references to Jesus Christ in the first ten verses. There can be no doubt where Paul wanted the Corinthians to focus their spiritual lives.


Some of them were saying they were with Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or Jesus. But, said Paul, Christ is not divided. They were only baptized into the name of Christ. It was Christ who died on the cross, no one else.

Note: Saying they were "with Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas" was the way a slave identified who his owner was. The problem with their thinking is 1) it divided Christ, 2) it elevated men, and 3) it caused men to focus on following men rather than Christ.

In verses 1:18-3:4 Paul addressed their misunderstanding of the Gospel message.

In verses 18-25 Paul emphasized the message of the cross is God's power to those who are saved. God's wisdom made foolishness of their philosophers, scholars, and debaters. God saved both Jews and Greeks who believed through faith.

In verses 26-31 Paul exhorted the brothers to consider their calling. Not



many people were wise from a human perspective, not many were powerful, and not many were nobles by birth. However, God had chosen what the world considers foolish to shame the wise. He chose the weak to shame the strong. He chose the insignificant to bring to nothing that which was viewed as something.

It is from God that you received righteousness (justification), sanctification (holiness), and redemption (glorification) so if you want to boast, boast in the Lord. God's plan of salvation was hidden from the "wise" but revealed to those who believed by faith.

1 Corinthians 2

In verses 1-5 Paul says somewhat humbly, that when he first came to them he did not preach anything but the simple, clear message of Jesus Christ and His crucifixion.

Note: Paul's claim in verse 3 that he came in weakness, fear, and trembling without persuasive words, was to point to the power of the Spirit of God. He wanted them not to focus on him as an orator, but on the message of God.

In verses 6-16 Paul focuses on the wisdom of God as revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Paul's focus is not on man's wisdom, but on God's wisdom. God's wisdom is a mystery, that the rulers of the age did not perceive (quoting Isaiah 52:15 and 64:4).

However, God's wisdom has been revealed through the Holy Spirit, who knows the depths of the heart of man. Believers have received the Spirit of God who explains matters of spiritual wisdom.

The unbelievers do not welcome God's Spirit because it is foolishness to them. The spiritual person, however, can perceive the wisdom of the Spirit (quoting Isaiah 40:13). The spiritual person can discern and evaluate spiritual matters. Because believers have the mind of Christ. The spiritual person cannot be evaluated by the "natural man" because they cannot discern spiritual matters.

1 Corinthians 3

In verses 1-4 Paul begins to address the issue of spiritual immaturity. When Paul had first taught them they were spiritual babies so he fed them with milk (beginning teaching) because they were not ready for solid food (advanced teaching).

Paul says they are still not ready for solid food, because there are envy and strife among them, and they live fleshly lives. Paul's proof of their spiritual immaturity is how they refer to themselves as being with Paul, or Apollos.

In verses 5-17 Paul describes the role of God's servants. Paul describes himself and Apollos only as God's servants. Paul had planted the church, and Apollos had watered, but God gave the growth. The person who plants and



the person who waters is nothing, only God who waters. Paul described himself only as a co-worker with God, in God's field (Corinth).

In a second analogy, Paul describes himself as a builder who has laid the foundation that is Jesus Christ. Paul describes three kinds of builders: the expert (v. 14), the unwise (v. 15), and the destructive (v. 17). The materials the builder uses will be tested. Some materials will last (gold, silver, costly stones) whereas others will not (wood, hay, straw).

Note: The analogy Paul uses describes the Corinthian church as a building. He has laid the foundation, now others will come along and build (the church). Their work will be evaluated in the day of judgment, and those who did good work will be rewarded. The unskilled builder will see his work burned up (lost) in judgment, but he himself will be saved.

Paul concludes saying they (the believers in Corinth) are God's sanctuary, and the Spirit lives in you. The sanctuary is Holy. If anyone destroys God's sanctuary God will destroy them.

Note: The phrase, "Don't you know" introduced in verse 16, occurs ten times in the letter and each time it precedes an indisputable statement.

In verses 18-23 Paul admonishes the believers not to deceive themselves thinking they are wise. Rather, he must become foolish so he can become wise. Paul again is referring to the foolishness of man's wisdom in comparison to God's wisdom.

No one should boast, says Paul, in human leaders whether they were baptized by Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas. They should boast in Christ because Christ belongs to God.

Note: Paul is again focused on the importance of unity in the church. It is not about human wisdom, but focusing on the source of the wisdom of God.


1 Corinthians 4

In verses 1-5 Paul says they should consider "us" (church leaders) as servants of Christ and managers of God's mysteries.

Note: The word Paul used for "servants" is *hyperetas*, a servant who is subordinate and responsible to a master. This is different than the word *diakonos* used in 1 Corinthians 3:5, which is a servant in the sense of waiting on tables.

Paul said he was not concerned with the evaluation of men, or even with evaluating himself. His concern was how Jesus Christ would evaluate him. Therefore, says Paul, don't judge things prematurely before the Lord comes, because He will bring light to darkness and reveal the intentions of the heart.

Note: Paul's concern is people will judge ministers prematurely, raising some up or humiliating others, without fully understanding the condition of their hearts.



In verses 6-13 Paul explains the division in the Corinthian church was emanating from their pride. Using himself as an example he claimed he taught nothing beyond what is in the Scripture so that they would not favor one person over another.

The Corinthians, says Paul, are living as though they were already reigning as kings. He wished this was true because then he could reign with them.

Note: Paul is referring to the promise to receive a crown of righteousness.

The apostles, says Paul, are on display to the world, angels, and men in last place like men condemned to die. He makes three comparisons between himself and the prideful Corinthians:

- We are fools for Christ, but you are wise in Christ.
- We are weak, but you are strong.
- You are distinguished, but we are dishonored.

Describing his own state Paul says we are hungry and thirsty, poorly clothed, roughly treated, homeless, and they labor with their hands. Despite this:

- When they are reviled they bless.
- When persecuted we endure.
- When slandered we respond graciously.

Concluding, Paul says they are like the world's garbage, the dirt that is scraped off their sandals.

Note: The word used for dirt is more graphic. It means the contents of the chamber pots or the cesspool.


In verses 14-21 Paul concludes his purpose is not to shame them because he was their father in the sense that he brought the Gospel to them first. Therefore, he said, imitate me.

Note: Paul is not bragging or arrogant when he says to "imitate me." He is saying imitate me in the sense that I am a fool for Christ (v. 10).

Paul sent them Timothy to remind them about Paul's teaching about their life in Jesus Christ. He warned them he would be visiting them if the Lord wills it, and he did not want to hear about the division brought about by their pride.

In a final warning, Paul says do you want me to come with a rod, or in love with a spirit of gentleness.

Note: Paul's conclusion carries on the theme of being their spiritual father. The father corrects and disciplines their children. He has now corrected them and they had been warned. They needed to change or he would have to discipline them. If they repented, he would come in love with gentleness.



Thought for additional consideration:

- *Despite being a highly educated “Pharisee of Pharisees” Paul says he spoke plainly to the Corinthians when he presented the Gospel because he wanted them focused on the message, not the speaker. Do we listen in church today for what the Holy Spirit wishes to teach us, or are we attracted to the charisma of the preacher?*
- *Pride caused division among the members of the Corinthian church. Is it pride that divides the church today?*

What I Noticed Today (1 Corinthians 5-9)

1 Corinthians 5-6

In these two chapters, Paul turns his attention to dealing with several discipline problems in the Corinthian church: their failure to discipline an immoral brother, their failure to resolve disputes in a godly manner, and their failure to maintain sexual purity.

1 Corinthians 5

In verses 1-8 Paul learns a brother is committing sexual sin by living with his father's wife. The local church has done nothing to discipline the man. They are not even grieving this man's blatant sin against God.

Speaking with judicial authority, Paul says he has already decided this man should be removed from the congregation. He said when they gathered in the name of the Lord they should remove the man from the assembly and turn him over to Satan.

Note: The objective of removing the man from the congregation is twofold: 1) removing the man may lead to his repentance and ultimately restoration to the body, and 2) if he refuses to repent you have removed a bad example from the midst of the body.

Paul reminded them how a little yeast leavens the whole lump of dough. They were "unleavened," for Christ was sacrificed as their Passover. Therefore, observe the feast without old yeast or the yeast of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Note: Jews removed yeast from the home during the Passover celebration. Yeast here is a metaphor for sin. It needs to be removed or it will spread.

In verses 9-13 Paul notes that he had written them before not to associate with sexually immoral people. By that he did not mean the people of the world, but those believers who were sexually immoral, greedy, an idolater, verbally abusive, a drunkard, or a swindler.

Note: Paul's admonition to not associate with believers who were sexually immoral, greedy, etc. is that associating with them would have the appearance of condoning their behavior.

He tells them not to judge outsiders, that is God's job, but they should judge (discipline) the insiders (the believers).

1 Corinthians 6

Paul now turns his attention to Christian brothers who are taking legal dis-

puts to secular courts and glorifying God through sexual purity.

In verses 1-11 Paul reminds them Christians will judge the world and angels (in the end times judgment) surely they can handle simple things between themselves. Paul chides them saying surely there is one wise person among you who can judge between brothers rather than taking your case before unbelievers.

Note: Paul's point is it does not honor God to have believers arguing legal disputes before unbelievers.

Therefore, Paul says having legal disputes with one another already shows a moral failure. You cheat and act unjustly with your own Christian brothers.

The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God: sexually immoral, idolaters, adulterers, practicing homosexuality, thieves, greedy, drunkards, verbally abusive or swindlers. And some of you used to be like this, BUT you were washed, sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Note: Paul refers in verse 9 to a letter he sent the Corinthians previously. This letter was lost.

In verses 12-20 Paul reminds the Corinthians that everything is permissible, but not everything is helpful.

Note: Paul is saying although everything is permissible, there are limits to our liberties. If our liberty is not beneficial, or worse, if it is harmful to another believer then we are not acting in love to our brothers. In this case, liberty becomes slavery.

Paul continues, reminding them that our bodies are part of the body of Christ. We should not take a part of Christ's body to a prostitute because anyone joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

Note: Paul's point is the union between a Christian and Christ affects both. The actions of one affect the other.

Therefore, says Paul, run from sexual immorality. Your body is a sanctuary of the Holy Spirit who lives inside you. You were bought with a price (the blood of Christ). Therefore glorify God with your body.

Note: Sexual immorality grieves the Holy Spirit, Jesus, and God the Father.

1 Corinthians 7

Paul's focus in chapter 7 is on marriage and celibacy.

In verses 1-9 Paul is responding to a question the Corinthians had asked him. It is good for a man to not have sexual relations with a woman (to remain celibate).

However, because sexual immorality was so prevalent among them, Paul says each should have his own wife, and each wife her own husband, and

they should fulfill their marital responsibilities to each other. Each owns (has rights over) the other's body.

Note: It seems individuals were refraining from sexual relations inside the marriage. This was acceptable if it was by mutual consent of both partners. But if this was one partner this was not good because it would lead to temptation for the other partner.

Paul suggested they abstain from sexual relations only when agreed upon by both parties for a period of time devoted to prayer. Then resume relations to avoid the possibility of temptation because of their lack of self-control.

To the unmarried (never married and divorced) and to the widowed, Paul said it is good if they are like him (celibate). However, if they lack self-control it is better to marry than burn with desire.

In verses 10-16 Paul deals with the issue of divorce. He begins by emphasizing this is the Lord's command, not just his opinion. A wife must not leave her husband, but if she does she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to him. The same holds true for the man.

Paul says his opinion (not a command of the Lord) is if a man has an unbelieving wife he should not leave her, nor should a believing wife leave an unbelieving husband. The believing spouse sanctifies the unbelieving spouse.

Note: Paul's reference to the believing spouse sanctifying the unbelieving spouse (v. 14) because the believing spouse was a vessel of God's grace into the marriage. Perhaps by their example they might lead the unbelieving spouse to a relationship with Christ. The believing spouse was a similar example to the children in the family.

However, if the unbelieving spouse is determined to leave, let them, and live in peace. Perhaps you will still be able to bring them into a relationship with Christ.

In verses 17-24 Paul addresses two situations and says you should remain as you are:

- If you are circumcised or uncircumcised when you were called as a believer, remain as you are.
- If you were a slave when you were called, do not be concerned because you are free in the Lord.

God called you knowing who and what you were when he called you, so you do not have to change to be acceptable to the Lord.

In verses 25-31 Paul is apparently answering another question put to him by the Corinthians regarding marriage and ministry. He has no specific instruction from the Lord but offers his opinion.

Paul says if you are married, stay married. If you are not married do not seek to marry. However, if you do marry you have not sinned. Married people will have trouble in this life, says Paul, and he is trying to spare you because time

is limited (before the Lord's return), and the substance of this world is passing away.

Note: Paul is saying marital commitments should not be neglected, but being single makes it easier to have undivided devotion to God.

In verses 32-40 Paul repeats the reason for his admonition to "remain as you are." A married man is concerned with things of the world, and pleasing his wife and this divides his interests. The same is true of a married woman. A virgin or an unmarried woman is concerned about things of the Lord, without any distractions.

Note: The section of verses 36-38 has some translational and interpretive difficulties. The Greek word translated "anyone" could refer to a father in reference to his unmarried daughter. Or, it could mean a man who intended to marry. Most modern scholars agree this advice is intended to a father with an unmarried daughter. The phrase "they can get married" refers to the father giving permission to the daughter to marry.

In verses 39-40 a wife is bound to her husband but if the husband dies she may remarry another Christian, but Paul says, in his opinion she is happier if she remains single.

Note: Paul's advice to remain unmarried may have been influenced by the persecution of Christians that existed at that time. Additionally, he may have been thinking of the difficulties and hardships of raising a family, and if not handled properly, could be a distraction from serving the Lord.

1 Corinthians 8-11

In these four chapters, Paul deals with issues of Christian liberty and pagan worship.

1 Corinthians 8

In verses 1-12 Paul tackles the issue of eating meat offered to idols. Paul states a Christian should demonstrate love to other Christians. Love, says Paul, is superior to knowledge.

Knowledge puffs a person up with pride, but love builds up. For the Christian knowledge of God is limited, but even that limited knowledge led us to God, and a love for God that must be reflected in our love for others.

For the Christian who knows there is only one God, it means nothing to have meat offered to an idol because an idol means nothing. But not everyone has that knowledge. In fact, some are so used to the idea that eating food dedicated to idols was wrong that their consciences can't fathom the idea that it is now acceptable. For them it was wrong and still sinful to eat meat offered to idols.

Paul reminds it is not food that makes us acceptable to God; we are not better if we do eat and not inferior if we do not eat. But, he warns, the Christian who eats should be careful not become a stumbling block to those whose

faith is weaker.

Ultimately, if we sin against a weaker brother like this we are in effect sinning against Christ. If it would cause a brother to fall Paul would not eat the meat.

Note: Paul is not suggesting the spiritually mature brother is always limited in their liberty because of those weaker in the faith. We should be cognizant of the impact of our example, be sensitive to weaker brothers, and seek to build them up in their faith.

1 Corinthians 9

In chapter 9 Paul uses the example of his personal ministry to expand the principle set forth in chapter 8; that the Christian brother builds others up through love, not the exercise of rights.

In verses 1-2 Paul asks four rhetorical questions all of which are phrased to expect a positive response:

- 1) Am I not free?
- 2) Am I not an apostle?
- 3) Have I not seen our Lord Jesus Christ?
- 4) Are you not my work in the Lord?


In verses 3-14 Paul begins his defense of the rights of an apostle to 1) be compensated for their work, 2) take a Christian wife, and 3) to devote themselves entirely to ministry.

He proved the point of the apostle's rights with six illustrations:

- 1) The soldier, farmer, and shepherd are all supported by their work (v. 7).
- 2) Even an ox is allowed to eat grain as it works (vv. 8-10).
- 3) The law of reciprocity suggests those who brought spiritual riches should not be denied material compensation (v. 11).
- 4) Precedence, the church had supported other apostles (v. 12).
- 5) The priests of the Old Testament were compensated for their service (v. 13).
- 6) Jesus himself said those who spread the Gospel should derive their support from it (v. 14).

In verse 12b Paul explains that he had not exercised his right to be compensated because he didn't want people to think he only did the work for the money.

In verses 15-27 Paul underscores the point that he has not exercised these rights among the Corinthians. His obligation is to preach the Gospel, and his reward is in doing the work willingly and without charge.



Although Paul is a free man he has made himself a slave to the Gospel in order to win more to Christ. To win the Jews (those under the law) he became like a Jew. To win the Gentiles (those without the law) he became like a Gentile. To win the weak he became weak. He became all things to all people so that he might win some to Christ.

Note: Paul is not being undisciplined when he says he became all things to all people. He is attempting to be relevant to the broadest audience possible in order to present the Gospel and win people to Christ.

Paul concludes the discussion with the metaphor of the runner running a race. Only one runner wins the prize so run the race in such a way as to win the race. The runner exercises discipline and self-control to win a crown that will fade away, but we receive a crown that will never fade away. Therefore, said Paul, I discipline myself so I will not be disqualified.

Note: In terms of Paul's metaphor, he disciplined himself because he did not want to be disqualified by God, and not be able to finish the race.

Some thoughts for further consideration:

- *Paul's discussion of the role of the church really strikes home. In my view we as Christians do not do a very good job of bringing matters of discipline into the church.*
- *In the same way, we believers are still quick to take disputes between brothers to civil courts, rather than to elders in the church.*
- *As Christians we have many liberties, but to the extent that our liberties adversely impact the faith of weaker brothers we are not acting in love as Christ has commanded.*

What I Noticed Today (1 Corinthians 10-13)

1 Corinthians 10

Continuing with his discussion of the limitations of Christian liberty, Paul provides the Corinthians an example of the Israelites of old who received many blessings from God but were disciplined severely by God.

In verses 1-13 Paul tells of the advantages of the Israelites:

- 1) They were all under a cloud (the Lord went before them in a pillar of cloud, Exodus 13:21).
- 2) Led through the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-20).
- 3) All were baptized in Moses ((Exodus 14:31).
- 4) They all enjoyed the same spiritual food (Exodus 16:4).
- 5) They all enjoyed the same spiritual drink (Exodus 17:6). Paul says the source of their spiritual drink was the spiritual rock that was Jesus Christ.

In spite of these advantages, all the Israelites except for two (Joshua and Caleb) were “disqualified” having died in the desert (Numbers 14:29).

Note: Even Moses was “disqualified” and died in the desert (Numbers 20:12).

These things were examples, Paul said, so that we do not desire the evil things as they did. Paul listed five of their failures:

- 1) They desired evil things (Numbers 11:4).
- 2) They became idolaters (Exodus 32:1-6).
- 3) They participated in other immoral idolatrous practices (Numbers 25:1-2).
- 4) They question the plan and purpose of God (Numbers 21:4-6).
- 5) They spoke rebelliously about God’s appointed leaders (Numbers 16:41-49).

These examples were given as a warning to the Corinthians so they would not be tempted, stumble, and fall. God will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able to withstand, and with the temptation He will also provide a way of escape.

Note: Paul’s overarching point in giving the examples of the advantages and failures of the Israelites is to demonstrate to the Corinthians that God would certainly hold them accountable just as He had the Israelites.

In verses 14-22 Paul warns the believers against idolatry, saying they should flee from it.

Note: Practice of idolatry was rampant amongst the temples to foreign gods in Corinth. Paul knew the believers might be tempted to learn more about it or even participate in the ceremonies, but his warning is no, flee from these practices!

The cup of blessing is a sharing of the blood and the body of Christ. There is one bread, and we are part of the one body that shares that bread.

Note: Paul's point is the sharing of the Lord's Supper was an expression of unity among the members of the Christian church united with Christ.

Continuing, Paul said the food offered to idols and the idols themselves are nothing. However their sacrifices are to idols and not to God, and Paul warns them not to participate with demons. You cannot drink the cup of demons and the cup of the Lord, not can you share in the Lord's Supper and the table of demons.

Note: Paul's concern here is a warning to believers not to participate in demon ceremonies, as part of actual idol worship. You cannot worship demons and God!

In verses 10:23-11:1 Paul returns to the issue of liberty stressing that everything is permissible, but not everything is beneficial. Not everything builds up our brothers and sisters.

Speaking to the issue of meat offered to idols Paul says if an unbeliever asks you to dinner and you want to go eat whatever they put before you without asking questions about where it came from. But if a non-believer or a weak believer points out the meat had been offered to idols then do not eat it.

Note: Paul's position is to do nothing that might weaken the conscience of a weaker brother.

In general, you do not have to alter your behavior in private when you are thankful for what you have, but don't act in a way that would cause a weaker brother to act against their conscience. Whatever you do, do it to the glory of God, so that others will be saved!


1 Corinthians 11

In verses 2-16 Paul addresses issues of women in worship. Paul explains that Christ is the head of the man, and the man is the head of the women. Men dishonor their head if they pray with their head covered, while a woman who prays with her head uncovered dishonors her head.

Note: Paul had apparently given the Corinthians these instructions previously because he commends them (v. 2) for keeping the traditions.

If the woman refuses to cover her head she should shave her head.

Note: Shaving the head was a sign of disgrace.



Paul concluded a man should not cover his head because he was made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26-27), whereas a woman's glory derives and is complementary to man's.

Note: The complementarian view of Paul is seen in verses 11-12: in the Lord woman is not independent of man, and man is not independent of woman.

In verses 17-26 Paul chides the Corinthians for their disunity when coming together as a church. Their meetings were doing more harm than good. They acted selfishly eating and drinking on their own, rather than celebrating the Lord's Supper as it was intended.

Note: Paul points out that one person who had little and remains hungry while another has much and gets drunk. Economic disparities may have been at the root of these issues.

Paul restates the instructions for the proper celebration of the Lord's Supper: taking the bread and the cup are a reflection of Christ's new covenant with the people established by His shed blood on the cross. The Lord's Supper should be taken in remembrance of what Christ had done.

In verses 27-34 therefore, says Paul, whoever takes the Lord's Supper in an unworthy way is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of Christ. Those who take the cup and eat the bread without recognizing the body of Christ in what they are doing are bringing judgment upon themselves. This, says Paul, is why many of the Corinthians are sick or have died. They have brought God's judgment upon themselves.

Concluding, Paul tells them to wait for one another when they come together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. This was not to be a time of selfishness, but a time to build each other up in the Lord.

1 Corinthians 12-14


In these three chapters, Paul's focus is on the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts in the body, and the exercise of those gifts in love.

1 Corinthians 12

In verses 1-3 Paul begins by stating the spiritual gifts come from the Spirit, and that no one speaking by the Spirit can say Jesus is cursed, and no one can say Jesus is Lord apart from the Spirit.

Note: Apparently Paul felt it necessary to head off questions about teachers who said they spoke for God. Only those who were speaking by the power of the Holy Spirit could say Jesus is Lord. Those teachers who cursed or spoke against Jesus were not from God.

In verses 4-11 Paul stresses the diversity of spiritual gifts arise from the same source: the Spirit. There are different ministries, but the same Lord. There are different activities, but the same God. Each gift given by the Spirit is given to produce what is beneficial:

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- 1) Wisdom. Insight into doctrinal truth.
 - 2) Knowledge. The ability to apply doctrinal truth in your life.
 - 3) Faith. An unusual amount of trust in God.
 - 4) Healing. The ability to heal others.
 - 5) Miraculous Powers. The ability to do miraculous works.
 - 6) Prophecy. The ability to give a message from God about the future.
 - 7) The ability to distinguish between spirits. Being able to discern false prophets from true prophets.
 - 8) Tongues. The ability to speak in unlearned living languages.
 - 9) Interpretation. The ability to translate an unknown language for the assembly.

These gifts are given to each person by the Spirit as the Spirit wills.

In verses 12-31 Paul speaks of the diversity and unity that exists in the body of Christ. We were all baptized into the same body and received the same Spirit. Therefore the body is composed of many parts. One part should not be held in higher regard than another because all the parts of the body are important. One part should not wish to be another part. All the parts are dependent on one another; the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

We clothe the less honorable parts of the body bringing them greater honor. In the same way, God gives greater honor to the less honorable in the body. God did this so there would be no division in the body.

You are members of the body of Christ, and God has created a variety of gifts: apostles, prophets, teachers, miracles, healing, helping, managing, and languages. Everyone is not an apostle, or a prophet, etc.

Note: Paul’s admonition to desire the greater gifts (the first three he numbered for emphasis) may reflect the fact that the Corinthians did not view these gifts as most important. Also, these first three (apostles, prophets, and teachers) ministered to the entire body whereas the other gifts were more individual.


1 Corinthians 13

In chapter 13 Paul describes the “better way” he eluded to in 1 Corinthians 12:31b.

In verses 1-4 (written as poetry) Paul describes this better way as love.

- If I speak languages, but do not have love, I am a sounding gong (noise).
- If I have prophecy and knowledge, but do not have love, I am nothing.
- If I give away all my possessions, but do not have love, I gain nothing.

In verses 4-10 Paul switches from first person to third person as he describes



the personification of love.

- Love is patient, love is kind, loves does not envy, is not boastful, is not proud.
- Love does not act improperly, is not selfish, is not provoked, and does not keep a record of wrongs.
- Love finds no joy in unrighteousness but rejoices in truth.
- Loves bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
- Love never ends.

In verses 11-13 Paul uses an analogy of a child growing to adulthood to describe the difference between our current knowledge and the understanding of God we will have in the age to come (I will know fully, as I am fully known).

When all the gifts pass away in the age to come three things remain: faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love.

Some thoughts for additional consideration:

- *The attitude of “everything is permissible” should not be taken to mean everything is beneficial. Many things that are permissible are not beneficial, and this is definitely the case when what is permissible might weaken the faith of another believer.*
- *The unity of the church is paramount. Every person as a member of the body is important to the kingdom work to be completed.*
- *Spiritual gifts are given to us by the Holy Spirit to be used to edify the church and each other.*

What I Noticed Today (1 Corinthians 14-16)

1 Corinthians 14

In verses 1-25 Paul discussed prophecy as a superior gift to tongues.

Note: There are numerous interpretations of the word “*glossa*” which is commonly translated as either “tongue” or “language.” In the New Testament whether it is used literally or figuratively it is used in reference to a physical tongue or human language, not to excited utterances.

In verses 1-12 Paul says they should pursue spiritual gifts, prophecy in particular. The person who speaks in another language speaks to God, but not to men. Whereas the person who speaks prophecy speaks for the edification, encouragement, and consolation of the people in a way that builds them up. The person who speaks in another language only builds himself up.

The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in languages unless someone is there to interpret for them so the church will be built up.

Note: It is likely that people speaking foreign languages in the Corinthian assembly, spoke with no one there to translate for them, thus to those who did not understand, it was meaningless.

Paul continues saying if I do not know the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker, and the speaker a foreigner to me.

So, since you are anxious to exercise spiritual gifts, seek those which build up the church.

In verses 13-19 Paul continues saying if you pray in another language have someone interpret, otherwise it is not fruitful. How will anyone understand and say “Amen” if they do not understand the language? You may be praising and thanking God, but no one will know and no one will be built up. Therefore, Paul says, I would rather speak five words to teach others, than 10,000 words in another language.

In verses 20-25 Paul admonished the Corinthians not to be childish in their thinking quoting Isaiah 28:11-12 even though they speak in foreign languages there are people who will not listen to the Lord.

Paul’s conclusion is speaking in other languages is a sign for non-believers not for believers. Therefore, if people are speaking in foreign languages and non-believers enter the assembly they will not understand. However, if an unbeliever enters and someone is speaking prophecy he will understand and may be convicted in his heart and worship God.

In verses 26-40 Paul explains the importance of order in their church meet-



ings.

Paul explains whenever they come together each person with a psalm, a teaching, a revelation, another language, or an interpretation must be done in a way that edifies the body.

Specifically, regarding foreign languages, there should be two or three at most with an interpretation. If there is no interpreter the speaker should remain silent.

Regarding prophets two or three should speak and the others should evaluate the prophecy. There should be order in the worship because God is a God of order not of disorder.

In all the Christian churches, Paul said, women should be silent, submit, and ask questions of their husbands at home.

Note: There is some debate as to whether the reference was to all women or married women. The word “submission” and “the phrase “ask their husbands” suggests the admonition is aimed at married women.

Note: It is not appropriate to take this instruction as Paul saying women should not speak in church because that contradicts Paul’s instruction elsewhere (1 Corinthians 11:5). Taken in context, Paul is saying during the interpretation of prophecy for the sake of order, questions should be asked at home.


In verses 37-40 Paul concludes these instructions saying if anyone considers themselves a prophet or spiritual he should realize what Paul writes was the Lord’s command. Anyone who ignores the Lord’s commands would themselves be ignored. Most important in the exercise of spiritual gifts is that they be used to edify (build up) the body and that the worship be orderly.

1 Corinthians 15

Note: Chapter 15 contains the most complete discussion of the resurrection in the entire Bible.

In verses 1-8 Paul wishes to clarify (reinforce) the Gospel that he preached previously to the Corinthians. He is passing along the teaching that he himself received:

- Christ died for our sins according to the Scripture.
- He was buried and raised on the third day.
- He appeared to Cephas (Peter) and then to the twelve.
- Then he appeared to a group of 500 at one time, many of whom are still alive (at the time of the writing).
- Then He appeared to James and all the apostles.
- Last of all, He appeared to me (Paul).



Note: Paul's reference to being "abnormally born" refers to the way in which Jesus appeared to him on the Damascus Road and his conversion after the death and resurrection of Christ.

In verses 9-11 Paul declares he is unworthy to be called an apostle because of his history of persecuting the church. Yet through God's grace he was called to proclaim the Gospel, and as a result, the Corinthians believed.

In verses 12-19 Paul presents a logical argument defending the resurrection of Christ:

- To deny the resurrection of the dead is to deny the resurrection of Jesus.
- If Christ was not raised then their proclamation of the Gospel is without merit and so is their faith.
- Additionally, they would be false witnesses against God, because they had testified that God had raised up Christ.
- If Christ has not been raised then your faith is worthless, you are still in your sins.
- Therefore, the dead in Christ have also perished.
- Finally, if Christ was not resurrected then the pagans were right, and believers should be pitied all the more because they had placed their hope in a false belief.

In verses 20-28 Paul presents the theological argument defending the resurrection of Christ:

- Christ's resurrection was the first of those who had fallen asleep (believers).
- Death came to man through the disobedience of one man, Adam.
- In Adam all die, in Christ all will be made alive. First will be Christ then those who belong to Christ, then comes the end when Christ will turn the kingdom over to God the Father.
- Death, the last enemy, will be abolished.
- God will put everything under the feet of Christ. Everything is subject to Christ, as the Son is subject to the Father.

Note: The phrase "those who had fallen asleep" refers to believers who had died. The phrase "fallen asleep" is the more general term for those who had died.

In verses 29-34 Paul presents his fourth argument for the resurrection based on Christian experience:

Note: There are literally hundreds of interpretations of verse 29, most of which attempt to force fit the verse to support a specific church practice. However, from the context of the discussion it appears that Corinthians had practiced baptism of the dead for those who had died prior to being bap-

tized in life. Paul is not condoning this practice, nor is it supported elsewhere in Scripture. His point is if someone does not believe in the resurrection what is the point of baptism after they died?

Paul provides examples from his personal experience saying his life was in peril (we are in danger every hour...I die every day...I fought wild animals). But, Paul asks, what good is that if the dead are not raised. If the dead are not raised then you might as well eat and drink, for tomorrow you die.

Note: The “eat and drink for tomorrow you die” reference would have been an appeal to the Epicureans who pursued pleasure and avoided pain.

Concluding, Paul warned them not to be deceived: bad company corrupts good morals. Come to your senses and stop sinning.

Note: Paul’s warning about bad company is a warning to avoid false teachers who claim great knowledge, but don’t know God.

In verses 35-49 Paul answers questions about the resurrection of the dead:

- 1) Verses 35-41. How are the dead raised? What kind of body will they have? Paul considered these foolish questions. He compared resurrection to the sprouting of a seed that grows into a plant. A plant was related to the seed, so to the resurrected body is related to the natural one.
- 2) Verses 42-44. Paul describes the earthly body as corrupt, raised as incorrupt; sown in dishonor, raised in glory; sown in weakness, raised in power; and sown in natural body, raised in a spiritual body.
- 3) Verses 45-49. The first man Adam had a natural body first then a spiritual one; the natural body made of dust, the spiritual one from heaven; man has the image of the first man (Adam), just as we will also bear the image of the heavenly man.

In verses 50-58 Paul answers questions about the rapture of the living. What about those who are alive when Christ returns?

Note: Based on the prior discussion a person would understand that the natural man must die in order to be resurrected. This begs the question what about those who are alive when Christ returns? What will happen to them?

Paul says flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God because corruption cannot inherit incorruption.

- We will not all be asleep (dead), but we will all be changed in the blink of an eye at the last trumpet (the appearance of God).
- The trumpet will sound and the dead will be raised incorruptible.
- The corruptible (alive) must be clothed with incorruptible, and the mortal must be clothed with immortality (the living will exchange the temporal and imperfect for the eternal and perfect).
- When this happens death will be defeated.

Paul exhorts the believers to be steadfast, excelling in their work for the Lord, knowing their labor is not in vain.

1 Corinthians 16

Chapter 16 marks a shift away from the doctrinal discussion of chapter 15 to a more practical discussion of the importance of caring for the needs of others.

In verses 1-4 Paul addresses the question from the Corinthians about a collection for God's people in Jerusalem. He instructs them to do the same things as he suggested to the churches in Galatia. That is to set aside on the first day of the week a portion of their income so that no collection will be needed when he arrives. When Paul does arrive in Corinth he will send letters and the gifts to the people in Jerusalem carried by members of the Corinthian church.

In verses 5-12 Paul speaks of his future travel plans. He plans to leave Ephesus (where he wrote the letter to the Corinthians) and travel to Macedonia (north of Corinth where the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea existed).

On that journey Paul hoped to be able to spend some time with the Corinthians, perhaps a whole winter. He planned to stay in Ephesus until after Pentecost because of the opportunity for ministry there.

Paul also told the Corinthians that if Timothy comes to them they should welcome him, and send him on his way to join Paul.

Note: The reference "to send him on his way" meant they were to supply his needs.

Paul says he had strongly urged Apollos to go to Corinth, but he remained in Ephesus with Paul and would come to Corinth when he had an opportunity.

In verses 13-24 Paul concludes the letter to the Corinthians. First, he exhorts them to stand firm and then extends greetings and a final benediction.

In verses 13-18 Paul exhorts the believers in Corinth to remain strong in the faith, and do everything in love. He also exhorts them to submit to Stephanas who was among the first believers in Corinth (first fruits).

Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had come from Corinth and been a blessing to Paul, refreshing his spirit.

Note: Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus had probably brought Paul the letter (1 Corinthians 7:1) to which Paul responded.

In verses 19-24 Paul extends greetings from the churches of Asia, Aquila and Priscilla, and all the brothers.

Note: "All the brothers" may refer to others in the home of Aquila and Priscilla, Corinthian brothers who were with Paul in Ephesus, or the larger community of believers in Asia.



Note: In verses 21-24 Paul stopped dictating the letter and wrote the last portion himself.

He offered a final benediction asking the grace of the Lord to be upon them, and his love be with all of you in Christ Jesus.

Some thoughts for further consideration:

- *The end result of worshipping God should be bringing glory to God, convicting sinners of their need to repent and be a blessing to believers. Most important is whatever is done be it prayer, prophecy, singing, teaching, or preaching it be done in an orderly manner in a way that edifies the body of Christ.*
- *The offering that Paul referred to for the saints in Jerusalem was voluntary, reflecting how God has blessed them, with amounts set aside the first day of the week. These principles to provide for the care and support of believers still apply today!*