
1 Corinthians

Author: Paul

The book of **1 Corinthians** is one of Paul's letters to the church in Corinth. Paul had planted the church in this very affluent and sinful Greek city (**Acts 18:1-18**) and he wrote to them after his departure (**1Cor 5:9-11**).

Highlights

Unfortunately, sinful cultural influences and the Corinthians' own spiritual immaturity required Paul to systematically address each church problem in this letter.

Paul addressed a host of major problems in the church at Corinth. These issues included deep divisions in the church, arrogance of its members, their denial of key doctrines, and their acceptance of openly sinful lifestyles.

For each issue, Paul brought it into the open and counseled them on its biblical solution. The Corinthian church was misusing the spiritual gifts God had given them. It was harming the church body. Paul said we should view every gift and ability as a conduit of God's love (**1Cor 12-14**).

In **1 Corinthians 15**, Paul gave the most extensive treatment on resurrection in the Bible. He identified several witnesses of Christ's resurrection, explained its, and described human resurrection.

Key Verse

1Cor 13:13 And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love. (NKJV)

Personal Reflection and Application

You may not be a powerful speaker; however, the skill of your presentation or power of your arguments is not the key to changing someone's soul. Read **1 Corinthians 1:18-25** aloud. Given what that passage states, what are some practical ways to become more effective at sharing the gospel?

Paul made the bold statement that he was **determined not to know anything among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified (1Cor 2:2)**. His focus in life was singular. He was consumed with knowing Jesus Christ and the implications of the crucifixion. Examine your heart and see if you

could honestly say this about yourself. If not, why not? What's holding you back?

Being a Christian is not a downhill ride (1Cor 3:19). The world and our flesh make things difficult for us. Our resistance and disobedience cause unnecessary detours, delays, and heartaches; however, He will accomplish His work in us (**Php 1:6**). Stop to pray right now that God helps you focus on Him so you can resist the world and your flesh.

Legitimate evaluation comes from the Lord, not other people or even ourselves (**1Cor 4:3-5**). The only evaluation that makes a difference comes from God, though He

sometimes uses other people to bring issues to our attention. **Pray that God clearly shows you where He is pleased with you and where He wants you to make changes.**

Twice Paul urged the believers to “imitate” him [**1Cor 4:16** & **1Cor 11:1**]. That is an extremely bold request. He is saying, “If you follow me around everyday, all day, you will become more like Christ!” If you asked people to follow you, where would you lead them, to Christ or somewhere else? In **1Corinthians 7**, Paul made several comparative statements (It is better to ____ than ____). Make a list of as many as you can find. Notice that Paul said these statements are his advice rather than commandments (**1Cor 7:6**). Consider whether any of the items on your list relate to your current life situation. If so, pray for God’s direction.

The **bad news**: there will be temptation in your life. The **good news**: God has given us a promise related to temptation (**1Cor 10:12-13**). What is that promise? Write **1Corinthians 10:13** on a notecard or in an electronic device that you always have with you. When you experience temptation, read the verse to yourself several times. Pray the verse back to God and seek His help.

Consider what Paul said about the serious nature of The Lord’s Supper (**1Cor 11:26-31**). Eucharist is how some refer to the Lord’s Supper. It comes from “eucharisteo” meaning “had given thanks.” We give thanks for the bread, a representation of the body of Jesus Christ. Jesus gave His **body** for us. We give thanks for the cup, a representation of the **blood** of the Lamb of God, shed for the salvation of the world. Before taking communion, say a prayer of confession to God. Come to the Lord’s Supper clean.

How do you know if a person has spiritual gifts? If a person behaves as if Jesus Christ is His Lord and follows God’s Word, the person has at least one spiritual gift (**1Cor 12:1-7**). Do you say and believe that Jesus is your Lord? If so, you have at least one spiritual gift. Read **1Corinthians 12**, **Romans 12**, **1Peter 4**, and **Ephesians 4**. Take a personal inventory of your spiritual gifts.

If you have accepted Christ as Savior, reflect on how your glorified body will be different from your current body (**1Cor 15:35-49**). Consider how a seed dissolves to bring forth a new plant (**John 12:24-25**). We will recognize one another, but our glorified bodies will have characteristics unlike any we had on earth (**Php 3:21**).

Small Group Conversation Guide

1Corinthians 1:26-2:5 is one of the most encouraging passages in the entire Bible for those who feel they don’t have anything to offer God. Have someone read **1Corinthians 1:26-31** and someone else read **1Corinthians 2:1-5**. Notice the unique qualifications for Christian service. Compare those with what the world says we need to make a difference.

How does this encourage you? Does it change your perspective? What’s the result of having this attitude (**1Cor 2:5**)?

It is possible for someone to read the Bible and not understand it (**1Cor 2:10-16**). That is because it takes the Holy Spirit to open up the meaning to us (**Psa 119:18**, **1John 2:27**). **God reveals His truth through His Spirit.** Along with accepting Christ as Savior to receive the Spirit, the Holy Spirit must have

our cooperation to teach us (**John 14:26**). Discuss ways to cooperate with the Holy Spirit so you can get the most from the time you spend in God's Word.

Your talent is only helpful when you submit it to God's truths and will (**1Cor 3:18-23**). If you've accepted Christ as Lord (**1Cor 6:17**), you are joined to Christ. That also means you are one with other believers. We belong to one another. **Respond to others based on their faithfulness to the Word, not their style or outward appearance.** Discuss how this approach can improve your relationships with others and with God.

You are not your own: YANYO (**1Cor 6:12-20**). If you are a believer, your body belongs to God (**1Pet 1:18-19**). Your body is the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (**John 7:38-39, Rom 8:9**). In what ways does knowing that your body belongs to God motivate you to take care of your body? As a group, brainstorm a list of ideas for being good stewards of the bodies God gave us.

In **1Corinthians 7**, Paul gave reasons why it might be better to be single rather than to marry. Make a list of the reasons that Paul gave. Discuss the joys and challenges of being married compared to the joys and challenges of being single.

In **1Corinthians 8**, Paul used the example of eating food given to idols as something that does not concern God though some Christians may believe it is a sin. What are some other examples of things we may do without sinning yet some Christians may consider those things sinful? What should our response or action be when we are around those Christians?

Paul realized that if he did anything that someone thought was sinful that it could diminish his authority and ability to spread the gospel (**1Cor 9:16-23**). God has given believers the authority and command to spread the gospel. What can we do to

protect our authority from being diminished?

We may wonder how Israel could do such a foolish thing as creating and worshiping a golden calf (**Exo 32:7-8**) until we take a hard look at our own lives. In a typical week, how much time do we spend on sports-related activities, on hobbies, or on anything that consumes our focus other than God? Discuss ways to prevent enjoyable or good things from becoming idols in our lives.

Read **1Corinthians 12:4-7**. As a group, answer these questions: When do you get spiritual gifts? What is the source of spiritual gifts? Why do you receive spiritual gifts? In what way can spiritual gifts bind us together as a church?

Some people have one obviously strong gift while others have a blend of several gifts (**1Cor 12:11, 1Cor 12:28**). God weaves these together with a person's traits and experiences in the context of the needs of a church. God has given you a unique SHAPE (Spiritual Gifts, Heart, Abilities, Personality, Experiences). He has planned a ministry for you that requires that specific SHAPE. Discuss how failing to use your gifts as God intends can hinder the ministry of others and stifle your own spiritual growth. As a group discuss what your SHAPes are and how you can use them for God's purposes.

In today's society, we toss around the term "love" rather carelessly. It can mean many things. To say, "I love ice cream" and "I love you" doesn't mean I value you and ice cream in the same way. When you say you love me, what does that really mean? Does it mean you appreciate me for what I do for you? Does it mean you view me as a friend and enjoy my companionship? Does it mean you feel romantic towards me? Or, does it mean you are willing to make sacrifices for my well-being regardless of your "feelings" towards me? Read **1Corinthians 13:1-13**. Discuss what Paul means by "love."

At the end of Paul’s famous “love” chapter, **1Corinthians 13**, he made an interesting statement, “When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things.” In your relationships [marriage, children, friendships, etc.], how can you put away childish things and behave like an adult?

Make a list of the eyewitnesses to the Resurrection (**1Cor 15:1-11**). Discuss which of the eyewitnesses seem most reliable. On matters other than the resurrection, how many eyewitnesses does it generally take for someone to believe what happened?

Leadership Principles from 1Corinthians

Downside, Upside

Paul said he was a servant of Christ (**1Cor 4:1**). Consider the downside and upside of being a true servant of Christ. Which of these have you experienced?

<i>downside</i>	<i>upside</i>
affliction, hardship, distress, turmoil, sleeplessness	purity, knowledge, patience, kindness, love, righteousness

Your Response is Key

Leadership is hard. If it were easy, everyone would do it! Although leaders should have an optimistic outlook on life, it must be bathed in reality. Read Paul’s leadership outlook in **1Corinthians 4:9-16**. Highlight his trials and then his response. “Life is 10% of what happens to you and 90% of your response” -Chuck Swindoll. Notice Paul’s response and try to emulate it.

Behave Like a Spiritual Parent

To what degree do you behave like a spiritual parent?

- Admonish (**1Cor 4:14**): Put in mind to bring about a change (**Mat 18:15-20** and **1The 5:14**).
- Love (**1Cor 4:14**): Gently confront because you care (**2Cor 12:14-15** and **2Cor 10:1**).

- Beget (**1Cor 4:15**): Bring forth (**Jas1:18**).
- Set an example (**1Cor 4:16-17**): Show God’s ways in how you live (**2Tim 3:10**).
- Teach (**1Cor 4:17**): Speak the truth (**Eph 4:15** and **Mark 12:37**).
- Discipline (**1Cor 4:18-21**): Correct, chasten (**Pro 3:12** and **Heb 12:6**).

Freedom and Others

When deciding how to use your freedom, consider these guidelines:

Edify vs. gratify	Use your freedom to build up others rather than satisfy yourself (1Cor 8:1).
Others vs. self	Give up something for the sake of others (1Cor 8:13 , and Php 2:3-4).
Liberty vs. legalism	Others’ welfare should be our first concern, but their standards do not rule us (1Cor 7:22 and Gal 5:1).

Repel the Spirit of the Age

If we as a church allow the “spirit of the age” to influence us instead of the mind of God, we are failing. When the spirit of the age invades a church, it is because leaders in the church neglect the only force equal to repelling that invasion (**1Cor 8:6**).

Leader, you can be doing many good things, but are you neglecting your time alone with God in His Word? Your spiritual growth, the health of our church, and our influence in our community depend on your faithful relationship with Our Savior.

Sacrifice to Serve

Paul chose to make several sacrifices to be of greater service to the Lord (**1Cor 9:1-15**). Are there any areas in your life that are keeping you from greater service to the Lord? What are you willing to sacrifice?

Avoid Disqualification

Disqualify. It's a daunting word in athletics. Imagine working toward a championship only to realize your efforts do not count because you are disqualified. This is the illustration Paul gave in **1Corinthians 9:24-27**. Are there currently things in your life that might disqualify you? Take some time to meditate on the passage and commit your leadership to running the race without disqualification.

Don't Die in the Wilderness

In **1Corinthians 10:5-13**, Paul listed five reasons the Hebrews died in the wilderness (lust, idolatry, sexual immorality, tempting God, complaining). Use this as a springboard for action in your own life. Determine not to die in the wilderness just short of the Promised Land!

Glamorous?

Many view leadership as more glamorous and important than other gifts. God says the less noticeable and less glamorous parts of a body are more critical to survival (**1Cor 12:20-31**).

Your rewards will come from willing faithfulness to use your gifts as God directs rather than the outward appearance of your gifts:

- **Mat 20:20-23**
- **Mat 19:30**
- **Mat 20:27-28**

How do you view your gifts?

True Identity

Understanding your **true identity** is essential for being a leader. Observe how Paul thought about himself (**1Cor 15:9-11**). Notice that he blended humility and gratitude in how he viewed his position as an apostle.

- How do you view yourself?
- How do those closest to you view you?

Do Everything in Love

Are you a loving leader? Paul tells us to do everything in love (**1Cor 16:14**). Here are some details for doing everything in love:

- Pursue it (**1Cor 14:1**).
- Clothe yourself in it (**Col 3:14**).
- Fill yourself up with it (**1The 3:12** and **Php 1:9**).
- Be sincere in it (**2Cor 8:8**).
- Be fervent in it (**1Pet 4:8**).
- Stimulate it in others (**Heb 10:24**).

Which items on the list are easiest for you? Which are most difficult?

Living and Giving for Others

Leadership is about living and giving for others. In **1Corinthians 16**, Paul mentioned the collection for the saints. Reflect on giving through the following verses:

- Read **2Cor 8:1-5** and **2Cor 9:12-15**. What is the purpose of giving?
- Read **Mark 12:41-44**. Who should give?
- Read **2Cor 9:6-7** and **Luke 6:38**. How much should a person give?

Pray, asking God to show you where He wants you to give more (time, talents, resources, testimony).

Something to Find in Each Chapter

As you read through the book, it may help to have something to find in each chapter.
Try these:

01. What God had sent Paul to do instead of baptizing	02. What is required to learn the spiritual truths of God
03. Why the Corinthians could not handle deeper truths	04. How spiritual parenting is more valued than teaching
05. How a church protects itself from certain open sins	06. Why we are to flee from all sexual temptations
07. How believing spouses can help unbelieving spouses	08. How Bible knowledge can actually poison our attitude
09. Why Paul chose to make himself a servant of men	10. How God protects us from being over-tempted
11. How self-examination is vital to the Lord's Supper	12. How God gives spiritual gifts so we can help others
13. What is more important than anything we say or do	14. How an orderly service helps unbelievers follow God
15. What is implied if Christ is not risen from the dead	16. How often the people were to give their offerings