

1 CORINTHIANS

STUDY QUESTIONS

Some background information

In 146 BC, the Greek city of Corinth was destroyed by the Romans. Some 102 years later, Julius Caesar built a Roman colony there that was first settled by veterans from Caesar's armies. Later, many freed slaves, merchants, and tradesmen also came to Corinth, including a significant number of Jews. Corinth boasted a very prosperous harbor, adding to the influx of visitors to the city. By the time Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians, the city was incredibly diverse in culture, language, philosophy, and religion. Those studying Paul's letters to the Corinthians today will find that he has just as much to say to the church in our postmodern, pluralistic society as he did to the original, 1st century recipients of the letters.

We can read of Paul's visit to Corinth in Acts 18. We learn that Paul stayed there for a year and a half, first preaching Jesus as the Christ to the Jews in the city, among whom some prominent leaders became Christians. However, most of the Corinthians Jews dismissed Paul's preaching, and so he shook out his garments and shifted his focus over to the Gentiles of the city.

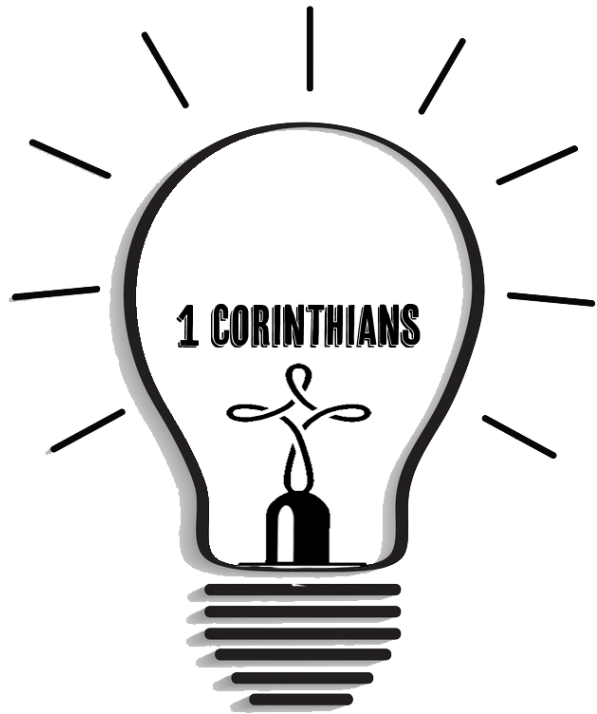
The main theme of Paul's letter is the unity of the church. In Corinth, this unity was being threatened by a number of different things: factions and divisions in the church, gross and unrepentant sin, disagreements about marriage and how to handle food sacrificed to idols, how to worship together as one body in a God-pleasing way, and what it means that Jesus was raised from the dead.

Outline

- I. Greetings and Thanksgivings (1:1-9)
- II. Divisions and the Path to Unity (1:10-4:21)
- III. Sin, Conflict, and Compromise (5:1-6:20)
- IV. Marriage, Idols, and Conscience (7:1-11:1)
- V. God-Pleasing Worship (11:2-14:40)
- VI. The Resurrection of the Dead (15:1-58)
- VII. Wrapping It Up (16:1-24)

Martin Luther on 1 Corinthians

"In this epistle St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be one in faith and love, and to see to it that they learn well the chief thing, namely, that Christ is our salvation, the thing over which all reason and wisdom stumbles..."



Day 1- Monday, September 14

Greetings and Thanksgiving

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.

- ✘ Who is Sosthenes? (see Acts 18:17) What is the significance of Paul naming Sosthenes at the beginning of this letter?
- ✘ What about the Corinthians makes Paul thankful? How does the identity of the Corinthians find its source in what God has done and will do for them?

Day 2- Tuesday, September 15

Division

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.

- ✘ What is the main problem in Corinth that Paul addresses right off the bat in this letter? What seems to be the reason for the divisions the Corinthians are experiencing?
- ✘ When have you seen Corinthian-like divisions in the church? How can you faithfully follow and honor your God-given leaders without idolizing them?

Day 3- Wednesday, September 16

The Foolishness of the Cross

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25.

- ✘ Why is the cross “folly to those who are perishing?” What about the message of the cross seems foolish to those who do not trust in Jesus as their Savior?
- ✘ When are some times in your life when you have seen that “the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men?”

Day 4- Thursday, September 17

Shaming the Wise

Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31.

- ✘ In order to help the Corinthians move beyond their sinful pride, he points out to them their low station in life before they came to faith. How might you apply this to yourself?

- ✘ Paul calls Christ “wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption.” What does this mean for how you ought to seek out wisdom in your life?

Day 5- Friday, September 18

Preaching Christ Crucified

Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5.

- ✘ Paul points out that he did not come to the Corinthians with impressive rhetoric or heavy-handed philosophy. Is there anything wrong with these things? Though certainly capable, why did Paul choose not to make use of them?
- ✘ What are some ways you can “know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified” among those God has put in your life? How might your witness of Jesus be like Paul’s to the Corinthians?

Day 6- Monday, September 21

Secret and Hidden Wisdom

Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

- ✘ What kind of wisdom does Paul tell the Corinthians he came to share with them? What exactly is this secret and hidden wisdom?
- ✘ What role does the Holy Spirit play in revealing the wisdom of the gospel? *How* has the Spirit revealed this wisdom to you?

Day 7- Tuesday, September 22

Jealousy and Strife

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

- ✘ What evidence does Paul give to back up his assessment of the Corinthian Christians as “infants in Christ?” When have you seen such behaviors in the church? In yourself?
- ✘ How did God choose to use Paul and Apollos in different ways? What would have been a better way for the Corinthians to regard them and their work among them?

Day 8- Wednesday, September 23
Building on the Foundation

Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15.

- ✘ Who has built the foundation of Jesus Christ in your church and in your own personal life? How are you seeking to build on that foundation?

- ✘ How might someone's work be burned up? What do you think Paul means when he says that such a person will be saved, "but only as through fire?"

Day 9- Thursday, September 24
God's Temple

Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-23.

- ✘ How does the fact that you are God's temple change or enhance the way you should view yourself? How does knowing you are holy in this way inform how you live?

- ✘ Paul urges us not to boast in men but to seek after Christ. What assurance does he give us in vv. 21-23, and how will you take it to heart today?

Day 10- Friday, September 25
Stewards of the Mysteries

Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

- ✘ Whom do you regard as "servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God?" What does this look like, and what are the mysteries Paul is talking about? How do pastors fulfill this role today?

- ✘ Paul is unconcerned by other people's judgments of him because he is looking ahead to the Lord's judgment. Does it frighten you or encourage you that the Lord "will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart?"

Day 11- Monday, September 28
The Scum of the World

Read 1 Corinthians 4:6-13.

- ✘ Paul tells the Corinthians that they already have more than they could ever need. How has God provided you with what you need?
- ✘ Why does Paul say that the apostles are “last of all... fools... the scum of the world?” What does this look like, and what is God’s purpose through it?

Day 12- Tuesday, September 29
A True Spiritual Father

Read 1 Corinthians 4:14-21.

- ✘ Who has been a father in Christ Jesus through the gospel in your life? In what ways have you sought to imitate that person and their faith?
- ✘ The Corinthians needed to be reminded of Paul’s instruction for them, and some were still resistant to it. When have you needed a reminder of God’s will for you?

Day 13- Wednesday, September 30
A Great and Arrogant Sin

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

- ✘ What has the overall reaction of the Corinthians been to the arrogant sexual sin taking place within their midst? Why is such prideful sin so destructive, and what does Paul say a godlier reaction would look like?
- ✘ What instruction does Paul have for the Corinthian church regarding the unrepentant sinner in their midst? How is this exclusion from the church an act of mercy and love toward the one caught in sin? In what ways are we to treat those outside the church differently when it comes to their sin as opposed to those within the church?

Day 14- Thursday, October 1
The Saints Will Judge the World

Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-11.

- ✘ Why does Paul stress the importance of dealing with intra-church conflict in the context of the church instead of in the courts? How do lawsuits among Christians harm our witness to the world, and how should we handle such conflicts instead?

- ✘ In vv. 9-10 Paul gives us a list of sinners that will not inherit the kingdom of God. Have you ever found yourself on that list? What good news does Paul give you in v. 11?

Day 15- Friday, October 2 **The Temple of Your Body**

Read 1 Corinthians 6:12-20.

- ✘ Why should sexual immorality be unthinkable for those who are part of the body of Christ? How does sexual sin degrade our bodies in a way other sins do not?
- ✘ What are some specific ways you can glorify God in your body, both by what you choose to do and by what you choose not to do?

Day 16- Monday, October 5 **Marriage Advice**

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-5.

- ✘ What should the sexual relationship between a husband and a wife look like in a healthy and God-pleasing marriage? What is the reasoning behind this that Paul gives?
- ✘ What is Paul talking about in v. 5? How can an intentional pause in the physical relationship between husband and wife be spiritually beneficial, and what are the dangers of allowing this pause to last too long?

Day 17- Tuesday, October 6 **Marriage as Ministry**

Read 1 Corinthians 7:6-16.

- ✘ Why do you think Paul would prefer that everyone be single as he is? When is it best for those unmarried to remain that way, and when should they get married instead?
- ✘ What instructions does Paul have in vv. 12-16 for those married to unbelievers? How can those married to unbelievers help to show them Jesus in their life together?

Day 18- Wednesday, October 7
As You Were

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24.

- ✘ What is the main reason Paul suggests that the Corinthians each remain in whatever state they were in when they came to know Jesus? In what ways does this apply to us today?
- ✘ What might be a modern application of Paul's advice to bondservants to seek their freedom if the opportunity arises, but not to let it be their only priority?

Day 19- Thursday, October 8
The World is Passing Away

Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-31.

- ✘ What "present distress" is Paul referring to in v. 26? Is this still something which concerns us today? Do Paul's instructions on that basis still apply to us?
- ✘ What is Paul getting at when he says the married should live as though they are not, those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it, etc.? How should the fact that "the present form of this world is passing away" change how you choose to live out certain areas of your life?

Day 20- Friday, October 9
Divided Interests

Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-40.

- ✘ How are those who are married burdened with worldly concerns? Are these concerns sinful? If not, how might they best be handled in a way that minimizes the dividing of interests between one's spouse and God?
- ✘ How would you sum up Paul's teaching on marriage in 1 Corinthians 7? How are some of the conclusions we might draw from this tempered by what Paul has to say about marriage in other places (i.e. Ephesians 5:22-33 and Colossians 3:18-19)?

Day 21- Monday, October 12
One True God

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-6.

- ✘ How have you seen others puffed up by knowledge instead of building up in love? When are some times you have been guilty of this?

- ✘ Compare and contrast v. 6 with Deuteronomy 6:4. Is Paul contradicting the Jewish belief in one God? If not, how does the lordship of Jesus fit into the concept of there being only one true God?

Day 22- Tuesday, October 13
Idols and Food, Rights and Conscience

Read 1 Corinthians 8:7-13.

- ✘ What are some modern-day equivalents of food sacrificed to idols? Are there ways to engage in these things with a good conscience and without sinning?

- ✘ How does love for others inform our decisions on how we approach such things? When has your conscience been wounded by others over-asserting their right to Christian freedom?

Day 23- Wednesday, October 14
Giving Up Our Rights

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-18.

- ✘ Paul says that “the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the gospel.” Why is this an important thing to hold onto, especially in our church today when so many congregations are struggling to find and pay church workers?

- ✘ Why did Paul choose to forego the right to payment for his preaching and ministry? What are some ways you can remove any obstacles between the gospel and those in your life God has called you to serve?

Day 24- Thursday, October 15
All Things to All People

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

- ✘ How did Paul make himself a “servant to all?” How might you do the same in your own context? What would it look like for you to “become all things to all people?”

- ✘ Are you living your life in an intentional way so as to receive the prize in the race God has called you to run? How are you disciplining your body and keeping it under control for the sake of the Gospel?

Day 25- Friday, October 16
The Way of Escape

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

- ✘ How do the stories of Israel in the Old Testament serve as warnings for us today? What lessons have you learned from Israel's history?
- ✘ How has v. 13 often been misquoted and misinterpreted? What promises does God give us in this verse? When is a time God has led you through the way of escape and helped you avoid a certain temptation?

Day 26- Monday, October 19
One Cup, One Bread, One Body

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22.

- ✘ What does Paul teach us about what is happening in communion by saying it is a participation in the body and blood of Christ? How does this participation unite all who partake of it?
- ✘ Have you ever been guilty of partaking of the table of the Lord and the table of demons? How can we keep ourselves pure from this sort of sin?

Day 27- Tuesday, October 20
All to the Glory of God

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1.

- ✘ Paul quotes a saying being thrown around in Corinth: "All things are lawful." What are some modern manifestations of this phrase? How have you seen it used by others to condone sinful decisions? How have you used it as an excuse in your own life?
- ✘ What are some ways that you seek to do all you do to the glory of God? Why does Paul call upon the Corinthians to imitate him? Are you living a life worthy of imitation?

Day 28- Wednesday, October 21
Covering Up

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

- ✘ What is the point of all this talk here about head coverings for men and women? What differences does Paul say there are between men and women?

- ✘ How do Paul's words in vv. 11-12 demonstrate an interdependency between men and women? How can you be intentional about serving the opposite gender in your own life?

Day 29- Thursday, October 22
Losing the Supper

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-26.

- ✘ What is the main issue that Paul is confronting when it comes to the Corinthians improperly celebrating the Lord's Supper? How has this problem caused the Corinthians to lose the supper?

- ✘ Why are the words of Jesus when He instituted the Lord's Supper so important? How does the eating of the bread and drinking of the cup proclaim the Lord's death until He comes?

Day 30- Friday, October 23
Examining Ourselves

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34.

- ✘ Why is it so important to eat and drink the Lord's Supper worthily? What is one guilty of if he partakes unworthily? How does Paul show us here that the consequences for doing so are dire?

- ✘ When Paul says that "anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself," is he referring to the church, the body of Christ truly present in the Supper, or both? How does our interpretation of this passage determine our church's communion practices and our own personal preparation for the Supper?

Day 31- Monday, October 26
Many Gifts, One Spirit

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11.

- ✘ How does the Spirit enable us to confess the lordship of Jesus? Why is it so important that we give credit to the Spirit instead of ourselves for our confession of faith?
- ✘ Since one Spirit gives many different spiritual gifts, how should we view the diversity of gifts within the church? What goal or result are these gifts meant to help us strive for?

Day 32- Tuesday, October 27
Many Parts, One Body

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-20.

- ✘ In addition to Paul's metaphor of a body here, what other analogies does Scripture give us to describe the multi-faceted unity of God's people? Why is the analogy of a body especially helpful?
- ✘ How have you seen members of Christ's body disparage another in the past? Have you ever been guilty of doing this or been the victim of somebody doing this? How can each individual member of the body find value in the role God has called them to play?

Day 33- Wednesday, October 28
Indispensable Body Parts

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21-31a.

- ✘ How has God intentionally arranged the "honorable" and "unpresentable" parts of the body for the greatest possible outcome for the body as a whole? When you feel like disparaging yourself, how can this help you appreciate the gifts God has given you?
- ✘ What gifts has God uniquely given to you, and how are you using them to benefit the body of Christ? How might you "earnestly desire the higher gifts?"

Day 34- Thursday, October 29
A More Excellent Way

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:7.

- ✘ When have you experienced a time when your great skill or talent or effort did not have its intended impact because it was lacking in love? Why is Paul so adamant about the meaninglessness of all these things without love?

- ✘ Which of the characteristics of love given in vv. 4-7 is most difficult for you to put into practice in your own life? How has Jesus exhibited love perfectly in the way Paul describes?

Day 35- Friday, October 30 **The Greatest of These**

Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13.

- ✘ Paul describes love as eternal and connects it with knowing God fully when Jesus returns. How does this eternal, all-knowing love of God fill you with hope now for knowing God fully when that time comes?
- ✘ Why is love even greater than faith and hope? What is it about love that causes it to endure in a way that faith and hope will not? How does love allow our faith and hope to grow now?

Day 36- Monday, November 2 **Prophecy Better Than Tongues**

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-12.

- ✘ Why is prophecy—speaking the Word of God and interpreting it for God’s people—of greater value than the gift of speaking in different tongues?
- ✘ In addressing the gift of speaking in tongues, Paul seems to be speaking more of speaking different human languages than the ecstatic babbling found in some charismatic churches. How does this interpretation, which was held by the church fathers and the Reformers, change the way we think of this spiritual gift?

Day 37- Tuesday, November 3 **Tongue-Tied**

Read 1 Corinthians 14:13-25.

- ✘ How were the Corinthians using the gift of speaking in tongues in a selfish way? What is the main, and perhaps only, way speaking in tongues benefits the church as a whole? Why does Paul seem to downplay this spiritual gift that the Corinthians apparently held in such high regard?
- ✘ Which is more important—the language being used in church or the message being conveyed? If it is the message, how can we make sure that our language is sharing the Gospel in the clearest and most helpful way?

Day 38- Wednesday, November 4
Getting Our Worship in Order

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40.

- ✘ Here Paul gives instructions to the Corinthians on how to worship in good order. Why is such order important in the church? What else do we lose if we lose good order in our worship?

- ✘ How are we to regard what Paul has to say about the role of women in worship in vv. 33-35? Are these simply opinions that Paul held due to the culture of his time, or do these instructions still apply to us today? How does what Paul says in v. 37 help us to answer this question?

Day 39- Thursday, November 5
The Resurrection of Jesus

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1-11.

- ✘ How do the resurrection appearances of Jesus mentioned in vv. 5-8 provide even more evidence of the many and various eyewitness accounts of those who saw Jesus alive? For example, if Paul were simply making it up that Jesus appeared to more than 500 at one time, wouldn't it have been easy to discredit him? How does this then strengthen our faith in the truth of Christ's resurrection?

- ✘ Why does Paul consider himself "the least of the apostles?" What made it so that this "least of the apostles" could have such a profound impact on the world with the Gospel of Jesus? How does this encourage you when you feel unworthy or not up to the task?

Day 40- Friday, November 6
Firstfruits of the Dead

Read 1 Corinthians 15:12-22.

- ✘ What is the main problem Paul is addressing in Chapter 15? (see v. 12) Apparently some of the Corinthians were denying that there will be a day when all people will be raised from the dead, as Scripture had always taught. What is Paul's counter-argument to those who are denying this? If Christ has not been raised from the dead, where does that leave us?

- ✘ Of course, Christ *has* been raised from the dead! What does Paul mean when he calls Him "the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep?" If Christ is the first of those to be raised, what does that mean for us? (see v. 22)

Day 41- Monday, November 9
Death the Destroyed Enemy

Read 1 Corinthians 15:23-34.

- ✘ How does understanding death to be the ultimate enemy (see v. 26) help us to understand the significance of the resurrection of Jesus? How does it help us to understand the significance of the resurrection He has promised to us?
- ✘ How does knowing that Jesus will one day subject all things except the Father to Himself help us to live our lives with greater meaning and purpose? How does knowing this help us avoid the foolishness of saying, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die?”

Day 42- Tuesday, November 10
A New Body

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-49.

- ✘ What can we understand now about what our bodies will be like after the day of resurrection? What things are we able to say about them? What aspects remain a mystery to us for now?
- ✘ When Paul speaks about the “spiritual body,” it is important to understand that he is still talking about a physical body, but one that is animated by the life-giving Spirit of Jesus. How does knowing that your body will one day be raised up and made perfect impact the way you use it now?

Day 43- Wednesday, November 11
The Mystery of Resurrection

Read 1 Corinthians 15:50-58.

- ✘ What are you most looking forward to about the moment when Jesus returns with the sound of a trumpet and raises the dead? How does it make you feel to know that God gives us victory over death and the grave through our Lord Jesus Christ?
- ✘ Rather than suggesting that we hunker down and wait for the day of resurrection, Paul says that we should instead be “steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord.” How can we know that the labor we do right now is not in vain?

Day 44- Thursday, November 12

Instructions and Itinerary

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-11.

- ✘ What do Paul's instructions about the collection for the church in Jerusalem mean for us today? What habits of giving to support the church should be a part of our walk with Jesus?
- ✘ Paul's desire is to spend some significant time with the Corinthians on his way through town the next time. What benefits are there when God's people are able to build deep, lasting relationships with one another as Paul did with the Corinthians?

Day 45- Friday, November 13

Final Greetings

Read 1 Corinthians 16:12-24.

- ✘ In the context of this letter and all we have learned from it, what are some specific ways we can follow Paul's charge to "be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong?"
- ✘ How is the love Paul has for the Corinthians evident both in the opening and the closing sections of his letter to them? How have you experienced this same kind of love and encouragement in the church?

Thank you!

Thank you for joining me in this study of 1 Corinthians! As you have reflected on the readings, study questions, and videos from these past few months, what insights have you gained from this study? How has your understanding of the gospel and your appreciation for it grown? How has this study helped your faith to grow or the way you go about your life to change? If you would be willing to share your answers to any of these questions, please shoot me an e-mail at caleb.adams@saints.org.

Peace in Jesus,
Pastor Caleb Adams