

The Book of 1 Corinthians

“Christian Conduct”

Introduction

“Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.” 1 Cor. 4:1-2

Have you ever sighed, “I wish my church could be more like the church of the first century”? Perhaps you have in mind a small, closely knit community of believers who are radically committed to each other and, despite their number, are turning the community upside down with the gospel. What an exciting ideal! Unfortunately, the reality of the first churches probably wouldn’t match it.

The church at Corinth is a good case in point. It had several excellent teachers and leaders, yet it struggled with the same problems many churches face today. The Corinthian church was an example of what churches look like, made up as they are of sinners saved by grace.

Depending on your expectations, 1 Corinthians can make for encouraging reading. This letter points to the fact that there is no instant spirituality. Discipleship is a process. So if you and other believers around you sometimes seem less than Christ like, take heart! The Corinthians have walked this path before you. Despite their shortcomings, they held a special place in the heart of those who knew them best and helped them get started in the faith.

Author

Paul, the Apostle. The writing is Paul’s style, and the description of Corinth and its people fit Paul’s day. In A.D. 96 Clement of Rome referred to the Corinthian letter in a letter that he himself wrote: “Take up the Epistle of the blessed Paul, the apostle.”

Date

Uncertain. Probably A.D. 54-56 on Paul’s third missionary journey.

To Whom it is Written

“To the church of God at Corinth, to those set apart in Christ Jesus” (1 Cor. 1:2).

Purpose

Paul wrote this letter for three reasons:

1. To draw the church back together in a spirit of unity as one body in Christ. The church was severely divided and split, feuding and arguing and forming cliques.
2. To deal with moral carelessness in the church.
3. To answer certain questions the church had. Questions concerning marriage, Christian liberty and rights, public worship, spiritual gifts, and the resurrection from the dead.

Structure of the lesson

The emphasis of this lesson is not only on studying the passage, but also on how to practically apply these principles in our lives today. If your desire is to get the most out of this study, it is important to complete the entire lesson each week. These lessons will then be discussed in your group. It is important for you to participate in sharing your answers, but the leader will not require you to share if you don't want to.

If you are a believer who wants to live a radically transformed life, you have come to the right place! Strap on your safety belts and prepare for a great time together in God's Word!

Our prayer is that these lessons will be a blessing to you, and that they will stimulate you to further growth as you build, guard and live for the Lord. Invest your life in those things that count for eternity, not for the things that will pass away.

Some Well Known Scriptures From 1 Corinthians

1 Cor. 1:20 “Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?”

1 Cor. 1:23-24 “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, ²⁴ but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”

1 COR. 3:12 “Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw”

1Cor. 6:12 “All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.”

1 Cor. 6:19 “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?”

1 Cor. 9:22 “to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.”

1 Cor. 10:12-13 “Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

1 COR. 13:13 “And now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these is love.”

1 Cor. 15:55 “O Death, where is your sting O Hades, where is your victory?”

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson One - 1 Corinthians 1:1-31
“The Christian Calling”

Have you ever found a Christian group that doesn't have any problems? If so, don't join it, you'll ruin everything! In a most sensitive way, Paul opened his letter by reminding the believers of the wonderful blessings they had in Christ. He does this before he rebukes them for their sin, for they were “taking advantage” of their privileges as Christians. They were not walking in a manner worthy of their calling in Christ (Eph. 4:1).

The local church here in Corinth was in serious trouble. Sad to say, the problems did not stay within the church family. Their compromise was known by the unbelievers outside the church. To begin with, the church at Corinth was a defiled church. Some of its members were guilty of sexual immorality; others got drunk; still others were using the grace of God to excuse worldly living. It was also a divided church, with at least four different groups competing for leadership (1 Cor. 1:12). This meant it was a disgraced church. Instead of glorifying God, it was holding back the progress of the Gospel. How did this happen? The members of the church permitted the sins of the city to get into the local assembly. Corinth was a polluted city, filled with every kind of vice and worldly pleasure. About the lowest charge you could make against a man in that day would be to call him “a Corinthian.” People would know what you were talking about.

Corinth was also a proud, philosophical city, with many traveling teachers promoting their speculations. Unfortunately, this philosophical approach was applied to the Gospel by some members of the church, and this cultivated division. The congregation was made up of different “schools of thought” instead of being united behind the Gospel message.

If you want to know what Corinth was like, read Romans 1:18-32. Paul wrote the Roman epistle while in Corinth, and he could have looked out the window and seen the very sins that he listed! Of course, when you have proud people, depending on human wisdom and adopting the lifestyle of the world, you are going to have problems. In order to help them solve their problems, Paul opened his letter by reminding them of their calling in Christ.

Read 1 Cor. 1:1-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

Back in Paul's day, the first century church was also far from ideal, especially in Corinth. Pressured by a pagan culture, the Christians were divided by conflicts and immorality. Though the church at Corinth was gifted, it was spiritually immature. In many ways it was like some young churches today. These problems brought discouragement. Paul wrote to this church to bring them hope and comfort. They needed to change, and God was able to help them. This letter also gives us hope today, whether our problems are at home or at church.

1. What theme does Paul repeat several times in verses 1-9? What does this tell you about Paul's objective?

2. What does it mean that God has given us **Grace** and **Peace**?

3. Why did the Corinthians "*eagerly wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ*"? What does this mean to you? How does this apply to your responsibilities and commitments as a believer today?

4. What does it mean that God is faithful? Note some ways in which God has been faithful to you, past, present and future.

Read 1 Cor. 1:10-17. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Church in Corinth was far from perfect. Paul had heard a long list of complaints about this eager but misguided flock. As he attempted some long distance pastoring, the question remained, where should he begin? One of the main issues at hand was that of conflict and splits.

Today, cliques and quarreling might remind us of our junior high days in school. But they also characterize many of our modern day churches. Some Christians become very attached to one particular leader. They read only his books and listen only to his recorded messages and lessons, taking great pride in being followers of "his ministry." Paul now addresses this very

relevant problem and instructs us of the importance to worship the Creator not the creation.

5. What does it mean for Christians to be “perfectly united in mind and judgment”?
6. Why is it important for Christians to be united?
7. What practices can help us be more united with other Christians?
8. How can division among Christians empty Christ’s message of its power?

Read 1 Cor. 1:18-31. Pray and answer the following questions:

Conventional wisdom says that changing the world requires high profile spokespersons, popular leaders, and the use of power. Instead, in God’s economy He uses ordinary, humble, and powerless people to do His work. And most amazing of all, he used the cross. Who would expect a Savior to die as a criminal? No wonder God’s ways seem foolish to the world. The cross alone is the answer to a divided church, not words of human wisdom. Human wisdom can never solve the divisions within the church, nor within the world. Why? Because love is the only remedy for division, and the greatest demonstration of love ever witnessed upon earth is the cross of Christ. It is the cross that reveals the love of God and challenges man to love his fellowmen. The cross of Christ is the answer both to the divisions among men and to the problems that plague men and their world. The problem with the Corinthian church was that people were still looking at life from the world’s perspective. Here Paul brings the Corinthians back to the basics of their new found Christian faith.

9. The Corinthians boasted in worldly wisdom and those who taught it. How does the message of the cross destroy all such boasting?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Two - 1 Corinthians 2:1-16
The Christian Message

When Paul came to Corinth, it was from a seeming defeat at Athens (Acts 17:32-34) where he addressed the Greek philosophers but won few converts. This experience, plus his conviction that only the plain Gospel is the power of God, led Paul to minister in Corinth in fear and trembling. He did not use the persuasive words of the speaker or philosopher; he simply preached in the power of the Spirit. He was anxious that the believers put their faith in God and not in people. It is sad when pastors or evangelists make converts to themselves and fail to teach people how to walk with Christ alone. How sad when Christians have to lean on other believers and never learn to walk on their own.

Paul did not stop with a simple statement of the Gospel, as important as that is. He also taught a deep wisdom of God to those who were more mature in the faith. Sad to say, there were few of these in Corinth! These people had their eyes on human leaders, were comparing men, and were failing to grow in the Word. It is necessary in the local church for the pastor and teachers to declare the Gospel to the lost, but it is also important that they teach God's wisdom to those who are maturing in the faith. It is impossible to build a strong church on the preaching of the Gospel alone; there must be the teaching of the plan and “mystery” of God. (A mystery is a truth hidden in the ages past revealed by the Spirit to those who belong to God's family.) The mystery that Paul taught at Corinth was that Jew and Gentile are “one in Christ” through faith, and make up the one body which is the church. This mystery, or hidden wisdom of God, could never be known by the “rulers of this world,” because it is understood only through the prompting of the Spirit. Many professed Christians do not really understand God's purpose for this age!

In this chapter, Paul will emphasize the message of the Gospel and the warning that we must not mix it with human wisdom or human philosophy.

Read 1 Cor. 2:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

D.L Moody was once scheduled to preach at Cambridge University. Some of the students were outraged that an American without a college education would dare to speak in that center of culture. They planned to hoot him off the platform. Moody began his sermon by saying, “Young gentleman, don’t ever think God don’t love you, for He do!” The scoffers were dumfounded, and Moody’s unpolished words captured them. That was the beginning of a revival and one of the greatest awakenings of the nineteenth century. This chapter in Paul’s letter shows clearly that polished speech is not the key to effective ministry.

1. How did Paul’s regard for the world’s wisdom affect his preaching and testimony?

2. Describe some different preaching styles you have heard. Which of these follows Paul’s example, and why is it most effective?

3. List some benefits of living according to God’s wisdom instead of human wisdom.

4. What can you do this week to follow God’s wisdom instead of the wisdom of the world?

For more Bible passages on the limits of human wisdom, see Proverbs 3:5-7, Ecclesiastes 1:12-18, Jeremiah 9:23-24, Ezekiel 28:2-7, Matthew 11:25 and 1 Corinthians 3:19-20

Read 1 Cor. 2:9-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

Believers and churches today are seeking to meet the challenges of an increasingly industrial society that depends on advancing, new technologies. But they cannot improve upon the essential strategy Paul reveals here. Today’s churches often fail to gain New Testament results because they do not rely on the power of the Holy Spirit to take the message and make it

effective in the lives of the people. Paul here presents the argument that nobody really knows what goes on inside a person's mind, (memories, reflections, motives) except for the person's spirit. In a similar way, no one can know what goes on in God's mind, except the Spirit of God.

5. Why do people often fail to see God's purpose for them?
6. List some ways that the Holy Spirit helps believers.
7. Record a time in your life when God gave you the opportunity (Divine appointment) to witness to someone above and beyond your own natural abilities? What was the result?
8. How could these experiences become more frequent in your life?

Read 1 Cor. 2:14-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

This section of Scripture is open to several interpretations, some of them misleading. "*We have the mind of Christ*" and "*we are subject to no man's judgment*" have been slogans of cults and individuals who accept no authority beyond their own opinions. But since Paul was rebuking a group of self-styled spiritual people who were taking just that position, we can be sure that he did not mean that any believer should follow his own opinions because he has the mind of Christ. It is up to us to come up with a sound, consistent interpretation of these verses that takes into account all that Paul has to say about judgment, spirituality, and maturity. When we come to Christ, we receive God's Spirit, who searches and knows the mind of Christ. He is able to impart the things of God to us. Worldly wisdom, however impressive, cannot do for us what God's Spirit can.

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9. According to Paul, what is the difference between a spiritual and an unspiritual person?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Three - 1 Corinthians 3:1-23
The Local Church

British Bible teacher Dr. G. Campbell Morgan had four sons; all became ministers. Someone asked one of the grandsons if he also would become a minister, and he replied, “No, I plan to work for a living.”

What is a pastor supposed to do? What really is “the work of the ministry”? If we don’t know, we will never know how to evaluate the minister’s work.

In chapter 3 Paul deals with the ministry of the Gospel and tells us what a minister of the Gospel is and does, and how the church should look upon him and his work. It is sad that we have such extremes today: some churches “idolize” their ministers and make gods out of them, while other fellowships “resist” their ministers and refuse to respect them.

The word “minister” here is the same word from which we get our word “deacon,” and it means “a servant.” For eighteen months Paul was Christ’s servant in Corinth, feeding people the Word, disciplining them, encouraging them, and helping them win others.

If there were problems in the church, it was not Paul’s fault; it was their fault for being such immature Christians. They were babes in Christ and could not receive the solid meat of the Word. He had to feed them with milk like a nurse! Just like little children they argued and divided into cliques, following human leaders.

A true pastor must be a servant. He must have a servant’s mind and be willing to put Christ first, others second, and self last. We are to have the **J.O.Y.** of the Lord in our lives. (**J**esus first, **O**thers second, and **Y**ourself last! This is not always easy to do! We must pray for our spiritual leaders, that God will give them grace and strength to be servants to others.

Read 1 Cor. 3:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul spoke to the Corinthians as their spiritual father. He had a pure and genuine concern for their welfare and spiritual growth, but he saw the young church being split into factions according to personalities and leadership styles. Because people were taking such pride in the groups they belonged to, the church was divided. It's good and normal to appreciate gifted people and to follow your favorite teachers, but when that appreciation leads to feeling of superiority, arrogance or pride, the church is weakened and the Lord is saddened. As you look around at other groups, both inside and outside the church, be appreciative of differences. But remember the simple truth that there is only one foundation, Jesus Christ, and that all we have or do comes from Him.

1. What situation in the church was Paul addressing?
2. What traits did the Corinthians have that made them worldly?
3. What does it mean to plant and water God's Word in others?
4. What are some practical ways that you are able to plant and water God's Word in others?

Read 1 Cor. 3:9-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Corinthian's were worldly and quarrelsome because they misunderstood both the message and the messengers of the cross. In chapter one and two, Paul focused on the message and the true wisdom from God. Now he looks at God's messengers. As he does so, Paul reminds the Corinthians and us of our true identity in Christ and how this should shape all Christian ministries. This study will lead to a proper perspective on the place of our ministry in the overall work of God.

5. Jesus is the foundation of the church. What does that mean in today's world?

6. In what ways can we build on the foundation that God has laid?

7. God will test the quality of our work like fire tests the quality of building materials. What kinds of work will withstand that test?

8. According to Paul, what is every Christian's responsibility in the building project? Describe the different kinds of building materials, how they will be tested, and what the result will be.

Read 1 Cor. 3:16-23. Pray and answer the following questions:

9. In what ways can Christians be influenced by the wisdom of the world?

10. What does it mean that a Christian is the temple of the Holy Spirit?

11. Note the warning in verse 17. How should this affect our attitudes and actions toward other Christian groups and individuals with whom we may not agree with?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Four - 1 Corinthians 4:1-21
The Christian Ministry

In this section, Paul now presents three pictures of the minister, a steward (1 Cor. 4:1-7), a spectacle (1 Cor. 4:8-13), and a father (1 Cor. 4:14-21). He wanted his readers to understand how God measured and evaluated a Christian's service. 1 Corinthians 4:6 explains Paul's purpose: "That no one of you be puffed up for one against another." Paul presents three characteristics of a true minister of Jesus Christ.

The Steward of God's Wealth (4:1-7)

A steward owned nothing; he was a slave who managed his master's wealth. The pastor is a servant who is a steward. The word "minister" in vs. 1 is literally "the slave who rows on the lowest level of a boat." It means to be the "under rower."

A steward's responsibility is to be faithful to the Master, and the pastor's responsibility is to be faithful to teach the things of the Lord, especially those truths that relate to the mystery of the church.

A Spectacle to the World (4:8-13)

What a spectacle a true servant of God must be to the world! Paul could have been a great Jewish rabbi, with authority and esteem; yet he gave it up for Christ's sake (Phil. 3) to have hunger, nakedness, peril, and death! The world cannot understand this attitude and calls such a person a fool. How convicted these Corinthians should have been when they compared their carnal living to the sacrifices Paul and the other apostles were making.

A Spiritual Father (4:14-21)

Jesus warns us that we should call no man on earth "father" (Matt. 23:9), but it is still true that those who lead souls to Christ are, in a sense, "fathering" them. Paul had been their spiritual father in that he gave them the Gospel and helped to lead them to Christ. A sinner is born into God's family through the Spirit of God and the Word of God, but God uses human instruments to bring sinners the Gospel.

There must never be in a church a worldly attitude of exalting men and ministries. The pastor ministers the Word, sows the seed, builds the temple, dispenses the mysteries of God, suffers shame before the world, and lovingly

fathers the church family. These are great responsibilities, and only the sufficiency of God enables anyone to fulfill them.

Read 1 Cor. 4:1-7. Pray and answer the following questions:

1 Corinthians has been called “the problem letter” because in it Paul deals squarely with one problem after another. But though the apostle’s words are strong, he writes as a father to his dear children. This chapter shows us how such a relationship calls for tough love, encouragement, warning, teaching, and even discipline.

1. In verse 1 how does Paul describe the apostle’s role in the church?
2. What does this passage teach about the life of an apostle?
3. Why should we judge “nothing before the appointed time”?
4. Note the apostle’s series of questions in verse 7. What abilities do Christians tend to boast about?

Read 1 Cor. 4:8-17. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul’s warning back in chapter three does not imply that human leaders are unimportant. He was very clear that people are only saved by Jesus Christ, and there is no other basis for salvation. Church leaders are to build on this foundation. From this thought, Paul now appealed to the Corinthians to act on what he had written. Paul’s key points in this section include: 1. The responsibilities of church leaders and the importance of their example to other believers. 2. The “secret things of God” granted to leaders are things that human wisdom cannot discover, but can only be revealed by God.

5. Paul saw evidence of spiritual pride in the early church. Why did that trouble him?

6. Our abilities and talents are gifts from God. How should knowing that keep us from thinking that we are better than others?

7. In 4:16, Paul says to “imitate me.” Is this statement arrogant? Why or why not?

8. Would it be arrogant for us today to say this? Why or why not? How should this statement affect our actions?

Read 1 Cor. 4:18-21. Pray and answer the following questions:

9. How does the example of Paul’s lifestyle in this chapter challenge your own way of living?

10. Paul gets firm with the arrogant members of the Corinthian church who are questioning his authority. What does he mean by saying, “the kingdom of God is not in word but in power”?

11. What is the Kingdom of God? (See Luke 4:18-19; 11:14-20; 17:20-21)

12. How is the kingdom a matter of power?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Five - 1 Corinthians 5-6
Dealing with Immorality

Discipline in the church is not like a policeman arresting a culprit; rather, it is like a father chastening his son. The first motive is to help the sinner, to show Christian love in seeking to bring him to repentance. For us to allow church members to live in open sin hurts them as well as Christ and the church. This particular member of the Corinthian church apparently was living with his stepmother in an immoral relationship. The woman was apparently not a part of the church family; otherwise Paul would have had the church deal with her as well. What a terrible thing for a Christian to live in sin with an unsaved person while the church does nothing about it!

The church cannot change the world if the church is like the world. Read these verses carefully and note that Paul makes a distinction between sin in the lives of Christians and sin in the life of unbelievers. Sin in the lives of believers is worse! Paul had commanded them in a previous letter not to fellowship with Christians and church members who had sinful reputations as fornicators, coveters, or idolaters. He did not tell them to stay away from all sinners of this kind; otherwise they would have to leave the world! We expect the unsaved man to live in sin, but even the world expects the Christian to be different. One reason the church today has so little influence in the world is because the world has too much influence in the church.

How should Christians settle personal differences? They must first have the right spiritual values. Too many Christians have warped values; the things of this world (especially money) are more important to them than the glory and praise of God. Matters between Christians should be settled quietly according to the principles of Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Cor. 6:5.

This closes the first section of the letter dealing with the sins in the church. Keep in mind that all of these problems—division, immorality, disputes, and defilement with the world—come from one common source: the believers in Corinth were spiritual babes and were not growing in the Lord. They had their eyes on men, not on Christ; they were feeding on milk, and not the meat of the Word; they were unwilling to admit sin and deal with it. Most serious church problems begin as personal problems and sins in the lives of church members.

Read 1 Cor. 5:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

The cosmopolitan city of Corinth was known for its immorality. At the temple of the Greek goddess Aphrodite, one thousand temple prostitutes made themselves available. The new Christians at Corinth were influenced by this pagan environment.

Today our culture is infiltrated with a Playboy philosophy that portrays evil as good and good as evil. At times this philosophy infects the church, as it did in Corinth. Paul shows that the best way to deal with the problem is head on. In the process, we will learn what it will really mean to love one another.

1. What are some of the strongest influences toward sexual immorality we see in our world today?
2. At what point would you stop associating with a person who continued to do wrong?
3. Why is purity such a vital issue for a Christian and for the church?

Read 1 Cor. 5:9-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul presents his readers with a principle of New Testament church discipline. When a congregation, or the church at large, overlooks immorality, the moral fiber of the church is weakened. None escape the contamination. The whole lump is affected. No church or fellowship can celebrate deliverance from sin while sheltering sin among its members. Evil can never be remedied by ignoring or hiding it. In fact, covering it up is the worst that can happen, for like yeast, evil does its terrible work from within. The same is true of believers who live in consistent disobedience to God's expressed will. Their behavior will badly infect the larger groups of which they are a part. It can even lead to a distorted perception of sin in which the group tolerates or even approves of disobedience among its own members yet condemns outsiders for the very same activity. Paul challenged the Corinthians to confront the subtle deterioration they had allowed within their congregation. However, once the perpetrator had repented, they were then to seek his restoration. Even though corrective activity among believers may be severe, confrontation should always be to promote healing rather than to

expel wrongdoers. **There are no throwaway people in the kingdom of God!**

4. Why is Paul so firm about staying away from immoral Christians, but not from immoral people of the world? What is the main difference?

5. In Paul's culture, what was the significance of eating with a person?

6. Why do we sometimes find it easier to judge sin in non-Christians than the weaknesses of someone in our own Christian fellowship? How can we deal constructively and in love with the latter?

Read 1 Cor. 6:1-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul now turns his attention to personal disputes among the church members. Members of the congregation were contending about personal rights or business matters. Unable to resolve these differences, they were appealing to courts of law. Paul provides instructions for keeping the resolution of disputes among believers rather than taking them before pagan judges, where the witness of the gospel could be discredited.

7. How do you think that Believers taking their grievances into civil court has affected their witness to unbelievers? Have you ever witnessed this personally? Explain.

8. If you have ever been wronged by another Believer, what was your attitude in seeking justice? In the light of Paul's instruction, how should a problem like this be handled?

9. What should you do if you feel you have been wronged by another Believer?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
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Lesson Six - 1 Corinthians 7:1-40
Building a Solid Marriage

In the United States today, about every other marriage ends in divorce. Unfortunately, each year there are nearly as many divorces as marriages.

Marriage problems are not just unique in today's society. They have occurred throughout history and were rampant in New Testament times in the Roman Empire. As with their many other problems, much of the marital difficulty that was present in the Corinthian church reflected the pagan and morally corrupt society in which they lived.

Corinth was a cesspool of immorality, one of the most immoral cities in the world of its day. All forms of sexual variation ran rampant and were openly displayed. Loose living was the practice of spouse and neighbor, friend and stranger. Practically everyone dressed to draw attention to their own selves. A decent person could not walk down the street without being eyed and thought about by the tempter or temptress. Sex was the goddess of Corinthian society. It saturated the government, commerce, recreation, and religion of Corinth.

Now, imagine the church sitting in the midst of such an immoral society. Imagine men and women desiring to live pure and godly lives for the Lord Jesus Christ. Imagine the temptations they would face, the pressure to look, touch, and experience; and it was out of such a life that so many had been saved. Think of the enticing temptations and pull that would confront them to return to the world.

As you read this chapter, keep in mind: (1) that Corinth was noted for its immorality and lack of standards for the home; (2) that Paul was dealing with local problems that we may or may not face in the same way today; (3) that it was a time of persecution for the Christians.

Read 1 Cor. 7:1-9. Pray and answer the following questions:

It is easy to envy what others have. The problem with this is it assumes that what you have is inferior to what you don't have. This is especially true with marriage and singleness. In reality, both have accompanying benefits and problems. Paul saw this in the Corinthian church, where there was tremendous pressure for sexual immorality and a sense of urgency about spreading the Gospel. Single people wanted to be married to avoid sin, and married people wanted more time to serve God. Instead of worrying about what you don't have, thank God for what you do have, and focus on serving God where you are.

1. Paul begins where he left off in chapter 6, with sexual immorality. Although Paul agrees that celibacy is good (vs. 1), why is it impractical for most people? (See vs. 2, 7, and 9)

2. What practical advice does Paul give to the unmarried and the married for avoiding sexual immorality?

3. Paul's focus is not on what a spouse should receive but what a spouse should give. (See vs. 3-5) Why is this principle important?

4. What is Paul's advice to those who are not married? What optional action does he suggest? (See vs. 8-9)

Read 1 Cor. 7:10-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

As the Gospel was preached in Corinth, sometimes both a husband and wife became Christians. Sometimes, only one spouse became a believer, leaving a mixed marriage. Still others who responded to the Gospel were unmarried or widows. The Corinthians wanted to know how becoming a Christian would affect these various relationships. Questions were raised such as: Should a Christian continue to share life's most intimate union with a pagan partner? Should an unmarried Christian marry? Should a widowed believer remarry? How do these situations apply to various religious settings? Paul answered

these important questions, often deferring to the record of Jesus. Where no recorded teaching of the Lord's was available, Paul gave his own opinion "*as one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy.*" (vs. 25)

5. How should a believer handle a marriage where his or her spouse is not a Christian?

6. Under what circumstances would Paul seemingly allow for divorce, and why? (See vs. 15-16)

7. What principles from the chapter so far, could help us minister to Christians who are considering separation or divorce?

8. In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Paul counsels those who think they are in the wrong situation in life. How does he explain and illustrate the "rule" that applies to such people?

Read 1 Cor. 7:25-40. Pray and answer the following questions:

After repeating his statement that singleness is preferable to marriage, Paul identified several tensions associated with the issue of marrying or remarrying. His conclusion was that "keeping Gods commands is what counts. Each one should remain in the situation which he was in when God called him." Paul continues on and provides instructions for the unmarried, married, and widows.

9. As Paul continues his teaching on marriage, what advice does he give to both unmarried and married?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Seven - 1 Corinthians 8, 10
“The Believers Freedom”

Chapters 8 and 10 deal with the church’s questions about meat offered to idols. This was a serious problem to them, especially since the church was composed of both Jews and Gentiles, and the Jewish believers were anxious to avoid any contact with heathen idolatry. The situation was this: most of the meat in Corinth was slaughtered at the temples. The priest kept part of the meat, but the rest was used for private feasts or sold in the markets. In fact, sacrificial meat was sold at a cheaper price, making it that much more attractive to these poor Christians. If a friend or neighbor invited a Christian to a feast, it was likely that the meat had been dedicated to an idol. Should the Christian participate in the feast? Would some demonic power be present in the meat and injure the believer? Would eating such meat defile the Christian?

We don’t face this same problem today, but the basic situation is still with us: does a Christian, because he is set free from the Law, have the right to live any way he pleases? There are many practices that we know from Scripture are definitely wrong, but there are also many borderline problems about which even dedicated Christians disagree. In these two chapters, Paul outlines the basic principles that should govern our lives when it comes to questionable things. Here in chapter 8, he uses the example of Christ and states that we must be controlled by love so as not to cause others to stumble.

Finally in chapter 10, Paul uses the example of Israel to warn believers about sin, particularly those connected with idolatry and immorality. Paul now points to Israel’s past history. This section deals with meat offered to idols. He probably had in mind the overconfident members of the church at Corinth, believers who thought they had such wisdom and knowledge that they did not have to beware of temptation or sin.

Read 1 Cor. 8:1-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

At the pagan temples in Corinth, meat that had first been offered to their idols was then sold at bargain prices. The Christians asked themselves and one another, “Is it wrong to eat this meat?” This is one issue we really don’t struggle with in our culture today, but you would be surprised how contemporary Paul’s response is to this issue. Every church has traditionalists and those that call themselves “free thinkers.” Paul now goes beyond the technicalities of the argument and pleads for a spirit of love.

1. The issue of eating food offered to pagan idols raised several questions for the Corinthians. What were some of those?
2. What light does Paul’s statement about idols throw on the question of eating meat previously sacrificed to idols?
3. How should we limit our freedom out of sensitivity to weaker Christians?
4. How can the example of a mature believer challenge an immature believer to grow? What responsibilities does each have toward the other?

Read 1 Cor. 10 1-15. Pray and answer the following questions:

Should Christians go to R-rated movies or for that matter any movies? Should Christians drink alcoholic beverages such as beer or wine? Should they wear expensive clothes, makeup and jewelry? Debates over such “questionable” practices are as old as the church.

The Corinthian’s were divided over such issues. They would not sit down to a meal if the meat had been purchased at a pagan meat market (and therefore offered to a “god”). Others were so “liberated” that they could participate in the Lord’s Supper and then commit acts of sexual immorality. In 1 Cor. 10 Paul finds a way of reaching both kinds of people. In this study we return to the idea that every behavior is not beneficial, and will seek to bring the

appropriate discipline into our lives. Paul in our text calls Believers to do everything for the glory of God.

5. What warning should we remember when tempted to participate in idolatry, sexual immorality, testing the Lord, or grumbling?
6. What difference should it make in your daily life that God will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear?
7. How can a person escape when faced with temptation?
8. What are today's idols?

Read 1 Cor. 10:16-33. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul was a driven man. He had a clear sense of what was important and moved ahead accordingly. Paul knew that God had called him to share the good news about Christ, so he ordered his life around that purpose. Paul was motivated by the needs of people, his responsibility to use his gifts, and the knowledge that God would evaluate his life. As a result, he was dedicated to telling others about Christ. God has a unique calling and purpose for each of us. To be effective, we need to have a sense of purpose and to know where to focus our energies.

9. Since eating at the Lord's Table is a participation in Christ, and since eating Jewish sacrifices is a participation in the Jewish altar, what is the obvious conclusion about eating at a dinner party in a pagan temple?
10. What qualifications go with the saying, "Everything is permissible"?
11. What is the guiding principle on the subject of our freedom?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Eight - 1 Corinthians 9
“Personal Priorities”

In the previous chapter, Paul pointed to the example of Christ and laid down the principle that we should do nothing that would offend another Christian, especially weaker Christians. In this chapter, he points to himself as an example of one who had privileges, but, for the Gospel's sake, did not use them. Keep in mind that he is still dealing with the problem of meat offered to idols. “Certainly we have privileges as Christians,” he states, “but we must never use our privileges in such a way that we will hinder the Gospel.” While in Corinth, Paul worked with his own hands and took no support from the church. He willingly laid aside even the privilege of marriage.

Every Christian needs to govern his or her life “with eternity's values in view.” For Paul to set aside his personal privileges meant discipline and hard work. His illustration from the Greek games was familiar to his readers, for the famous Isthmian Games (similar to the Olympics) were held near Corinth. The contestants had to discipline themselves and lay aside even good things in order to win a prize. If athletes can give up their rights in order to win a fading olive-leaf crown, certainly Christians can lay aside privileges to win an eternal crown! Only one athlete could win each event at the Isthmian Games, but all Christians are given the opportunity to win Christ's approval.

Paul's fear of becoming a castaway had nothing to do with his salvation. He is not talking about salvation but Christian service. We are not saved by running the race and winning; we run the race because we are saved (Phil. 3:12-16, Heb. 12:1-3). The word “castaway” means “disapproved, disqualified”; it is translated “not well pleased” in 10:5. Paul compares himself to the herald who called the athletes into the arena, yet who himself did not pass the tests to be a contestant! Paul was not afraid of losing his salvation but of losing his reward for faithful, sacrificial service.

Read 1 Cor. 9:1-6. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul begins this chapter by defending his apostleship. In our society, people are expected to stand up for their rights and watch out for themselves. God's way is just the opposite. Although we have rights, there are certain values and priorities that take precedence over our rights. These include not hurting a brother or sister in Christ, not causing others to stumble, and above all, doing what God has called us to do. We are to live with humility and love, placing God and others above ourselves.

1. What proofs did Paul use to show that he was a genuine apostle?
2. Why was seeing the risen Christ so important?
3. What rights did Paul waive to be an apostle?
4. What are some of your rights and freedoms as a Christian?
5. Under what circumstances are you free to use these freedoms, and under what circumstances should you not use them?

Read 1 Cor. 9:7-18. Pray and answer the following questions:

An exhausted mother pulls herself out of bed to care for her crying baby. A pastor interrupts his vacation to comfort a grieving family. A doctor leaves a lucrative practice to become a missionary. The apostle Paul knew well what it meant to give up his rights for the sake of ministering to others. We will now see how his example applies to the church today.

6. How can we show our love to unbelievers while refusing to participate in activity that is of the world?
7. Why is it helpful as believers to be extra sensitive in what we do and what we say in public?

8. What advantages and disadvantages can you see in regards to someone providing their own financial support while doing ministry?

9. What can you do to support those in ministry?

Read 1 Cor. 9:19-27. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul had a remarkable history of spreading the gospel message throughout many lands and in the midst of various cultures. His success was due partly to his flexibility and his willingness to take risks in moving beyond his own culture. For example he wrote, *“To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews.”* Paul had unusual skills in distinguishing between the nonessential and the essential as he proclaimed the gospel. He willingly adapted to the culture of his listeners, and he did so without compromising the gospel. Paul declared in verse 22, *“I have become all things to all men so that by all Possible means I might save some.”*

10. Why was Paul so successful in spreading the gospel in so many cultures?

11. What should you do to be assured of finishing your life well?

12. How can neglecting spiritual disciplines (such as prayer, Bible study, and worship) disqualify a Christian from having an influence on unbelievers?

Note these following Scriptures for additional insights: (Mark 16:15, Acts 4:20, 26:16, 2 Tim. 4:2, Isa. 6:8, 62:6, Jer. 20:9)

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you

are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts)
Write your insights down for review and group discussion

“The Great Christian Race of Faith”

Heb. 12:1-2

“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

This is one of the most stirring passages in Scripture, a passage that is written for the purpose of stirring us to run and to keep on running in the Christian race of life. What is the Christian race? It can be described in many ways.

- It is the race for heaven.
- It is the race for life, for both abundant and eternal life.
- It is the race to live with God forever.
- It is the race for perfection, a perfect life and world in which there is no suffering, corruption, evil, suffering, or death.
- It is the race for righteousness and justice—for a perfect world of godliness.
- It is the race for the Promised Land, the eternal land where we can live forever with God.
- It is the race to live in the new heavens and earth with God forever and ever.
- It is the race to know God, to commune and fellowship with God both now and forever.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Nine - 1 Corinthians 11:1-22
Priorities and the Church

Since Paul had some negative things to say to the church later in this section, he opened on a positive note by praising the church. Two matters in particular received praise: the church remembered Paul and appreciated him, and the church was faithful to keep the teaching that had been given them. The traditions of men should be avoided (Matt. 15:2-3; Col. 2:8), but the traditions that are given in the Word of God must be observed.

One of the biggest problems in the Corinthian church was disorder in the public meetings. Some of the women were assuming more freedom than they should have; there was disorder at the Lord’s Supper; and there was confusion in the use of the spiritual gifts. The church had been greatly enriched with spiritual gifts, but they were sadly lacking in spiritual graces.

Paul could have tried to solve these problems in the power of his flesh, but instead he patiently explained the spiritual principles that supported the teachings he had given the church. He founded his arguments on and in the Word of God.

Paul is often accused of being critical of women and placing them in an inferior position, but this is not true. He realized that God is a God of order, and that when anything is out of order, there is confusion and loss of power. Paul nowhere teaches that women are inferior to men in the eyes of God, but rather that God has laid down the principle of headship (not dictatorship) that makes Christ the Head of man and man the head of woman. At Corinth, this important principle was being violated. Women were competing with men for public leadership in the church. Furthermore, in the observance of the Lord’s Supper, women were not keeping their proper place and were coming with their heads uncovered; it is this matter that Paul now discusses.

When there are divisions and heresies in the church, even though they seem hidden, they will show up in the public meetings. The Lord’s Supper speaks of the unity of believers; divisions in the church would contradict this wonderful message.

Read 1 Cor. 10:31, 11:1. Pray and answer the following questions:

Pride was a real problem in the church of Corinth. Some of the Corinthians boasted of the eloquence or wisdom of their favorite leaders. Some were arrogant about their liberation from old-fashioned morality. Others were proud of their ability to remain celibate. Still others were puffed up about their knowledge and freedom to eat anything and attend any pagan function without defilement or temptation. In the middle of all this, they even wrote proudly to Paul that they were “*remembering him in everything and holding to the teaching just as he passed on to them.*”

Paul never lost a chance to praise his readers for anything he honestly could, especially when he had to go on with more criticism. This section of our study deals with the issue of disorder in public worship, and the root of that disorder being pride. As you read 1 Cor. 11:1-22 look for signs of pride in the Corinthian church, and ask God to reveal any areas of pride in you.

1. Whose example should all Christians follow? Why?
2. What is one way you can follow the example of someone who is following Christ?
3. What can you learn from a fellow Christian who is following Christ?
4. What two motivations should characterize everything you do in daily life?
5. How can you bring more of your activities into line with God’s purpose for your life?

Read 1 Cor. 11:2-16. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Corinthians brought their problems to worship with them. Some of these problems such as the matter of head covering, involved disagreement over how they were being perceived by outsiders. Other problems, such as their abuse of the Lord's Supper, resulted in broken relationships, pride, and self-centeredness. Paul wanted them to know that the attitudes they brought to worship and the way they acted during worship had great importance. In worship we come into God's presence and declare that we are His people, united together by faith. We cannot do that if we are divided, or fighting for the best seats. We must come into God's presence focused on Him and united as one in Him. We must worship with respect toward one another and toward God. Otherwise, we miss the purpose of coming together in the first place.

6. What seems to be Paul's major concern for the church in this section?

7. The Corinthians had to be careful about head coverings because of what these coverings meant to some people in their culture. What cultural practices should Christians be careful about today because of what they mean to others?

8. What matters most to God about worship in the church?

9. Read Galatians 3:28. What does this verse say about the equality of men and women under God?

Read 1 Cor. 11:17-22. Pray and answer the following questions:

The early church held a full meal along with the Lord's Supper. It was called the *agape* ("Love feast" in Jude 12). It was supposed to be like a potluck dinner, with each member bringing something to share. However, it seems that in Corinth, the rich were arriving early with the fine meats and wines they were use to, and going ahead without the rest. The poorer members (slaves, the "weak" we have already heard about in 1:26-28, 8:7-13) arrived later when they had gotten off work. They had to make do with

the little food they were able to bring. When pagan aristocrats gave feasts, it was customary for them to invite their entire households. The slaves and servants received smaller portions and cheaper wine than the higher class guests. Evidently, the rich members of the church considered this acceptable in the Christian love feast as well.

10. In New Testament times Communion was celebrated during a common meal or “love feast.” What abuses had crept into this celebration?

11. What examples of insensitivity and impoliteness do we find in the church today? How can we recognize these problems and correct them?

12. Think back over your own experience. What is the most meaningful celebration of the Lord’s Supper you have ever been part of. What made this particular time so special?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Ten - 1 Corinthians 11:23-34
The Lord’s Supper

Evangelical churches recognize two ordinances established by Jesus Christ for His people to observe: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. Jesus Christ took the cup and the bread, the ingredients of a common meal in that day, and transformed them into a meaningful spiritual experience for believers. However, the value of the experience depends on the condition of the hearts of those who participate; and this was the problem at Corinth.

It is a serious thing to come to Communion with an unprepared heart. It is also a serious thing to receive the Supper in a careless manner. Because the Corinthians had been sinning in their observing of the Lord’s Supper, God had disciplined them. *“For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep [have died]”* 1 Cor. 11:30.

The Lord’s Supper gives us an opportunity for spiritual growth and blessing if we approach it in the right attitude. What, then, must we do if the Supper is to bring blessing and not chastening?

We should look back (23-26).

The broken bread reminds us of Christ’s body, given for us; and the cup reminds us of His shed blood. It is a remarkable thing that Jesus wants His followers to remember His death. Most of us try to forget how those we love died, but Jesus wants us to remember how He died. Why? Because everything we have as Christians centers on that death.

We should look ahead (26).

We observe the Supper *“till He comes.”* The return of Jesus Christ is the blessed hope of the church and the individual Christian. Jesus not only died for us, but He arose again and ascended to heaven; and one day He shall return to take us to heaven. Today, we are not all that we should be; but when we see Him, *“we shall be like Him”* 1 John 3:2.

We should look within (27-28, 31-32).

Paul did not say that we had to be worthy to partake of the Supper, but only that we should partake in a worthy manner.

If we are to participate in a worthy manner, we must examine our own hearts, judge our sins, and confess them to the Lord. To come to the table with unconfessed sin in our lives is to be guilty of Christ's body and blood, for it was sin that nailed Him to the cross. If we will not judge our own sins, then God will judge us and chasten us until we do confess and forsake our sins.

We should look around (33-34).

The Lord's Supper is a family meal, and the Lord of the family desires that His children love one another and care for one another. It is impossible for a true Christian to get closer to his Lord while at the same time he is separated from his fellow believers. How can we remember the Lord's death and not love one another? "*Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another*" 1 John 4:11.

Read 1 Cor. 11:23-26. Pray and answer the following questions:

1. Describe in your own words the meaning of the bread and the cup in verses 23-25.
2. Why should Christians celebrate Communion?
3. Why is the Lord's Supper an important part of our responsibility to spread the gospel message to the lost?
4. Why is the Lord's Supper important in your life?

Read 1 Cor. 11:27-29. Pray and answer the following questions:

5. In what ways were the Corinthians corrupting the celebration of the Lord's Supper?

6. What instructions did Paul give the Corinthian Christians for preparing to participate in the Lord's Supper?

7. What instructions would you give a child before they took communion for the first time?

8. Paul speaks of communion as being a remembrance. What sort of things should Christians remember when partaking of the Lord's Supper?

Read 1 Cor. 11:30-34. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Lord's Supper should be a celebration of unity; instead, divisions among the church members were magnified. Because they were participating in Christ's body and blood, to participate in an unworthy manner profaned the Supper and invited judgment. Paul exhorted the Corinthians to examine their motives, methods, and manners when they gathered to worship the Lord at His Supper.

9. What are the consequences of eating the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner?

10. What did the illness and death suffered by the Corinthians reveal about God's attitude toward Communion?

11. Why does the Lord discipline His children?

12. Why should we be grateful for the Lord's discipline?

13. When and how have you seen the Lord's discipline benefit you?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Eleven - 1 Corinthians 12
“How the Body Works”
Part One

This chapter opens the discussion on spiritual gifts, and in this day when churches and denominations are emphasizing the work of the Spirit, we need to know what God has to say on this subject. However, we must study this chapter in the light of the problems in the Corinthian church. There were divisions, immorality, stunted spiritual growth, and confusion in the assembly. Here in chapter 12, Paul explains the work of the Holy Spirit in the body of Christ as He gives spiritual gifts to the members.

Division was a major problem in the church at Corinth. Each group followed its leader, exercised its gifts selfishly, and cared little for the health or ministry of the whole body. The Christians at Corinth had received an abundance of spiritual gifts, but they were lacking in spiritual grace. Keep in mind that Christian gifts are not necessarily a mark of Christian character or spiritual maturity. These Corinthian believers were carnal, yet they exercised wonderful and miraculous gifts.

Paul now lists the spiritual gifts and shows that they are given for the benefit of the whole church, and not for the private enjoyment of the individual Christians. We must distinguish between: 1. The spiritual Gift, which is the Spirit Himself, received at salvation; 2. Spiritual gifts, which are ministries to the church through the Spirit, and not just natural abilities or talents; 3. Spiritual offices, which are positions of trust in the local church, as discussed in 1 Peter 4:10; 4. Spiritual graces, which are the fruit of the Spirit in Christian conduct. Paul makes it very clear that each Christian has at least one spiritual gift. Not all Christians have spiritual offices, but all Christians should manifest the graces of the Spirit, which are far more important than miraculous gifts.

It is important that we realize our relationship to one another in the church. Yes, there are many denominations today, but all true Christians, indwelt by the Spirit, are members of His body. There can be unity even where there is not uniformity. Christ never prayed for uniformity in His church, but for the same spiritual unity that exists between Him and His Father (John 17:20-23). We should likewise pray for spiritual unity and do all we can to guard it and extend it.

Read 1 Cor. 12:1-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were about to rip the church apart. One of the most serious problems was the issue of spiritual gifts. No gift, or ability from God should ever be abused or cause for division. The gifts of God's Spirit were being so abused by the Corinthian believers that the church was about to be torn apart.

Charismatic renewal has brought the subject of spiritual gifts to center stage. There are many conflicting opinions about the role of gifts in the church today. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts? How should they be used in public worship? What should be done about certain controversial gifts that seem divisive? In this chapter Paul deals with similar situations in the church at Corinth and offers answers to these questions.

1. Christians must be careful not to follow false teachers. How can a person avoid being deceived by false teachers?
2. What particular problem in the Corinthian church may have led Paul to offer the "test" in verse 3?
3. What is the purpose of spiritual gifts (12:7)? How have you been able to use your gifts for this purpose?
4. In verses 8-10, what spiritual gifts did Paul describe?
5. What more do we learn about the nature and purpose of spiritual gifts in verses 8-11?
6. If you do not know what your spiritual gift is, what can you do to find out?

Read 1 Cor. 12:12-18. Pray and answer the following questions:

Because we're all part of the body, everyone has a function and a role to play. Because God has placed us where it pleases Him, it's not up to us to try to change our position, but to rest in the place God has us. If, growing tired of being at the bottom of the body, in a dark, unseen, smelly shoe, my big toe climbed up and planted himself on my kneecap, not only would I look weird, but it would definitely affect the way I walk. So too, although our fleshly tendency is to want to be seen, Paul tells us the Lord has planted each of us where we need to be and where we'll function most effectively.

7. In what way are Christians like a human body?

8. What lessons are there in seeing the church as a human body?

9. What part do you serve in the body of Christ?

Read 1 Cor. 12:19-31. Pray and answer the following questions:

This passage gives us one of the most meaningful descriptions of the church in all of Scripture. It is also one of the most meaningful messages on the church that can be preached. The purpose of the passage is to stress the unity of the church. The church is said to be a body, a body of many parts or members. It is compared to the human body throughout the whole passage.

10. Why shouldn't all Christians perform the same function?

11. Why might certain Believers feel inferior to others in the body? How does Paul encourage these people?

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Twelve - 1 Corinthians 13
“How the Body Works”
Part Two

It is tragic when the world takes a chapter like this and divorces it from its true Christian meaning. The unsaved man can no more experience this kind of love than can a marble statue! It takes the indwelling of the Spirit of God in the life, and the empowering of that Spirit, for anyone to display this kind of character in daily life.

Keep in mind that Paul is still dealing with the question of spiritual gifts. Here he is emphasizing the fact that gifts without graces are nothing. The fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23) is more important in the Christian life than the miraculous gifts of the Spirit. Whenever the church strives for miraculous experiences rather than Christian holiness and character, there will be division, confusion, and carnality.

The word “charity” means “love” in action. It is not simply an emotion; it is the heart reaching out to others. “Charity” today makes us think of giving away old clothes or making gifts to “charitable institutions.” These activities can be Christian love in action, but Paul is demanding much more. The word he uses for love is *agape*, which is love that sacrifices for the good of others.

The Corinthians were spiritual babies, and, like babies, they were striving for the temporary and neglecting the permanent. They wanted passing spiritual gifts instead of lasting Christian character.

There will always be room for growth in the church, and while we are growing, we will know and see imperfectly. Corinth was famous for its metal mirrors, so Paul used that as an illustration. One saw only a dim reflection of the real person in those mirrors, just as we see only a dim reflection of God today.

The church grows closer to perfection through love: believers loving Christ and one another; holding the truth in love; practicing the truth because they love Him. “*Building the body up in love*” is the way Eph. 4:16 puts it, and this is a ministry all of us share. Faith, hope, love these abide forever; and love is the greatest, for “God is love” (1 John 4:8, 16).

Read 1 Cor. 13:1-8. Pray and answer the following questions:

First Corinthians 13 has been called the Love Chapter because of its powerful description of love. However, in reading this passage, keep in mind that it's easy to talk about love; it's much harder to do the tough work of living it. Love as God intended it is more than just passion, romantic feelings, or sentimental expressions. It involves commitment, sacrifice, and service, the kind of things that benefit both the giver and the receiver.

1. Why do you think Paul wrote about love to the Corinthians?

2. What qualities does love have? (13:4-8)

3. In what practical ways can you show a love that never fails?

4. It is widely known that the special Christian word for love, (agape), means the kind of unconditional, self-sacrificing love shown to us by Jesus. Besides telling us what love is and how gifts should be expressed in love, this passage gives us a secondary portrait of Jesus as the ultimate lover. Read verses 4-7, replacing the word love with **Jesus**. Note some insights of Jesus' love and care for us that you observe from this exercise.

“What is Love”

The Greek word agape was not in common use before Christians chose it to express the characteristically Christian virtue. More common were words that mean fondness among friends and relatives (**Philia**), affection between parent and child (**Storge**), or passion between lovers (**Eros**). But (**Agape**) was the word Greek speaking Jews used to express the love between God and His covenant people. In secular Greek it represented a love in which the mind analyzes and the will chooses the object to be loved. Thus it is a term wholly given to emotions, intellect, and will. Agape is a deliberate, free act

that is the decision of the subject rather than the result of overpowering emotion. A what can I do for you not expecting anything back kind of love. Its greatest expression is the Father's love in giving up His Son for us, and the Son's love in giving up His own divine privileges, His purity from human sin, and His life. (See John 15:12-13, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Philippians 2:5-8, 1 John 3:16, 4:10)

Read 1 Cor. 13:9-13. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul discussed the necessity of love in the exercise of spiritual gifts. Christians may be talented, devoted, generous in their giving, or gifted with mountain moving faith; but those are of no value if love is not present. Without love, none of the gifts can honor God and build up the church.

5. When will we no longer need spiritual gifts?

6. How should we use them in the meantime?

7. In verses 11-12 how does Paul illustrate the difference between our present and future circumstances?

8. How does it encourage you that God fully knows you and your present situation?

Read 1 Cor. 13:1-13 again. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul stated that "love never fails." As he contrasted genuine love with spiritual gifts, he showed love is greater than the gifts because it is eternal, where as the gifts are temporal. Paul closed this chapter with a brief discussion of the three great realities that will endure forever: faith, hope, and love.

9. How would you summarize the description of love in this chapter?

10. What makes it difficult for us to love this way?

11. Many people talk about love, but there seems to be few loving people. What often takes the place of love in our society?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

Summing Up this Week's Study:

The Bible's simplest description of God, and therefore God's own description of Himself is "*God is Love*" 1 John 4:16. Love is the most blessed manifestation of the character of God. John continues, "*and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him*". Therefore the simplest and most profound description of Christian character also is love.

It is tragic that in many churches, as in the one in ancient Corinth, the love that is basic to Christian character does not characterize the membership or the ministry.

John MacArthur

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Thirteen - 1 Corinthians 14
“Using Spiritual Gifts”

Surely this subject of tongues is one of the most, if not the most, controversial issues in the church today. Without a doubt it is one of the major eyebrow-raisers of modern times. Many are asking questions about it, and there is much that is written in this area. You cannot meet with any Christian group and start discussing any popular Christian leader without the question, either voiced or unvoiced, arises, "Does he, or doesn't he?"

1 Cor. 12-14 deals with the spiritual gifts which God gives to His followers for the work of the ministry. Believers are gifted to minister and to help people in their desperate need for life, both life abundant and life eternal. However, when men focus upon their gifts and abilities, the problems of pride, arrogance, superiority, and super-spirituality always arise. There are always some people who feel that their gifts and abilities make them better and more favored and privileged than others. This is exactly what happened to the Corinthian church, and it is what has happened to multitudes of believers since that day. The gift of tongues is especially subject to pride and super-spirituality because it involves that of a heavenly utterance as opposed to ordinary human language.

The point is this: the gift of tongues (and all other gifts) is just one of many gifts. Each gift has its place in fulfilling the mission of the Lord and each must be used effectively in reaching the world for Christ and in ministering to the needs of His people. Therefore, the apostle gives us some very helpful insights on these gifts and how they contrast one with another.

Although the gifts of prophecy and speaking in tongues were valid, they were not of equal importance in the ministries of the church. Whereas those speaking in tongues regarded their gift more highly than the other gifts, Paul taught that prophecy is more important. He provided three reasons to support his argument: 1. Prophecy edifies the whole church. 2. Prophecy is understood by all. 3. Prophecy inspires conviction, confession, and worship.

We must keep in mind that spiritual gifts have as their purpose the building up of the church of Jesus Christ (12:7) and not the personal enjoyment of the

believer. Gifts are for employment, not enjoyment. In this chapter, Paul contrasts tongues and prophecy.

Read 1 Cor. 14:1-5. Pray and answer the following questions:

What comes to mind when someone mentions prophecy? Prediction of the time and place of the next large earthquake, a stock market crash, or the final battle called Armageddon. Is that the kind of prophecy mentioned in the Bible? What mental image is conjured up when you hear about speaking in tongues? Loud, out of control speech that seems to be irrational? Misuse of these two spiritual gifts at Corinth were causing problems to which Paul now turns his attention. Given current misconceptions, his teaching may contain a few surprises about the nature and purpose of these gifts in the church today.

Key Definitions

Prophecy: “Speaking forth, or proclaiming publicly” Predictions about the future and the end-time; special messages from God, often uttered through human spokesmen, which indicate the divine will for mankind on earth and in heaven. The speaking forth of the mind and counsel of God. Speaking Gods truth by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

Tongues: “The Spirit-given ability to speak in languages not known to the speaker or in an ecstatic language that could not normally be understood by the speaker or the hearers.”

1. Evidently, the Corinthians placed great value on the gift of tongues. What do verses 1-5 reveal about why Paul prefers prophecy to (uninterpreted) tongues?

2. What is the purpose of prophecy?

3. What is the purpose of tongues?

Read 1 Cor. 14:6-19. Pray and answer the following questions:

All of our spiritual gifts, talents, and abilities are given to us by God for the benefit of others. Our spiritual gifts are specifically for building up our brothers and sisters in Christ. God expects us to use them for that purpose. Because the believers in Corinth were spiritually immature, they were using their gifts to help themselves rather than others. As a result, when they gathered together for worship, they were divided rather than unified. God wants us to use our spiritual gifts to help and build his people. Instead of expecting people to give to you, or focusing your gifts on yourself, we are to use God's gifts to benefit others.

4. In verse 6 what gifts are mentioned and how does each one build up the body of Christ?

5. In verses 7-12, how do Paul's illustrations support his argument against the public use of tongues without interpretation?

6. In verses 13-19 what does Paul recommend for those who speak in tongues?

Read 1 Cor. 14:20-40. Pray and answer the following questions:

Words are cheap today. They can be digitized and processed. With one depressed button on the computer we can eliminate words forever. However, the Bible says words have great power because they are an extension of our personality. God's Word, especially, always accomplishes His purpose because it is spoken with His personal power.

In this section Paul focuses on the exciting potential of God-inspired speech in the Christian community. Having established in chapter 13 that love should motivate and shape all the gifts, Paul now turns to a concrete example of love through inspired speech. But like every exciting gift, there are abuses to be understood and regulated, as we shall see.

7. Paul promoted orderly worship, and his instructions in this section were designed to correct the abuses the Corinthians were allowing. He centered his teaching on three basic principles: 1. All must be done for the purpose of strengthening of the church. 2. The God they worship is not a God of disorder, but of peace. 3. Everything must be done in an orderly way.

Describe these principles in your own words, and note how well you believe these are applied in our churches today?

8. What were Paul's instructions regarding the role of women in the church? How are we to apply these to today's church?

9. Some worship services are so "orderly" that they put us to sleep. Others are so "free" that they seem out of control. How does this chapter promote both freedom and order in worship?

10. What are some ways you can make sure that worship in our church is "*done decently and in order*"?

Summing up this Weeks Study

According to those who study such things, the vast majority of people who own running shoes don't run. That's a lot like us. We say we believe that praying in the Spirit is meant for today. We believe in the validity of prophecy. We know the Holy Spirit wants to work wonders in and through us congregationally. We've got the running shoes. Let's step out in the Spirit and run. Like Paul, let's covet the gifts and then use them in a way that is harmonious, beautiful, and acceptable. The Holy Spirit is pictured as a dove for a reason. He's not portrayed as a hawk coming in for the kill, or a vulture circling over the congregation to pick people to death with prophecies and words of knowledge. The dove is a bird of beauty, gentleness, and peace. And when the gifts and manifestations of the Spirit it represents are operating properly, the effect will likewise be beautiful, gentle, and peaceful.

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Fourteen - 1 Corinthians 15
“Our Hope is Christ”

The Greeks did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. So carnal was the city of Corinth that the term “Corinthian” was synonymous with “party animal.” This was due in part to the fact that Corinth was the center of the Epicurean philosophy, which said that, because there is no eternity, man should eat, drink, and be merry on earth. Part of this Epicurean mentality had filtered into the church. When Paul preached the resurrection at Athens, some of the people actually laughed at this doctrine. Their philosophers taught that the body was the prison of the soul, and the sooner the soul was set free in death, the better off a person would be. The Greeks looked upon the human body as a source of weakness and wickedness, and they could not conceive of a body that continued to exist after death. It was this kind of thinking that Paul had to deal with when he wrote this chapter.

The Corinthians did not doubt the resurrection of Christ, so Paul began there in his argument for the resurrection of the human body. The resurrection of Christ is an historic fact proved by the message of the Gospel, the testimony of witnesses and the conversion of Paul himself. If there were no resurrection, there would be no salvation, for a dead Savior can save nobody!

Paul now deals with the Bible doctrine of “the two Adams.” (He uses this argument also in Rom. 5.) It was through the first Adam’s sin that death came into the world; but through the Last Adam (Christ), death has been conquered. Christ is the first fruits; that is, He is the first of a great harvest that is yet to come. Christ is God’s “Last Adam,” and He will reverse the wrong that the first Adam brought into this world.

Next Paul deals with the second coming of Christ and what it means to both the living and the dead. “We shall not all die (sleep),” because some saints will be alive when Christ returns; “*but we shall all be changed.*” This mystery concerns the rapture of the church. When Christ returns, the dead shall be raised first, the living caught up with them, and all will be changed to be like Christ. And all of this will happen in the twinkling of an eye.

Several times in this chapter Paul uses the phrase “*in vain.*” It means “empty, without content.” Because the tomb is empty, our faith is not empty! But if the tomb is not empty, then everything else is in vain: our preaching is empty, our faith is empty, and our works are empty. Thanks be to God for the victory we have in the resurrection of Christ.

Read 1 Cor. 15:1-19. Pray and answer the following questions:

What happens after death? Do we live on as disembodied souls, as the Greeks taught? Do we go through countless cycles of reincarnation, as the Hindus believe? Do both body and soul cease to exist, as naturalism maintains? This chapter brings us face to face with the ultimate reality, the final enemy each of us will face. What does the Christian faith have to say about death? How does the resurrection of Jesus Christ relate to our hope? What meaning does it have for our present hope? Paul devotes the longest chapter of his letter to these questions about the future.

1. How would you describe, in your own words, the importance of the gospel to your life?

2. How does Christ appear or make Himself known to us today?

3. Why is “fallen asleep” (vs. 18-19), a good way to describe the dead in Christ?

Read 1 Cor. 15:20-34. Pray and answer the following questions:

Nothing is more important to the Christian faith than the truth of the resurrection of Jesus. Because Jesus was actually raised physically, all believers will be raised to eternal glory as well. Christ’s resurrection puts everything in a new perspective. Life and death, work and recreation, values and priorities, all look different when viewed in light of the resurrection that is to come. Because Christ lives, you can live now with confidence in God and hope for the future.

4. What hope does Jesus’ resurrection provide for your daily life?

5. In verses 23-28, what does Paul tell us about the future? What meaning and purpose should this overview of history give to our own lives today?

6. When have you ever associated with bad company that could have corrupted you? Explain?

7. Why is it important to avoid people who want to distract you from your commitment to the gospel?

Read 1 Cor. 15:35-58. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul has given a strong argument that Christians will be raised from the dead when Christ returns: We know bodily resurrection is possible because Jesus was raised. Hundreds of people saw Him. And if He wasn't raised, than He wasn't Christ, and our sins are not forgiven. Furthermore, if we will not be raised, than there is no point in risking our lives and limiting our pleasures for the gospel; we might as well indulge ourselves like pagans.

Okay the Corinthians might answer. We see that the whole gospel, the Christian hope of salvation, eternal life, and the Kingdom of God, rests on the resurrection of Christ and His people. But that doesn't get us past the problem that physical matter just seems incompatible with eternal life. How can bodies that age and decay exist in the Kingdom of God? This next section addresses these questions.

8. What are the differences between our present bodies and those we shall have in the resurrection?

9. In verses 50-58, what message is there for those who grow weary of this physical world and long to escape to heaven?

10. What encouragement can we take from the fact that the work we do for the Lord is not in vain?

Journaling

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. (If you are married, pray together with your spouse, and share your thoughts) Write your insights down for review and group discussion.

Summing up this Week's Study

The coming resurrection is the hope and motivation of the church and of all believers. What ever happens to our present bodies, whether they are healthy or unhealthy, beautiful or plain, short-lived or long-lived, or whether they are indulged or tortured they are not our permanent bodies, and we should not hold them too dearly. Our blessed hope and assurance is that these created natural bodies one day will be recreated as spiritual bodies. Although we have only a glimpse of what those new bodies will be like, it should be enough to know that *“we shall be like Him.”* *John MacArthur*

The Book of 1 Corinthians
“Christian Conduct”
Lesson Fifteen - 1 Corinthians 16
“Giving and Living”

It is to the credit of the believers at Corinth that, when they wrote their questions to Paul, they asked him about the collection he was taking for the poor saints in Jerusalem. Paul answered their question and then closed the letter by informing the church of his personal travel plans and also the plans for his associates in the ministry.

How to Take the Offering (16:1-4)

A local church gets its financial instructions from the Word and not from the world. How sad it is when churches reject the biblical method of financing and adopt worldly methods.

Giving was regular

Paul encouraged them to bring the money weekly, if possible. Some people are paid weekly, others by the month. Paul is saying, “Don’t let your tithes and offerings accumulate at home.” Regular giving makes for spiritual growth.

Giving was for everyone

Giving was not just for the rich, but rich and poor alike. In fact, in 2 Cor. 8-9, Paul tells us that the poor saints in Macedonia gave liberally out of their poverty. Here is the biblical model for giving. The church member who is able to give but does not give faithfully is a thief: he is robbing God (Mal. 3:7-12); he is robbing other Christians, for they pay the bills while he gets the blessings; moreover, he is robbing himself of blessings.

Giving was proportionate

The tithe was the minimum standard for giving in the Old Testament, and there is no reason why this standard should not apply to the New Testament Christian as well. Tithing was practiced long before the Law was given (Gen. 14:20; 28:22), so it cannot be argued that tithing is a legalistic practice.

Giving was carefully handled

Paul was always careful about the handling of money. He wanted church-appointed representatives to assist him, lest anyone accuse him of stealing money for himself. It is right for a church to have a financial system that includes receipts and records.

How to Help the Servants (16:5-12)

Paul outlined his future plans, trusting that the church would want to share in his ministry. He was then at Ephesus where there were both battles and blessings; Paul, in faith, looks at the blessings, not the battles!

How to Strengthen the Church (16:13-24)

Paul's commands in vs. 13 sound like military orders, suggesting that the church is an army and ought to act like one. "Act like adults!" he exhorts them, and how we need that exhortation today. Too often the church does not have the discipline and maturity of an army. The Corinthians were acting like babies; it was time they grew up and acted like adults.

We must love and appreciate faithful laborers in the church. Paul mentions several workers in vs. 15-19, including his beloved Priscilla and Aquila. Paul could never have done his work were it not for the assistance of many Christians, and he was glad to acknowledge his thanks to them.

Read 1 Cor. 16:1-4. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul seldom ministered alone. In all of his travels and missionary ventures, he was in the company of trusted and valued friends. Some of his lowest times came when he was isolated. In spite of Paul's great gifts and calling, he recognized his need for fellowship and support. He depended on others for help and encouragement. These supportive people were his partners in ministry. God calls all of us as Christians to be involved in ministry. We are partners together with Christ and other believers. How incredible to realize that God calls us to partnership in the building of His Kingdom.

1. What attitudes, actions and characteristics of the early Christians do you think you should imitate?

2. What principles should govern our giving to the work of the Lord?

3. How should we decide how much to set aside for the church?
4. How do you think you can be a better steward of the resources God has given you?

Read 1 Cor. 16:5-11. Pray and answer the following questions:

Paul stated his intention to visit Corinth by taking a route through Macedonia rather than sailing directly from Ephesus. His desire was to spend some extended time with the Corinthians, perhaps even a winter. Paul also mentioned that he would stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, the Jewish feast that followed seven weeks after Passover. By doing this, he was hoping to take advantage of the opportunity he had to preach the gospel at Ephesus.

5. What do you learn about Paul's heart and his ministry?
6. What words did Paul share about Timothy's visit?
7. What did Paul's words reveal about Timothy?

Read 1 Cor. 16:12-24. Pray and answer the following questions:

In his final appeal and farewell, Paul mentioned Timothy's approaching visit to Corinth. He concluded by offering several encouragements and gave recognition to many others for their faithful service in the work of the gospel.

8. How can we actually do everything in love?
9. How did Paul end this difficult letter to the Church at Corinth? What does this teach us about confronting others with problems?

