

Reading Through the New Testament

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians (part 1)



Basic Outline of the Book:

I. Divisions in the Church (1-4)

II. Sexual Immorality (5-7)

III. Food Sacrificed to Idols (8-10)

IV. Worship (11-14)

V. The Resurrection (15)

VI. Final Greeting (16)

Background to the Letter

- Corinth was a very large and flourishing city (100,000 inhabitants), located along the isthmus between the Aegean and Ionian Seas
- Many cultures and religions mingled, the temple of Aphrodite was a major place of worship
- Pagan worship was ingrained into everyday life (civic festivals, social clubs, government affairs...)
- It was the “sin city” of the ancient world, so well known for its vices the phrase “act like a Corinthian” meant to engage in blatantly immoral behavior
- Believers faced the temptation to return to their former way of life, conforming to the culture, rather than living holy lives pleasing to the Lord
- Paul had previously written the church (1 Cor. 5:9)
- This letter was written during the 3rd missionary journey from Ephesus about 55 AD (1 Cor. 16:8)
- There were many problems in the church at Corinth; ultimately they were still living carnal and worldly lives, thus Paul shows them how the gospel should influence every area of the believer’s life

I. A Church Divided: (1:10-17)

1. Believers were having a difficult time getting along in the church at Corinth. The apostle rebuked them for this, and urged them in 1:10 to “...a_____ with one another...” and be “...u_____ in mind and thought...” Why is this such a big deal? How effective will a congregation be in carrying out its ministries if the members are constantly bickering about silly things?

2. Paul appeals to them as “b_____,” reminding them that they were part of the family of God. Despite our many differences, what is it that brings Christians together and makes us one?

3. What was one source of conflict within the church, according to verses 12-13? Why was this so silly?

4. Who is the head of the Church? Who is our highest authority? What happens in churches today when the members are more loyal to certain leaders or teachers than they are to the Lord?

5. Paul brings up the issue of baptism, in verses 13-17. Has this ever been a source of contention among believers today? How much importance does Paul place on the ritual of water baptism in this passage? If more churches had Paul’s attitude, do you think there would be so much conflict?

6. 1 Corinthians 12:13 helps us to understand why *water* baptism was not a major concern for Paul. Who baptizes ALL believers? Into what (or whom) have we been baptized? When does this baptism occur? If every believer shares this in common, is there any reason for Christians to spend time arguing about the proper modes and methods of baptism?

II. The Lord’s Supper: (11:17-35)

7. Their lack of unity was also apparent when they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. Apparently, the early church often shared a meal when they observed communion. This is meant to be a sacred expression of our relationship with Christ, and with one another. How had they made a mockery of it?

8. How serious was this problem? How serious was it in the eyes of God (according to v.30-31)?

9. One of the wonderful things about the Church is that whoever we are, from whatever walk of life, we stand before God on equal footing as one. If that is the case, how should those who are wealthy regard the poor? How can they express mutual care and affection?

10. What can churches today do to emphasize unity when we celebrate the Lord’s Supper, or in our potluck meals?