






























27 studies on 1 Corinthians

The letter of 1 Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul to a church that had drunk very deeply from its own culture's view of leadership, wisdom and power. Despite being a letter from another time and place, the problems experienced then bear an eerie resemblance to many of the problems that confront us today. However, while the problems are all too familiar, Paul's solutions are surprisingly fresh, radical and - in stark contrast to many of our own DIY approaches to problem solving - profoundly theological.

From the Bible Brief on 1 Corinthians 1-4 from The Briefing magazine # 305 by Christ Church, Gladesville.

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources:

- Bible studies: Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) 26 studies, St Barnabas, Broadway 2015
1 Corinthians, The Scandal of the church 3 studies, Roseville Anglican, 2011
Where is the Wise Man? Studies in 1 Corinthians 1-7 by Ashleigh Hooker 2004, 8 studies
Body Building Studies in 1 Corinthians 8-16 by Ashleigh Hooker 2004, 10 studies
Church Matters 1 Corinthians 1-7 by Bryson Smith, 8 studies, Pathway series, Matthias Media
 Bible Briefs on 1 Corinthians from The Briefing magazine # 305 and # 312 by Christ Church, Gladesville and # 348 by Neil Atwood
 2 articles by John Woodhouse: "What is this meal?" The Briefing #123 23/10/1993 and "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" The Briefing #124 4/11/1993, some letters and John's reply in "Interchange About that meal" The Briefing #128 7/2/1994 and a personal email from Kim Hawtrey dated 5/8/2006.
Christian Freedom and True Spirituality Bible studies on 1 Corinthians 8-14 10 studies by Stephen Gibson 1996
1 Corinthians 8-15 The Handbook for a Healthy Church 8 studies by Naremburn Cammeray Anglican Church
True Spirituality 8 studies on 1 Corinthians by Sam Morton, St Luke's Anglican Church, Miranda 2019
1 Corinthians 15 4 studies by Brett Morgan 1992
1 Corinthians Problems and Solutions in a Growing Church 16 studies by Charles & Anne Hummel, Fisherman series

The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) Interactive Bible Studies, Matthias Media by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne
Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997
Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies on Philippians by Tim Thorburn
Homeward Bound (1 Peter) 10 Interactive Bible Studies by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne

 Commentaries: Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians and Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright
The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior and The Message of John by Bruce Milne, both from the Bible Speaks Today series
New Illustrated Bible Dictionary

The Wrong Messiah by Nick Page
The Evangelical Universalist by Gregory MacDonald
The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass Aged 37 ¾ by Adrian Plass
One Forever the Transforming Power of being in Christ and Union with Christ by Rory Shiner
The New Testament a translation by David Bentley Hart

 Quotes from sermons by John Dickson from the 2012 series on Isaiah and from a sermon on 1 Cor ch 1 1/5/2011 at St Andrews, Roseville, and a YouTube video called "The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission – Introduction" by John Dickson.
 Notes from a sermon by Stephen Gibson at St Faiths, Narrabeen 8/6/1997
 Notes from 7 talks from 24/4 to 11/12/2015 on Hebrews and from 7 talks on "Hope and Hell" from 2/3 to 7/9/2018 by Tony Golsby-Smith from www.gospelconversations.com.au
 Notes from the eulogy by Tony Golsby-Smith at his mother's funeral
 Quotes from a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013
 Songs by Bob Dylan and Bobby McFerrin
 Various websites including www.aboutbibleprophecy.com

Ed O'Connor, 2019

Study 1, Acts 18:1-18, Welcome to Corinth



Getting started

1. Consider the following scenario: A middle aged couple have been coming to your church regularly over the past couple of months. They seek you out for a chat every Sunday but one day they don't show up. They don't come on the next 2 Sundays either. The minister is beginning to get worried and before he asks you if you know what has happened he asks you if you know them.

In this context (a) what does it mean to know someone?



(b) What is the difference between knowing someone and knowing someone well?

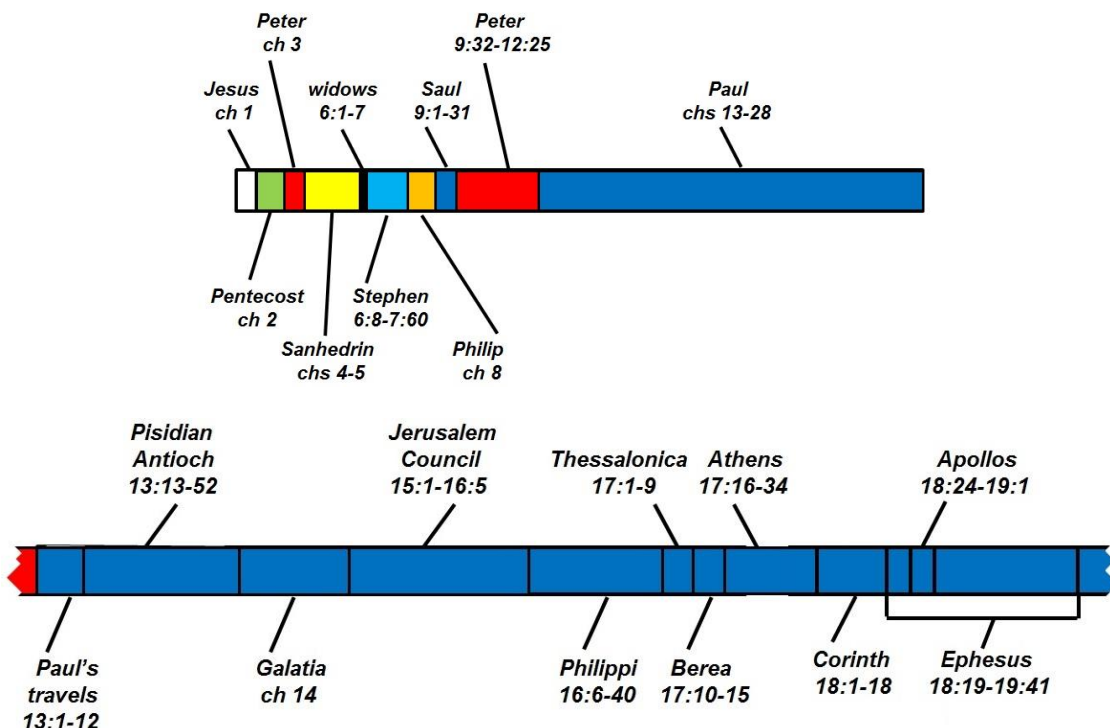
2. (a) How do people describe you?

(b) How would you like to be described?

Bible

3. Read Acts 18:1-18.

Context: Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey (Acts chs 13-14). Wherever they went people became disciples but some Jews opposed and persecuted them. Some people said you couldn't be saved unless you were circumcised. This dispute was resolved by taking it to the Jerusalem Council (Acts ch 15). About 50AD Paul began his second missionary journey. In a dream at night God directed him to change direction and cross over the Bosphorus (The Strait of Istanbul) into Europe from Asia. Paul continued his travels and went to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens then Corinth.



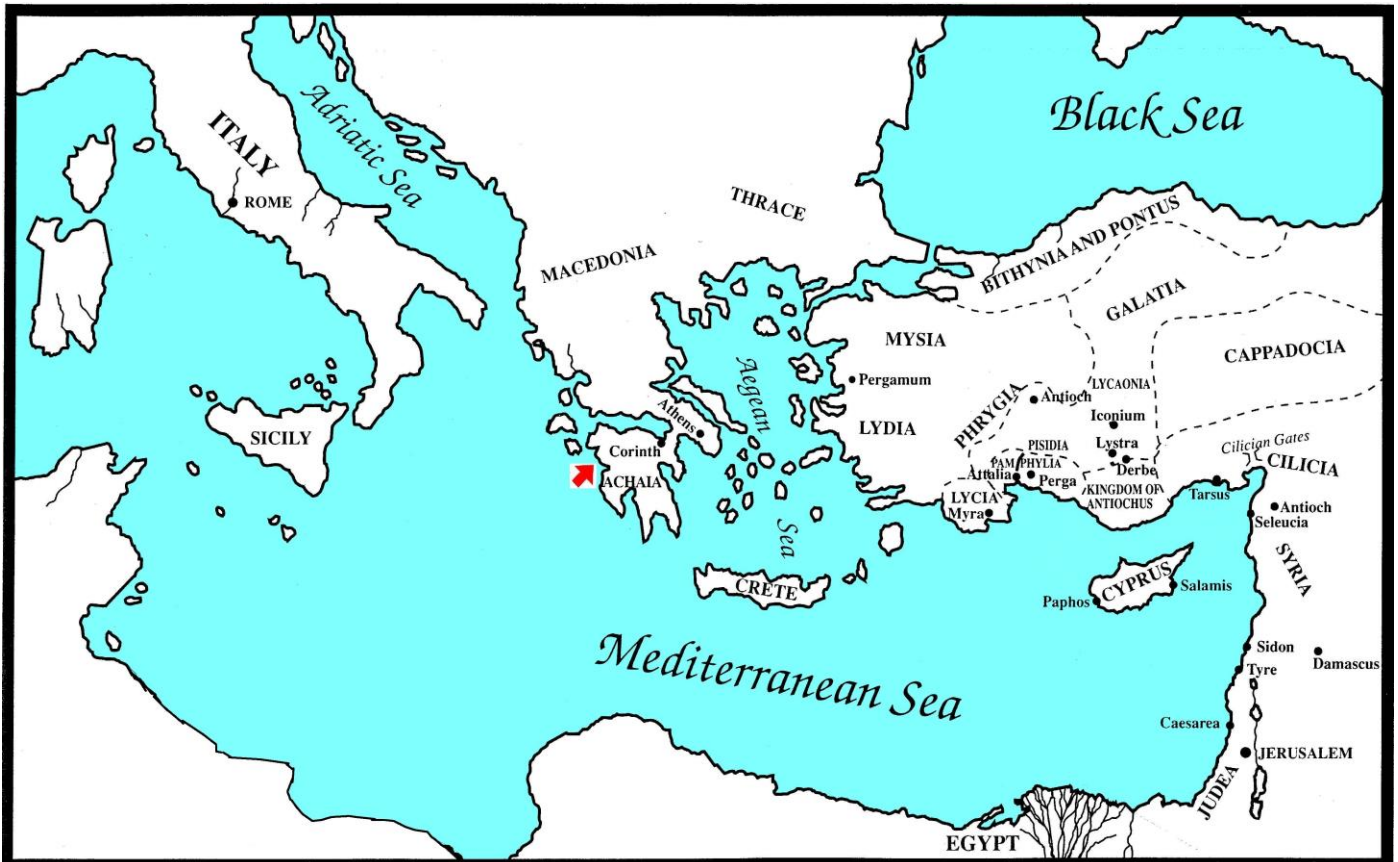
The Ancient City of Corinth

Geography and Population: Ancient Corinth was situated on a narrow *isthmus* (a strip of land connecting two larger areas with water on either side) linking northern and southern Achaia (modern day Greece). Corinth was the largest city that Paul had encountered with a population of around 250,000 people.

Importance: Corinth was an important centre of trade and commerce flanked by two seaports on either side of the isthmus. Ships, instead of sailing the treacherous waters around the southern part of Achaia, would unload their cargo and march 200 miles across the isthmus. Corinth also held the Isthmian Games, which were second in importance only to the Olympic Games.

Culture: Corinth's commercial prosperity created a melting pot of culture, language, and religion. As such, Corinth was deeply beset by pagan idolatry and philosophy. A number of prominent temples dedicated to Greek deities were in Corinth, the most important being the temples of Aphrodite (goddess of love), Apollo (god of the sun and music), and Asklepios (god of healing). Sexual immorality was pervasive throughout Corinth's temples and its port-city life.

Background notes by Andrea Abeyasekera from Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) 26 studies, St Barnabas, Broadway 2015.



Ancient Corinth was a fertile region blessed with natural springs and set between two harbours, one connecting it with Rome and the West, the other connecting it to the exotic cultures of the East. Corinth had once been a centre of Greek learning, religion, art and entertainment. In the New Testament period, It was one of the four great cities of the known world (with Rome, Antioch and Alexandria). It was a trading hub between East and West and enjoyed the special privileges of a 'Roman Colony', making it a mini-Rome.

From 1 Corinthians, The Scandal of the church 3 studies, Roseville Anglican, 2011.

4. What were the marks of Paul's ministry in Corinth?

5. It is during his time in Corinth that Silas and Timothy rejoin Paul with good news from Macedonia. The encouragement that Paul receives from this news (see 1 Thes 3:6-10) seems to be the trigger for Paul to move to full-time gospel preaching.
 - (a) How do the Jews react to Paul's preaching?

 - (b) Why shouldn't this surprise us?

6. Why do you think the risen Christ chose this specific moment to comfort Paul with words of protection (vv 9-10)?

7. What do you think of Gallio's attitude towards
 - the Jews complaints about Paul?

 - the treatment of Sosthenes?

Notice that the name 'Sosthenes' appears in both Acts 18:17 and 1 Cor 1:2. It is quite likely that they refer to the same person: Paul usually only mentions names in his letters if they are familiar to the recipients. Sosthenes may have been converted during Paul's ministry in Corinth, and then accompanied him onwards as a secretary or scribe.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 1 by Mike Paget.

8. The author of 1 Corinthians is Paul (1 Cor 1:1). What do you know about him from the following?

Acts 7:54-8:1

Acts 9:1-31

Acts 11:25-30

Acts 16:37-38

Acts 22:3

Phil 3:1-6

2 Cor 11:21-12:10

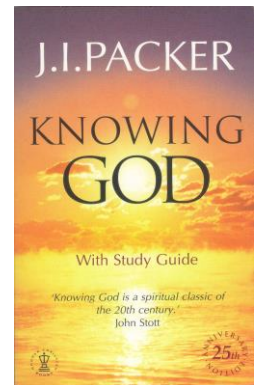
Paul was in Corinth for about a year and half (from c.50 AD), before journeying on to Ephesus on his third missionary journey (c.52-57 AD). It was in Ephesus that Paul began to hear word of problems arising in the Corinthian church and consequently wrote them a series of letters. 1 Corinthians (c.54 AD) is the first of two *canonical* letters written to the church in Corinth.

Background notes by Andrea Abeyasekera from Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) 26 studies, St Barnabas, Broadway 2015.

To finish

9. (a) What does the phrase “he/she loves the Lord” mean?

(b) Is this the same as “knowing God”?



(c) How much of “loving the Lord” or “knowing God” is - like knowing another (physical) human being?

- not like knowing another (physical) human being?

(d) Is “loving the Lord” or “knowing God” the same as “being saved”? Why/why not?

Study 2, 1 Cor 1:1-9, Paul & the church in Corinth

Getting started

1. (a) How would you describe your church?
- (b) (i) What do non-Christians think of church?



- (ii) Why do they think this way?

Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 1:1-9.

Reading 1 Corinthians is like opening someone else's mail. Lots had gone on between Paul and the Corinthians before he wrote this letter. He had spent 18 months with them some four years earlier. He had written at least one letter to them before 1 Corinthians. They had also written to him telling him about problems in the church and asking him questions. In 1 Corinthians Paul writes to answer their questions and address some of the difficulties in the church. . .

Imagine it's about 54 AD and you are a part of one of the house churches that began in Corinth after Paul came. Another letter from Paul has arrived. You met him early on. You had seen how Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his whole family had changed after putting their faith in the Lord Jesus. You listened to them, asked your questions. You spoke with Priscilla and Aquilla as well as Paul and it wasn't long before you joined the growing number of believers in this city. You heard Paul speak many times during his stay. He said that the Lord himself had told him to stay for such a long time. It's not easy to follow Jesus in this city. There are a quarter of a million people living here and they come from all parts of the empire. Such immorality! The temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, towers over this place enticing people to sexual immorality. In the name of religion too. And such wealth! People here worship pleasure and prosperity.

From Where is the Wise Man? Studies in 1 Corinthians 1-7 by Ashleigh Hooker 2004.

- (a) How does Paul describe the church in Corinth?



- (b) Compare this with the way you described your church in Question 1 (a). Why are the two descriptions so different?

- (c) The word translated “spiritual gift” (NIV) is the same as “grace” in verse 3. What is Paul saying about what they have as a church?

In some of Paul's letters he addresses the people of the church he is writing to as "**saints**" i.e. Romans, 2 Corinthians [1 Cor 6:1-2], Ephesians and Philippians. The Greek word translated "saint" has the same root as the word for "holy" – i.e., a saint is someone who is made holy, which means being set apart from unrighteousness and sin, and to God and his character and purpose. This is actually a description of every christian person, so if we are "in Christ", we are saints, according to the New Testament definition. The only reason we may feel uncomfortable is that we have become used to a different scale of meaning for the word, where it describes only the very best and most worthy - and we know we are not classed among those! But, in fact, God has made us worthy (no-one is worthy of themselves), so we are saints.

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

In all Paul's letters (except Galatians) he addresses Christians as **saints** or in similarly positive terms but never as sinners. In Galatians Paul is annoyed at the churches because they are "so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel" (Gal 1:6). So he has no words of praise for them but still he doesn't address them as sinners. With the exception of 2 references in James perhaps, the New Testament never addresses Christians as sinners but as saints or in similarly positive terms like God's holy people, God's people, God's elect, brothers loved by God and God's servants.

(d) In your church are Christians more often referred to as sinners or saints?

(i) Why is that?

(ii) *Should* you be addressed that way? Why/why not?

3. Paul describes the Corinthian church as both 'sanctified in Christ Jesus' and 'called to be his holy people'. Even though they are very different words in English, they share the same root in Greek. You might like to read 'sanctified' as "holified". The word holy means 'set apart for God's special purpose and use.' So Paul first describes the Corinthian church as already having been made holy (even though they don't look very holy at all!), and then secondly, called to become holy.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 1 by Mike Paget.

(a) How do you think both can be true at the same time (see also Heb 10:10,14)?

(b) If you had to choose, would you be more likely to describe yourself as 'holy' or 'becoming holy'?

(c) What difference do you think that this makes for how you think about yourself?

(d) What difference does it make in how you live?

(e) How do you think that holding the two together would change you?

Unless you come to believe that Christ has made you holy, special to God, you will never begin to become holy. Instead, you will live in fear and anxiety. It is love that produces change. So a change to more holy living is always built on a growing confidence in Christ as our holy standing. Or, in other words, our sanctification always rests on our trust in justification by faith.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 1 by Mike Paget.

4. (a) From these first 9 verses what is the tone of the letter?



(b) What is Paul feeling for this church?

(c) What does this suggest about his leadership style?

5. (a) How does Paul describe himself?

(b) 'Apostle' literally means 'one sent out' and implies a special commission and message. Who made Paul an apostle?

(c) Read the following and note down what else the New Testament says about the role of apostle.

1 Cor 4:9

1 Cor 12:28

2 Cor 12:12

1 Thes 2:6

1 Tim 2:7

(d) What is the difference between a local church pastor/minister and an apostle?

6. (a) It is almost certain that there were a number of house churches in Corinth (v 2). In light of what you have read, why do you think that Paul calls them 'church', in the singular?

(b) Paul also reminds the Corinthians that there are many others who call who call on the name of Jesus. What does it mean to be part of a bigger family?

(c) What are the consequences for us of forgetting this?

(d) How do you think we might learn from our brothers and sisters around the world?

To finish

7. Your answer to Question 1 (b) (i) could be described as the church's "brand".
(a) What aspects of Christianity today in Australia may result in Christians being given a hard time either because of the church's "brand" or because of things prominent Christians (e.g. Fred Nile, Cory Bernadi, Israel Folau) have said or done?
- (b) Is this persecution deserved or is this suffering for the name of Christ? Give reasons for your answer.
- (c) What can we do to alleviate this problem?
8. If Paul was writing to your church what are some of the issues he might address?

Study 3, 1 Cor 1:10-2:5, cliques, wisdom and Jesus

Getting started

1. Think of someone you would describe as wise. What makes them so in your eyes?



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Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 1:10-17.
 - (a) What do you think is going on amongst the Corinthians (vv 10-12)?

- (b) Why do you think this problem has arisen?

The 'sophists' who travelled around the ancient world were keen on making disciples for themselves, and their followers often quarrelled and scrapped among themselves as to which teacher was the greatest. Paul has realized, with the report from the family of Chloe, visiting him in Ephesus, that the Christians in Corinth have begun to treat him, Apollos, Peter, and even King Jesus himself, as a bunch of teachers to be played off against one another. And that is to miss the whole point. The church still (God help us!) sometimes makes the same mistake today.

From Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright p 10.

- (c) Sometimes you get the feeling Anglicans will only listen to Anglican preachers and Baptists will only listen to Baptist preachers and charismatics will only listen to "spirit-filled" preachers. Or people will only listen to their favourite ministers and only half listen to anyone else.

Compare this attitude to what was happening in Corinth.

- (i) What is similar?

- (ii) What is different?

- (iii) What is a better attitude? Why?

(d) What reasoning does Paul use to advise the Corinthians with this problem?

(e) Why do you think Paul tackles this problem first?

Not all unity is good, and not all division is bad.

There is unity that is godly. Jesus prayed for it: “that they may be one as we are one” (John 17:11, 22). There is unity that is ungodly. The tower-builders of Genesis sought it: “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves and not be scattered over the face of the whole earth” (Gen 11:4). There is division that is godly. The one who prayed, “that they may be one” also said, “Do you think I came to bring peace on earth? No, I tell you, but division” (Luke 12:51). There is division that is ungodly. Paul warned us, “watch out for those who cause divisions” (Rom 16:17).

From ‘When to unite and when to divide’ by John Woodhouse.

3. Read 1 Cor 1:18-31.

(a) What is the message of the cross (v 18)?

(b) How is it powerful (v 18)?

(c) Why don't the Jews like it (v 23)?

(d) Why don't the Gentiles like it (v 23)?

(e) In your view is our society more like the Jews or the Gentiles in its view of the cross? Give reasons.

(f) What is foolish about the wisdom of the world (v 20)?

(g) What is the wisdom of God (vv 21-30)?

(h) (i) According to Paul, where would the Corinthian Christians have sat in a social hierarchy?

(ii) Why do you think Paul is reminding them of this?

(i) How has God chosen the foolish, weak and lowly things, and the things that aren't, to shame the wise, noble and strong things, and the things that are (hint: it has to do with Jesus, not us!) (1 Cor 1:28-30)?

(j) How is this encouraging? How is it a warning?

(k) Why has God chosen the 'weak' and 'foolish' things to 'shame' the 'wise' and the 'strong'?

This passage contrasts two views of wisdom and power, and foolishness and weakness. To help you get into these themes, consider the cultural context of Corinth. It had been a wealthy and significant city in Greece, and a centre of philosophy. You can imagine then, that the citizens would have valued power and the intellect. The majority of the Christians in the church in Corinth would have come from pagan backgrounds, being shaped by these values. At the same time, however, according to Paul in this section most of them were 'ordinary' - perhaps tradespeople and workers - rather than rich and powerful. In this context, it appears that there were others in the church who exploited their relative power, and those who dismissed the gospel message as 'foolishness' and 'weakness', preaching instead a more sophisticated-sounding message. How were these Christians to understand their position before God, when what they believed seemed ridiculous to those outside and even within their church?

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 3 by Erica Hamence.

(l) What freedom is offered to you by what Paul is saying?

(m) (i) What does it mean to boast in the Lord (1:31)?

(ii) How does it compare to the more usual boasting of our culture?

Boasting is another way of talking about what we think gives us status – with God, and with others. What we 'boast' about indicates what we think qualifies us, what we think justifies us and what we think gives us our standing.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 3 by Erica Hamence.

4. Read 1 Cor 2:1-5.

(a) What does Paul use as an illustration of his point?

(b) How does this continue to make the point of contrasting the world's wisdom with God's wisdom?

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 centre of culture. They planned to hoot him off the platform. Moody began his sermon by saying, "Young gentlemen, don't ever think God don't love you, for he do!" The scoffers were dumbfounded, and Moody's unpolished words captured them. That was the beginning of revival and of one of the greatest awakenings of the nineteenth century.

From 1 Corinthians Problems and Solutions in a Growing Church by Charles & Anne Hummel p 15.

(c) Why might Paul have been weak, fearful and trembling (v 3) when he came to Corinth?

One of the reasons, in fact, why the mystery of the gospel is a mystery is because nobody in Corinth or most other places would ever think of looking for the secret to life, the universe, God, beauty, love and death in a place of execution outside a rebellious city in the Middle East. That is why, as Paul says; not only were the Corinthian Christians themselves, for the most part, neither wise, powerful nor aristocratic, but also he himself, when he announced the message to them, found himself in fear and trembling.

Imagine finding yourself standing up to make a speech in front of an audience of the great and the good, and having nothing to say except some stammering words about a strange thing that happened a few years ago which you know sounds crazy but which you just happen to think contains the secret to everything. You'd watch the faces, and see a lip curl here, an eyebrow lift there, people glancing at one another with knowing looks, shaking their heads not only at the stupidity of what's being said but at the insult to the audience to offer them such rubbish.

And yet there was power in it. We don't know exactly what Paul meant by 'brought home powerfully by the spirit; but it may imply that healing miracles took place. What was more important, though, is that without Paul using any of the normal rhetorical tricks of the trade, people's hearts, minds and lives were changed. The truth of the gospel carried its own power, and Paul was happy to keep it that way, even though he looked a fool while he was announcing it . . .

Crucifixion was regarded in the ancient world as so horrible, so revolting, so degrading that you didn't mention it in polite society. Imagine somebody at a fashionable dinner-party going on in a loud voice about how he'd seen rats eating the body of a dead dog in the street; that's the kind of impression you'd make by standing up in public and talking about someone being crucified. No self-respecting sophist or rhetorician would dream of doing it. But Paul believed, and the new-found faith and life of the Corinthian Christians bore this out, that this was the clue to the mystery of life.

From Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright p 21 and 22.

To finish

5. "One of the most important questions we could ask ourselves as individuals and as a church is: What is our greatest boast in life? What are we most proud of? For the thing you're most proud of (whether career, wealth, beauty, education, culture – or Jesus) will shape your life. It will shape what you day-dream about, where you put your time and resources, how open you are about it in public, and how willingly you will accept criticism on its account."

From a sermon on 1 Cor ch 1 by John Dickson at St Andrews, Roseville 1/5/2011.

(a) Share what you feel most proud of in life.

(b) Looking through 1 Cor ch 1 what grounds does Paul give us for shifting our boast from the things of this world to 'boasting in the Lord' (1:31)?

Study 4, 1 Cor 2:6-16, spiritual

Getting started

1. If you have time play “two truths and a lie”, where each member says three things about themselves, one of which is untrue, and the rest of the group has to guess which is which. Just don’t be too good at it or it may harm your credibility.



2. (a) Have you ever heard of someone who was described as “spiritual”?
(b) What do you think it means to be described that way?

The story so far . . .

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as sanctified, holy, enriched in every way, not lacking any spiritual gifts, safe and blameless because of what Jesus has done for them. He wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. Before 2:6 Paul has been advising on the problem of divisions/cliques in the church and then compares the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God.

Bible

3. In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 Paul set up two types of wisdom – the wisdom of this world and God’s wisdom (revise the last study if you need to).
(a) What does Paul mean by “wisdom” here?

(b) (i) What are the two types of “wisdom” Paul is contrasting?

(ii) How do they differ?
4. Read of 1 Corinthians 2:6-10.
(a) (i) Who are the “rulers of this age” (v 6)?

(ii) Why is their wisdom coming to nothing (v 6)?

(b) Why are “secret” and “hidden” (v 7) good words to describe God’s wisdom?

(c) How do we *know* that God’s wisdom is really wise and the world’s wisdom is really foolish?

(d) How is it possible to know anything about God and his plans? (Are we just smarter than the others?)

(e) What is the advantage in choosing the right wisdom?

Paul here is playing with words from the weird and wonderful world of Greek/Roman religions and cults, which were very popular in Corinth. The word “mysterion” normally referred to secret teachings, customs and ceremonies which the members of these strange religions kept secret from people who were not part of the club. But here Paul uses it for God’s secret plan for the final salvation of the world which has only just been revealed by God to his people by the Spirit.

The “rulers of this age” were responsible for crucifying Jesus (verse 8). They are not only the individuals who ordered his execution (Pilate, Herod, the Jewish leaders) but “the world’s organized opposition to God’s wisdom” as well as “the pernicious spiritual forces behind them.”

From Scroggs & Bruce cited in The First Letter to the Corinthians, a Pillar New Testament Commentary by Roy E. Ciampa & Brian S. Rosner p 125.

The quotation in verse 9 is interesting, because it’s not at all clear where he is quoting from. The closest thing in the Old Testament as we have it is Isaiah 64:4, which is the same sort of idea: you can’t know anything about God unless he reveals it to you.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 4 by Andrew Judd.

5. Read of 1 Corinthians 2:10-16.

(a) What is it that God has revealed by his Spirit (v 10)?

(b) What is the point of Paul’s analogy in verse 11?

(c) Why do some people accept this message as from God, while others think it’s stupid?

(d) Why is the Spirit uniquely able to reveal to us who God is?

(e) What are the spiritual truths mentioned in v 13?

(f) How do we learn these spiritual truths?

(g) (i) Who are the “we” in verses 12 and 16?

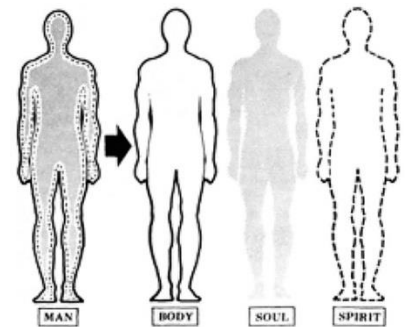
(ii) Are they the same “we” or different groups?

(h) (i) Who or what is God's Spirit?

(ii) Who or what is man's Spirit (v 11)?

(iii) Who or what is the spirit of the world (v 12)?

(iv) If everyone has a spirit and someone becomes a Christian, then how does their spirit fit in with the Holy Spirit?



Paul relishes the fact that the spirit who is poured out upon believers, bringing them to faith and opening their hearts and minds to the wisdom of the 'age to come, is God's own spirit, not some lesser being. The spirit within a person - the deep innermost life where thought, feeling, memory and imagination meet - knows best what the person is really all about. Even so, Paul declares, God's spirit is like that with God; and this spirit is given to all God's people in the Messiah.

From Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright p 27.

(i) (i) What is God's plan for you?

(ii) How do you know?

(j) Many strands in philosophy are very sceptical of our ability to know, much less communicate, anything about God. Isn't God a mystery?

(k) Is it right for God to condemn the rulers of the world if they have not received the Spirit?
(For that matter, is it right for anyone to be judged for rejecting Christ if they don't have the Spirit?)

This touches on God's work verses human responsibility. Generally the Bible presents them not as "versus" at all, but as two compatible realities. God reveals things to us in a way that changes our perspective on Christ, but in a way that doesn't compromise our humanity (including our ability to make morally responsible decisions).

In fact, the Spirit restores our humanity – it wasn't God's fault that the rulers of this age couldn't recognise Christ, it was theirs! They were so twisted by their own sin, they mistook Christ's humility for pathetic

weakness. Their fear and envy and hate meant they didn't want to understand what God was doing. They have already brought themselves under God's righteous justice long before the Spirit does (or doesn't) get involved.

And yet, for reasons that should blow our minds, he has mercy on some through his Spirit. Take Paul – he's on the way to exterminate the early church, and then Jesus turns his life around on the road to Damascus. In the process Paul doesn't become a robot; he becomes a better human.

This is a great mystery, but I sometimes think of it in terms of great art: God's wisdom is like a beautiful painting which makes us see the world differently, and recognise beauty we had been unable (or unwilling) to see before.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 4 by Andrew Judd.

6. (a) "Judgements" can be about making decisions or making assessments about people. What do you think "making judgements" means in v 15?

(b) What does it mean to be "not subject to any man's judgement" (v 15)?

(c) In what sense do we have the mind of Christ (v 16)?

(d) Does this mean Christians are always right? Why/why not?

(e) Where does humility fit into this?

To finish

7. (a) Have you ever heard someone say "The Spirit has revealed this to me" or "I have received a prophecy from God"?

(b) How did you handle what they told you?

8. Reflect on and share who has been the most significant human voice for you, naming one Christian and one non-Christian influence, and why?

9. How can we as Christians ensure we give more weight to the 'wisdom of the Spirit' than to the 'wisdom of the world'?

Study 5, 1 Cor ch 3, teachers

Getting started

1. When you were at school how did you learn things?



2. Was there a method of learning that worked particularly well for you (e.g. lectures, film, conversations, question and answer, reading or experiences)?

3. Think back to the time when God opened your heart to believe in Jesus.
(a) What did you begin to learn that you hadn't understood before?

(b) Mention one thing that you have learnt as you have matured in your faith.



(c) Was there way of learning and growing that worked particularly well for you (e.g. sermons, film, fellowship, question and answer, Bible reading, experiences, voices from God, spiritual inspiration)?

4. What makes a good teacher?

The story so far . . .

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as sanctified, holy, enriched in every way, not lacking any spiritual gifts, safe and blameless because of what Jesus has done for them (ch 1). He wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. Paul gave advice on the problem of divisions/cliques in the church and then compared the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God which he links with being taught by the Spirit of God.

Bible

5. Read 1 Cor 3:1-11.

Many translations open with 'Brothers'. In our culture, this is a poor attempt to translate the Greek word, 'adelphoi'. In its context it clearly meant 'brothers and sisters', and that is how we should translate it.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 5 by Mark Wormell.

(a) What is Paul referring to in 3:2 when he says he gave them 'milk' not 'solid food' (see also Heb 5:11-14)?

(b) Why are they still not ready for 'solid food'?

(c) In your own church what would you identify as - "milk"?

- "solid food"?

(d) What images are created in your mind by the use of the word (v 3) "fleshly" (Bentley Hart), "of the flesh" (ESV), "worldly" (NIV)? What are the signs that they are still 'fleshly'?

(e) How has your faith been built? What has contributed to its strength? What weaknesses exist?

(f) In verse 4 this is not the first time Paul has referred to the factions formed around Apollos and himself (see 1:12-17). What was the point there?

Apollos was a Christian Jew from Alexandria, Egypt. He is said to have been a great teacher and preacher. He is mentioned in several New Testament passages, including Acts, chapters 18 and 19; 1 Corinthians, chapters 1, 3, 4 and 16; and Titus 3:13. He heard about John the Baptist, and what John said about Jesus, but that was all he knew (Acts 18:25-26) until Aquila and his wife Priscilla met him in Ephesus and instructed him in the life of Jesus. He became a popular teacher of Christianity, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:12. Paul also described himself in his teachings as one who planted, and Apollos as one who watered what already had been planted.

From www.aboutbibleprophecy.com

(g) How is the idea developed in 3:5-9?

(h) Paul explains that it is God who gives the growth but why are we tempted to think of some people/servants as great?

(i) Do you treat your leaders in church in a God honouring way (see also Heb 13:17 and 1 Tim 5:17)?

Do you put them on pedestal?

Do you treat them as rock stars?

Why/why not?

(j) "A congregation's greatest temptation is to want to put their minister on a pedestal and the minister's greatest temptation is to want to be there." Discuss.

(k) Are you aware of factions or divisions or cliques at your church?

If so, where do the divisions lie, and what can be done to heal them? If there are not factions, why not?

(l) How do you see your role and gifts in the church compared to the role and gifts of staff?

Note that Paul calls the Corinthians 'fellow-workers' and 'God's field' (v 9). There is no sense a teacher or pastor being a 'leader' in the way that is used in secular society. We will come to different gifts in chapter 12-14.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 5 by Mark Wormell.

6. Read 1 Cor 3:12-17.

(a) What is the 'Day' referred to in verse 13?

(b) What does "fire" refer to – refinement, judgement or punishment? Give reasons for your answer.

(c) Which things in your own life would you classify as gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay and straw (v 13)?

(i) Which things will stay?

(ii) Which things will be burnt up?

(d) What 'reward' will they receive (v 14)?

(e) What role did the temple play in the Old Testament?

The word translated 'temple' actually refers to the inner sanctuary. God had chosen to dwell there (1 Kgs 8:27-30) but could choose to leave it (Ezek 10). It was the place where God was specially present and where he would meet with his people.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 5 by Mark Wormell.

(f) So if the Corinthian Christians are now 'God's temple', what does this mean?

(It is the church which is the temple here. Not individual Christians. This text does not support 'my body is a temple' misapplications - Mark Wormell.)

(g) How do you understand and experience being 'sacred'?

Imagine yourself at the airport, about to board a plane. The plane is on its way to sunny Melbourne, and Melbourne is where you want to be. What relationship do you need to have with the plane at this point?

Would it help to be under the plane, to submit yourself to the plane's eminent authority in the whole flying-to-Melbourne thing? Or would it help to be inspired by the plane? To watch it fly off and whisper "One day, I hope to do that too". What about following the plane? You know the plane is going to Melbourne, and so it stands to reason that if you take note of the direction it goes and pursue it then you too will end up there.

Of course, the key relationship you need with the plane is not to be under it, behind it, or inspired by it. You need to be in it. Why? Because, by being in the plane, what happens to the plane will also happen to you. The question "Did you get to Melbourne?" will be part of a larger question: "Did the plane get to Melbourne?" If the answer to the second question is yes, and if you were in the plane, then what happened to the plane will also have happened to you.

I think, at heart, the biblical idea of being in Christ is something like that. According to the New Testament, to be in Christ is to say that, by union with him, whatever is true of him is now true of us. He died, we died. He is raised, we are (and will be) raised. He is vindicated, we are vindicated. He is loved, we are loved. And so on, all because we are in him....

Now, if your mental image of your relationship to God through Christ is that of a lover relationship, a friendship, or of following God, then the language of 'closer' or 'far away' makes sense. But not if you are united to Christ.

Grasping the nature of our union with Christ challenges our very language of 'getting close to God'. We say, "I want to get closer to God". And union with Christ says: "Really? How close to God do you want to get? How do you intend to pull that off? To which part of the universe do you plan to move to secure this 'closer to God' status?"

If you know yourself to be in Christ, then surely you are now, presently, in all your brokenness, as close to God as it is possible for any person to be - because you are in Christ. And, if you are in Christ, united to Christ, then the answer to the question "How close am I to God?" is subsumed by the larger question "How close is Christ to God?" If Jesus Christ is as close to God as the only Son of the Father, the beloved of God, the object of the affections of the heart of the Father, and if you are in Christ, then the language of getting closer to God needs re-thinking.

From Union with Christ by Rory Shiner pp13-15.

7. Read 1 Cor 3:18-23.

(a) What foolishness should they adopt?

Paul summarises his preceding teaching as 'no more boasting about human leaders' (v 21). Historically, over-identifying with leaders has been more associated with the Pentecostal tradition than mainstream Protestantism. From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 6 by Michael Paget.

(b) What do you think are the corresponding dangers for a church like yours?

(c) Paul seems to think that the best antidote to boasting about leaders and breaking into factions around them is the gospel news that 'All things are yours...and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God' (vv 21, 23). How does believing this change things?

To finish

8. Looking back at how you have matured in your faith:

How much of your growth can be attributed to having good teachers?

Study 6, 1 Cor ch 4, arrogance

Getting started

1. (a) Rank the following qualities of a Christian leader from most important (1) to least important (16).

Good work ethic	Demonstrates healthy leadership
Models evangelism	Does not yield to critics
Effective preaching	Love of congregation
Joyous	Casts a vision
Strong character	Transparent
Good looking	Degree in theology
Faithful	Conservative
Legalistic	Control freak

- (b) Would you include any other qualities? Be specific.



- (c) Where would you place your own church leaders in this list?

2. According to research there are over 10,000 ministers across all church denominations in Australia that have left full-time ministry. What reasons do you think might be factors?

The story so far . . .

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as sanctified, holy, enriched in every way, not lacking any spiritual gifts, safe and blameless because of what Jesus has done for them (ch 1). He wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. Paul gave advice on the problem of divisions/cliques in the church and then compared the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God which he links with being taught by the Spirit of God (ch 2). Contrary to the trend towards cliques or factions in the church according to who is following the big names, Paul says that different teachers have different roles in helping people grow but it is actually God, through his Spirit, that brings the growth (ch 3).

Bible

3. Read 1 Cor 4:1-5.
Here Paul, having told the Corinthians how they *ought* not to regard their leaders, describes how they *should* regard them.
(a) How does Paul say the Corinthians should view their leaders?

(b) How should they view themselves (v 7)?

(c) What difference would this make to how they relate to their leaders?

(d) What difference would this make to how their leaders experience their own ministry?

4. (a) What does it mean to judge people?

(b) Read Matt 7:1-6.

Context: In the first four chapters of Matthew we read about the coming of the king heralded by angels and a scruffy prophet called John the Baptist. After being commissioned by the Holy Spirit Jesus describes, in chapters 5 to 7, the Sermon on the Mount, what the kingdom of heaven is like under his rule.

(c) In what ways are we to judge (Matt 7:6)?

(d) In what ways are we not to judge (Matt 7:1)?

(e) How does God judge people?

5. (a) What does Paul mean when he writes about judgement in 1 Cor 4:1-5?

The Corinthians were assessing their leaders on the criteria of wisdom, eloquence and impressive personal presence. God's basis for judgement, however, is that 'those who have been given a trust must prove faithful' (4:1- 2). From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 6 by Michael Paget.

(b) On what basis do we judge our leaders?

(c) On what basis *should* we judge our leaders (compare your answer with your answer to Question 1)?

(d) What does faithfulness look like (v 2 and see 4:8-13)?

We all judge our leaders and even one another. However, Paul says that, in the end, it is only the judgement of the Lord that counts (4:4-5). This isn't because he is a stoic – Paul has known and been hurt by judgement, even amongst those he led to Christ.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 6 by Michael Paget.

(e) What is the implication of this for the church (4:5)? What might this look like?

(f) In what sense should Christian leaders not worry about how people judge them?

(g) Can they ignore every criticism? Why/why not?

(h) (i) What barriers do you experience to living in the light of the Lord's judgement, and none other?

(ii) Why do you think you find them substantial?

(i) It is often true that we feel judged by the standards by which we judge others. This is sometimes called 'projection'. Certainly, the Pharisees felt most condemned by Jesus Christ.

Is there a difference between how you judge your leaders and how you want to be judged yourself? What is it?

6. Read 1 Cor 4:6-17.

The yawning void in the life of the Corinthian church was caused by the absence of love: 'love is not puffed up' (13:4). On the contrary, 'love builds up' (8:1), whereas - knowledge" puffs up'. This 'knowledge', this false wisdom, of the Corinthians was clearly taking them *beyond what is written* (6). This is a difficult phrase, which Barrett interprets as enjoining 'life in accordance with Scriptural precept and example'. The phrase 'going beyond Scripture' has been seen as the characteristic and the watchword of the Christ-party, in the sense that they saw the Old Testament Scriptures as a thing of the past, which 'mature' Christians had left behind. It could well be, alternatively, that 'Nothing beyond what is written' was a Jewish formula brought to Corinth by the Peter-party. We shall never know the full significance of what is clearly a topical allusion of some importance. The major point of these two verses is the foolishness of boasting amongst people who owe everything to the grace of God.

From The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior pp 64-65.

In the first 3 chapters of 1 Corinthians, Paul has highlighted six quotes from Scripture (1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20) whose cumulative application is the same: 'no boasting about human beings.' In 4:6 he hammers this again: 'do not go beyond what is written!' The danger of disobedience, Paul says, is that they will become 'puffed up' (4:6; compare 4:8-13), and Paul writes to warn them against this (4:14).

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 6 by Michael Paget.

(a) What are "these things" (v 6)?

(b) What is the Corinthians' problem?

- (c) What humbling words does Paul have for the Corinthian leaders about their own abilities? (vv 6-7)
- (d) How should they humble us too?
- (e) What is the danger of being 'puffed up' (v 6 ESV, "take pride in" NIV)?
- (f) Why is it such a threat to the Christian life?
- (g) How does Paul correct them?
- (h) Is Paul being sarcastic? Why/why not?
- (i) What is Paul's attitude towards the Corinthians (4:14)? How has this been demonstrated in his life?
- (j) In what ways is Paul like a Father (v 15)?

Before we trace the way in which Paul sees himself as a father to the Christians at Corinth, it is necessary to stress that he does *not* see it as an authority-position, let alone as one invested with status. He would have known the words of Jesus himself: 'Call no man your father on earth, for you have one Father, who is in heaven . . . He who is greatest among you shall be your servant.' [Matt 23:9-11] The way the title 'Father' is given to, and accepted by, the ordained ministers of certain denominations flies in the face of this teaching. Indeed, many other sections of the church often manifest a paternalistic, over-dominant style of leadership, even if they do not use the title 'Father'. The folk-religion which lies behind this is not nearly so serious as the unbiblical theology which gave rise to and still endorses such an understanding of status and authority in the church. This false teaching is arguably the strongest barrier to the growth and health of the church in our day. It affects church unity, evangelism, worship, lay ministry, the ministry of women, theological training. Indeed, virtually every aspect of the mission of God's church is hampered, so long as this anti-Christian view of leadership in the church is perpetuated.

Positively, Paul sees himself as father to the Christians at Corinth (and particularly to Timothy, *my beloved and faithful child in the Lord*, verse 17) in the sense that he proclaimed the gospel to them and was, therefore, responsible on a human level for their faith in Christ. Like any father, and because children always copy their father, he has striven to set them an example in daily life of the behaviour expected of Christians; *I urge you, then, be imitators of me* (16).

From The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior pp 67-68.

- (k) Why is Paul sending Timothy?

7. Read 1 Corinthians 4:18-21
Paul wants to show the difference between mere talk and the real power of the gospel.
(a) What do you think the 'power' is that he's speaking about (4:20)?
- (b) How is it different to what is at work at times amongst the Christians in Corinth?

To finish

8. How can we avoid getting caught in the same trap as the Corinthians?

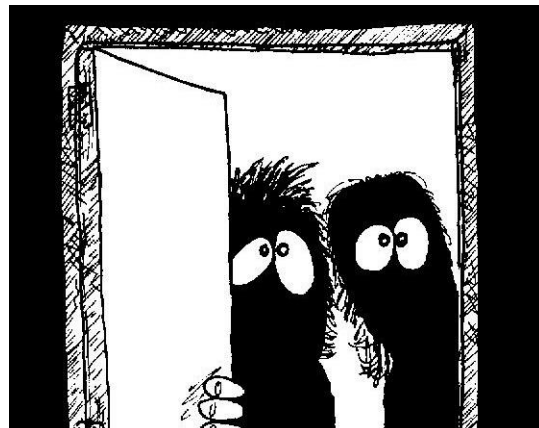


9. Who are some people who have been examples for you in Christ?
10. How can we nurture a culture of leaders who are known for their faithfulness not their flashiness?

Study 7, 1 Cor ch 5, incest

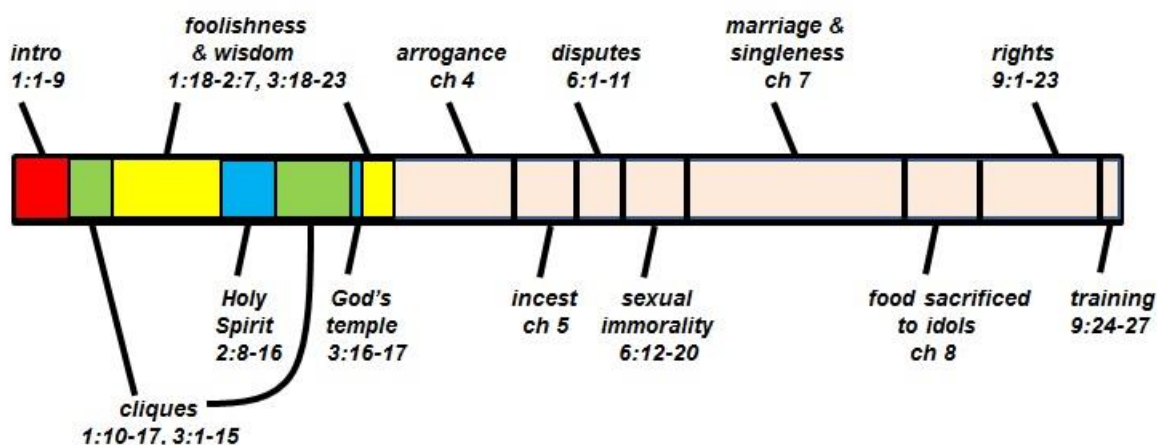
Getting started

1. In many cultures, what consenting adults do is a private matter and no one else's business. What do you think a Christian attitude should be to such an approach?



The story so far . . .

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as sanctified, holy, enriched in every way, not lacking any spiritual gifts, safe and blameless because of what Jesus has done for them (ch 1). He wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. Paul gave advice on the problem of divisions/cliques in the church and then compared the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God which he links with being taught by the Spirit of God (ch 2). Contrary to the trend towards cliques or factions in the church according to who is following the big names, Paul says that different teachers have different roles in helping people grow but it is actually God, through his Spirit, that brings the growth (ch 3). Some in the church have become arrogant in thinking they have got it all together and judging their leaders. Paul sets them straight and suggests they imitate his life of suffering and humility.



Bible

2. Read Leviticus ch 18. 1 Cor ch 5 gets us thinking about holiness. Leviticus chs 18-21 are called the "Holiness Code" for Israel, outlining how Israel is to be holy (that is, set apart).
 - (a) Why do you think Israel was given a holiness code?
 - (b) Do Christians have a holiness code?
 - (i) If so, what do you think is the Christian holiness code?



(ii) How is it different to Israel's holiness code?

(iii) How is it similar?

(c) What does it mean for Christians to be "set apart" for God?

3. Read 1 Cor 5:1-13.

All of the 'you's in this passage are plural. Paul is speaking of the actions of the church collectively, not of individuals.

(a) What immediately strikes you as hard or challenging about this passage?

(b) What authority does Paul have over the Corinthian church?

(c) What authority does Paul have over your life? Give reasons for your answer.

(d) Handing someone over to Satan (v 5) sounds both severe and spooky.

But what does Paul actually hope will happen (vv 2, 7, 11. See also Gal 6:1-2, Matt 18:15-17, 2 Cor 13:1, Deut 19:15, 1 Tim 5:20)?

Verse 5 is a difficult one. What does it mean to hand someone over to Satan? The context (v 2) suggests that this is probably referring to being publicly expelled from the church. In the New Testament, the world outside the church is seen as the realm of Satan. To be expelled from Christ's household is to be delivered into the region where Satan roams and holds sway.

From Church Matters 1 Corinthians 1-7 by Bryson Smith p 28.

(e) (i) What are the two arguments Paul makes about bread and yeast?

(ii) How do they support the case for expelling an immoral brother or sister (vv 6-8)?

Yeasts are eukaryotic, single-celled microorganisms classified as members of the fungus kingdom. Baker's yeast is the common name for the strains of yeast commonly used as a leavening agent in baking bread and bakery products, where it converts the fermentable sugars present in the dough into carbon dioxide and ethanol. Sugar in a bread dough provides food for the growth of yeasts.

It seems very likely that he is writing these words in the build-up to the annual celebration of the feast of the Passover, because its details are vivid in his mind as he unfolds the crucial importance of proper discipline in the Christian community.

At Passover each year, the Jews recalled the way God had delivered them from bondage in Egypt [c.f. Ex 12]. One feature of current Passover observance was the solemn search for and destruction of all leaven before the festival began (for seven days unleavened bread only might be eaten). This purging out of all leaven was done before the Passover victim was offered in the temple. The Passover celebrations were pre-eminently a celebration of the believing community; thus Paul is drawing attention to the devastating contradiction in the Corinthians' tolerance of leaven in the lump; the Passover lamb (i.e. Jesus) has already been sacrificed; the festival celebrations (which normally lasted a week for the Jews) have already begun and should be a permanent feature of the redeemed community. But still there is leaven in the community, and a very large piece of leaven too.

From The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior p 76.

(f) What did the Corinthians misunderstand about Paul's last letter (vv 9-11)?

(g) Paul describes 2 groups: those who the church is to exercise judgement over, and those who the church is not to exercise judgement over.

(i) Who are these two groups?

(ii) Why is the responsibility of the church different towards each?

(iii) Why is the church to judge one? Why not the other?

(iv) From this passage what place, if any, do Christians have in speaking against the sin of non-Christians? Give reasons for your answer.

(h) What does it look like to judge within the church?

(i) What is the goal of judgement within the church?

(ii) What is the danger of not judging?

(iii) The church is a community of grace. How can we be both this, and a community in which judgement is exercised?

(i) What loss would the person suffer by being put out of the Christian community (v 13)?

(j) Read Luke 17:1-4.

Where does forgiveness & grace fit into all this?

(k) Paul says that there are people who '[claim] to be a brother or sister', which implies that they aren't actually Christians. What does this mean for the connection between behaviour and salvation?

(l) How would you react if you heard that someone had been asked not to come to your church because of their immoral living?

(i) What loss would they suffer?

(ii) What loss would you suffer?

In 2 Corinthians 2:5-11, Paul talks about restoring to fellowship a brother who has sinned and been removed from the church, possibly the same person mentioned here in 1 Corinthians 5. Paul says, "Now... you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed... I urge you to reaffirm your love for him."

To finish

4. Letter to the Editor, Sydney Morning Herald, May 10, 2002.
Christianity's problem is that Christians take it upon themselves to alienate so many people. Christians are sanctimonious about drug use, for example, but not a single word of their preaching is directed at cars or guns, both of which leave drugs way behind in the race to cause social and economic damage. Christians claim to support marriage and the family, but they try to cover up child abuse within the churches, and they stay silent about the adulteries of future church leaders like Prince Charles. When some scandal or other breaks out, they try to do nothing about it ..

(a) Is the church guilty as charged? Why/why not?

(b) What should the church be doing about these matters?

(c) Revise your answer to Question 1, if appropriate, in the light of studying 1 Cor ch 5.

Study 8, 1 Cor 6:1-11, disputes

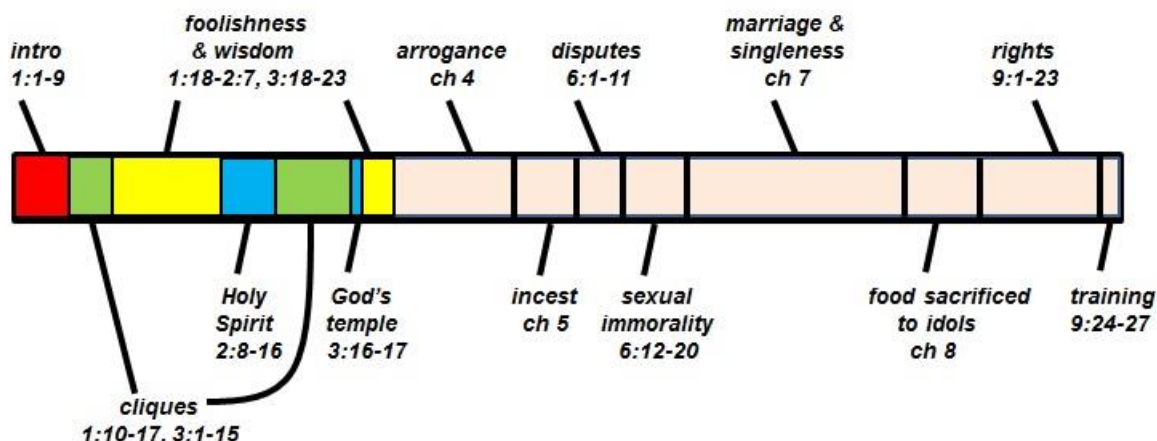
Getting started

1. (a) Have you ever been to court to settle a dispute?
- (b) Was it worth it? Why/why not?



The story so far . . .

Paul addressed the Corinthian church as sanctified, holy, enriched in every way, not lacking any spiritual gifts, safe and blameless because of what Jesus has done for them (ch 1). He wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. Paul gave advice on the problem of divisions/cliques in the church and then compared the wisdom of man with the wisdom of God which he links with being taught by the Spirit of God (ch 2). Contrary to the trend towards cliques or factions in the church according to who is following the big names, Paul says that different teachers have different roles in helping people grow but it is actually God, through his Spirit, that brings the growth (ch 3). Some in the church have become arrogant in thinking they have got it all together and judging their leaders. Paul sets them straight and suggests they imitate his life of suffering and humility (ch 4). Next Paul tackles a case of incest in the church and recommends he be expelled (ch 5). Next Paul tackles a case of incest in the church and recommends he be expelled (ch 5).



Bible

2. Read 1 Corinthians 6:1-8.
 - (a) What problem are the Corinthians facing and how are they trying to solve it (vv 1, 6)?

This passage, tragically, assumes 'disputes' (or 'grievances' – literally, 'matters against others') in the church that have led to lawsuits. Paul describes two categories of people: 'the ungodly' (NIV) = 'the unrighteous' (ESV) = 'the unjust' (Bentley Hart) and 'the saints' (NIV and ESV) = 'the holy ones' (Bentley Hart). (Notice that he doesn't fall into the trap of middle class Christendom, which divides on the basis of 'the moral' and 'the immoral'.) From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 8 by Michael Paget.

- (b) What are Paul's reasons for believing the Lord's people competent and 'the ungodly' incompetent to exercise judgement in the church?

(c) Consider the following quotes:

Cicero	"the courts will never convict any man, however guilty, if only he has money."
Petronius	"Of what avail are laws to be where money rules alone, and the poor suitor can never succeed?"
Dio Chrysostom	in Corinth there were "lawyers innumerable perverting justice."

From 1 Corinthians by David. Garland, Baker Academic: Grand Rapids, Michigan (2003)

(i) How did the law courts operate in Corinth?

(ii) Why wouldn't this be a good place for Christians to settle disputes?

(iii) Is it much different today in our own law courts? Why/why not?

Read a certain way, this biblical teaching could appear to be an attempt to protect the reputation of the institution that is the church (check out 6:6). This, of course, is exactly what many denominations so wickedly did in the face of persistent child abuse by clergy: they exercised judgement 'inside' rather than 'before unbelievers.' Wonderfully, the truth has come out, and those decisions have been exposed and institutions rightly shamed.

Keep in mind, however, that Paul is talking about civil suits here. In the ancient world, most law was 'civil': there was no prosecutor, just a plaintiff and a defendant. You brought your own case before the court. In 'criminal' matters, though, Paul thoroughly upholds the role of the government (see Romans 13) and its role in exercising vengeance. It is hard to imagine (especially in the light of the previous study) the apostle Paul supporting a church sheltering abusers of the weak and vulnerable.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 8 by Michael Paget.

(d) What does it mean that the church will judge the world (v 2)?

Paul's great concern isn't with the reputation of the church. Rather, he claims that the presence of lawsuits – and 'cheating' and 'doing wrong' to one another – is a sign that the Christians in Corinth are defeated already (vv 6-8). By 'defeated' he means something like 'living in a way that is utterly out-of-step with the gospel they claim to believe'.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 8 by Michael Paget.

(e) Is Paul saying Christians should never take others to court?

(f) How does Paul want Christians in this church to sort out their problems?

(g) How are lawsuits within the church an indication that the church has stopped living with a Christian worldview?

(How does Paul's rhetoric – describing their lawsuits as 'trivial cases' (v 2) and asking 'why not rather be wronged...cheated?' – help you answer this question?)

(h) How do you think Christians hurt other Christians in the same way in this day and age?

(i) How are we encouraged to respond when other Christians mistreat us?

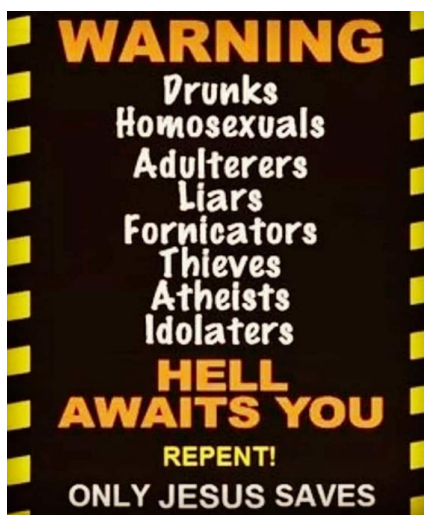
3. Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-11.

(a) How would you summarise:

(i) the warning of verses 9-10?

(ii) the encouragement of verse 11?

(b) Israel Folau, fullback for the Australian Rugby team, after previously tweeting similar sentiments in 2018, took to Instagram in April 2019 to post the following picture along with quotes from Gal 5:19-21, Acts 2:38 and Acts 17:30:



(c) What does “hell” mean?

(d) Compare this with 1 Cor 6:9-10 and Gal 5:29-21.

Is hell the same destination as not entering the kingdom of God?

Graeme Goldsworthy describes **the kingdom of God** as God’s people in God’s place under God’s rule (Gospel and Kingdom p 47). “Hell” is the common English translation for the Greek word “Gehenna” which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew for “Valley of Hinnom”.

Hinnom’s Vale or Valley of Hinnom – a deep, narrow ravine west and south of Jerusalem. At the high places of Baal in the Valley of Hinnom, parents sacrificed their children as a burnt offering to Molch (2 Kings 23:10). Ahaz and Manasseh, kings of Judah, were both guilty of this awful wickedness (2 Chr 28:3, 33:6). But good King Josiah destroyed the pagan altars to remove this temptation from the people of Judah.

The prophet Jeremiah foretold that God would judge this awful abomination of human sacrifice and would cause such a destruction that “the Valley of the Son of Hinnom” would become known as “the Valley of Slaughter” (Jer 7:31-32, 19:2, 6, 32:35). The place was also called “Tophet”.

Apparently, the Valley of Hinnom was used as the garbage dump for the city of Jerusalem. Refuse, waste materials, and dead animals were burned here. Fires continually smouldered, and smoke from the burning debris rose day and night. . . .

Translated into Greek, the Hebrew “Valley of Hinnom” becomes **Gehenna** which is used 12 times in the New

Testament (11 times by Jesus and once by James), each time translated as “hell” (Matt 5:22, Mark 9:43, 45, 47, Luke 12:5, James 3:6).

From New Illustrated Bible Dictionary p 568.

It ought to be noted that a debate has arisen within recent Gospels scholarship about whether Jesus actually spoke of punishment in the afterlife at all. N.T. Wright has argued that the apocalyptic language of the Gospels has been misunderstood by generations of Christian readers. Such language did not refer to the end of the space-time universe, as is commonly thought, but was a powerful way of speaking of the theological dimension of cataclysmic events of divine judgment and vindication within history. According to Wright all the passages that warn of the fires of Gehenna speak not of any post-mortem punishment but of the pre-mortem events of AD 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed. The threat of Gehenna was one made to the generation contemporary with Jesus (Matt 12:38-39)—a warning that “all that was left of Israel’s hopes and dreams” could become “a heap of rubble, with Jerusalem as a whole turned into a large, smoking extension of Gehenna, her own rubbish dump.” [N.T. Wright Jesus and the Victory of God p 336.]

From The Evangelical Universalist by Gregory MacDonald p 141.

If “hell” is thought of as a place of everlasting fire and torture then note the following:

Eternal

The Latin vulgate translated one word “eternis” for two words in Greek: “aidios” which means timeless, without time, eternal and “aeonis” which means an age or epoch. Aeonis is far more common in the New Testament than aidios. NIV follows the Latin vulgate by translating both aeonis and aidios as “eternal”. David Bentley Hart and Tom Wright translate aeonis as “of the Age” or “of the Age to come” or something similar (except for one occasion in Tom Wright’s case). So “eternal” rather than meaning everlasting means an age or epoch.

Fire is better thought of in terms of cleansing, purification or refinement rather than torture. John Dickson makes a very strong case that all the destruction passages in Matthew were pointing to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. Those terrible warnings were about a cataclysmic extinction of Jerusalem.

From the 5th of 7 talks on “Hope and Hell” from 2/3 to 7/9/2018 by Tony Golsby-Smith from www.gospelconversations.com.au.

(e) What would be another (better?) way for Israel Folau to evangelise his followers?

(f) How would you describe the change in identity of the Corinthians (1 Cor 6:9-11)?

(g) What does v.11 say to those who want to trust in Jesus Christ but feel burdened with the guilt of their sins?

(h) What does v.11 say to *Christians* who feel burdened with the guilt of their sins?

To finish

4. (a) When is it appropriate to bring another Christian before secular law courts?

(b) Does the church put too much emphasis on sin - when talking to non-Christians? Why/why not?

- when talking to Christians? Why/why not?

Study 9, 1 Cor 6:12-20, sexual immorality

Getting started

1. (a) What is your definition of freedom?



(b) In what ways are Christians free?

(c) In what ways are Christians not free?

(d) Are Christians more free than non-Christians? Why/why not?

2. (a) What is your favourite TV drama?

(b) What are its underlying attitudes to - sex?

- violence?

- revenge?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have read how Paul gave advice on the problem of divisions/cliques (chs 2 and 3), arrogance (ch 4) and incest (ch 5).

Bible

3. Read 1 Cor 6:12-20.

This passage is considered one of the hardest exegetically in 1 Corinthians. But the main point is clear and simple: flee sexual immorality.

Research suggests that Corinthian attitudes to sex were varied, but generally different from Christian views today. Some thought sex was recreational, while minorities thought it either debased our spiritual essence and should be avoided, or was only for procreation. Some thought it was recreational outside marriage and for procreation in marriage.

The dominant view in Corinth was expressed in the male head of the household having the right to have sex with his male and female slaves, going to prostitutes, having sex with other men, and confining sex with his wife to producing legitimate heirs.

It is unclear if there were 'temple prostitutes' at the time Paul wrote (probably not), but there would have been prostitutes who were brought out at the end of dinners and religious festivals for the enjoyment of the men.

Husbands would generally be older than their wives, and both Greek and Jewish traditions considered conversation with women to be a waste of time.

Interpretation of this passage is made more difficult by trying to work out the eschatology of the Corinthians. Some claim they had an 'over-realised eschatology'. That is, they thought all or most of the benefits of Christ's victory had already arrived. Others had a more conventional 'now and not yet' eschatology, seeing Christ's victory inaugurating the end times, but many benefits awaiting Christ's return. Some commentators want to see the sexual freedom of some Christian Corinthians as evidence of an 'over-realised eschatology', which had them believe that it doesn't matter what they do because they are saved.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 9 by Mark Wormell.

(a) What do you think Paul was responding to in verse 12?

(b) What do you think they are getting at by saying "Food for the stomach and the stomach for food, and God will destroy them both"?

(c) (i) Who do our bodies belong to? Give reasons for your answer.

(ii) What does this say about our identity?

(iii) What does this say about our freedom?

(iv) Why do you think non-Christians would object to this idea?

(d) In thinking about identity - what terms do people in general often use to describe themselves to others?

- what are the three key things that Paul highlights when he talks about the identity of the Christians in Corinth (vv 15, 19-20)?

- in what way should this new identity make a difference in how we behave?

To be “in Christ” we

- are included in Jesus’ death
 - are included in Jesus’ resurrection
 - are involved in an unseen spiritual reality
 - are a new creation
 - have access to the Father
 - are joined together in a building where God lives in his Spirit.
- (See Eph chs 1 & 2, Rom 6:3-10, Col 1:27-28.)

What does it actually mean to be **in Christ**? Let me try an analogy. Imagine yourself at the airport, about to board a plane. The plane is on its way to, let’s say, beautiful Perth. You’re at the airport. There’s you. There’s the plane. It’s going to Perth. And my question is: What relationship do you need to have with that plane? . . . Of course, the key relationship you need with the plane is not to be under it, behind it or inspired by it. You need to be *in* it. . . . At its heart, the New Testament idea of being in Christ is something like that. What the New Testament is saying is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we become united to him. And we are in him, so that whatever is true of Jesus is also true of us.

From One Forever the Transforming Power of being in Christ pp 34-35 by Rory Shiner.

(e) (i) What have prostitutes got to do with this?

(ii) If you have sex with a prostitute (or someone else) does that mean . . .

- you are one with her/him? Why/why not?

- you are married to her/him (see Gen 2:24)? Why/why not?

(iii) Should you extend Paul’s argument further than sex with prostitutes e.g. incest, pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex and homosexual sex? Why/why not?

(f) How does the rest of the world think about sexuality?
(Does “everything is permissible for me” ring a bell”?)

(g) Is casual sex ok as it doesn't hurt anyone else? Why/why not?

4. Take a look at how Joseph responds to sexual temptation (Gen 39:6-12).
What might fleeing sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:18) look like in our context?
(Consider avoiding certain films or TV programs as well as physical contact and the possibility of physical contact.)

5. (a) What is the motive that Paul gives for honouring God with our bodies (v 19)?

(b) What might it look like today for us to honour/glorify God with our bodies?

(c) In what ways can we consider our bodies 'temples of the Holy Spirit'?

6. (a) What was the main point of this passage?

(b) In verse 12 what did Paul mean by - "but not everything is beneficial"?

- "but I will not be mastered by anything"?

To finish

7. Consider the scenario of an unmarried Christian man and an unmarried Christian woman who have had sex. After initially regretting their actions the man says they have been united in body and so they should get married. The woman is not so sure. What do you think?

8. (a) Do you hear more about sexual sins than other sins (e.g. laziness or vanity) in church? Why/why not?

(b) Do you think verse 18 is justification for the church being fixated on sexual sins?

(c) Is sex outside of marriage worse than other sins? Why/why not?

Study 10, 1 Cor 7:1-16, marriage and singleness 1

Getting started

1. What does it mean to “fall in love”?

2. A survey of young men in the U.S. gave 10 reasons **not** to get married.
 1. Men can get sex without marriage.
 2. They can enjoy the benefits of having a wife by cohabiting rather than marrying.
 3. They want to avoid divorce and its financial risks.
 4. They want to wait until they are older to have children.
 5. They fear that marriage will require too many changes and compromises.
 6. They are still waiting for the perfect soul mate, and she hasn't appeared yet.
 7. They face few social pressures today to marry.
 8. They are reluctant to marry a woman who already has children.
 9. They want to own a house before they get a wife.
 10. They want to enjoy single life for as long as they possibly can.

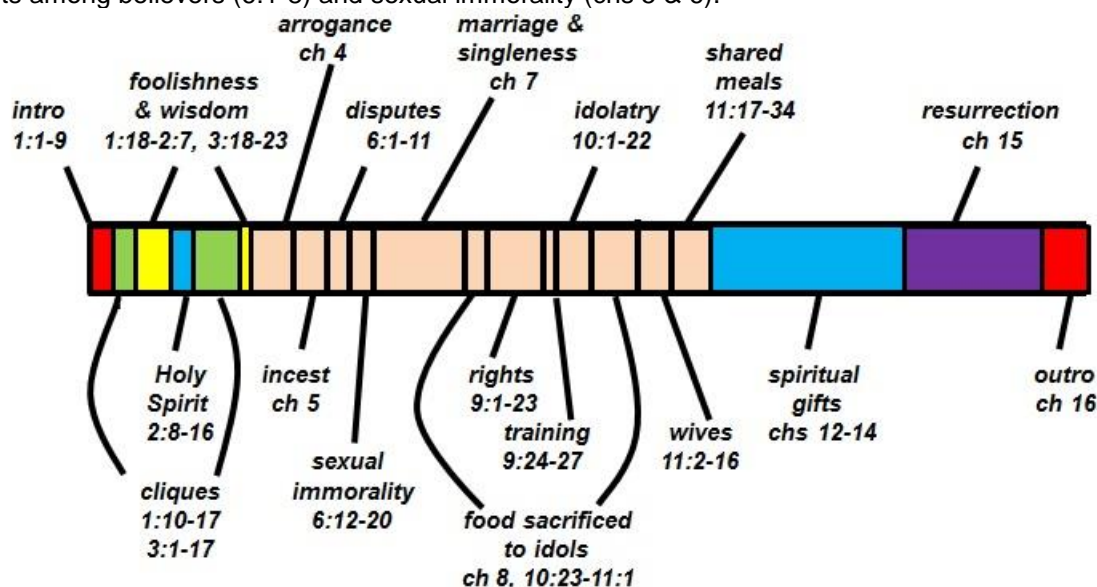
From Where is the Wise Man? Studies in 1 Corinthians 1-7 by Ashleigh Hooker 2004.

Give reasons **to** getting married.



The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8) and sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6).



Bible

3. Read 1 Cor 7:1-3.

NASB Now concerning the things about which you wrote, it is good for a man not to touch a woman. ² But because of immoralities, each man is to have his own wife, and each woman is to have her own husband. ³ The husband must fulfill his duty to his wife, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

Bentley Hart Now, concerning the matters of which you wrote: It is a good thing for a man not to touch a woman. ² But, on account of prostitution, let each man have a woman of his own, and let each woman have a man of her own. ³ Let the man render to the woman what is owed, and likewise also the woman to the man.

NIV Now for the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ² But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. ³ The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband.

ESV Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: "It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman." ² But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. ³ The husband should give to his wife her conjugal rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.

Good News A man does well not to marry. ² But because there is so much immorality, every man should have his own wife, and every woman should have her own husband. ³ A man should fulfill his duty as a husband, and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs.

Some [versions] say 'don't touch' others 'don't have sexual relations', others 'don't marry'. 'Touch' here is a Greek euphemism for sexual gratification. It probably refers to sex for the reason of one's own pleasure or passion, but does not include procreation.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 10 by Mark Wormell.

4. Read 1 Cor 7:1-9.

(a) In verse 3, what does it say and what does it not say?

(b) (i) Who does your body belong to (v 4, see also 1 Cor 6:13-20)?

(ii) Why was v 4 such a radical idea for the time?

(iii) Is it a radical idea for our time? Why/why not?

(c) (i) What reasons does Paul give for getting married?

(ii) Compare your answer with the answers you gave for Question 3.

(iii) If Paul's reasons seem shallow perhaps it is because he was dealing with a specific culture and a specific issue in the Corinthian church rather than taking a wider view. What would you say to people who argue that Paul's two reasons are the only two Biblical reasons for getting married?

(d) Paul considers that a mutually agreed time of prayer is a sufficient reason for a married couple to refrain sexually (v 5). (i) Are there other reasons that could be added to this list?

(ii) What are the implications for conversation between a husband and wife?

(e) (i) If and when you are sexually aroused by someone who is not your spouse, do you think of it as Satan's influence (v 5)? Why/why not?

(ii) Should you blame Satan if you sin sexually? Why/why not?

(iii) Do we ever accept the sexual sins of Christians because we don't really take sin seriously?

(f) How often should a married couple have sex? How would they know?

(g) Why is it good to stay unmarried (v 8)?

5. Read 1 Cor 7:10-16, also known as the **Pauline Privilege**.

(a) Paul variously gives a command ("ordinance" Bentley Hart) in verse 10 or a concession (v 6) and says it is his command in verse 12 but the Lord's command in verse 10. What's the difference?

(b) Should we always obey what Paul says?

OR

Should we take Paul's words as advice from a wise and godly person, giving consideration to the context and culture of the time?

Give reasons for your answer.

[W]here Paul had to hand actual sayings of Jesus, he explicitly quoted them. . . . 1 Corinthians was written before any of the Gospels and Paul would not necessarily have known more than a few of the sayings of Jesus. He certainly

appears actually to quote very few; if he knew any more than he quotes, it might be because he quotes only where the teaching of Jesus varied considerably from prevalent Jewish teaching; and on this particular matter of divorce, we know that the teaching of Jesus was utterly different from the rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai (the two most influential) and from the text of the Old Testament itself.

There is certainly no need, or justification, to drive a wedge between Paul's own advice and the actual teaching of Jesus, as has been the habit of some writers. The phrase in verse 12, *not the Lord*, is not intended to signify that Paul is saying anything unsympathetic, let alone contrary, to what the Lord himself would have said. He would certainly not regard his own words as unauthoritative and, whatever the flavour of the statement in 1 Cor 7:40 ('I think that I have the Spirit of God'), he is surely expecting to be received with more than mere respect. He was an apostle, whatever the Corinthians might have thought about his apostolic credentials.

From The Message of John by Bruce Milne pp 122-123.

- (c) What is Paul saying about staying with your spouse or leaving your spouse . . .
 - if husband and wife are believers (vv 10-11)?

- if either the husband or wife are unbelievers (vv 12-16)?

- In the past the church has used verses 10-11 to force wives to return to their husbands even if they are in abusive relationships. - What do you think about that policy?

- Does a more compassionate approach disobey Paul's teaching?

Why/why not?

- (d) How does Paul's teaching on divorce fit with Jesus' teaching on divorce (see Matt 19:9, Mark 10:2-12, Luke 16:18. For further reference see this article by Mike Paget <http://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2012/01/the-good-news-of-divorce/>)?

Jesus' teaching on **divorce**, for example, has been seen as a blanket injunction for all times. It is wrong. Full stop. But divorce today is very different from Jesus' day. Jesus' teaching on divorce (Matt. 5:31-32) has to be seen first and foremost in the context of protecting the weak and the powerless. In first-century Judea a woman could be divorced for virtually any reason. Deuteronomy allowed for a man to divorce his wife if he found 'something objectionable about her' (Deut. 24:1) and by first-century AD this catch-all phrase meant that a man could issue a bill of divorce for virtually any reason. Different rabbinical schools argued that it permitted a man to divorce his wife if she burned the dinner (Rabbi Hillel), or even if she were less attractive than another woman (Rabbi Akiba). Women, on the other hand, could only initiate divorce if their husband was impure in some way. We can observe this in action. Josephus divorced his wife because he was 'not pleased with her behaviour', even though she was the mother of his three children. He subsequently went up in the world and married a Cretan Jew 'of eminent parents'. So Jesus' injunction — that divorce is only permissible in the case of adultery — not only protects women, but goes way beyond the restrictions of rabbinical Judaism.

From The Wrong Messiah p 125-126 by Nick Page.

- (e) (i) What do you think Paul means by the believing partner making holy the unbelieving partner (v 14)?

(ii) What do you think Paul means by the believing partner making the children holy (v 14)?

6. How would you respond to someone who said that sex is a private matter and shouldn't be talked about with others at church?
7. (a) What steps can you take to make it easier to stay faithful to the one you are married to/might one day be married to?

(b) How can you help others in this regard?
8. What are the spiritual benefits for children of Christian parents?
9. In marriages between believers and unbelievers, what is Paul's overriding concern?
10. How do relationships between believers and unbelievers create problems?

Study 11, 1 Cor 7:17-24, circumcision & slavery

Getting started

1. What image does the word “slavery” put in your mind?



The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6) and marriage and singleness (7:1-16).

Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 7:17-24.
 - (a) Why does Paul shift focus from marriage (7:1-16) to circumcision and then slavery?
 - (b) What connects all of these topics (see Galatians 3:26-29)?
3. 3 times in this passage Paul says to remain in the situation to which God has called them. Why is this so important (see 1 Cor 7:29-31)?
4.
 - (a) What do you think it would have been like to be a Jewish Christian hearing Paul say (v 19) ‘circumcision is nothing’?
 - (b) What would it have been like for a Christian from a Gentile background hearing Paul say ‘uncircumcision is nothing’?
 - (c) What values and assumptions is Paul challenging here?
 - (d) If circumcision and uncircumcision are unimportant, what *is* important?

Paul is making the point that, in Christ, our old identities and social markers (indeed, our social divisions) are done away with, or rendered unimportant. A Corinthian Christian should feel no pride or shame or spiritual hindrance because of his circumcised or uncircumcised state, and neither should a slave or free person. This is because their old

ways of conceiving of identity and standing have been superseded by their new standing in Jesus.

If you think back to what we know about the Corinthian church's enthrallment with prestige and spiritual superiority, this would probably have been quite challenging for some (as well as encouraging for others). The social differences which they hold dear are unimportant to God.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 11 by Erica Hamence.

5. How can Paul say that slaves should stay as they are? Should this be understood as an endorsement of slavery in general?

If not, what in this passage leads you away from that conclusion?

Slavery

The submission that Peter speaks of in this passage [1 Pet 2:13-25] is in part the submission of slaves to their masters. We must be careful as we read about this, for it is easy to form false impressions. The slave-master relationship in the ancient world was not really the same as our employee-employer relationships, although it was not entirely different either. Nor was slavery always what we associate with it. When we think of slavery, we might think of black slaves taken by force from Africa and put to work on American cotton plantations, and subjected to brutal oppression. Or we might think of Charleton Heston, chained in his Roman galley, pulling on the oars while the brutal centurion with the bald head and no shirt prowls up and down dispensing lashes with his whip.

In Bible times, slavery was a varied social structure. Doubtless there were slaves of the Charleton Heston variety, but there were also many slaves who enjoyed considerable freedom and responsibility. These latter sort were not harshly treated with whips and chains. Their place in the society and economy of their day was not entirely different from other social structures that we do not call 'slavery'—such as the serfdom of the middle ages, or perhaps the company man for whom the company provides not only a job, but in return for his lifelong loyalty and labour provides also for housing, schooling and retirement.

In particular, slavery was often a means of dealing with bankruptcy in the ancient world. If you owed money that you could not repay, you might be forced to be a slave to that person for a certain period to work off the debt. It was a normal and accepted part of the social fabric, and thus we find both Old and New Testaments providing instructions for the humane and godly treatment of slaves, and in turn how slaves should act towards their masters.

Even so, the Bible still regards slavery as an undesirable state to be avoided where possible.

From Homeward Bound (1 Peter) by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne pp 54-55.

I think in the New Testament we see that we see a different kind of slavery being highlighted, and a different kind of freedom being championed. A free person who is a nonetheless a slave to sin is worse off than a slave who knows Jesus. A slave who knows Jesus is freed from their sin, and is given a new status as 'brother' (1 Tim. 6:2) and 'the Lord's freedman' (1 Cor. 7:22). A Christian who is not a slave to an earthly master is nonetheless a slave of Christ's (1 Cor. 7:24). So then, the contrast is not between slavery, which is bad, and freedom, which is good. Instead, the contrast is between *to whom* or *to what* we are slaves, and *for whom* and *for what* we are freed.

Paul's point is that, in a Christian community, our identity and status in Jesus is more important than any other category we might fall into. There is no category you might belong to which makes you better or worse spiritually. . . .

Consider that they may have wanted to improve their standing in society or the church:

- They may have spiritualised one state over another, thinking that they were able to serve or honour God better that way (remember Paul's critique of 'those mutilators of the flesh' in Philippians 3:2-3, those who argued that Christians must be circumcised in order to be truly Christian).
- They may have looked down on those who were different from them.
- Ciampa and Rosner say: 'Paul is not against making any change to one's circumstances, as v 21b proves. Rather, he is responding to the opinion that such changes will enhance one's calling to live as a Christian.'

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 11 by Erica Hamence.

6. Circumcision and slavery might not feel like very significant issues for us as Christians today.
(a) What modern-day equivalents to these social dividers can you think of?

(b) What things might Christians think of as more or less spiritual?

(c) What divisions keep us from seeing one another as brothers and sisters?

To finish

7. (a) In what sense are Christians slaves?



(b) What challenges you about this idea?

(c) In what sense are Christians free?

(d) What challenges you about this idea?

Study 12, 1 Cor 7:25-40, marriage & singleness 2

Getting started

1. Think of your favourite subject at school or the course you studied at TAFE or uni.
(a) How much work did you do?



- (b) How enthusiastic were you?



Compare this with how much time and effort you spend on things of God like studying the Bible, prayer, church, worship, fellowship, good works etc.

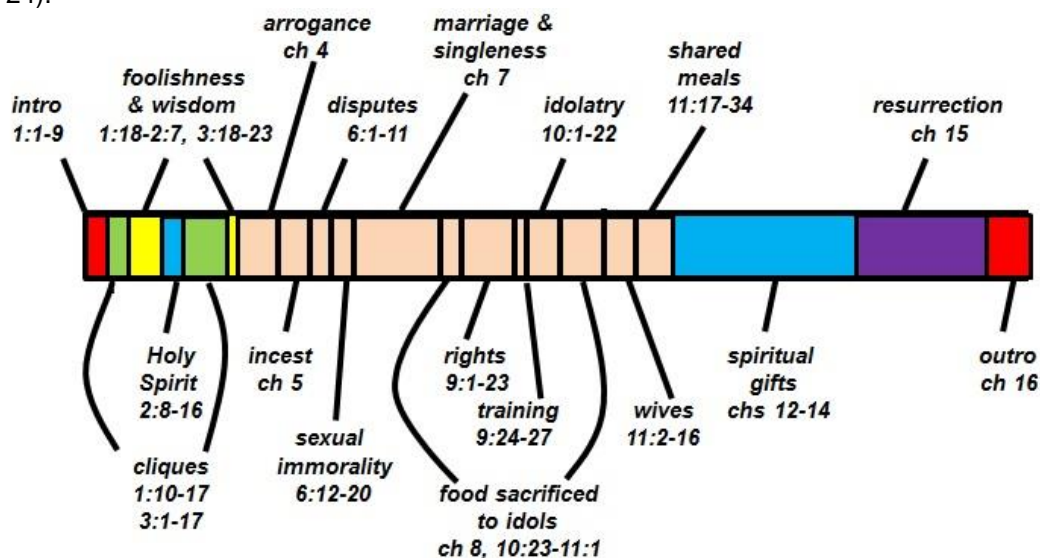
- (c) How does it compare?

- (d) How enthusiastic are you?

- (e) If you are married is it easier or harder to be serving the Lord, than when you were single? Why/why not?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (7:1-16), circumcision and status (7:17-24).



Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 7:25-40.

“Virgins” in verse 25 and following means young women of marriageable age, usually without sexual experience. In his context Paul is probably thinking of young betrothed women who are questioning whether to go through with their marriages in light of pressure from some groups who think it is intrinsically more holy to resist sexual desire. It seems the Corinthians have asked Paul about it, and may have assumed his support for the anti-sex position given his own situation as an unmarried man.

“Troubles” in verse 28: Some commentators think this refers to particular persecution, culminating in the destruction of the temple in AD69 (shortly after this letter was written). Others think he is speaking more generally about the end times as we wait for Jesus’ return.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 12.

(a) Do you think Paul’s advice gives preference to married life or singleness? Give reasons for your answer.

(b) What might be “the present crisis” (v 26)?

(c) Why do you think Paul says people should “remain as they are” (vv 24, 26, 27-31)?

(d) How should the fact that “the time is short” and “the world is passing away” change one’s attitude to singleness (vv 29-30)?

(e) Paul is calling us to hold loosely to this world because time is short and this world won’t last (vv 29-31). How might this look like in practical terms in our lives?

(f) What advantage does a single person have when it comes to serving the Lord (vv 32-35)?

Compare your answer to your answer to Q 1 (e).

(g) (i) What do these verses teach those considering marriage?

(ii) What other factors might come into it?

3. (a) Considering the discussion on divorce from Study 10, is a woman bound to her husband as long as he lives (v 39)?

(b) What if he abuses her?

(c) Why do you think Paul does not phrase this the other way around i.e. a man is bound to his wife as long as she lives?

4. Why should a Christian marry someone who “belongs to the Lord” (v 39)?

To finish

5. Paul is writing into a situation where some people were over-emphasising the benefits of singleness. Think about your own church culture: does it overemphasise marriage or singleness?

What could you change to have a more balanced Biblical view?

6. (a) What might ‘undivided devotion’ (v 35) look like in day-to-day life?

(b) In reality, is it true that single people have this undivided devotion? Why/why not?

(c) How can we help married people be more concerned about the Lord’s affairs’?

7. There are many good gifts that God gives his people, marriage, sex and even the gift of singleness are some of these. How do we find the right balance of delighting in these good gifts, but not becoming engrossed in them (i.e. being ‘in the world, but not of it’)?

8. How does society view those who are single and not in a sexual relationship?

9. How would you encourage someone who currently feels deeply discontented in his or her singleness?

Study 13, 1 Cor ch 8, food sacrificed to idols

Getting started

1. Without any false humility and giving reasons for your answers, do you think you are . . .
- optimistic or pessimistic?



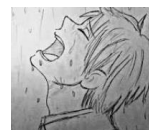
- laid back or uptight?



- enthusiastic or calm?



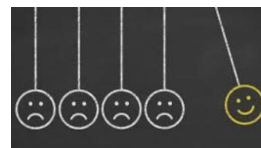
- emotional or unemotional?



- a young Christian or a mature Christian?



- a conservative Christian or a radical Christian?



- a strong Christian or a weak Christian?



The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6) and marriage and singleness (ch 7).

Bible

"Now about food sacrificed to idols." [1 Cor 8:1] I don't suppose many Australian Christians would consider this a live issue for them today. However, there are important principles about Christian freedom, conscience and concern for fellow Christians.

Idolatry pervaded the whole of life in the Greek and Roman world. Their social gathering, feasts, administration of justice, recreation and government, were all more or less connected with religious ceremonies, as it still is today in many parts of Asia, South America, Africa and multicultural Sydney. You couldn't even buy some meat from the butcher for your evening meal without it having been offered to some idol before it was ready for sale. How should a Christian respond to this? Some had no scruples at this point: others thought it sinful to eat of such sacrifices under any circumstances. It is into this situation Paul writes.

From Christian Freedom and True Spirituality Bible studies on 1 Corinthians 8-14 by Stephen Gibson.

2. Read 1 Cor 8:1-3.
(a) Is there anything wrong with knowledge?

(b) Why is love better?

(c) Have you heard of someone being called a "know-all"?

(i) What does it mean?

(ii) What is the problem with "know-alls"?

(iii) How does a know-all affect the people around him/her?

3. Read 1 Cor 8:4-8.

(a) Who is God?

(b) Who or what are idols?

(c) What is it that not everyone knows (v 7)?

(d) (i) What is your conscience (v 7)?

(ii) How does your conscience affect you?

(iii) What is - a weak conscience?

- a strong conscience?

My understanding of **conscience** is mostly negative. You get a "guilty" conscience when you've done something wrong. Or something "weighs heavily" on your conscience when you have done something questionable. You never seem to get a happy conscience when you do something good. You might feel good about it but you don't express it as now having an "ecstatic" conscience (as opposed to a "guilty" conscience). But you can "ease" your conscience by doing something that makes up for whatever gave you a guilty conscience. So it's not all negative.

We've had a morality most of our lives and conscience is where our morality effects our feelings about things. Since

we've had a morality for so long it is very hard to change though becoming a Christian will slowly change our morality as we learn more and more about the Way of Christ. As our morality changes so does our conscience, perhaps making it more sensitive - perhaps feeling guilty about some things that we didn't feel guilty about before we became Christian.

At church there is so much talk about sin (e.g. the Lord's Supper, most sermons and continually asking for forgiveness for sins in our prayers) that our consciences are continually being topped up with an awareness of our sins. (One friend of mine got sick of going to church because it felt like everything was sin.) It's no wonder most Christians are pre-occupied with sin.

You can try to move ahead and be more concerned about grace, say, than sin, but it is very difficult because our consciences have been so trained over the years and every week at church. The fact that we have a word, "conscience", for the part of our consciousness that contains feelings of guilt shows how pre-occupied we are with sin and guilt. We don't have a word for the part of our consciousness that contains the joy of grace, for instance.

I'm not suggesting we run amuck and sin with gay abandon. Paul poses that idea in Rom 6:1 and answers it in the verses that follow. But we can choose to do things. Things that are out of the norm, things that may be a little "sus" to our strict right/wrong way of thinking, things that may prick our consciences. But we can choose to ignore our consciences and give things a go that we otherwise might not try.

As Christians our conscience governs our feelings and keeps us in slavery to guilt. We are in slavery to sin because we keep doing it and we are in slavery to guilt because we keep feeling it. We will probably never leave that slavery behind because our conscience has been trained that way all our lives.

When Paul says we have been freed from slavery to sin (Rom 6, Gal 4) by Jesus' death and resurrection we would probably all agree that we have been freed from getting the punishment we deserve for our sin. Maybe we get more freedom than that. Rom 12:2 tells us we are free to a new way of thinking and living according to God's will. Rom 6:11 says we are dead to that old way of sin and, I suggest, that old way of thinking about sin which involves our consciences, and alive to Christ.

Paul talks a lot about freedom and slavery in Gal 5. On the slavery side he puts law (vv 2-4, 18), the flesh (vv 16, 19, 24) and sin (v 19). On the freedom side he puts grace (v 4), righteousness (v 5), love (vv 13-14) and the Spirit (vv 16-18, 25). The slavery side is the old way and the freedom side is the new way. Paul does something similar in Rom 8 when we talk about old and new mindsets. On one side is law (v3), flesh (vv 3-5, 12-13) and the mind set on the flesh (vv 5-9), death (v 10) and fear (v 15) and on the other side is the Spirit (vv 2, 4-6, 9, 11, 13-15), life (vv 6, 10-11, 13), peace (v 6), righteousness (v 10), sonship (vv 14-16) and heirs (v 17). We are to reject the slavery side and the old mindset and choose freedom and a new mindset. We can choose to live this new way but I'm not sure if our consciences will change.

(e) When is a weak conscience defiled (v 7)?

(f) Is it ok to eat meat sacrificed to idols? Why/why not?

4. Read 1 Cor 8:9-13.

(a) What do you think it means by "stumbling-block" (v 9) and "destroyed" (v 11)?

(b) When might it be wrong to eat food sacrificed to an idol, even though we know that idols are meaningless?

Most Christians in Pakistan will avoid eating pork, as do their Muslim neighbours. Though genuine Christians they would be stunned and possibly offended to know that most Australian Christians enjoy bacon, ham and sausage. .

Wesley and early Methodists encouraged their new converts (Welsh coal miners and Northern English industrial workers) to avoid alcohol. Some Christians who work in Papua New Guinea or among Aboriginal communities today may do the same.

From Christian Freedom and True Spirituality Bible studies on 1 Corinthians 8-14 by Stephen Gibson.

(c) Were you ever told as a Christian to avoid certain foods, drink or other activities (e.g. dancing, wearing make-up, jewellery, movies or playing cards)?

(i) Do you still have a tender conscience about these things?

(ii) What would you do if you were around other people who thought these things were sinful?

(iii) What would a know-all do (check your answers to Question 2)?

(iv) How serious is this matter (vv 11-12)?

To finish

5. How does this chapter shed a new light on what freedom means for a Christian (refer back to Study 11)?

6. (a) People generally don't like to be referred to as weak (v 11). Are Christians any different? Why/why not?

(b) Later Paul delights and even boasts in his weaknesses (2 Cor 12:9-10).
Should Christians today do the same? Why/why not?

Study 14, Gospel 1

Getting started

1. (a) How do you think non-Christians would define the Christian religion?



- (b) Would Christians agree with that definition? Why/why not?

2. Before looking deeply into the word “gospel” what do you think the gospel is?

Bible

The word “gospel” is first used in 1 Corinthians in 1:17 and gospel is mentioned 7 times in ch 9. By talking to different groups you may have found some confusion amongst Christians as to what the gospel is. The gospel is a vital key to understanding the New Testament so it is important to get it right. Before working through ch 9 we will use this study to get a clear idea of what “gospel” means.

The word “gospel” = good news/tidings has its origins in Isaiah when God’s people had been defeated, their cities destroyed and all but the poorest people were taken into exile into Babylon. To that situation Isaiah speaks the following good news:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

Isaiah 40:9-10

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’

Isaiah 52:7

3. (a) From the three passages above what is the good news?

For Israel, the good news is as much about God’s kingly rule over the world (Is 40:9-10) as it is about his forgiveness (Is 40:1-2). The gospel proclaims both a Saviour who pardons wrong and a King who puts things right. From the 2012 sermon series on Isaiah at St Andrews, Roseville by John Dickson.

God’s people returned from exile to live again in the land God had promised them. But it was tough going and things didn’t turn out as well as they had expected. “The Jews of Jesus’ day were sick of being losers. Nearly five centuries had passed since the last of the Old Testament prophets, and during that period, with a few exceptions, Israel had suffered nothing but humiliation at the hands of the Gentiles (first the Greeks and then the Romans). . . . Into this

mixed environment of messianic hope strode Jesus, proclaiming that the time had finally come - the kingdom of God was at hand."

From The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) p 11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

Mark 1:14-15.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4:16-21

(b) From the two passages above what is the good news?

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

1 Cor 15:1-4

(c) What is the gospel = good news in the passage above?

(d) How does it fit in with the previous passages on good news?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Rom 1:16

The idea of '**good news**', for which an older English word is '**gospel**', had two principal meanings for first-century Jews. First, with roots in Isaiah, it meant the news of YHWH's long-awaited victory over evil and rescue of his people. Second, it was used in the Roman world for the accession, or birthday, of the Emperor. Since for Jesus and Paul the announcement of God's inbreaking kingdom was both the fulfilment of prophecy and a challenge to the world's present rulers, 'gospel' became an important shorthand for both the message of Jesus himself and the apostolic message about him. Paul saw this message as itself the vehicle of God's saving power (Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The four canonical 'gospels' tell the story of Jesus in such a way as to bring out both these aspects (unlike some other so-called 'gospels' circulated in the second and subsequent centuries, which tended both to cut off the scriptural and Jewish roots of Jesus' achievement and to inculcate a private spirituality rather than confrontation with the world's rulers). Since in Isaiah this creative, life-giving good news was seen as God's own powerful word (40:8, 55:11), the early Christians could use 'word' or 'message' as another shorthand for the basic Christian proclamation.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright pp 215-216.

4. (a) What is grace?



(b) How could you give grace to people?

Patricia was a mother of a well-off English family living in Fiji in the 1950s. They had servants which was customary in that context. Patricia discovered that one servant had been stealing. Her first reaction was to sack her but Patricia had recently become a Christian and she wanted to think through what believing in God's grace meant to her life. She prayed about it and reasoned that her servant had stolen because she was poor and needed the money to feed her family. Patricia decided that God would not want her to sack her servant but to give her a raise which was what she did. The servant was astounded and became a devoted household maid. Patricia's act of grace was an overflow of the grace she had received from God and it was life changing for her servant. Later Patricia led her to faith in Jesus Christ.

From a eulogy by Tony Golsby-Smith at his mother's funeral.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve. We deserve death and God's judgement but, because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection we get what we don't deserve - life, the Holy Spirit, fellowship with God, church, gifts . . . think of all the other things God gives us. But it doesn't stop there. Like Patricia, we can give grace as it overflows from the grace we have received from God. We can do grace/give grace, and it may be life changing for the people who receive it.

5. (a) How does Paul's greeting ("grace and peace" 1 Cor 1:3) sum up the gospel?

(b) Is this more than "just a greeting"?

(c) Would "grace and peace" or "guilt and pressure" be a better description of your experience with church?

Why?

"Grace" is the free gift of God's love, extended to us, though totally undeserved on our part. It is God's grace which stands at the heart of the gospel (see Ephesians 2:8-9), and without it we would all remain condemned. "Peace" speaks of the reconciliation which we have with God in Christ - and the implication of that peace, found in the gospel, is that we then strive for peace (reconciliation) with others (see Col. 1:20, 2 Cor 5:18-21, Eph 2:14-18).

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

To finish

6. When did the gospel first make sense to you?

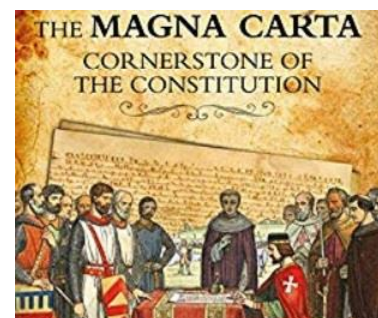
7. Wikipedia's definition of religion: Religion is a cultural system of behaviours and practices, mythologies, world views, sacred texts, holy places, ethics, and societal organisation that relate humanity to what an anthropologist has called "an order of existence".

Where would the gospel fit in with a definition of the Christian religion?

Study 15, 1 Cor 9:1-23, rights

Getting started

1. (a) Can you think of countries that have a bill of rights?



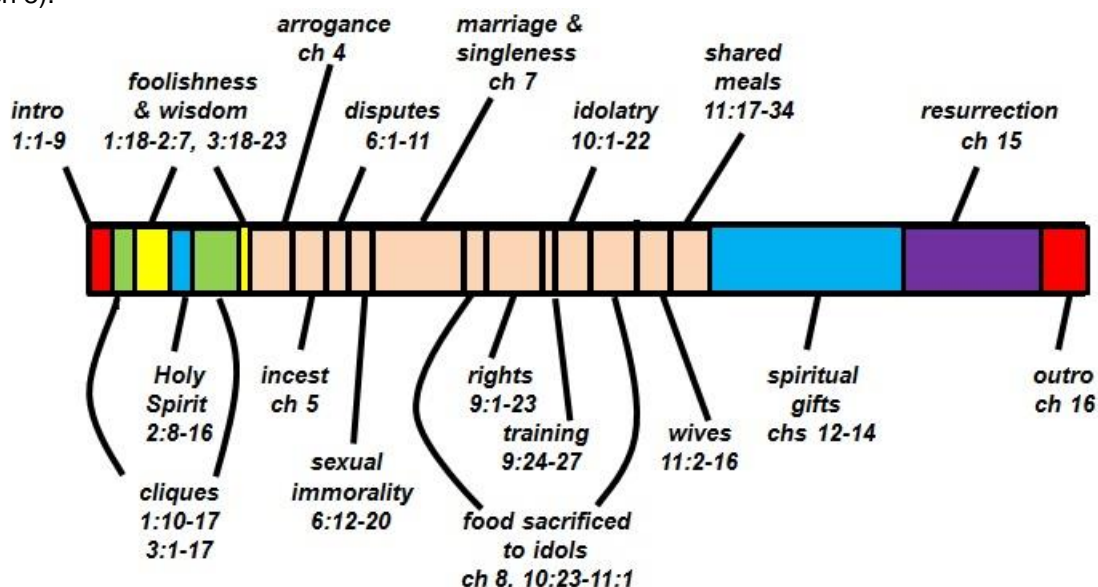
- (b) What sort of rights does a bill of rights specify?

2. Does Australia have a bill of rights? Why/why not?

3. What rights do you have?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7) and food sacrificed to idols (ch 8).



Bible

4. Read 1 Cor 9:1-2.
(a) What is an apostle (see also 2 Cor 12:12 and Acts 26:12-20)?

(b) Why was Paul an apostle to the Corinthian church but perhaps not to others?

(c) What authority did an apostle have (see Acts 2:42, ch 15)?

(d) What authority do the words of the apostles have over you now?

(e) Are there any apostles today? Why/why not?

(f) In what sense are we an “apostolic church” according to the Nicene Creed?

Nicene Creed

I believe in one God, the Father almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all things visible and invisible. I believe in one Lord Jesus Christ, the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages. God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father; through him all things were made. For us men and for our salvation he came down from heaven, and by the Holy Spirit was incarnate of the Virgin Mary, and became man. For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father. He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead and his kingdom will have no end. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets. **I believe in one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church.** I confess one Baptism for the forgiveness of sins and I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come. Amen.

(g) What authority do the ministers at your church have?

(h) What authority do the ministers at your church have over you (see Heb 13:17)?

Listen to these sound bites from sermons by John Dickson from St Andrews, Roseville:
1/7/2012 MinistersAuthorityHeb13JohnDickson01072012.mp3 and
May 2013 MinistersAuthority02babyBathwaterDicksonActs2_36to47.mp3

5. Read 1 Cor 9:3-14.

The Old Testament law being referred to in verse 9 is from Deuteronomy 25:4 and concerns farm animal welfare. An animal being used to tread out grain would often be muzzled so that it could not eat the grain as it goes. The Old Testament law says, in essence, “no, let the poor animal have its share of the food too!”

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 14.

(a) What rights does Paul insist he and the other apostles have?

(b) What arguments does Paul use to support his case?

(c) What is the obligation of a church to its pastor and leaders (see vv 7-14)?

(d) What do you think people are judging Paul about (v 3)?

6. Read 1 Cor 9:12-18.

(a) Why doesn't Paul claim his rights?

(b) What does the gospel have to do with it?

(c) Paul talks here about the rights that he has but chooses not to use. What do you think he wants the Corinthians to learn from him in this?

7. Read 1 Cor 9:19-23.

(a) "I have become all things to all people" (v 22). What does Paul mean?

(b) Why is Paul so flexible?

(c) How free is Paul?

(d) What does it mean to "share in the blessings" of the gospel (v 23)?

(e) How flexible are you willing to be for the sake of the gospel?

To finish

8. (a) It seems in many situations that "if you don't stand up for your rights, who will?" What is it about the gospel which makes giving up rights voluntarily a good idea?

(b) What rights do we find particularly hard to give up for the sake of the gospel?

(c) Paul talks about winning people to Christ "by all possible means" (v 22). Is there a limit to what we can or should do to win people for Christ?

Study 16, 1 Cor 9:24-10:22, training and idolatry

Getting started

1. Why are many Christians so ignorant of the Old Testament?



- Multiple choice
- (a) It is only for Jewish people.
 - (b) It has no relevance today.
 - (c) It is too hard to understand.
 - (d) The God we believe in is different to the one described in the Old Testament.

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (ch 8) and Paul's rights and apostleship (ch 9).

Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 9:24-27.

The Olympic Games lasted a full five days and saw running, jumping and throwing events plus boxing, wrestling, pankration and chariot racing. At least 40,000 spectators would have packed the stadium each day at the height of the Games' popularity. All athletes competed naked. Corporal punishment awaited those guilty of a false start on the track. Wrestlers and pankration (a sort of mixed martial art which combined boxing and wrestling) competitors fought covered in oil. There were only two rules in the pankration – no biting and no gouging. Boxers were urged to avoid attacking the on-display male genitals. Boxers who could not be separated could opt for *klimax*, a system whereby one fighter was granted a free hit and then vice-versa – a toss of a coin decided who went first. There were no points, no time limits and no weight classifications in the boxing. Athletes in the combat sports had to indicate their surrender by raising their index fingers – at times they died before they could do this.

Isthmian Games were named after the Isthmus of Corinth (see map on page 4), where they were held. The Isthmian Games were held both the year before and the year after the Olympic Games. These games were comparable to the Olympic Games but also included musical and poetical contests, in which women were allowed to compete. All the other events were for men only. The victors' prize, originally a crown of dry wild celery, was changed to a pine wreath in Roman times, the pine being sacred to Poseidon. Celebration of the festival died out when Christianity became dominant in the 4th century AD.

- (a) What is Paul talking about when he uses this games metaphor?



- (b) For Christians - what is the prize/crown?

- what sort of training would be involved?

- what would running aimlessly mean?

- could you lose the race or be disqualified? Why/why not?

- how is your goal different from that of an athletic contest?

3. Read 1 Cor 10:1-22.

(a) What is Paul alluding to?

(b) Paul was writing to Gentile Christians in the 1st century.

(i) Why does he talk about the children of Israel as their forefathers (v 1)?

(ii) Who are our spiritual forefathers?

(c) How were “our forefathers” baptised?

(d) What is meant by “they drank from the spiritual rock . . . and that rock was Christ” (v 4)?

(e) Having been rescued by God most of the Israelites failed to please God (v 5).

How many from the 1st generation actually reached the Promised Land (see Num 14:30)?

(f) Having made a Christian commitment in the past, how might we fail to please God?

(g) (i) How does this relate to the Corinthians?

(ii) What is Paul's warning (v 11) to the Corinthians?

(h) Is Paul's emphasis on sexual immorality, idolatry or sin in general? Give reasons for your answer.

The link to the Old Testament narrative is a pretty clear indictment of the Corinthians – the desert wanderings of the Israelites (including the idolatry of the Golden Calf - Ex ch 32, the desire for the food of Egypt - Num ch 11, and the immorality with the Moabite daughters - Num ch 25) hit pretty close to home for the Corinthians who had issues with idolatry, covetousness, immorality and more.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 15.

(i) (i) Do verses 1-12 suggest you *can* lose your salvation? Why/why not?

(ii) Does verse 13 suggest you *can't* lose your salvation? Why/why not?

(iii) Which do you most need to hear – the warning of verse 12 or the encouragement of verse 13?

Give reasons for your answer.

4. Read 1 Cor 10:14-22 again.

(a) Is this about the Lord's Supper/Holy Communion/the Eucharist? Why/why not?

The question is whether Paul is now referring to a Christian sacramental meal, which he contrasts with the pagan meals. Many take it that way and, if we had other evidence that such meals were part of early Christian practice, it would make sense. But it is equally possible that these words identify the Christian meals in Acts, not sacramental meals in any sense. Paul would then be pointing to the reality of Christian unity and fellowship, expressed in eating and drinking together, and based on our sharing in Christ's death. The language he uses may be based on the Passover, but his point is that the "cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks" is not so much a literal cup as our "fellowship in the blood of Christ"; "the bread we break" is not so much the literal bread, but our "fellowship in the body of Christ". Therefore, our Christian meals, which express our fellowship that is based in Christ's death, bind us together and are an expression of our unity in Christ. We cannot deduce from this passage that the Corinthians thought of their meals as re-enactments of the Last Supper, nor that they necessarily gave symbolic significance to the physical bread and cup.

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

(b) Why does Paul mention the Old Testament sacrifices (v 18)?

(c) How does this relate to participation in the feasts at pagan temples (vv 14 and 18-20)?

(d) Why should a Christian avoid getting involved in these activities (vv 20-22, 1 Cor 8:10 and Deut 32:16-17)?

(e) What does it mean to "arouse the Lord's jealousy" (v 22)?

(f) Re-read 1 Cor ch 8. What does this section add to the question of whether they can eat food sacrificed to idols?

Despite what Paul has said earlier about the Christian freedom to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols, he now draws the line on public participation in idol feasts.

From Christian Freedom and True Spirituality Bible studies on 1 Corinthians 8-14 by Stephen Gibson.

(g) Does idolatry disqualify Christians? Why/why not?

5. (a) What is your most valued possession and why is it of such great value to you?

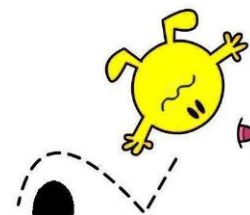
(b) Would you call this possession an idol?



(c) What does it mean to “worship” something or someone?

To finish

6. (a) What things in your Christian journey have unsettled or threatened your commitment to Christ?



(b) What did you do?

7. What things in your Christian journey have helped you stand firm in Christ?



Study 17, 1 Cor 10:23-11:1, food sacrificed to idols 2

Getting started

1. What are you thinking about when you first get to church?

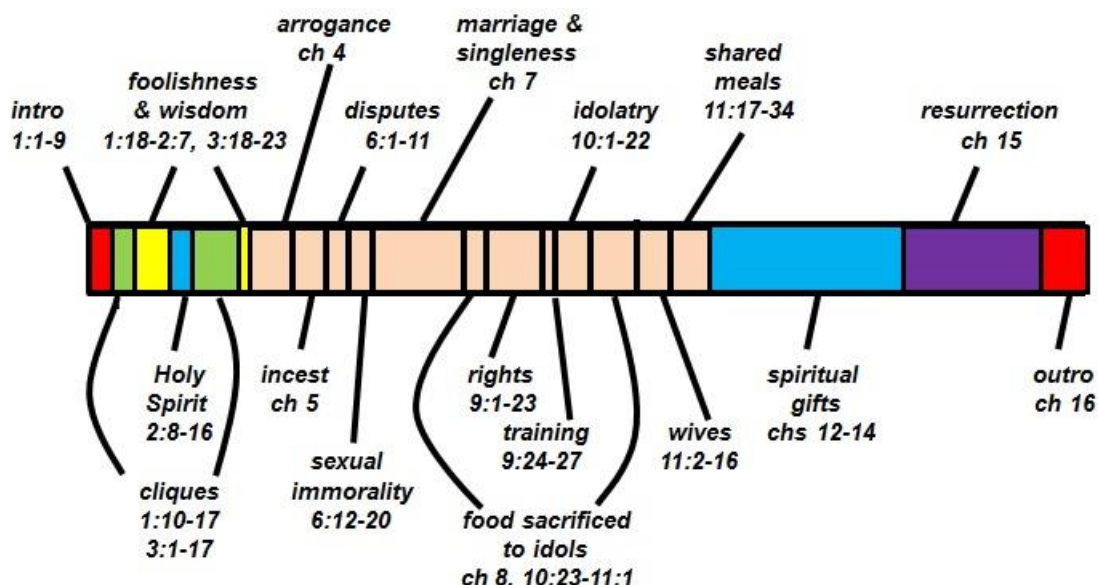


For example

- where are my friends?
- what's the latest news/gossip?
- am I on a roster today?
- who is preaching?
- how long before it's over?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (ch 8), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9) and idolatry (ch 10).



Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 and 1 Cor 6:12-20.

1 Cor 10:23

²³ "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible" - but not everything is constructive. NIV

²³ "All things are lawful," but not all things are helpful. "All things are lawful," but not all things build up. ESV

²³ All things are lawful, but not all things are profitable. All things are lawful, but not all things edify. NASB

²³ All things are lawful - but not all things are expedient; all things are lawful - but not all edify. Bentley Hart

The words at the beginning of 1 Cor 10:23 are the same as those at the beginning of 1 Cor 6:12 where Paul wrote about sexual immorality. It was probably a phrase common to the Corinthian culture or the Corinthian Christian sub-culture.

(a) What do you think “Everything is permissible” = “All things are lawful” means in the Corinthian context?

(b) How does Paul modify the idea in - 1 Cor 6:12?

- 1 Cor 10:23?

(c) How do these modifications apply to - sexual immorality in 6:12-20?

- food sacrificed to idols in 10:23-11:1?

3. Re-read 1 Cor 10:23-11:1.

(a) When *can* you eat meat sold in the meat market?



(b) When *can't* you eat meat sold in the meat market?

(c) Verse 26 quotes Ps 24:1 “The earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it”. How does this support Paul’s argument that you can eat meat in good conscience?

Paul is adamant that Christians can have no part in eating meat *in the temple* (1 Cor 10:19-21). However this case study in chapter 10:23-11:1 concerns meat which has potentially come from the temple but is now for sale in the marketplace (in “plain packaging”, so to speak, without any explicit link to idol worship). It is highly likely that much of the meat you’d buy in the market had come from the temple. And Paul himself may have been seen eating meat from the market. But for Paul there is no danger of idolatry here.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 16 by Andrew Judd.

(d) Give an answer to the question in verse 29.

(e) Give an answer to the question in verse 30.

(f) What does “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (v 31) mean in its context?

(g) What do Christians today mean by “So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God” (v 31)?

4. What are Paul’s motivations in 1 Cor 10:32-11:1?

5. (a) Does this passage add anything to the previous passage (1 Cor ch 8) on food sacrificed to idols?

 (b) Why do you think Paul comes back to this subject after dealing with it in ch 8?

6. What principles should guide us in making judgement calls in grey areas?

To finish

7. Consider this hypothetical. Two Christian housemates have moved into a small place in Redfern, Sydney. Chris does not drink alcohol, but Sam does. Sam has started keeping bottles of wine in the house to serve to dinner guests. Chris has repeatedly asked Sam not to store it in the house: “As someone who doesn’t drink alcohol, I find it offensive that you store this Demon’s Drink here.” How could both Sam and Chris apply 1 Cor 10:23-11:1 to their situation?

8. As a result of this study what *should* you be thinking about
 - when you first get to church?
(Compare your answer to Q1.)

 - when you interact with other people?

Study 18, 1 Cor 11:2-16, wives



Getting started

1. Which of these rules should we obey? Give reasons for your answer.

- (a) A woman must wear a hat at church.
- (b) A man must keep his hair short.
- (c) Eat 3 meals a day.
- (d) Don't lie.
- (e) Go to church every week.
- (f) Don't work on Sundays.
- (g) Give away 10% of your income (preferably to the church).
- (h) Pray every day.
- (i) Keep your promises.
- (j) Love your neighbour as yourself.



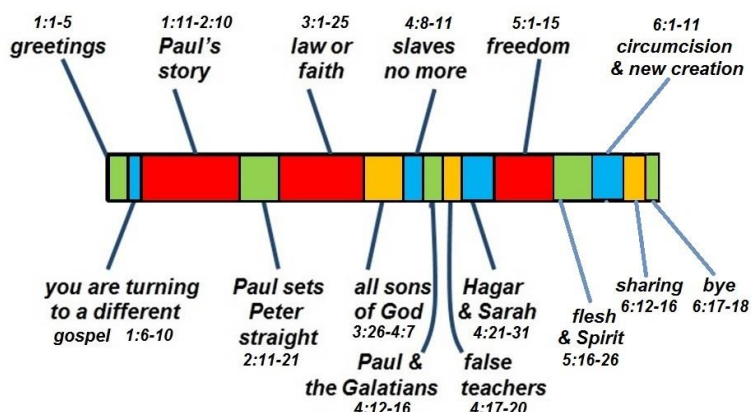
The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9) and idolatry (ch 10).

Bible

2. Read Gal 3:28. There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

Context: Galatians gives details about the problem of some Jewish Christians (the circumcision group) saying that faith in Jesus is not enough. You've got to keep the Jewish law as well, they say. Paul strongly argues against this and says that the law was to *lead us* to Jesus (Gal 3:24) and now we are no longer under the supervision of the law (Gal 3:25). In fact, Paul says, if you go back to the law you are going back to the slavery to all its rules and regulations (Gal ch 4), none of which will get you saved. Instead of being burdened by the law we have freedom in Christ (Gal ch 5).



How does the gospel effect how we see gender differences?

3. Read 1 Cor 11:2-16.

Keep in mind here that “man” and “husband” (and “woman” and “wife”) are the same word in the original language (“aner” means man/husband, and “gyne” means woman/wife) so context has to be the guide. . . .

Descriptions of the cultural setting are contested. However, there is little doubt the Greek culture was heavily skewed in favour of men. Only men had many legal rights, or could take roles in public life. Women could go out in public only if accompanied. Normally they could not speak to men other than their husbands or relatives. Wives were usually much younger than their husbands (married at 12-14 years old). They lived under the authority of their father until married, when the authority of the husband would take over. Women did not live alone, and needed the protection of a man both for physical safety and propriety.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 17 by Andrew Judd and Study 22 by Mark Wormell.

Paul is addressing a situation that had evidently arisen specifically in the church of Corinth, where certain women, when publically praying or prophesying in the assembly, removed their cover from their heads and exposed their hair. There have been many elaborate discussions of these verses (4-16), but both the issue and the energy with which Paul addresses it may be easily understood if one recall that he belonged to a culture of extreme modesty, in which a woman's full and lustrous head of hair was regarded as among the chief beauties of her sex; hence, a woman's uncovered head in public, and especially in places of worship, was seen both as an ostentation and as an ill-mannered provocation (rather as, today, immodest dress is discouraged in many places of worship). Paul's long, symbolic justifications for demanding more traditional behaviour from Corinthian Christian women are notoriously tortuous, and at times obscure. And his arguments from marital hierarchy (hardly a contentious issue in an age when—in addition to the force of universal cultural custom—society was unpoliced, households lived by a labour economy, and young girls were married to fully grown men) are no sooner introduced than they disintegrate in the solvent of his (for his time) quite remarkable sexual egalitarianism (vv 11-12). Finally, he is forced to appeal instead to a natural sense of propriety and seemliness, and his anxieties become quite clear when he explains (v 15) that, whereas a man adorns his head with a “wraparound” covering (peribolaion) and so should remove it in order to approach God in humility, a woman's adornment is a natural endowment that cannot be removed, and so should be covered if she too is to humble herself before God.

From The New Testament a translation by David Bentley Hart p 338.

What traditions (vv 2 and 16) does Paul expect to be maintained?

4. (a) Who is the head of whom (v 3)?

(b) Understanding the equality of status in the Trinity, how can Paul say “the head of Christ is God” (v 3)?

Paul stresses first of all the pattern of relationships which God has written into the Christian community: *The head of every man is Christ, the head of a woman is her husband, and the head of Christ is God* (3). In other words, the divine order is: God . . . Christ . . . husband . . . wife. The husband. is no more superior to his wife than God is superior to Christ. But as Christ chose to submit himself to his Father, so the wife should choose to submit herself to her husband. The word for *head* is *kephate*, which on rare occasions means the ruler of a community, but normally carries the sense of source or origin. It is used of the source of a river. So God is the source of Christ, Christ (as creator) is the source of man, and man (‘out of his side’ — Gn. 2:21ff.) is the source of woman (so 11:8). A third sense of *kephate* (apart from its literal meaning) is the determinative and directive sense, which is far closer to what we mean now by headship or leadership.

From The Message of 1 Corinthians by David Prior p 181.

There's more than a rib going on here [Gen 2:23] This word translated “rib” never elsewhere refers to anatomy. . . . The word is used quite often, not in anatomy but in architecture. In architecture it represents one side of a pair – the north side and the south side, this side of the temple and that side of the temple, this side of the altar and that

side of the of altar. It talks about sides where there are two of them. That means if God took one of Adam's sides he's cut him in half. . . . Now that would be fairly radical surgery but what makes us think that an Israelite would think of surgery? But it says God closed up the flesh [Gen 2:21]. That's true. Could you see the sutures? Yeah but God put Adam in a deep sleep. So did the Israelites know anything about anaesthesiology? No, they don't.

How is an Israelite thinking about this text? By looking at the Hebrew words we find information that might surprise us. The Hebrew word for a deep sleep is used 15-20 times and what we find is one of the significant things it refers to is when someone is in a visionary state. That is, they are in a deep sleep so that God can show them something in the spiritual realm so that God can show them something important.

Abraham, in chapter 15, slices up the animals and then there is deep sleep and he sees a vision – the torch in the oven passing through the pieces. This is nothing less significant than the ratification of the covenant, arguably the most important event in the Old Testament, and God shows it in a vision.

If Adam is in a deep sleep it's not so that he won't feel the surgical knife. It's rather so that God can show him a vision of something that is very important for him to understand. So the text tells us "that is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife and they become one flesh [Gen 2:24]. Why is it that someone would leave the closest biological relationship that they have – parents and children – in order to start up a new family with an unrelated stranger? How's that work? The text has an answer. It's because humanity – this is not talking about you as an individual, this is corporate identity which is how they always think in the ancient world.

Corporate identity – humanity is halves of a whole. You leave your biological family and find a spouse. It's because you have this drive to that which you originally were. Halves of a whole. Humanity is gendered. Ontology trumps biology. You're going to return to your roots. And so when it says they become one flesh this is not a statement of what marriage is. This is a statement that you are returning to that one flesh that is the origins of humanity in terms of who you are as people.

Is this just true of Adam and Eve? Of course not. It's true of everybody. That's the nature of the statement. It's true of everybody. So it's archetypal. Formed from dust – true of us all. Woman from man – true of us all. Originally one flesh – true of us all. That doesn't say that if you decide to be single or you end up single, you are out of kilter. No, this is not about individuals. This is about humanity. This is about our identity.

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

(c) Is this a statement (v 3) about the relationship between men and women in general, or specifically about husbands and their wives?

(d) Is this the way today? Why/why not?

The idea there [Gen 2:18 The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him."] is that Eve is an ally of Adam's doing these priestly roles in sacred space. When it describes her as a help mate that is not an inferior role. In the Bible the most common individual that is a helper is God. So we know that is not an inferior position. So it doesn't mean the woman is inferior because she's a helper. Likewise, it doesn't mean she's God! She's an ally in the task of preserving sacred space.

From a lecture series at Macquarie University on Genesis by John Walton, July 2013, sponsored by Gospel Conversations.

5. What involvement does Paul anticipate women will have in church (vv 5, 13 see also Joel 2:28)?

6. What reasoning does Paul give for . . . (a) a husband being head of his wife?

(b) a husband having his head uncovered when praying or prophesying?

(c) a wife having her head covered when praying or prophesying?

(d) the husband/wife not being independent of his/her spouse?

(e) a husband/man not having long hair?

(f) a wife/woman having long hair?

1 Cor 11:10 NIV It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.

Bentley Hart Therefore a woman ought to keep ward upon her head on account of the angels..

No one knows what this verse means. The phrase . . . can be translated as "have authority upon the head" or "have power . . ."; and this may be taken as meaning simply that she should exercise control over her head (some have taken it as meaning that she should "have a [symbol of her husband's] authority upon her head," but that is almost surely wrong, since the formula . . . which is frequently used in the New Testament, has such a meaning nowhere else in the text). But the matter is complicated by the reference to the angels. Most interpreters think Paul's meaning is that the angels are present when Christians worship and that a woman should not offend against decency in their august presence; but a few think he is referring to fallible angels, "powers" looking down from on high, who (as in the story of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6:4) are susceptible to the beauty of the "daughters of men." In the latter case, the phrase . . . refers to a woman covering her head as an apotropaic "power" for warding off the lustful gaze of the "gods." This reading seems implausible, because Paul only rarely uses the word "angel" of these defectible celestial governors (he does so, if at all, only in Galatians). My translation attempts to split the difference.

From The New Testament a translation by David Bentley Hart p 339.

7. Today, (a) do wives/women have to have their heads covered at church? Why/why not?

(b) do husbands/men have to have short hair? Why/why not?

(c) is it disgraceful for wives to have short hair? Why/why not?

(d) are women/wives created for men/husbands (v 9)? Why/why not?

(e) when is the husband dependent on his wife?

(f) when is the husband independent of his wife?

(g) when is the wife dependent on her husband?

(h) when is the wife independent of her husband?

(i) is the husband the head of the household? Why/why not?

To finish

8. If much of this passage is based on 1st Century culture what principles can we take from it in today's world?

Paul's concern here seems to be more about women and men not distracting attention away from God's glory by dressing in a way that was (in that culture) shocking or scandalous or seductive.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 17 by Andrew Judd.

9. (a) Are there things that we do in church worship which could possibly draw attention away from God's glory and on to ourselves?

(b) What can be done to minimise this risk?

Study 19, 1 Cor 11:17-34, shared meals

Getting started

1. Different churches use different words to describe the same thing. Describe what happens at your church when you have Holy Communion = Eucharist = Lord's Supper.

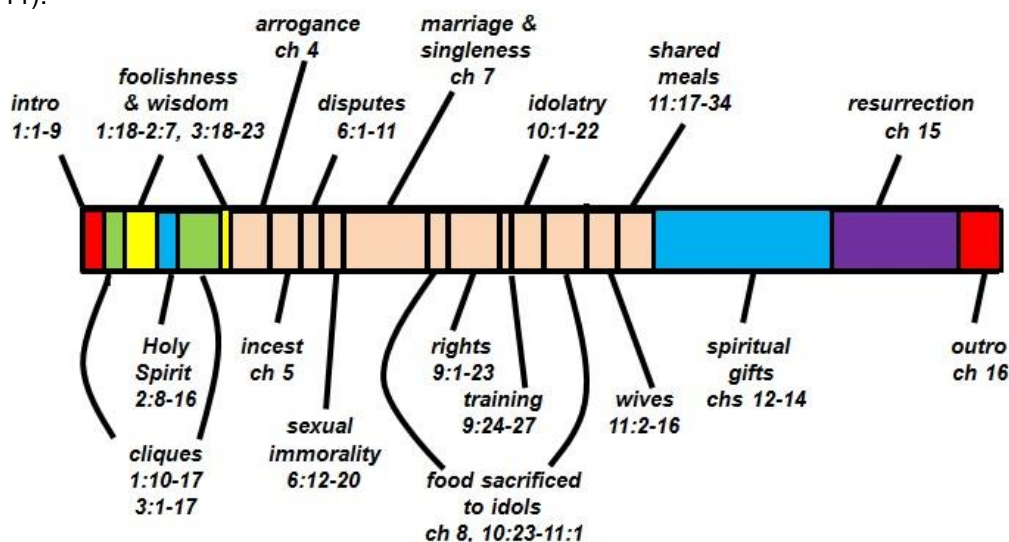


2. Describe what happens at your home when you have a meal together with family and/or friends?



The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10) and the role of wives in church (ch 11).



Bible

3. Read 1 Cor 11:17-22.
(a) What were they doing according to these verses?

Christians in New Testament churches ate meals together. They were meals where people ate food to satisfy hunger. Acts refers to these meals as "breaking bread" (Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11). Precisely the same vocabulary and phraseology is used to describe the meal that Paul shared with the pagan sailors in Acts 27:33-38. It was a meal in which Paul "took bread and gave thanks to God... Then he broke it..." (vv 35-36). This wasn't Holy Communion because Paul was eating with pagan sailors. It was a meal to satisfy hunger.

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

Acts 27:33-38: ³³ Just before dawn Paul urged them all to eat. 'For the last fourteen days,' he said, 'you have been in constant suspense and have gone without food – you haven't eaten anything. ³⁴ Now I urge you to take some food. You need it to survive. Not one of you will lose a single hair from his head.' ³⁵ After he said this, he took some bread and gave thanks to God in front of them all. Then he broke it and began to eat. ³⁶ They were all encouraged and ate some food themselves. ³⁷ Altogether there were 276 of us on board. ³⁸ When they had eaten as much as they wanted, they lightened the ship by throwing the grain into the sea.

- (b) What were they doing wrong?

There is a great failure in the Corinthian fellowship. It is a failure of love, a failure to consider one another. Greed, rather than mutual service, rules. Their meals were not therefore Christian! It was not the Lord's supper they ate, because their conduct was so unlike his. This is the first occurrence of the phrase "the Lord's supper", but it does not seem to be a well established name for a special kind of meal. Rather, Paul seems to mean that because of the self-centred behaviour of the Corinthians, the supper they eat cannot possibly be described as belonging to the Lord. "The Lord's supper" in 1 Corinthians 11 is not the name of a ritual that has been invalidated by the Corinthian conduct. The Greek sentence can be translated quite literally: "When you come together, it is not to eat a supper belonging to the Lord..."

The problem is conduct unbefitting to a church claiming to belong to the Lord, not a failure to conduct a ceremony properly.

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

- (c) What might Paul mean by "divisions" in v 18? Are they the same divisions Paul was writing about in chs 1-3?

4. Read 1 Cor 11:23-26.
(a) What event is Paul referring to?

- (b) Why is Paul reminding the Corinthian church about this event (keep in mind the context of 1 Cor 11:17-22)?

How can you claim to be eating a Christian meal (a supper of the Lord) and not care for one another? In other words, the point of Paul's reference to the last supper is **not** Jesus' act of institution [of Holy Communion]. The problem in Corinth was not that they were getting a ritual wrong. Paul's point is that the last supper shows up how wrong the Corinthian's *behaviour* was at their meals (note the logical connection between v 22 and v 23: "For ...").

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

5. Read Mark 14:12-26 and Matt 26:17-30 (they are nearly identical).
(a) What point is Jesus making?

(b) What is the connection with the Passover?

(c) Is there any evidence that Jesus is instituting a ritual that is to be repeated in the future?

6. Read Luke 22:7-23.

Where is the evidence that Jesus is instituting a ritual that is to be repeated in the future?

It is sometimes argued that the Greek present tense in "Do this" indicates that Jesus was referring to an ongoing practice. This is too much to read into the tense of a verb. The words make perfect sense as an instruction to the disciples on that occasion, without any suggestion that what they were to "do" that night was to be repeated. Jesus was telling his disciples, on the occasion of that Passover, when it was the Jewish custom to remember the exodus, to remember *him*. . . .

Why did Matthew and Mark (and possibly Luke - there is some doubt whether the words belonged to the text of Luke's Gospel originally²) not consider it important to record the words in question? If the Lord's Supper was a widespread practice of the churches when these evangelists were writing, it is surprising that they omit the only words that supposedly made the Last Supper into "the institution of the Lord's Supper".

John does not record Jesus' words about the bread and the cup at all. Also, there is no explicit reference to the Lord's Supper in John ch. 6. "Jesus' concern appears to be with his present congregation, confronting them with their errors and pointing them to the true way to find life from God. Essentially their need is to believe in him as the one the Father has sent as a sacrifice for the sin of the world. The eating of his flesh and drinking of his blood would appear a vivid, even shocking, illustration of what 'believing' in him implies."¹

¹ Bruce Milne *The Message of John* p113.

² It should be noted that the words "Do this in remembrance of me" are not in all the ancient manuscripts. Most (but not all) scholars believe they are original to Luke's Gospel. It remains a puzzle how these words would have ever been omitted from a copy of the Gospel if the Lord's Supper was of central importance in early Christianity.

From "What is this meal?" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #123 23/10/1993.

The tendency to read the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper as 'the institution of the Lord's Supper' does not arise out of the texts themselves, but is read back into them on the assumption that the early Christians practised the 'Lord's Supper'. . . .

It is interesting to observe that one of the early post-New Testament documents, the *Didache* (probably 2nd century), refers to the 'eucharist', which was a meal full of gospel significance, but without a hint that the bread and wine were made symbols of the Lord's death, or that the meal was based on Jesus' words "Do this in remembrance of me". Indeed in describing the eucharist the *Didache* does not mention the death of Christ! . . .

It is remarkable that no other letter of the NT, besides 1 Cor, refers or alludes to a sacramental meal, to eating and drinking in remembrance of the death of Jesus. It is all the more remarkable when we recall that the letters of the New Testament deal with congregational life, Christian obligations and the means of Christian growth.

Is it not remarkable that in all of these letters, concerned as they are to apply the death of Jesus to Christian and church life, that not once is there the slightest allusion to the activity that has since become the centre of church life in most denominations? Indeed, from neither the New Testament letters (apart from 1 Corinthians, to which we will return), nor the Book of Revelation would we have any reason to believe that the New Testament churches held a sacramental meal at all.

It is even more remarkable that in the letters to Timothy and Titus, which are specifically concerned with matters of church practice and the responsibilities of church leaders, not once do we find a hint that a sacramental meal was part of it. The duties of elders, as discussed in these letters, do not once touch on administering, or overseeing, a sacrament. There is the instruction to "Remember Jesus Christ" (2 Tim 2:8), but no suggestion that this is to be done by means of the sacrament.

But the silence of so much of the New Testament on this subject is difficult to explain if the Lord's Supper, as commonly understood, was central and basic to the Christian life.

Is there any important aspect of Christian theology or practice that rests on material in only one New Testament book? If someone studied the whole New Testament except any one book, would they miss any essential of the faith? However if someone developed their understanding of Christianity by studying the whole New Testament, with the

exception of 1 Corinthians, their view of Christianity would not include a sacramental meal.

From "What is this meal?" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #123 23/10/1993.

7. Read John 13:1-17.

(a) How powerful was Jesus (v 3)?

(b) How menial was Jesus (v 5)?

Proper etiquette, generally more important in the East than in the West, taught that guests, begrimed from journeying through the dusty streets, should on arrival have their feet washed by a slave. This was a particularly humble task, included in a list of works which a Jewish slave should not be required to perform. As they commence the meal with feet as yet unwashed, since apparently none of the disciples are prepared to fulfil the duty (one does not wash the feet of peers!), Jesus himself rises, divests himself of his outer clothing, girds himself with a towel, and proceeds to wash and then dry his disciples' feet.

From The Message of John by Bruce Milne p196.

(c) Why do you think Jesus washed the disciples' feet? What was he trying to teach them (see Luke 22:24-27)?



(d) What is Jesus telling the disciples in vv 14-15?

(e) In what sense do verses 14-15 apply to us?

If we belonged to a church in which we had a liturgy of footwashing which we believed went back to the early church, there is little doubt that we would jump to the conclusion that John 13 is a description of Jesus' *institution* of the sacrament of footwashing. And there would be a better case for this understanding of John 13 than there is for the common understanding of the Last Supper accounts in the Gospels. Jesus said: "**Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash** [present tense!] **one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you**" (Jn 13:14-15). Why do we (rightly) conclude that these words were not instituting a ritual, but establishing an *attitude* and *kind* of behaviour that should always prevail among disciples of Jesus? Partly because there is no evidence in the New Testament that mutual footwashing became Christian practice. There is no evidence that Jesus' words in John 13 were understood literalistically. The case is different, but similar, in the Gospel accounts of the Last Supper. The accounts themselves make no reference to future meals (except the great banquet when the kingdom finds fulfilment in Luke 22:16,18). In the absence of evidence, "Do this" should not be pressed to mean "Do this again and again".

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

8. Read 1 Cor 11:27-34.

Considering the earlier verses in this chapter

- what is the "unworthy manner" that Paul is referring to (v 27)?

- what is "the body" (v 27 and v 29)?

- what does it mean to "examine himself"?

- in what form has "judgement" come (vv 29-32)?

- why were they judged?

- what sort of meal is Paul writing about (vv 33-34)?

- what is Paul's conclusion (vv 33-34)?

When did the sacramental meal develop?

If the evidence of the New Testament does not lead to the conclusion that Jesus instituted a sacramental meal which the church kept from the beginning, when did the sacramental meal develop? The earliest description of such a sacramental meal comes to us from the writings of Justin Martyr, around AD 150 in Rome. There are two brief references to such a meal in the writings of Ignatius (early 2nd century). The latter already shows signs of developments well removed from New Testament thought: "...the Eucharist is the flesh of our saviour Jesus Christ...", "...bread, which is the medicine of immortality, the antidote against death...". If, as I have been suggesting, there was not necessarily a sacramental meal in the church of 1 Corinthians, it seems that by the end of the first century, at least in some circles, Christian meals had developed in a sacramental direction, probably under the influence of another understanding of 1 Corinthians 11. This would parallel a number of other early departures from New Testament thought.

From "The body of the Lord, The Lord's Supper in 1 Corinthians" by John Woodhouse, *The Briefing* #124 4/11/1993.

Emails

I was so surprised at John Woodhouse's conclusions that I wrote to 2 Anglican ministers to see if they agreed with him. They did but didn't want to change anything in their churches. I spoke with Glenn Walsh [lay preacher at St Faiths, Narrabeen] about it and he wondered if John Woodhouse still held to those ideas from 1993/4. So I emailed John Woodhouse and asked him. Here's my email and his reply:

4/3/2008

Dear John Woodhouse,

I've been reading back copies of *The Briefing* and I was fascinated by your articles on the Lord's Supper in 1993 and 1994. I was convinced by your argument and it had some bearing on our situation now as we have just begun a church plant from St Faiths Anglican Church, Narrabeen.

I was wondering if you still hold the same views? I haven't got a degree in Theology and I don't know Greek but a friend of mine, Glenn Walsh has, and he didn't agree with your statement that "do this in remembrance of me" meant "do this now" rather than "do this again and again". He mentioned some Greek tense of the verb and lost me. Before I get together with Glenn to write up a decent argument for his position, we thought we should check to see if you still hold your views.

I guess you are very busy. Thank you for taking the time to read this email. Keep up the good work at Moore.

Regards

Ed O'Connor

Reply from John Woodhouse 5/3/2008

Dear Ed

Thank you for your email. Yes, I do still hold the views expressed in *The Briefing* articles although not dogmatically and I do recognise that many do not find the arguments persuasive. I certainly would not like these

arguments to become a cause of division. On the particular question you hint at about verb tenses and so on I think the point is that the comment "do this" is in the present tense which some think suggests an ongoing practice. However, if anyone who knows a bit of Greek checks present imperatives in Luke's Gospel they will discover that the present tense does not carry this implication.

I hope your discussions on this issue are profitable.

Your brother in Christ

John

To finish

9. If these conclusions are correct should we
 - stop using 'tokens' of bread and wine?
 - stop having 'priests' dedicate, pray over, pour, dispense and finish off the 'emblems'?
 - stop using altars, or even tables that are so set apart they may as well be altars?
 - stop refusing communion to the un-confirmed?
 - not insist on doing it every week/fortnight?
 - not call the entire service by the title 'Holy Communion'?
 - remember Jesus' death and resurrection in all the different Christian 'congregations' we belong to: family, home, Bible study/fellowship?
 - be afraid as Bible-believing evangelicals to divide from mainstream Protestantism on another issue that is so widely accepted as 'Christian'?
 - stop refusing the Lord's Supper to non-Xns. 1 Cor 11:29 is not about bringing judgement on non-Christians for taking the Lord's Supper. It is about bringing judgement on Christians for gutsing themselves and getting drunk at meals with other people. What is wrong with saying something like "When we eat this bit of bread and sip this drink let's remember that Jesus died on the cross so that his people would be forgiven for their sins"? That way non-Christians can remember what Jesus did even though they are not committed to following him, yet, and they might be quite happy to eat and drink.

Study 20, 1 Cor 12:1-31, gifts

Getting started

1. (a) Name one thing you are good at?

(b) Is it a gift or a “spiritual” gift? What’s the difference?



(c) (i) Have you ever met someone who you thought was really ‘spiritual’, or someone who made you feel spiritually inferior?

(ii) What qualities did they show in their lives that made you feel this way?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul’s rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10), the role of wives in church and the sharing of meals (ch 11).

I used to play a great deal of football (soccer, for the parochial) until my prospects of international stardom were dashed with a knee injury that led to surgery. And then more surgery. Truth be told, I was never a great player. Worse than that - I was a ‘back’.

Many players will deny it, but there is a definite hierarchy on the football field. The strikers score all the goals, and earn all the glory (in fact, the most famous defenders are largely famous because of their goal-scoring, too). Chances are that even if you’ve never watched a game of football in your life, you’d recognise the names of some of the greats, like Pele and Ronaldo. The top-10 highest paid players in the world are mostly strikers (or at least forwards). Backs rarely rate a mention. But you can’t win a game with only strikers. That’s the story of every under-5s game every played. It’s true for orchestras, too.

I used to maul a clarinet. We loved to look down on the trombones who, in turn, happily condescended to the tuba. But all of us played in the shadow of the strings. The cellos, first. And above them, the viola. But at the apex, the very tip of it all, were the violins. The prima donnas and virtuosos of every high school orchestra. But as N.T. Wright points out, sooner or later you encounter a moment when everyone depends upon the instruments that were usually looked down upon: ‘you can’t start Mozart’s opera The Magic Flute unless the trombones are in good form.’

Here’s the problem: in the status-obsessed world of Corinth, the church has been playing like a bunch of soloists, and the end result has sounded pretty hideous.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 19 by mike Paget.

Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 12:1-11.

In v.1 in the NIV, ‘gifts of the Spirit’ is probably better translated ‘spiritual things’. [The word ‘gifts’ does not appear in the original Greek.] The Corinthian church, fascinated with spirituality, assumed that anything ‘spiritual’ must be from God.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 19 by mike Paget.

(a) What do you think was happening for their spirituality to be equated with idolatry?

(b) (i) According to verse 3, what is the test of true spirituality?

(ii) How might a church hold the bar too high or too low?

3. (a) In vv.4-6, Paul could seem to be immediately reversing his position. 'All spiritual things come from the one God.' But 'spiritual things' (v.1), 'speaking by the Spirit' (v.3) and 'gifts' (v.4) are probably all describing the same thing. If actions speak louder than words, then, what do all gifts of God 'say' (v.3)? How might they do that?

(b) Who gives spiritual gifts (vv 4-6, see also Eph 4:7-13)?

(c) To whom are they given (vv 7 & 11)?

(d) Why are they given (v 7, 1 Cor 14:26 and 1 Pet 4:10-11)?

4. (a) List the gifts mentioned in these passages:

1 Cor 12:7-11, 28

Rom 12:3-8

Eph 4:7-12

1Pet 4:9-11

2 Cor 8:7

(b) What can we learn about gifts from these lists?

(c) Can we make the idea of gifts as wide open as Col 3:17? Why/why not?

5. Read 1 Cor 12:12-31.

(a) What does the body metaphor for church have to do with gifts?

(b) Paul really speaks to two common experiences: our tendency to look down on those who don't have what we have, and our equal tendency to envy those who have what we don't have (but really want). How does Paul address each of these experiences?

(c) Paul looks at 3 ways the church can malfunction. Can you examine the patient?

(i) verses 14-16 diagnosis

modern examples

cure

(ii) verses 17-20 diagnosis

modern examples

cure

(iii) verses 21-26 diagnosis

modern examples

cure

(d) Is there significance in the ordering of gifts as “first”, “second” etc. in verse 28?

(e) Are some people in the church more important than others? Why/why not?

(f) Do we *treat* some people in the church as more important than others? Why/why not?

(g) Are some gifts more important than others? If so, which ones, if not, why not?

(h) Do we *treat* some gifts as more important than others?

(i) Are there any particular gifts that every Christian must have? Specify.

To finish

6. (a) What body part do you think you are?

(b) Do you honour yourself too much or too little?

(c) How are you feeling about the ministries you are serving in?

(d) (i) Are your spiritual gifts just as applicable outside of church? Why/why not?

(ii) If so, explain how your spiritual gifts can be applied outside of church?

Study 21, 1 Cor 12:31-13:13, love

Getting started

1. Have a competition to write down as many songs as you can, in 2 minutes, that have the word “love” in its title.



2. Why are love songs so popular?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10), the role of wives in church and the sharing of meals (ch 11) and spiritual gifts (ch 12).

Bible

3. Read 1 Cor 12:31-13:13.
 - (a) What is the more excellent way?
 - (b) What is it more excellent than?

4. Some people have never heard this passage (or at least vv 4-7) before they heard it at a wedding.
 - (a) Why is this passage appropriate for weddings?

 - (b) Why is this passage not appropriate for weddings?

5. Read 1 Cor 13:1-3 again.
 - (a) What is Paul saying about the value of these gifts without love?

 - (b) Why do you think Paul is specifically picking out tongues, prophecy, wisdom, faith, generosity & martyrdom in these verses?

 - (c) What does Paul mean when he says “I am nothing” and “I gain nothing”?

(d) Do you think we prefer to have great gifts or great love? Give reasons for your answer.

6. Read 1 Cor 13:4-7 again.

(a) What is love? List the 7 characteristics of what love is, and the 8 characteristics of what love is not.

love is

love is not

(b) Are these characteristics common in your church? Why/why not?

Play Gal6_1to18MMeynell.mp3 1st 2:30 minutes.

(c) How can church be better?

(d) How can we be better?

(e) Do you think there is a not-so-veiled rebuke in these verses for the Corinthians about the way they were using spiritual gifts and treating one another? Why/why not?

(f) In what ways are these verses also a description of God (see Ex 34:6, Titus 3:4, Luke 6:35, 2 Cor 5:19)?

7. Read 1 Cor 13:8-13 again.

(a) What future is Paul writing about?

(b) Why do we see dimly now (v 12)?

(c) Who knows us fully?

(d) What don't we know?

(e) Do we know enough? Why/why not?

(f) Paul illustrates his point in verse 11, by likening our present experience of spiritual gifts (in this age) to that of children. He also likens our present knowledge & understanding of God, as like looking into a mirror, and seeing dimly. That doesn't mean that we have an inaccurate knowledge of God now. No, scripture is clear that what we know of God is a true knowledge. It's just that it's not exhaustive.

From 1 Corinthians 8-15 The Handbook for a Healthy Church 8 Bible studies by Naremburn Cammeray Anglican Church.

What effect should this have on us, to know that we don't know as much about God as we think we know, and that our capacities now, as marvellous as they are, are like child's play?

(g) Why will the gifts of the Spirit be unnecessary when Jesus returns?

8. In several places in Scripture we are told either to be like children or to put away childish ways. Compare 1 Cor 13:11 with Mark 10:13-16 and 1 Cor 3:1-4 and 14:20.

(a) When should we be like children?

(b) When should we not be like children?

(c) In what sense were the Corinthians being childish about spiritual gifts?

(d) Why is love the greatest?

To finish

9. Is love, as Paul describes it, all about looking to other people's interests or is there an emotional side to it? Give reasons for your answer.

10. Many people are interested in destiny, either in this life or after their death. Paul says faith, hope and love will last forever.

(a) How could you describe destiny in terms of faith, hope and love?

(b) Is this the way forward for evangelism rather than using sin and guilt to manipulate a response? Why/why not?

Study 22, 1 Cor 14:1-25, tongues & prophecy



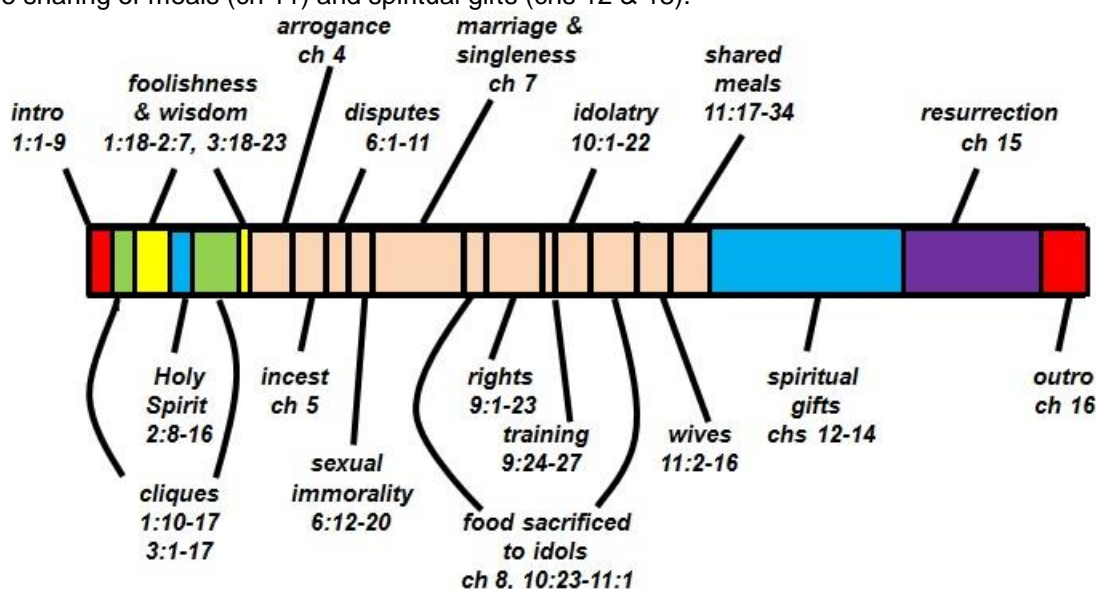
Getting started

1. Look at the following statements and discuss whether they are right or wrong:

- *"A gift is not given to me for my good; it is given to the church."*
- *"I love church because it gives me the opportunity to express myself by using my gift."*
- *"The church has 15 good piano-players, but I want my turn, because piano-playing is my gift."*
- *"The church needs someone to tidy up after the service. I'm available and able to do this. But, is this my gift?"*
- *"To discover what my gift is, I'm going to work out what I enjoy and what I'm good at and offer that to the church."*
- *"God used me in my previous church in a number of ways. In my new church I'm just offering my help wherever I can."*

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10), the role of wives in church and the sharing of meals (ch 11) and spiritual gifts (chs 12 & 13).



Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 14:1-26.

What is the main point Paul is making?

It's hard to say exactly what "**Speaking in Tongues**" means in this passage, because that same expression is used in different ways in different parts of the Bible. Some possibilities are:

1. *Natural human language*. "speaking in tongues" is a normal Biblical way of describing someone who is speaking in a human language (e.g. "people from every tribe and *language* (Greek: *glossa*, meaning tongue) and people and nation" Rev 5:9). Here, however, it seems like the language is not a normal human language which people in the church can learn.

2. *Natural human language supernaturally given*. In Acts 2 people are able to speak in languages they don't know and be understood by people from other nations. It is not quite clear, however, whether this is a supernatural gift of learning language really fast, or a supernatural gift of hearing the same words in your own language (i.e. is the miracle on the transmitting or the receiving end?)

3. *Divine language*. Sometimes it seems like the New Testament is talking about an angelic or divine language which people with the Spirit can use to communicate with God.

4. *Wordless communication*. It could be that what is being communicated is not actually an intelligible language at all, but some sort of Spirit-powered connection with God.

If we assume that a different person is given the gift of interpretation (14:5, 14:13), and that the person speaking is not actually able to translate the prayer into their own native language (which perhaps 1 Cor 14:14 hints at) then the most likely candidate is somewhere between the third and fourth option.

Paul uses "**Prophecy**" here as a broad term for speech directed towards the congregation about them and God on a particular occasion or with a particular focus. Like the reading of Scripture or the teaching of doctrine it is communication from God, but it is more tailored to the specific situation of the hearers.

- It can take the form of challenge, comfort, judgment, consolation – whatever is needed to build up the hearers.
- It doesn't have to be spontaneous, in fact it seems like Paul imagines people receiving a prophetic word at home, stewing on it a while, and then bringing it before the congregation to be weighed (1 Cor 14:26-40).

- It's not necessarily about predicting the future. In the Old Testament it was partly about warning people about what is to come, but also about giving God's commentary on human affairs – the point is how to live in light of what's the come, not to feel superior because you know who is going to win the Grand Final.

- Old Testament "big P Prophets" were rare, and were commissioned by God (Jeremiah 1:4-10) and if they got their prediction wrong they would be put to death as a false prophet. In New Testament land we don't have big P Prophets, we have Jesus (Heb 1:1). The gift of prophecy continues, but you are less likely to be writing new books of the Bible at this stage in God's salvation history.

- Some people have a particular gift of prophecy, but everyone has the Spirit and so is able to be used by God to deliver his message (See Joel 2:28-32). So the most basic level – when you tell your friend they probably should take Jesus seriously and they do, then you have been used by God to communicate God's most urgent message to their situation.

- The final thing that's worth saying about prophecy is that it comes in different shapes and sizes. There are hopefully elements of prophecy in our preaching at Barneys, at least in some sermons, but it can also be delivered one on one or in a small group. I think songs can have elements of prophecy in them – most great songwriters I know see their job as dwelling on scriptures in prayer in order to discern what God wants his people to sing about.

In this context, 'prophecy' probably was a form of highly occasion or situation focussed teaching or encouragement. Some have argued it is like the 'application' focussed modern sermon, although others would context this. Conservative commentator Anthony Thiselton says prophecy, 'combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared with judgement, decision and rational reflection) leading to challenge or comfort, judgement or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressees'.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Studies 21 & 22.

3. (a) What do you think it means to edify/build up yourself (v 4)?

(b) What do you think it means to edify/build up the church (vv 3-5, 12, 17)?

4. (a) What are the advantages of prophecy over speaking in tongues?

(b) Does Paul condemn speaking in tongues? Why/why not?

(c) How is speaking in tongues useful?

(d) In church, should we celebrate speaking in tongues more? Why/why not?

(e) Apart from the sermon, how could we give opportunities for different people to exercise their prophetic gifts?

5. Given the Corinthian spiritual pride, why is the advice in verse 1 so important?

6. Things that were flashy, exciting and powerful attracted the Corinthians.
Do you see that tendency - in yourself?

- in your church?

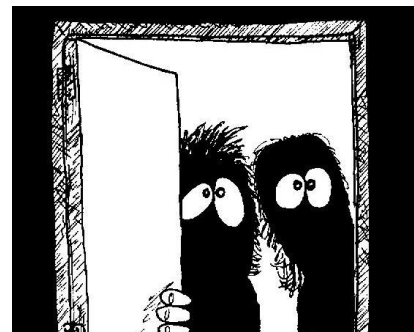
7. (a) Why is speaking in tongues a sign to unbelievers (v 22)?

(b) What does Paul say is the result when a visitor / outsider / unbeliever comes into a Church meeting and they can't understand what's being said because all are speaking in tongues (see v 23)?

(c) Some use vv 23-25 to say that church is for believers *and* unbelievers. What do you think?

(d) Imagine you are an unchurched unbeliever and you accidentally stumble into a church where there is speaking in tongues.

(i) What would think?



(ii) What would you understand?

(iii) Can you think of a better place for an unchurched unbeliever to learn about Jesus?

To finish

8. It seems likely that the Corinthians were prizing some gifts over others.
 - (a) What are the 'glamour ministries' in our church culture?
 - (b) Has this study changed your attitude to these 'glamour ministries'? How so?
9. How do you know what role you should play at church? Some people say the starting point is discovering your gifts. Others say you should determine the needs and ask for the gifts needed to exercise the ministry. What do you think?

Study 23, 1 Cor 14:26-40, church

Getting started

1. (a) What makes for a good church service as far as you are concerned?



- (b) Why do you go to church?

The story so far . . .

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Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 14:26-40.
 - (a) What do you think is the governing idea?

- (b) Is there anything that shocks you?

'Women should remain silent in the churches.' [v 34] There have been few more controversial issues in the Church in Sydney (and many other parts of the Western world) in the last 30 years than the role of women in the Church, particularly in leadership and church services. . . .

Whatever one believes, it cannot have been meant literally. In 11:5 Paul clearly contemplates women praying and prophesying, and there is no suggestion only men should sing the hymns mentioned in 14:26. Presumably female deacons could speak in connection with their distribution of relief to the poor, and women could greet each other and family members. . . .

Descriptions of the cultural setting are contested. However, there is little doubt the Greek culture was heavily skewed in favour of men. Only men had many legal rights, or could take roles in public life. Women could go out in public only if accompanied. Normally they could not speak to men other than their husbands or relatives. Wives were usually much younger than their husbands (married at 12-14 yo). They lived under the authority of their father until married, when the authority of the husband would take over. Women did not live alone, and needed the protection of a man both for physical safety and propriety.

There were no church buildings. Small groups of Christians met in their homes. They were small enough in

number to know each other. There was no need to manage hundreds of worshippers. Yet, Paul still found it necessary to encourage orderly meetings. They should take turns to speak, and not over-do things. They should avoid things that were culturally shameful.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 22 by Mark Wormell.

3. (a) What ingredients of church do we find in verse 26?

(b) What additional ingredients do we find in . . .

Acts 2:42-47

1 Cor 11:17-34

1 Tim 2:1-3

1 Tim 4:13

(c) What experience have you had in a meeting where everyone had the opportunity to contribute?

4. (a) What advise does Paul give regarding speaking in tongues?

(b) What advise does Paul give regarding prophecy?

(c) How strict are these rules?

(i) What does "2 or 3" suggest (vv 27, 29)?

(ii) What is the main idea?

5. (a) What should women keep silent about (in 1 Cor 14:5 all can speak in tongues or prophecy, in 1 Cor 11:5, 10 wives can pray and prophecy)?

(b) Considering what the Corinthians were like from previous passages why would Paul want to shut down their wives?

(c) Why not shut down their husbands instead?

(d) Paul was writing to a small church that met in someone's house, not a church of many hundreds of people. Does this make a difference?

6. (a) Do we get a glimpse of what Paul was like from vv 36-40? Why/why not?
 (b) If so, what do you think this shows about Paul?

7. Are these instructions for all churches everywhere or only for this particular church in Corinth? Give reasons for your answer.

8. What do our church services say about God?
 - good examples:

 - bad examples:

9. The word "worship" is never used in this passage. Why do we go to church according to . . .
 1 Cor 14:3-5, 12, 17, 26, 31?

 Heb 10:24-25?

 Compare your answer to your answer to Question 1 (b).

10. When do we worship God?
 Rom 12:1-2

 John 4:21-24

To finish

11. If Paul's point here about women speaking in church is that they should not question the teaching/prophesy/interpretations of their husbands, or other men, because that could bring disorder in church and/or marriages, then, given the greater equality and communication between the sexes that exists in our culture today, and that many women do not live with a father or husband, what limits (if any) on women speaking do you think Paul would impose on our churches?

12. (a) Do you think more people should have a say in how our services are structured and run?
- (b) How, and who should decide?

Study 24, 1 Cor 15:1-11, gospel 2

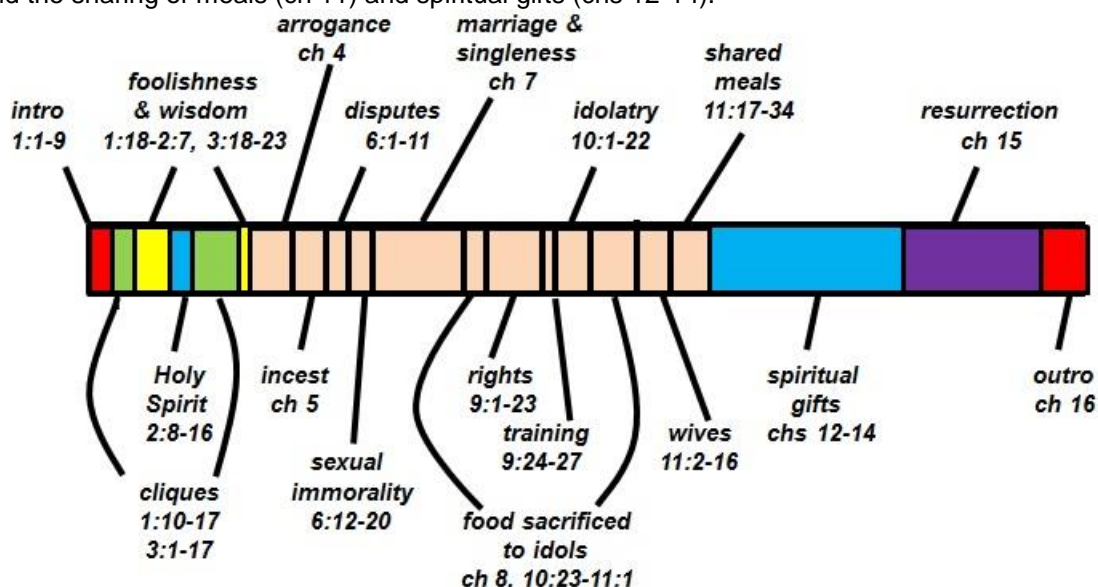
Getting started

1. What is the basis of your faith?
- vibes from God
 - good works
 - going to church
 - my baptism when I was a baby
 - Jesus' death
 - Jesus' life, death and resurrection
 - the Bible
 - all of the above
 - none of the above, please specify.



The story so far . . .

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Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 15:1-11.
 - (a) In explaining the gospel where does Paul put most emphasis?
 - (b) Why does he give this aspect so much emphasis?
 - (c) From this passage what would you say Paul means by the gospel?
 - (d) In 1 Cor 2:2 Paul resolves to know nothing but Christ and him crucified. Is the resurrection an optional extra or did he forget to include it in 1 Cor ch 2?
3. How do you hold firmly to the teaching of the Bible?
4. What does it mean to believe in vain (v 2)?
5. Why does Paul say "in accordance with the Scriptures" twice (vv 3 & 4) (see Ps 16:8-11, Is 53:5-6, 11-12)?
6. Why does Paul name people in vv 5-11 and say whether they are living or dead?
7. What does "resurrection" mean? How is it different from resuscitating someone who is clinically dead?
8. (a) Paul's apostleship has been challenged by some people in the Corinthian church (1 Cor ch 9). From 1 Cor 15:9-10 what does Paul think of his apostleship?
- (b) How can Paul say it was not him that worked harder than any of the apostles, but "the grace of God that is with me" (v 10)?
9. Sometimes if you compliment someone about their prayer or a song they sang they might say something like "it wasn't me, it was the Lord".
 - (a) Is this the same as what Paul is saying in v 10? Why/why not?
 - (b) Is it a case of false modesty or false boasting? Give reasons for your answer.

To finish

10. (a) What has God's grace accomplished in you?

(b) Where is God's grace leading you?

Study 25, 1 Cor 15:12-34, resurrection 1

Getting started

1. Would rather know the date of your death or the way you will die? Give reasons for your answer.



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Bible

2. Read 1 Cor 15:12-19.

(a) What if Jesus had not been resurrected?



(b) Why would no resurrection mean we are still "in our sins" (v 17)?

(c) What does "fallen asleep" mean (vv 18 & 20)?

(d) Is it important that Jesus was raised in a physical body (as opposed to some sort of spiritual elevation

to a higher place)?

3. Read 1 Cor 15:20-28.

Firstfruits is an Old Testament idea – the first part harvested of a bigger crop, which gives hope that the rest of the harvest is coming and will presumably be of equal quality.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 24 by Andrew Judd.

(a) Why is Christ the firstfruits?

(b) Who are the second/subsequent fruits?

(c) What is the comparison with Adam?

This links to the creation story in Genesis 1-3. Paul is highlighting our membership of either “team Adam” or “team Christ”; we are “in Christ”, or we are still “in Adam”; one or other of these men is our representative; which team we are on determines our destiny. What the two teams have in common is that a reality (death, in Adam’s case; resurrection in Jesus’ case) came through a human being.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 24 by Andrew Judd.

(d) What happens next?

(e) How did Jesus defeat the last enemy, death?

(f) What are the implications that death will be destroyed (v 26)?

(g) How does this impact your life?

(h) What did Jesus’ resurrection accomplish (see Rom 4:25, 6:4, 8-11)?

4. Read 1 Cor 15:29-34.

It seems that some of the Corinthians rejected (perhaps on philosophical grounds) the whole idea of a resurrection of the dead, favouring a more “sophisticated” Christianity, which didn’t involve a body walking out of his tomb. This may be what is behind Paul’s warning that “bad company corrupts good character” (verse 33): i.e. don’t be led astray by people who deny the resurrection!

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 24 by Andrew Judd.

Paul almost certainly didn’t actually fight animals in an arena like a gladiator would have done [verse 32]. It

seems most likely that he meant it metaphorically. Something had happened at Ephesus (that's where he is while writing this letter) which had been, for him, just like fighting wild beasts.

Some people think this is a reference to a huge moral struggle he's had to go through, with the wild animals of temptation coming up from the floor to devour him. Others think it's a battle with spiritual forces, using the weapons of prayer and fasting. I am inclined to think it's to do with the enormous opposition that the gospel aroused, not least from those who saw it as a political threat (Ephesus was a great centre of the new imperial cult), an economic threat (if Paul was right, man-made idols were a nonsense, but lots of people made a living by making and selling them), and a religious threat (if Jesus was the world's true Lord, the other gods and goddesses at Ephesus, whose worship was woven into the fabric of local culture, were downgraded). In chapter 19, Acts describes a riot in the huge theatre in Ephesus because of this explosive combination. As far as Paul was concerned, it was like being in the arena, facing a horde of wild beasts, with nothing but the weapons of the gospel for help.

Paul was good at breaking up a heavy discussion with a change of pace and style, and that's what he's doing in this little passage. The point he's making is that if he went through all that in order simply to die, with no hope of resurrection, he would be just like those gladiators, eating, drinking and making merry the night before the big show, knowing that this was the end. Paul does not even contemplate the idea, popular though it was in some philosophical circles, that there might be a wonderful, glorious non-bodily life after death. For him, as for most ordinary pagans at the time, if there was no resurrection, then death was basically the end, with nothing much to look forward to.

The other little comments which come thick and fast in this short passage all make the same point from different angles. The question of 'baptism for the dead' (verse 29) has long been a puzzle. It may be that some Christians had died without being baptized, and that the practice had grown up (if so, it didn't last long) of other people undergoing baptism on their behalf as a sign and symbol that they really did belong to the Messiah. Or it may be that 'being baptized on behalf of the dead' refers to non-Christians who, after the death of close relatives or friends who were Christians, decided to become Christians themselves, undergoing baptism so that they would continue to be with their loved ones in the final resurrection. But, whichever conclusion we come to (and every student of Paul knows that this verse is a difficult one), the overall point is clear. Something the Corinthians knew about as a regular practice makes no sense unless there is in fact a resurrection to look forward to.

His own sufferings, and the dangers he faces, are a further argument (verses 30-31), leading to the passage about the metaphorical 'wild beasts'. This then brings him, suddenly, a quotation from the Greek poet Menander: 'bad company kills off good habits. What Paul is saying - and quoting a pagan poet is a heavily ironic way of making the point - is that Corinthian Christians, who ought by now to be able to show and tell the truth of the one living God to their pagan neighbours, are instead continuing to allow the pagan thought-forms of those neighbours to distort and even deny the central beliefs they should be gladly holding. There is a danger, as present today as it was in Paul's day, of being deceived: it is possible to allow the influence of the surrounding culture and the ideas it promotes to seep into a Christian world-view until the truth has been turned into a lie. Part of the point of the gospel is that, through it, people come to know the true God (see 8:1-6); but some of these Christians have simply forgotten who God is (verse 34). They need the sharp rebuke Paul already issued in 6:5: I'm saying this to make you ashamed.

Nothing in this little section is actually an argument that the resurrection (of Jesus, or of Christians) is in fact true; it is all designed to say 'just think what it would mean if it isn't'. Someone might conclude, from these verses alone, that since it still isn't true all these consequences really do follow: baptism (especially on behalf of the dead) is a waste of time; Paul has been suffering and struggling unnecessarily; and one might just as well eat and drink and wait for death. But pointing things out in this fashion is useful alongside the formal, step-by-step exposition of the Christian world-view in verses 20-28 and the detailed discussion of the resurrection body which will now follow (verses 35-49). When faced with a new idea, especially the questioning of some central aspect of the faith, the wise Christian will ask: does this fit with what we regularly do as Christians? Does it make sense of the suffering which many have undergone for the faith? Does it show the tell-tale signs of being imported from pagan ideas? And, above all, does it show a true understanding and knowledge of the one true God, the creator, the life-giver?

From Paul for Everyone 1 Corinthians by Tom Wright pp 216-219.

To finish

5. What practical difference does the resurrection of Jesus make to everyday living?

Study 26, 1 Cor 15:35-58, resurrection 2

Getting started

1. (a) Name your favourite super hero?



- (b) What super power would you most like to have?

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul's rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10), the role of wives in church and the sharing of meals (ch 11), spiritual gifts (chs 12-14) and the resurrection (ch 15).

Bible

2. What are the Old Testament expectations for the resurrection . . . ?

Job 19:25-27

Ps 16:8-10

Is 53:10-12

Dan 12:1-3

3. Read 1 Cor 15:35-44.

One prominent theme in ancient Greek philosophy contended that everything spiritual is intrinsically good and everything physical is intrinsically evil. To those who held this view prior to coming to Christ, the idea of a resurrected body would have been repugnant, if not unthinkable. Paul presents a new idea: that the physical and the spiritual are related.

From Ugly Beautiful 1 Corinthians (chapters 1-16) Study 25 by Mike Paget.

- (a) What is foolish about the questions in verse 35?

- (b) What point is Paul making about seeds and bodies?

(c) What is the glory that Paul is writing about (vv 40-41)?

(d) (i) What is meant by a heavenly body and an earthly body?

(ii) What point is Paul making about them?

(e) What words does Paul use to compare the natural body with the resurrected body (vv 42-44)?

natural body

resurrected body

4. Read 1 Cor 15:45-49.

(a) Who was the first Adam and who was the last Adam (v 45)?

(b) How do the two compare?

(c) What have these two Adams got to do with us?

(d) What do we learn about resurrected bodies from Jesus' resurrected body . . . ?

Luke 24:31, 39, 42-43

John 20:17, 19, 26-27, 21:1-7

Mark 16:12-14

(e) From Phil 3:20-21 what will our transformed bodies be like?

5. Read 1 Cor 15:50-53.

Play "The trumpet shall sound" from Handel's Messiah.

(a) Who can inherit the Kingdom of God if flesh and blood cannot (v 50)?

(b) Why do we need to be transformed?

(c) What does "sleep" mean in verse 51?

(d) What event is heralded by the last trumpet (v 52)?

(e) How do you become immortal? Is it a super power?

(f) Why must the perishable clothe itself with the imperishable, the mortal with immortality (v 53)?

6. Read 1 Cor 15:54-58.

(a) How can death be swallowed up in victory (v 54)?

(b) Why is sin powerful?

(c) How is the law related to sin (see Rom 4:15, 7:7-13)?

(d) Shouldn't the phrase "the sting of death is sin" be the other way around because if you sin it brings death (Rom 5:12, 6:23) so why isn't the phrase "the sting of *sin* is death"?



(e) (i) What victory does Jesus give us?

(ii) How does this lead to being steadfast, immovable etc. (v 58)?

(f) What is "the work of the Lord" (1 Cor 15:58 and 16:10)?

To finish

7. What does it mean to give yourself "fully to the work of the Lord"?

8. If someone said to you, "If you have enough faith all your illnesses will be healed", how could you respond from verses 50-55?

9. A common belief is “when you’re dead, you’re dead”. What does the teaching of 1 Cor 15 say about this?
10. What would you say to someone who says they can use and abuse their body however they like because they’ll get a new one when Jesus returns?

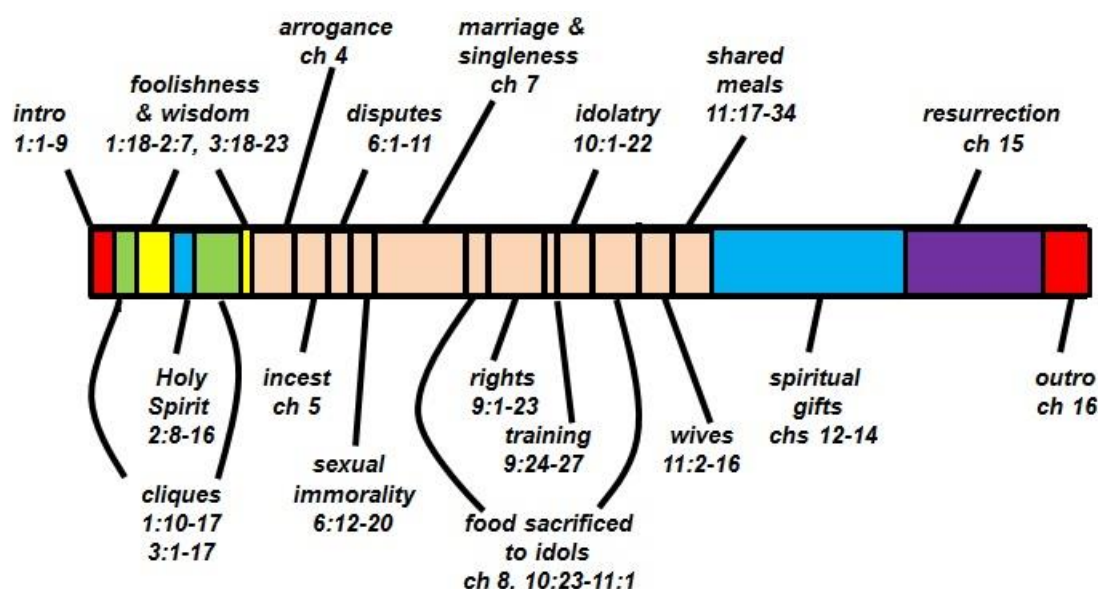
Study 27, 1 Cor ch 16, outro

Getting started

1. (a) On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very stingy, 10 being exceedingly generous), how generous do you think you are?
- (b) Give a reason for the number you chose.

The story so far . . .

Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to answer a number of problems and issues that the church was struggling with. So far we have looked at the issues of divisions within the church (chs 1-3), wisdom and foolishness (chs 1-3), arrogance (ch 4), lawsuits among believers (6:1-8), sexual immorality (chs 5 & 6), marriage and singleness (ch 7), food sacrificed to idols (chs 8 and 10), Paul’s rights and apostleship, training in following Jesus (ch 9), idolatry (ch 10), the role of wives in church and the sharing of meals (ch 11), spiritual gifts (chs 12-14) and the resurrection (ch 15).



Bible

2. Read 1 Cor ch 16.

Timothy was a traveling companion of Paul's. A native of Lystra in the province of Galatia, Timothy was the son of a Jewish mother and a Gentile father. His mother, Eunice, and grandmother, Lois, were believers in Jesus. Paul took Timothy on his trips, and Timothy represented Paul at various times in Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, and Macedonia. Timothy is named as co-author of seven of Paul's letters. In the two letters sent to Timothy by Paul, Timothy appears as timid, perhaps because of his relative youth. It is believed that Timothy became the first bishop of Ephesus, and that he was martyred there in 97 AD.

Apollos was a Christian Jew from Alexandria, Egypt. He is said to have been a great teacher and preacher. He is mentioned in several New Testament passages, including Acts, chapters 18 and 19; 1 Corinthians, chapters 1, 3, 4 and 16; and Titus 3:13. He heard about John the Baptist, and what John said about Jesus, but that was all he knew (Acts

18:25-26), until Aquila and his wife Priscilla met him in Ephesus and instructed him in the life of Jesus. He became a popular teacher of Christianity, as Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 1:12. Some in the church wanted to follow Paul, and some wanted to follow Apollos or Peter, while others said they were followers only of Jesus. Paul reminded them that neither he, Apollos or Peter died for anyone's sins, and that only Christ can atone for their sins.

Priscilla and Aquila were a married couple with Priscilla, the wife, and Aquila, the husband. Before living in Rome Priscilla and Aquila led a church in Ephesus. They left Rome when the emperor, Claudius, banned Jews from living in the city (Acts 18:2) and moved to Corinth where they met Paul and worked with him because they were also tentmakers. Priscilla is mentioned 5 out of 6 times in front of Aquila which implies that her leadership was at least as important as Aquila's.

(a) Where is Paul going?



(b) What are Paul's instructions for the collection?

(c) From Acts 24:17-18, 2 Corinthians 8:1-6, 9:12-15 what is the context for this collection?

(d) If there is a "take home" message here for us, what is it?

(e) What is the advantage of giving together as a church rather than individually giving to different charities?

3. What is interesting about the way Paul uses provisional language e.g. “if the Lord permits” (v 7)?
4. (a) How does verse 13 relate to what you have read in the rest of 1 Corinthians?

(b) How does it relate to us?
5. What does “be subject” mean (v 16)?
6. (a) Do you know anyone who “refreshes your spirit” (v 18) when you see them?
(b) What is it about them that “refreshes your spirit”?
7. What is a “holy kiss” (v 20)?
8. Do you think verse 22 is a bit harsh? Why/why not?
9. After a letter full of heavy rebukes what do Paul’s closing comments in verses 22-24 reveal about how he sees the Corinthians and what he wants for them?
10. How does “O Lord come” fit in with the previous chapter?



To finish

11. (a) If you had to summarise 1 Corinthians in a single sentence what would you say?

(b) Combine your sentence with people from the rest of your group to hone and settle on a summary.

