

Acts 1 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Seven: Corinthians, Part 1 – 1 Corinthians 1-7

Read 1 Corinthians 1-2.

- 1) According to Paul in 1 Corinthians 1:10-17, what was the source of a serious division in the church at Corinth (see also Acts 18:1-11 and 24-28)? **The Corinthians casted their allegiances with Paul or Apollos or Cephas (Peter), rather than viewing each leader as an instrument of Christ, each serving a different purpose in the spiritual life and growth of the church. These unnecessary allegiances were causing serious divisions.**
- 2) In 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, what is the essence of the message Paul called the wisdom and power of God (include verse numbers)? In which verse(s) in chapter 2 did Paul say that he determined his preaching would reflect this same simple, yet powerful, wisdom? **The essence of “the wisdom of God” is the message of the cross (1:18): Christ crucified (1:23) and Christ becoming our righteousness, holiness, and redemption (1:30). In 1 Corinthians 2:2 and 13, Paul states that he “resolved to know nothing ... except Christ and Him crucified” and “this is what [we] speak.”**
- 3) List the terms, phrases, descriptions, or information given in 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 about this wisdom of God. **“Secret...hidden...destined for our glory” (verse 7), not understood by the rulers of this age (verse 8), revealed to believers by the Spirit of God (verses 10, 12), and not understandable by anyone without the Spirit of God (verse 14)**
- 4) For whom will you pray to recognize the “foolishness” of the cross as “the wisdom of God” (1 Corinthians 2:14)? In what realm of your own life do you need “the mind of Christ” (compare 1 Corinthians 2:12, 16 with Ephesians 1:17-21, Philippians 1:9-11, and Colossians 1:9)? **Personal sharing**

Read 1 Corinthians 3.

- 5) Examine 1 Corinthians 3:12-15. What do the terms “fire” and “the day” (or “that day”) represent in the Bible (see Isaiah 2:11, 66:16, Jeremiah 46:10, Joel 1:15, Amos 7:4, Zephaniah 1:15, Malachi 4:1, 2 Timothy 4:8, Hebrews 10:27, and 2 Peter 3:7)? **The Day of the Lord is the time of judgment for all mankind. The just (those who are in Christ) will be rewarded but the wicked will be punished by fire.**
- 6) How might a person build on the foundation of Jesus Christ using gold, silver or costly stones? (You may use any Bible knowledge you have to suggest answers, since Paul is not specific in this passage.) **D.K. Lowery suggests at least four interpretations of the materials in 1 Corinthians 3:12 used by the ministers building the Corinthian church: “(a) The **gold, silver, costly stones** refer to the enduring quality of the builder’s work; and the **wood, hay, or straw** suggest work that is temporary and valueless... (b) The three expensive materials suggest sound doctrine, which the builder “builds” into people’s lives, and the three valueless materials are false doctrines. (c) The first three materials refer to the worker’s worthy motives, and the other three point to his unworthy motives (cf. 4:5). (d) The “gold, silver, costly stones” refer to believers who constitute the church (this is supported by similar uses of the metaphor in Ephesians 2:22; 2 Timothy 2:20; and 1 Peter 2:5), while the “wood, hay, or straw” represent unregenerate people present in the church... [bolding and underlining for emphasis is mine]”ⁱ Some of the ways a leader in the cause of Christ may build properly on the foundation of Jesus Christ are by ensuring their motives are pure, building into the lives of sincere followers of Jesus Christ (not just individuals from whom they personally benefit), ensuring that the message they present is Biblical (accurate), seeking God’s approval (not men’s), and trusting in God (not self) for results. **Personal sharing****

Read 1 Corinthians 4.

- 7) What point did Paul make sarcastically in 1 Corinthians 4:8-10 about the Corinthians' attitude in respect to their teachers (the "us" in verse 1), and how did he say that they ought to have viewed them? **Paul says the Corinthians ought to have regarded him, Apollos, Peter, and other teachers among them as "servants of Christ," entrusted with "the secret things of God" (4:1). Instead, the Corinthians' divisive bantering over which leader they preferred reflected their pride (verse 6) and arrogance (verses 8 and 18-19). Paul, Apollos and Peter viewed themselves humbly, but the Corinthians did not follow their example.**
- 8) What words did Paul use to describe himself and the other apostles in chapter 4? **Entrusted servants (verse 1); given a trust (verse 2); judged by men (verse 3); to be judged by God for their motives (verse 5); spectacles (verse 9); fools for Christ and dishonored (verse 10); hungry, thirsty, in rags, brutally treated and homeless (verse 11); hard-working, cursed, and persecuted (verse 12); slandered, scum of the earth, and refuse of the world (verse 13); and fathers (verse 15)**
- 9) Consider the contrast between the attitude of the Corinthians and the attitude of the apostles in 1 Corinthians 4. Then read Romans 12:3 and describe any patterns of thinking you have developed, through circumstances in your past or a bent in your personality, that need to be overcome so that you can evaluate yourself soberly. **Personal sharing**

Read 1 Corinthians 5-6.

- 10) How many letters did Paul apparently write to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 5:9, 2 Corinthians 2:4 with 7:8-9, and 2 Corinthians 7:5-7 [where Paul mentions the location from which he wrote 2 Corinthians])? **It seems that Paul wrote the Corinthians four letters. 1 Corinthians mentions a letter that was previously written (5:9), Paul's first but "lost" letter to them. Our book of 1 Corinthians appears to actually have been his second letter and is self-described as being written from Ephesus (16:8). 2 Corinthians 2:1 mentions a "painful visit" Paul made to Corinth, which the book of Acts does not describe but which seems to have happened during the three years Paul ministered in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (sometime after he wrote 1 Corinthians but before he journeyed through Macedonia to Greece [Corinth], as recorded in Acts 20:1-3). This "painful visit" may have been a direct journey from Ephesus to Corinth and back. It seems Paul followed up on that visit with a "sorrowful letter," mentioned in 2 Corinthians 2:4 and 7:8-9. That letter, his third, has also been lost. Finally, Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia (2 Corinthians 7:5-7) after he received an encouraging report from Titus about the church in Corinth. Therefore, 2 Corinthians would actually be Paul's fourth letter to the church at Corinth.**
- 11) List the two sins of the Corinthian church that Paul addressed in these chapters and one or two verses that summarize his advice to them. **The first sin was incest (5:1-13) and other sexual immorality (6:13-20). The second was believers taking other believers to court (6:1-11, especially verse 7). Verses that summarize Paul's advice in dealing with these sins are: "Hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord" (5:5), "Expel the wicked man from among you" (5:13), "Therefore honor God with your body" (6:20), and "Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church...Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?" (6:4 and 6:7b).**
- 12) For what purpose did Paul insist that the incestuous man in their congregation be excommunicated? Have you ever witnessed anything like this? **The man who "has his father's wife" was to be excommunicated for the purpose of driving out his sinful nature and restoring him to fellowship with Christ (verse 5). The man was not an unbeliever but a believer who had strayed and whose behavior (if tolerated) would have permeated the church (like yeast in a batch of dough), infecting others with malice and wickedness (verse 8). This principle is to be continued today. As Paul made clear, it does not apply to our relationship with unbelieving sinners, only with those who claim to belong to Christ yet continue in overt sin. Personal sharing**
- 13) In 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul referred to the physical bodies of believers as the Holy Spirit's "temple." How could you do a better job of honoring God with your body" (6:20)? **Personal sharing**

Read 1 Corinthians 7.

- 14)** List the challenge(s) from 1 Corinthians 7 that apply to your own marital position in life. To the married: Do not deprive one another of sex, except by mutual consent and only for a time of prayer (verses 3-5); do not separate from one's spouse, but if it's necessary, then do not remarry but seek reconciliation (verse 10-11); and do not divorce an unbelieving spouse who is willing to stay married (verses 12-13), but if the unbelieving partner leaves, then let them do so (verse 15). To the unmarried: It is good not to marry (verses 1, 8), unless you cannot control your physical passions (verse 9). To the engaged: In the culture of Paul's day, engagement was a legal and financial contract, as marriage is today, only without consummation by sex or cohabitation. Therefore, Paul's admonition to either marry or simply remain engaged without marrying is not transferrable advice to many cultures today. To the widow(er): Remarry if you choose, but you must remarry a believer. Consider that you may be happier remaining single (verses 39-40).
- 15)** Reread 1 Corinthians 7:29-31. What pleasures, circumstances or relationships tempt you to live as if the "here and now" is more important than things of eternal value? **Personal sharing**

¹ Walvoord, J. F., Zuck, R. B., & Dallas Theological Seminary. (1985). *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures* (1 Co 3:12). Wheaton, IL: Victor Books.