

1 Corinthians

About Corinth	The ancient city of Corinth was the capital of the Roman province of Achaia. It was a large city that controlled two harbors. This meant that the city was multicultural. It was also a city of immorality and corruption. In Paul's day, the term "Corinthian" was used a lot to speak of someone who lived a life of licentiousness and debauchery.
But They Needed the Lord	Paul visited Corinth numerous times. One of those times Luke records for us in Acts 18. He met Aquila and Priscilla there. It was in Corinth, that Crispus, a synagogue leader, became a Christian, as did many of the people who heard Paul preach. It was also the place the Lord came to him in a vision and said, "Don't be afraid" and "Keep on preaching" for "I have many people in this city." (Acts 18:10).
1 Corinthians Isn't 1 Corinthians	When reading 1 and 2 Corinthians, you will discover that Paul wrote 4 letters to the church in Corinth: 1) The first letter is referenced in 1 Cor 5:9: "I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people." We don't have that letter. 2) The second letter is 1 Corinthians. 3) The third letter is the severe letter Paul mentions in 2 Corinthians 2:3-4: "I wrote to you out of great distress and anguish of heart and with many tears." 4) The fourth letter is 2 Corinthians.
The More Letters, the More Problems	Paul wrote 4 letters to the Corinthians because the church had major, major problems. The problems detailed in 1 Corinthians are: (a) Divisions; (b) Sexual Immorality; (c) Food Issues Related to Jews and Gentiles; (d) Problems related to Gathering for worship; and (e) unbelief in the Resurrection. And that's just 1 Corinthians!
Theme/Reason for Writing	Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to stress the importance of seeing every part of life through the Gospel. Everything we see, believe, do, say, and portray should reflect the Gospel.
1 Corinthians in a Phrase	Gospel Application
Key Verses	<u>1 Cor 13:4-7</u> : "Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. <u>1 Cor 15:3-4</u> : "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."
Structure	The flow of 1 Corinthians is fairly easy to follow. In each major section, Paul identifies (a) a problem and (b) a solution to each problem.

The First Problem: Divisions in the Church (chs 1-4)

¹⁰I appeal to you, brothers and sisters,^[a] in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought. ¹¹My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. ¹²What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas^[b]"; still another, "I follow Christ." ¹³Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul? ¹⁴I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵so no one can say that you were baptized in my name. ¹⁶(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.) ¹⁷For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. (1:10-17)

The Solution

The church is a community of people centered around Jesus. Therefore, the leaders and teachers are servants of the Lord.

⁵What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. ⁷So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. ⁸The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. ⁹For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.

¹⁰By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. ¹¹For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (3:5-11)

The Second Problem: Sexual Immorality (chs 5-7)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that even pagans do not tolerate: A man is sleeping with his father's wife. ²And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have gone into mourning and have put out of your fellowship the man who has been doing this? ³For my part, even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. As one who is present with you in this way, I have already passed judgment in the name of our Lord Jesus on the one who has been doing this. ⁴So when you are assembled and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, ⁵hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord. (5:1-5)

The Solution

Jesus died for your sins. Our bodies will be raised from the dead. Therefore, what you do with your body really does matter.

¹⁸Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a person commits are outside the body, but whoever sins sexually, sins against their own body. ¹⁹Do you not know that your bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; ²⁰you were bought at a price. Therefore, honor God with your bodies. (6:18-20)

The Third Problem: Food Issues Related to Jews and Gentiles (chs 8-10)

Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat sacrificial food they think of it as having been sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. ⁸But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do (8:7-8)

The Solution

You are free in Christ. But do not use your freedom to make your brother or sister in Christ stumble

⁹Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak. ¹⁰For if someone with a weak conscience sees you, with all your knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't that person be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols? ¹¹So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. (9:9-10)

The Fourth Problem: Gathering for Worship (chs 11-14)

⁴There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them.⁵There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. ⁶There are different kinds of working, but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work. (12:4-6)

The Solution

#1: One Body. Many Members. None of Them Have the Same Function
#2: Love

¹⁵Now if the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁶And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," it would not for that reason stop being part of the body. ¹⁷If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? ¹⁸But in fact God has placed the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. ¹⁹If they were all one part, where would the body be? ²⁰As it is, there are many parts, but one body. (12:15-20)

⁴Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. (13:4-7)

The Fifth Problem: Unbelief in the Resurrection (ch 15)

¹²But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (15:12)

The Solution

Without the resurrection, we have no basis for the faith, nothing to offer the world, and nothing to look forward to.

¹⁴And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith.¹⁵More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. ¹⁶For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. ¹⁷And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. ¹⁸Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. ¹⁹If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied. (15:14-19)