**Metadata**

* + Paul established the church in Corinth (cf. Acts 18:1-17). His preaching there was most effective among the Gentiles. Was there at least 1.5 years (cf. Acts 18:11).
  + Date of writing can be determined by other references. He was in Ephesus at the time of writing (16:8-9), probably at least two years into his nearly three year stay there (cf. Acts 19). Taking in account travel time to and from Antioch, the letter was written in A.D. 55 to 56.
  + Corinth was the commercial capital of Greece because of a location that was both defensible and strategic to trade. Commerce traveled the *Dioklos*, a special road built to move boats across an isthmus rather than traveling around the treacherous waters around Cape Malea.
  + In Paul’s day, more than 500,000 in population. A Jewish presence (synagogue, Acts 18:4). More success was found in preaching to the Gentiles.
  + The Epistle has been divided into 16 chapters and 437 verses.
  + The book is universally recognized as canonical, and as the product of the apostle Paul.

**Concise Outline of Book**

*(Taken from Mike Willis’ commentary, pages vii-viii)*

1. **Greetings (1:1-3)**
2. **Thanksgivings (1:4-9)**
3. **The Problem of Factions (1:10 – 4:21)**
4. **Problems of Morality (5:1 – 6:20)**
   1. Incest (5:1-13)
   2. Litigations (6:1-11)
   3. Fornication (6:12-20)
5. **Questions Concerning Marriage (7:1-40)**
6. **The Proper Use of Liberties (8:1 – 11:1)**
   1. The problems related to eating of meats (8:1-13)
   2. The apostle’s decision to waive his rights (9:1-23)
   3. The peril of the strong (9:24 – 10:22)
   4. Final statement of principles (10:23 – 11:1)
7. **Problems relative to the Worship (11:2 – 14:40)**
   1. Relative to the women’s covering (11:2-16)
   2. Relative to the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34)
   3. Relative to spiritual gifts (12:1 – 14:40)

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1. **The Resurrection (15:1-58)**
2. **References to the Collection for the Poor Saints in Jerusalem and Paul’s Planned Visit (16:1-9)**
3. **Concluding Remarks (16:10-24)**

**Paul’s Purpose in Writing 1 Corinthians**

* Problems had erupted in the church, which threatened division, and led the church to write to him (7:1). There was an earlier letter written of which we have no copy (5:9).
* Paul determined to write in an attempt to help them overcome their problems. The tone is sharp, expressing concern and urgency.
* Because the problems were numerous, the letter is lengthy covering many topics.

**Chapter Synopses**

1. After his gracious greeting to the Corinthians, Paul immediately deals with the division existing among them. He proclaims the power of the message of the cross, and calls for them to rest their hope in it alone.
2. Paul continues to express the importance of the gospel, stating his determination to rely upon it alone, and so influence them to do the same. He contrasts the mind of Christ with the *“natural man”* who cannot know or discern God’s will.
3. Returning to the main admonition regarding factionalism, Paul calls the Corinthians *“carnal”* because of their striving. He emphasizes that men are only workers, and that Christ is the *“foundation.”* He warns them against worldly wisdom and boasting in men.
4. Paul emphasizes the concept of proper place. Christians are to be faithful stewards, and he gives himself as an example. He urges them to imitate him, and like a parent, warns them of the consequences of continuing in their sins.
5. Paul deals with a specific instance of sexual immorality in Corinth, which was being tolerated by the church. He calls for them to discipline the offender, and explains the reasons for it.
6. As a part of his admonition against divisiveness, he deals with the fact that some were suing their brethren in a secular court. He warns that their unrighteousness is characteristic of the ungodly lost, and reminds them of their sanctification. He warns against fornication.
7. In answer to their questions, Paul teaches on the subject of marriage. He discusses the relationship, the Lord’s teaching, and proper responses to the *“present distress.”*
8. Paul discusses the conscience, and calls the Corinthians to respect the weaker Christians among them. The specific context is that of eating meat offered up to idols.
9. Paul defends his right to receive support as an apostle and preacher. He does not exercise that right, avoiding the charge that he was abusing his *“authority in the gospel.”*
10. He calls upon the Corinthians to learn from the sins of Israel, and avoid temptation. He tells them to flee idolatry, and avoid offending men.
11. Paul deals with the head covering, and the subjection of women. He admonishes them for their behavior in the serving of the Lord’s Supper, and calls for them to examine them-selves before partaking in this act of worship.
12. He discusses spiritual gifts, and indicates that every person has a purpose and equal value to the body of Christ. Though the gifts are diverse, there is only *“one body.”*
13. In the midst of a discussion of spiritual gifts, he directs the Corinthians attention *to “a more excellent way.”* The chapter is a discussion of **agape** love, showing the greater importance of love as contrasted with the lesser gifts about which they were contending.
14. Paul specifically discusses the gift of tongues – the purpose, relative importance, and proper use of tongues in the assembly. He again deals with the role of women, and their subjection in the assembly.
15. Paul deals with the false view some had regarding the resurrection, by noting Christ’s resurrection, and the hope it affords us. He discusses the nature of the resurrected body, and emphasizes the hope that the resurrection gives to all Christians.
16. Paul finally gives instructions for a weekly contribution, to be used for benevolence to needy Christians elsewhere. He ends his letter with information regarding his personal plans, and some final brief admonitions.

**Suggested Memory Work**

**(1:18)**, “*For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”*

**(3:16-17)**, *“Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? 17 If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.”*

**(9:24-25)**, *“Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”*

**(10:13)**, *“No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”*

**(11:23-24)**, *“All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful; all things are lawful for me, but not all things edify. 24 Let no one seek his own, but each one the other’s well-being.”*

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

**(15:50-52)**, *“Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. 51 Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed— 52 in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed.”*

**Difficult Passages**

* What does it mean that the Son **confirms** us *“to the end, that* [we] *may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ”*? (1:4-8)
* In 3:10-15, what are the individual’s *“works”* that are under consideration. Does verse 15 teach the impossibility of apostasy as Calvinists claim?
* Explain 3:16-17. How are we the temple of God?
* What is the difference between sin in the church, and sin outside of the church? (5:9-13)

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* Difficult concepts concerning marriage (7:10-11, 14, 15-16, 26-27, 39).
* Explain the difference between sexual sin and other sin (6:18-20)
* Explain the significance of (10:13)
* What is the difference between what is lawful, and what edifies? (Examples?) (10:23-24)
* Have spiritual gifts ceased? (13:8-10)
* The primacy of the Father (15:27-28)
* Explain (15:29). Does this passage support the Mormon practice of baptizing for the dead?
* What does Paul mean when he writes of a *“great and effective door”* (16:8-9)

**Doctrinal Considerations**

* **Unity/Division (1:10-17; 3:1-23; 4:6-16)**
* The power of the gospel (1:18 – 2:16; )
* A demonstration of God’s ways diverging from the ways of man (1:18-31; 2;1-5; 3:18-23)
* Discipline (with regard to immorality) (5:1-8)
* Judging others (5:12-13)
* **Is it right to sue other Christians? (6:1-8)**
* Man’s body and sin (6:12-20)
* **Marriage (7:1-40)**
* Response to conscience (8:1-13; 10:23 - 11:1)
* Monetary support of gospel preaching (9:1-14)
* **Head Coverings (11:2-16)**
* **Spiritual Gifts (12:1 – 13:3; 13:8-10; 14:1-40)**
* Tongue Speaking (14:1-25)
* Submission of women in assembly (14:34-35)
* **The Resurrection (15:1-58)**
* **The first day of the week collection (16:1-4)**

**Practical Considerations**

* The content of our preaching (1:22-25)
* Our only means of knowing God’s will (1:9-16)
* Our job is to plant and water. God does not hold us accountable for the results! (3:5-7)
* The key to true wisdom (3:18-23)
* We will be judged by God, not men (4:1-5)
* Pride precludes true repentance (4:18-21; 5:2)
* Sanctification requires change! (6:8-11)
* Marital responsibilities (7:2-5)
* Your response to a weaker Christian (8:9-13)

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* Adapting to win souls to Christ (9:19-23)
* The importance of **purpose** in serving Christ (9:24-27)
* Learn from O.T. examples - refrain from sin (10:1-13)
* Lord’s Supper abuses (11:17-34)
* The importance of deference to weaker members of the church (12:20-27)
* Worship must be orderly (14:40)
* The evidence of Christ’s resurrection (15:1-4)
* Consider the motivation supplied by a belief in the resurrection of Jesus Christ (15:58)
* Consider the concise admonitions (16:13-18)

**Questions to Consider**

* Division for any reason is wrong. In Corinth, it was not doctrinal (as noted in chapters 1 & 3). What then does the admonition that *“you all speak the same thing”* mean? (1:10).
* Is there a trend in the church today that diverges from Paul’s plea to preach only Christ?
* Give examples of faithful stewardship (4:2)
* Is there a limitation regarding compromises we can make to save men’s souls? (9:19-23)
* How dangerous is sexual temptation? (6:18)
* Talk about the relationship between a preacher, and the congregation that supports him (9:1-18)
* What about modern day idolatry? (10:14)
* Can (11:22) be legitimately used as an argument against using the church building for social meals?
* How can we improve our individual observance of the Lord’s Supper?
* Is (12:26) an illustration of empathy?
* Why is love greater than faith and hope? (13:13)
* Is tradition and habit a help in the practice of decent and orderly worship? (14:40)
* Define and explain the term Hades that is used in (15:55).

**Student Questions**

*(Use the back of the pages to prepare questions and comments for class discussion. Since this is not a “verse by verse” study, make sure that all your questions concerning the text are answered).*