



**THRU** the **BIBLE**

with *J. Vernon McGee*

# 1 CORINTHIANS

BIBLE COMPANION



EPISTLES

# READ THIS FIRST

This Bible Companion is a summary of Dr. J. Vernon McGee's teaching of the book of 1 Corinthians heard on THRU the BIBLE. These summarized lessons get to the heart of Bible passages and are intended to stir your own thinking, prayer, and study.



**Begin with prayer.** Dr. McGee said, "We are living in the day of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, the day of grace, when the Spirit of God takes the things of Christ and reveals them to us." Before you start each lesson, ask the Lord to use it to grow you up in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He is revealed in that section. Dr. McGee said, "This is the secret of life and of Christian living."



**As you study, read the Bible passage first.** Invite God to open your eyes and deepen your understanding of His Word. That's a request God loves to answer!



**If you want to listen to Dr. McGee's complete teaching on any specific passage, go to [TTB.org/1Corinthians](http://TTB.org/1Corinthians)** (or any book of the Bible).

The corresponding audio messages are listed at the top of the summaries. You can also use this Bible Companion to follow along and take notes while you listen to Dr. McGee teach a book of the Bible on the radio or online.



**After every lesson, several questions are listed for your personal consideration or, if you're reading this as a group, for your discussion.** Ask the Spirit to help you take to heart what He wants to show you.

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LET THE WORD OF CHRIST DWELL IN YOU  
RICHLY IN ALL WISDOM AND TEACHING....

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COLOSSIANS 3:16<sup>A</sup>

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## LESSON 1

# A NEW MESSAGE FOR AN ANCIENT CITY



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 1**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 1:1-8**, **1 Corinthians 1:9-12**, and **1 Corinthians 1:13-31**

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Traveling back to the world of ancient Corinth means you need to engage your imagination. You will see the sights and hear the sounds of a bustling eastern European city. Known for its sparkling culture and prominence in the world of trade, Corinth had become the envy of the Roman world when Paul wrote this letter.

Yet, because of all that, the Corinthian Christians had fallen too much in love with the world. They pursued sinful activities and had little regard for spiritual things, except for a fascination with idols and gods. Just like people today, the Christians at Corinth were trading their devotion to Jesus for sexual satisfaction.

Sound familiar? It should. Fast-forward about two thousand years. It's still hard to be "in the world but not of it" (1 John 2:15). But studying the letter to a group of Christians who needed to grow up in the Lord will help you redirect your priorities and turn the focus of your life away from satisfying selfish desires back to a devotion to Jesus Christ.

Likely written somewhere around 55 A.D., Paul's letter to the Corinthian church carries themes you'd expect in a letter from a concerned pastor to believers living in the sin capital of the world. Located on a narrow stretch of land between Peloponnesus and the mainland, Corinth hummed with dazzling commerce, lively entertainment options, lots of sex, and all manner of decadent possibilities imaginable. It must have been an incredibly hard world to live in and remain clean before the Lord.

Greeks, Jews, and people from all over the known world made up a diverse mix of sailors, merchants, adventurers, and refugees all converging on the alluring Roman province.

Yet, like in many dark corners of the world today, the gospel made a difference. People had come to know Jesus through Paul's preaching and teaching over the years. A church was born and started to grow right smack in the middle of all of Corinth's wildness. Still, Christianity struggled to penetrate the thick walls of that pagan culture. The attraction of doing anything and everything to satisfy personal desires and fulfill very sinful appetites began to take away the original impact of the message of Jesus on the Corinthian Christians' lives. Corinth was a tough place to be a Christian.

Religion itself was put to questionable uses. The Corinthians built a huge temple for the Greek goddess Aphrodite. In it were a thousand priestesses (prostitutes) who ministered to a base form of idol worship. Plain and simple, sex was religion in Corinth.

Perhaps that's why Paul declared with urgency, "For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified" (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Into the darkness of Corinth, Paul brought the shining light of the gospel. He founded a church there and later wrote two letters (epistles) to the congregation. Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey and near the end of his third journey (Acts 18:1-18). He also met who would become two of his closest friends, Aquila and Priscilla, in Corinth. Good things happen in dark places when Jesus is the focus.

On Paul's third journey, he enjoyed a long stay in Ephesus. During that time, he became aware of some of the problems that had cropped up in Corinth. Paul wrote them to help correct some of their errors in doctrine and they, in turn, wrote to Paul asking more questions. Paul answered them and

responded to more reports that were brought to him. We don't have that first letter Paul wrote to Corinth. But the follow up letter to the Corinthians is what has come to be known as 1 Corinthians—this letter answers some tough questions about the Christian life. Aren't you thankful the Lord is up for answering your questions? We all have questions from time to time, and God faithfully responds when we ask.

Paul reminded the Corinthian believers of who they are. Perhaps just like you, they fell in love with Jesus after hearing the message of His grace and love. Yet, continually bombarded by a very evil culture, their once shining faith had grown dim in their struggle against sin. As a consequence, they were quickly overwhelmed with trouble. Paul's letter came to help them sort out sin issues.

In his letter, Paul greeted these believers he loved so very much with grace. He wanted them to know Jesus and experience this wonderful gift from God. God always leads with His grace when He approaches us and our situation. He wants us to be in a close and constant relationship with Him. That's why He personally calls us to know Him through His Son, Jesus. There is no other religion in the world that offers to you a God who not only loves you but has done everything you need to know Him in return and experience His ultimate goodness. God graciously calls us to be something for His glory, too. God appointed Paul to serve Jesus, he didn't appoint himself.

Paul wrote to believers who were part of the church of God in Corinth, "to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus." All believers who know God through faith in Jesus Christ are *sanctified* (made holy) when they are saved. That includes you, too. That's what it means to be *in Christ*.

Sanctification means we become holy because of Jesus. He makes you holy when you put your faith in Him. At the moment you believe, the Holy Spirit gives you a new life. God changes your thoughts and transforms your emotions to seek after Him. You are made into a new person. If you have trusted Him, He has made you holy before God and acceptable to Him through the Holy Spirit.

Yet, also like you, the Corinthians struggled to live out their holy standing in practical ways. Being in Christ does not mean you are perfect every day. But God called you to receive the perfect righteousness of Jesus. His righteousness becomes *your* righteousness.

And it's all because of grace. In Christ you now stand "blameless" before God. That doesn't mean you have no faults. We all have plenty of those. Instead, you are made righteous when you put your trust in Jesus Christ. Your life becomes a testimony of His grace and peace (v. 8), and your salvation shines as a witness to the perfect faithfulness of God (v. 9).

God also invites those in Christ into an intimate "fellowship" with Him. That word "fellowship" is the Greek word *koinonia*, which means "being together" as one. To have *koinonia* is to enjoy an intimate relationship to God through Christ.

The Corinthians had many questions and certainly struggled to keep their spiritual footing. But they, like us, received from Paul the encouraging reminder that, despite the struggle, Jesus keeps His children in perfect standing before God.

What a way to start a letter!

Take a moment to pause and offer praise to Jesus. What a great reminder of God's faithfulness to bring us salvation like this through His Son.

Now in his letter, Paul got right to the point. The Corinthians weren't getting along. That happens when people attempt to live together but do so focused on themselves. Divisions cause so much friction and pain.

The word for "divisions" is *schisma*. It means "fractures, or splinters." There should be none of that among God's people. Even in the most loving congregations, people are tempted to form cliques, argue over petty disagreements, and align themselves with important people rather than with Christ. Instead, God wants Christians to embrace the message of Jesus as the sole truth that keeps everyone together.

Since Christ is one Person, He is not divided. There is no division in Him so we all ought to share in that unity which comes from the Spirit. Even baptism, for Paul, was not that significant. In fact, he struggled to recall whom he had baptized at Corinth. Anything that draws attention away from Jesus has the potential to cause unnecessary and often destructive divisions in the church.

By focusing on Jesus, we guard against fostering harmful divisions. That is such an important principle for Christians to embrace.

In Corinth, as well as in most cities of that day, human philosophy reigned supreme. Paul knew that firsthand. The Corinthians placed a huge value on human wisdom and intellect. But the gospel challenged that focus on human achievement and offered so much more—changed lives.

The Cross of Jesus divides the saved from the unsaved, but it ought not divide Christians. While the world presents “the wisdom of words,” Paul just presents the cross. If you have been saved, then you know it’s only the power of God at work. This brings us together in unity.

For people who don’t know Jesus, preaching His Word sounds like foolishness. It makes no sense and is likely annoying. But the preaching of the gospel delivers God’s power that redeems the world from sin.

In that day, the Jews wanted a sign, desperate for some supernatural proof. The Greeks scorned the way Jesus died and viewed the Christian message as inferior to what they had come to rely on as wisdom. So when the Cross of Jesus was preached, unbelieving Jews wound up frustrated by its claims and high-minded Gentiles simply ignored them.

Perhaps that’s why Paul bore down on the fallacy of human philosophy. While he was in the city of Corinth, he preached the Cross of Christ. But the Corinthian Jews rejected it, which just made him turn his focus to the Gentiles (Acts 18:6). Paul knew people would not be saved by foolish preaching, but by the preaching of “foolishness,” which is the Cross of Jesus. So he just kept on preaching to anyone who would listen.

Anyone who belongs to God through faith in Jesus is uniquely chosen by God to receive His grace. Grace flows freely to those God chooses, but the people who receive God’s grace are not who you’d expect.

Many Jews and Gentiles who have received Jesus not only heard the invitation, but they have also responded in faith. And they found in the Cross of Christ the wisdom and power of God to change their lives, answer their deepest emotional questions, and give them a brand new beginning in life (1 Corinthians 1:24-26; 2 Corinthians 5:17).

Some people enjoy aligning themselves with famous believers—the entertainment greats, leaders in industry, and the prominent in government. But God majors in average people just like you. He calls simple people like all of us to know Him through a relationship with His Son Jesus Christ.



Does that mean you are foolish for believing in Jesus? Absolutely not! But it may seem foolish to those closest to you who have not yet received the Lord's grace. You are not weak, but you may appear weak in the eyes of your unbelieving family. But take heart: This is God's gracious way. That's why none of us have anything to brag about when it comes to our salvation. Jesus gets all the credit.

And He is everything we need. This is what God longs to communicate to you and to everyone who seeks Him. He is wisdom. He is our righteousness. He is our sanctification and our redemption. Whatever it is that you need today, you will find it in Him.

Our glory should be in the Lord. We should make Jesus Christ famous every day by how we live and honor Him. What are you boasting of today? Are you boasting in your degrees? In your wisdom? In your financial portfolio? In your children? Are you boasting today in your position of influence? That's all emptiness until you find your glory in Jesus. We can boast of Christ; *He* is everything we need.

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**NEXT: Why the Spirit's power is better than human wisdom.**

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## LESSON 1



# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. Does the description of the city of Corinth sound similar to where you live? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. In what ways did living in a city like Corinth make it difficult to be a Christian?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What does it tell us about God that He is faithful to answer our questions?

4. How could being surrounded by so much sin affect someone's identity as a Christian?

5. How can believers, who still sin, be called "blameless"?

6. A focus on Jesus will help prevent division in the church. Where else do we tend to focus other than on Jesus? What about Jesus will unite us?

7. God's method of proclaiming the gospel is viewed as foolishness by those who need the message. What does that tell us about people who need Jesus?

## LESSON 2

# THE MYSTERIOUS POWER OF THE SPIRIT



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 2–4**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 2**, **1 Corinthians 3**, and **1 Corinthians 4**

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To live the Christian life is to live a supernatural life.

If you've ever wondered at the secret to the apostle Paul's amazing ministry, you're about to discover the answer. He totally relied on the power of the Holy Spirit in everything he did.

So much emphasis in the modern ministry world is placed on the "how to" of ministry rather than the "through Whom." In other words, people become the center attraction instead of the power of God. The result is a lack of confidence in God's power working in our lives and an over confidence in what we can do for ourselves.

God wants all of us to fall in love with His Son and to come away from time with Him in awe of His amazing power. That is so encouraging.

Supernatural power joins human ability to bring miraculous results. One of the supernatural gifts given to Christians, according to 1 Corinthians 2:7, is the "wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained ..." Mystery and the Holy Spirit's power go hand in hand in ministry and in everyday life for Christians.

The mystery factor is not like a “who-done-it” novel or something from a crime story. The word “mystery,” as used in the Bible, refers to something which was not known in the past but is now revealed. Like a secret. This word occurs about 27 times in the New Testament. Jesus used it when He said, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries (secrets) of the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 13:11). The parables that follow in Matthew 13 are called the “mystery parables” because they reveal wisdom not previously known about the future.

During Old Testament times, so much truth about God and salvation remained a secret. But Jesus brought a new experience and revealed the secrets of knowing God.

We simply cannot learn everything about God by hearing someone teach or preach. There are certain things that cannot be attained by human means. You cannot discover God by searching for Him. The things God has prepared for people who love Him are not received through seeing, hearing, or by reasoning. They are only revealed through the Holy Spirit. We can only understand certain things if the Spirit of God reveals them to us, and He does this freely. He *wants* to be our Teacher.

The natural man, the person who doesn't yet know Jesus as Savior, can't receive the things of God. Why not? Because they are foolishness to him. The Lord knows all things and is the perfect judge of every aspect of our lives, and that's why it's best to leave all the judging to Him.

Since we are not able to know the mind of the Lord to its full extent or have the capacity to understand everything about Him, we need a supernatural help to open our minds to such amazing knowledge. That supernatural help comes from the Holy Spirit.

In fact, all of us fall into two categories of spiritual beings: We are either *spiritual* or we are *natural* in our responses to God and His Word. The natural person is controlled by sin and everything comes naturally to us as sinful people. That's because we are in Adam's line spiritually, the first human, and the first person to sin against God. A natural person can't understand or even receive the wonderful truths that come from God. It's impossible.

But if we are *spiritual* in response to God, that means we live with the Holy Spirit controlling and guiding our thoughts and our emotions and every other part of our lives. We can understand (discern) the deep things of God, make decisions that honor Him, and impact other people in ways that have lasting, life-changing results. And God gets all the glory for it all.

## GROWING UP AS CHRISTIANS

(1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-17)

Once we finally become a Christian, the Lord expects us to grow up in our faith. Babies like to drink milk because it tastes good, it's easier to swallow, and it winds up being much easier to digest. Eventually, though, a mother's milk or baby formula won't sufficiently help a baby grow and develop properly. The baby must learn to enjoy eating solid food.

In the same way, believers in Jesus need solid truth food to grow spiritually. We start out on the "milk" of God's Word—just taking in the basics and loving every bit of it. But we cannot keep relying on a diet of basic truth—eventually we need to develop an appetite for solid biblical truth. When we stay with the basics, we will not mature spiritually. We will act like children, treating each other out of selfishness and jealousy. God calls that being a "carnal" Christian. It means we act out of selfish, sinful motives.

But God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us grow out of the baby stage and into the adult stage of knowing and experiencing God and His Son. We take sides and compete against each other, even putting people we think are better than others into high places of respect over God. But God doesn't want us to live like that.

We all have a special place in God's family and a unique role to play in the work He wants to do in the world. We will all be rewarded according to what we do and how we go about doing it. But those results are only determined by the Lord. God not only offers the rewards, He decides to whom and how they are given.

God cares deeply about the way we choose to build our lives. Every building must first have a foundation. Once the foundation is laid, the rest of the building can be built upon its forms. We build our spiritual lives in the same way. The foundation of our faith is Jesus Christ. Everything else rises on top of that first decision to believe Him. We might be tempted to build our lives on things offered by the world—like being famous or making tons of money or even finding the perfect person with whom to spend the rest of our lives. But God knows such things offer only temporary fulfillment. In the end, the only thing that will endure the tests and heat of living are those things that come from the Lord.

If we live our lives based on those things the Lord offers to us in Jesus Christ, God promises to reward us uniquely when we go to be with Him in heaven. Anything else we have relied upon for any type of happiness or success will burn up and vanish, like hay or straw in a hot bonfire.

In other words, we please God most when we live according to the Holy Spirit's power—that's the supernatural life we first considered earlier. Our body, our physical and emotional self, is the temple, or house, where the Holy Spirit lives. So that's why it's important we live in ways pleasing and holy before the Lord.

## **GOD'S WISDOM VERSUS HUMAN WISDOM** (1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-23)

God warns us as Christians about being too confident in our own understanding of how life works. He wants us to learn to trust Him, to experience His power, and to seek His wisdom in everything.

Our minds trick us into believing we are on the right course, like a pilot lost in the fog, when we are going in the wrong direction. Instead of being wise in our own eyes, God wants us to seek and embrace the wisdom He offers us when we open His Word and listen to His Holy Spirit. The people around you may think that sounds foolish. But don't let that distract you from the truth. God's foolishness overrules the most powerful wisdom we could possibly receive from any other source but Him.

We go very wrong when we put our hope in celebrities or people who look successful, but don't live their lives honoring the Lord. Everything we need, we will find in our relationship to Jesus Christ. That's who we really belong to.

As the Holy Spirit helps us control our own actions and attitudes, we must also guard against being at odds with others. Sin causes us at times to focus on what divides us rather than what brings us together in Jesus. Divisions among God's people emerge which stop the flow of the Holy Spirit and prevent us from experiencing meaningful relationships.

What a privilege to be caretakers of God's wonderful message of love through Jesus Christ. Every believer in Jesus becomes a "minister" of His grace and a spokesperson for Him to others. What God wants from us is that we be trustworthy in living our lives in ways that honor Him and show the world around us that we are faithful to His call on our lives.



Being a faithful caretaker of God's message does not require special gifting or that you live perfectly in every aspect of your life. Instead, you can enjoy God's favor because of what Jesus has done by giving you a right standing with God. That is wonderful news, don't you agree?

Most people struggle with thoughts that judge too harshly. We tend to judge ourselves based on different standards from God's. Or we put too much stock in what we believe others think about us or our lives. But God only wants us to value His assessment of us, not others' judgment. Everything we have is a gift from God, and that ought to satisfy us perfectly.

Only God is qualified to judge our lives and no one else. Not even our own conscience, ultimately. He sees everything and nothing can be hidden from Him. But all things are seen by God through the grace and goodness of His Son, Jesus. That's why we should also desire to live our lives in ways that honor Him.

Unfortunately, many Christians put too much emphasis on human leaders and attempt to judge their own lives by an impossible standard. That is a slippery slope since it takes God's gracious work in our lives completely out of the equation.

God gifts every individual differently in the body of Christ. And there is no room for anyone to raise themselves above another based on giftedness or popularity. God's kingdom simply does not operate like that. Instead, to follow Jesus often requires Christians to suffer criticism and even, at times, physical harm. And to those who don't understand the grace of God in Jesus, that appears to be a foolish way to live.

The kingdom of God is not just a lot of talk and acting like you have everything together. That leaves those outside God's family feeling confused and even resentful of the gospel. Instead, we must live our lives in humility and obedience as representatives of the wonderful grace none of us deserve.

You may be a very gifted Christian. That is more evidence of God's grace to you, for certain. But it's also not anything you should boast about or take credit for yourself. If tempted to do that, think only of those who have gone before you and lived exemplary lives and even given their lives for the cause of Jesus around the world. They are worthy. They have laid a foundation for you to continue the work of sharing God's message of grace in Jesus. The apostles, like Paul, in that great martyr period of the church, have been set before the world as a spectacle, an example for angels and all people.

For the Corinthian Christians, Paul was the missionary who led them to Christ. Perhaps you can point to a spiritual mother or father in the faith, too. Their influence also shows God's grace to you and something for which you can offer praise to His name.

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**NEXT: Why spiritual pride hurts us.**

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4. How would you describe the difference between the natural and the spiritual man?

5. Paul uses the picture of building a house to describe the Christian life. What other pictures can you think of to describe the process of learning to live for God?

6. If even our own minds can deceive us, where can we turn for wisdom?

7. What can you do to make sure you are judging yourself by God's standards and not some other standard?

## LESSON 3

# WHEN SIN GOES UNCHECKED



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 5–6**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 5** and **1 Corinthians 6**

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Sin takes its toll wherever it raises its ugly head. It's true in your life, in your family, in the church you attend. Sin ruins lives, destroys your peace of mind, and devastates communities. Unchecked, it can bring down a nation.

God hates sin. Sin cost God the painful sacrifice of His Son, Jesus, on the cross. So, it matters to Him and it should matter to us, too. Instead of responding in arrogance when God points to sin in our lives, we should bow in humble repentance because of the pain it causes Him.

The congregation in Corinth was compromising with sin. Unfortunately, Christians still do that today. They were ignoring a case of glaring sin in the life of a man in the congregation. He was living a life compromised by evil. Like most terrible situations, people around the man knew what was going on in his life.

God's plan for dealing with sin in the church is to carry out a clear, firm, but loving response of discipline to bring the offending person to repentance (see Matthew 18).

Therefore, this situation needed to be handled with church discipline. No one questioned if this was sin. In fact, it was so horrible a sin that not even unbelievers outside the church would practice it. Paul wanted the Christians at Corinth to take drastic measures to confront this man's sin before it got too far out of control. God takes sin seriously.

Jesus does, too. He told Peter that Satan wanted to sift him like wheat, meaning Satan wanted to mess up his life and render him useless to the kingdom (see Luke 22:31). Not too long after Satan asked this of Jesus, Peter denied he knew the Savior three times.

God urges we administer strong medicine as an antidote for willful sin. And the kind of hidden sin plaguing the Corinthian church threatened to spread through the congregation like yeast spreads through bread dough. Closing our eyes to sin in our lives or in the lives of others, while also arrogantly boasting about living in such careless ways, dishonors the Lord.

The Corinthian congregation was allowing leaven—that is, evil—to spread through the church. These were the very ones who were talking about the death of Christ and the crucifixion of Christ, and yet they let this sin continue in their church.

Paul had previously written them and called out these sins. They lived in a city given over to immorality. A thousand priestesses at the temple of Venus were practicing prostitutes. Sex had become the dominant religion in Corinth. Perhaps the Corinthian Christians had grown numb to it. They were permitting this immoral man to come into their fellowship and join them in worship and ministry. They patted him on the back and accepted him as one of their own when they knew he was living in sin. They thought they could drop down to the world's level and escape God's judgment. But that wasn't true.

Yet, this kind of strong medicine only applies to believers, not to unbelievers. Paul was concerned about what was going on among the Christians at Corinth not, the people outside the church. That wasn't his business, he says. And it shouldn't be our concern either. God doesn't spank the devil's children.

Thankfully, all turned out for the good in this situation because of the Corinthian believers' response to Paul's strong words.

Once confronted, the man stuck in sin came back to the Lord in deep repentance and was restored to fellowship with the church. Today we need a great deal of courage—not compromise—to point out these things and say, "This is sin." Most often, when confronted with truth in a loving but firm manner, a believer who is in sin will confess, repent, and come back to God.

Why did the Corinthian church handle the challenge so well? Because Paul courageously presented the truth and confronted the sin. In Paul's second letter to the Corinthians, when referring back to this painful situation, the wise pastor said he was primarily hoping for their humble and obedient response. And that's what happened. He did it for the welfare of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Another challenge we face as Christians living in a secular world is how to relate to earthly government as our authority. As followers of Jesus we have a dual citizenship, both as citizens of earth and as spiritual citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20). But our heavenly citizenship doesn't exempt us from our responsibility to earthly authorities. The Christian carries an important duty to both God and earthly governments (see Mark 12:17). We live in two worlds as followers of Jesus.

For instance, God commands Christians to pray for those who serve in authority over us and carry out their responsibilities in government. Also, we share in fostering a peaceful society by pursuing godliness, honesty, and living in ways that promote the civic good of our neighbors. Ultimately, our aim is to live in a way that attracts others to the grace and goodness of Jesus (see Romans 13:1-4; 1 Timothy 2:1-4).

Because of that ultimate value of living at peace with each other, God offers practical ways we can resolve disputes without involving courts of law, when necessary. In some cases, Christians should use the benefit of law, particularly for their own personal protection. But using legal channels to solve personal disputes within the Christian family is not God's best for any of us.

Church conflicts should not be aired in state courts before unbelievers. Individual differences among Christians should be cared for by believers in the spirit of Christ. When unbelievers are given a front row seat to the painful conflict between fellow Christians, that tends to significantly diminish our witness of the gospel.

When it comes to personal disputes among fellow believers, Christians are well equipped to resolve those disagreements within the church.

Someday in the future, believers will judge the world. Did you know that? It's an amazing truth that God will one day fully equip believers to judge the world during the period of time when Christ sets up His earthly kingdom. Believers will be uniquely gifted to carry out this amazing and important task (2 Timothy 2:2).



Also, believers will one day judge angels (1 Corinthians 6:3; 2 Timothy 2:12). That's even more amazing.

The Bible teaches that God created humans at a level of creation just a little lower than angels but who, through the work of Jesus and salvation, were elevated to a place of highest honor (Psalm 8). Humans were made a little lower than the angels, and through redemption lifted into a place of intimate fellowship with God, a status high above the angels. Also, God permitted humans to fall because of sin, but with the purpose of ultimately exalting them to the place of highest honor in creation through the redeeming work of His Son, Jesus (Jude 24).

In addition, the human legal system falls short in its ability to judge spiritual matters among Christians because the individuals involved do not understand spiritual principles. A human judge may be an expert in societal laws but fall short in the realm of spiritual discernment.

Sadly, much heartache and sadness results when Christian brothers and sisters take legal action against one another before ever attempting to come to terms using the spiritual resources at their disposal in Christ and in the community of believers.

Of course, not every Christian would make the best judge or arbiter of difficult disputes. Unfortunately, few believers possess the spiritual wisdom and maturity required to make certain all parties are heard and wise decisions made. Still, there is more hope for a just outcome when Christians resolve disputes in the spirit of Christ rather than going to the expense and often painstaking processes found in a court of human law.

How much better to trust the work Christ has done in our lives by making us holy before Him and by equipping us uniquely by the Holy Spirit to live peacefully with one another. Also, we have a new spirit in us because of Christ's work of mercy when we first believed (see Titus 3:5). Because of God's Spirit in us, we are clear minded, even tempered, and pursuing of one another's best over our own. Such virtues are rarely found in a court of law where people are by nature hopelessly pitted against each all the way to the bitter end.

Since God in His mercy reached down and redeemed us, we ought to know how to extend mercy to one another. We can be merciful because we have experienced mercy. The Bible teaches that love covers a multitude of sins, including those injustices that might land us in a court of law.

This is all part of what it means to be sanctified as a Christian. It means that in Christ we have been made right with God and ultimately with one another. But it also means we have an unusual capacity to bear wrong-doing brought against us. The Holy Spirit fosters an unusual attitude of forgiveness and love that carries the day, instead of relying on a long drawn out legal fight to solve our disputes. In the same way that Christ's kindness leads unbelievers to turn from sin and trust in God, our kindness—as a fruit of the Holy Spirit—cushions the blow when fellow Christians wrong us. Since Christ is on our side and living in us, we have an amazing capacity to resolve disputes when they arise.

Ultimately, our standing before God because of Jesus' righteousness ought to make us so much easier to get along with than unbelievers. Or at least it should be that way. The kind of things that get people all worked up when it comes to religion, for instance, fall by the wayside when we come to know Christ. Things like what types of food to avoid to not offend God. None of that really matters to the Lord. And such things should not become points of conflict among believers either.

We are free to live according to the desires of our hearts when we live in submission to Jesus and His Spirit. But God wants us to honor Him with our bodies. We are not to give ourselves to sexual sin. Our bodies are not to be given to adultery or fornication but to remain holy and pure because they belong to the Lord.

We simply cannot live according to the standards of the world and pursue sinful lifestyles while at the same time claiming a commitment to Christ. It doesn't matter that the world continues to accept and condone sinful lifestyles that clearly dishonor the Lord. God doesn't accept people who reject His standards, and so the two can't exist side by side in the Christian's life. Our lives and our bodies ultimately are not ours to use and abuse as we choose. They belong to God. It cost God His Son to bring us into a right relationship with Him, and that ought to motivate us to live in ways that honor Him.

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**NEXT: How to keep Christ at the center of your marriage.**

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## LESSON 3



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. If sin is so serious, why do you think the Corinthian church ignored it being committed openly in their congregation?
2. How could the sin of one person, if not dealt with, spread to other believers?
3. Imagine you were a member of the Corinthian church. How would the Apostle Paul's rebuke of your church family's sins make you feel?

4. Why did the Apostle Paul see a difference between the sins of believers and unbelievers?

5. What is the intended purpose of disciplining a believer who is living in sin?

6. How can you live in such a way that promotes the good of your neighbors?

7. According to Corinthians, when you're in a dispute, what is more important than being right?



*Good things*

HAPPEN IN DARK PLACES WHEN

*Jesus is the focus.*



**THRU**the**BIBLE**



## LESSON 4

# THE JOY OF MARRIAGE AND SINGLENES



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 7**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 7:1-21**  
and **1 Corinthians 7:20-40**

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Got marriage on your mind? God does, too. In fact, marriage was His idea. He created the relationship between a man and woman as a gift to all creation. Marriage brings with it wonder, heartache, celebration, sorrow, and endless joys. But marriage also complicates our lives and challenges us at every level. No wonder God had so much to say in His Word and especially here in 1 Corinthians 7 about this special bond between a man and woman.

Christians struggle with the same relationship questions and challenges that non-Christians do. For instance, being single may sound exciting for a few years because of the freedom and excitement that stage of life offers. But eventually people feel the desire and even a pressure to find a spouse. When life fails to work out as we hoped, that only adds to the frustration. God cares about those frustrations and shows us clear principles in His Word for how to live successfully, single or married.

Ready? There's a lot here to grasp. So be patient and open your heart to the Lord's voice.

The guiding principle for a man and woman to embrace within any marriage relationship is how to submit to each other and love each other sacrificially (see Ephesians 5).

Yet much like Corinth, our world lays out traps and temptations that hijack purity and diminish the importance of commitment. When sex and self-satisfaction control our lives, our relationships suffer the consequences.

Most global cultures don't support God's view of marriage as a lifelong commitment between a man and woman. Nor do most embrace a man and woman living in mutual submission. That was certainly true in the Roman world and particularly Corinth. Women were treated more like slaves rather than honored, lifelong companions.

The wife in the Roman world was a workhorse. A man generally had several wives. One had charge of the kitchen, another had charge of the living area, another was in charge of the clothes. Also, men chose to fulfill their sexual needs with temple prostitutes instead of with their wife as God intended.

But God's Word lifts marriage to the highest heights of respect and honor. Marriage is to be a relationship between one man and one woman as long as they both shall live. Women are not slaves to men nor are they to be considered property to do with as the husband wants.

God's design for marriage goes all the way back to creation, recorded in Genesis, the first book of the Old Testament. God created man and woman this way from the beginning. He created woman as a strong helper suitable for him. She is the complement to the man. When a husband says, "I love you," she answers, "I love you." Both husband and wife ought to lovingly submit to one another in every possible way, including in the sexual relationship. That's God's design.

Also, God wants us to find our physical desires fulfilled within the marriage relationship, not from any source and person outside that relationship.

All through the Bible we see wonderful, though not perfect, examples of marriage: Adam and Eve, Jacob and Rachel, Boaz and Ruth, and David and Abigail (1 Samuel 25:29). What a wonderful celebration of this gift of grace from God's heart.

Once we're married, our bodies and physical and emotional beings are to be reserved for our mates. We ought not in any way withhold the pleasure and intimacy of the sexual experience from the one God has given to us. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God and a means by which we can remain pure before Him.



Keeping these standards by trusting the Lord guards us from sin and protects us from Satan's attack on our marriages. Satan is not in charge of our bodies or our marriages. God is, and He desires that we honor Him by obeying His commands and respecting His principles for how to treat one another. That's what makes marriage really work.

Many people who serve Christ in ministry do so without ever being married. They embrace the gift of singleness and enjoy the freedom to serve the Lord without the inevitable cares that come from maintaining a marriage. They have made that kind of sacrifice—some for several years, others for their whole lifetime (see Matthew 9:12). God may want you to remain single so you can focus purely on carrying out His will for your life.

## MARRIAGE COMMANDS

Yet, if you do decide to get married, God takes that promise made very seriously. In fact, He designed marriage to be for life. There are few ways to justify divorce or somehow get out from under the marriage commitment. Our culture makes marriage, like everything else, a throw-away option. Once it becomes inconvenient or conflicts reach a point of being unresolvable, you are free simply to walk away and go back to being single. That is not acceptable in God's eyes.

Sometimes either a husband or wife comes to know Jesus, but the other does not. That can cause real friction. After a while, either the believer or unbeliever decides the marriage is no longer workable because of the two different points of view.

But God wants couples in that situation to remain married and try to bring a resolution rather than pursue a divorce. His heart beats for a peaceful, loving resolution but does not hold the believer under judgment if he or she chooses to walk away when he or she is married to an unbeliever.

If the unbeliever walks out of the marriage, then the believer is free. And it seems God does not look down on the believer for wanting to remarry, if their divorce occurred when the unbelieving spouse chose to leave. According to the Bible, each case stands or falls on its own merits. But ultimately, God wants the marriage relationship to be preserved and that the believing spouse prayerfully wants to see their unbelieving spouse come to faith in Jesus. Your unbelieving spouse's salvation should be on the top of your prayer list.

Whatever your marital status as a Christian, God wants you to be content and live joyfully. This honors Him. If you have come to know Jesus as your Savior but your mate has not, stay in your marriage and be used by God to influence your spouse for good.

Whatever your marital situation, this is God's call on your life and He will help you find contentment in Him.

Here's the point: Whatever situation you find yourself in when you accept Christ, stay right there. That applies to your marriage situation, your professional status, and the place where you live and have started to build a life. Stay there for the glory of God until a time when God chooses to provide another plan for you. Stay put and serve Jesus where He has placed you. Since Jesus bought you with His blood, your life is no longer yours to do as you please. Instead, you are now free to serve Him in the power of Christ.

## CONTENTMENT AND SINGLEHOOD

Most single adults wish they could share their lives with someone right for them. Too easily, the message they get from the entertainment culture is that marriage is romantic and dreamy—not very realistic. But God wants us to learn contentment and faithfulness regardless of our marital status. He longs for us to find freedom and gladness and fulfillment in all areas of our life by finding it in Jesus.

Being single provides a unique opportunity to serve Jesus and live for Him unentangled by the inevitable stresses that come with being married. So, if you are single, be happy being single as long as the Lord wills that for you. Life presents enough challenges on its own without adding to it the daily demands of being in a marriage relationship. If being single is what God has for you at this time, joyfully receive that as a gift from Him, not a curse you must somehow endure.

On the other hand, getting married can be such a joy and pleasing to the Lord when it matches His will for you. From the start, however, marriage comes chock full of painful challenges and, at times, relentless frustration.

Every aspect of our life with Jesus demands that we strike a balance. We may wish to live in another state or transfer to a new career or finally leave singleness and step into the joy of marriage. Ultimately, though, none of that is ours to decide when we belong to Jesus. He determines what is best for us and helps us accept—even enjoy whatever God gives to us.

God knows what we need and when we need it. He graciously provides for us in ways we could never imagine. He is for us and He believes in us. He wants us to passionately pursue Him by getting to know His Son Jesus in deeper and deeper ways. That's His heart for you, whatever your marital status. You need to believe that.

Regardless of your situation, you already know that life can take tough turns. In those times, the Lord wants us to keep our eyes on Him. To stay focused on the life He has given to us and to keep Him as our priority over everything else. Everything else eventually disappears or dies out anyway.

As followers of Jesus, God calls us to be *in* the world but not *of* the world. In other words, we live in the world to influence others for good and point them to Jesus. But we should not allow the values and pressures of the world to change us or draw our attention away from Him, even if that means staying single.

When we get married, on the other hand, we obviously must focus on meeting the needs of our mates, caring for our children, and managing a household. That requires tons of focus and nearly unlimited resources. That's what God expects of us, too. But if you're single, you naturally have more time and emotional margin available to focus on serving the Lord.

If God wills it and you decide to get married, then you are bound by an entire set of biblical standards that guide your new responsibility. To love your spouse sacrificially, live with him or her in an understanding way, put his or her needs above your own, and be the primary caregiver for that person even when life takes the hardest turns.

Building a Christian marriage is no small matter to God, and it should not be all roses and romance for us, either. Marriage takes hard work and requires a lifelong sacrifice and selfless living. There's little time and energy left to devote solely to serving Jesus and others who need His grace.

In deciding your marital status, the most important consideration is not what your Christian friends will say or how society in general will regard you. Neither should you allow your emotions to guide your perspective. The question you need to ask yourself is: In what way can I put God first in my life no matter my situation?

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**NEXT: With freedom comes responsibility ...**

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## LESSON 4



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What are some of the traps your culture lays out for purity and commitment?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Mutual submission was counter to the culture of Corinth. How does it compare to the culture you see around you?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Why do you think God's design for creation was for marriage to be between one man and one woman, and for as long as they both live?

4. How does following God's plan protect us?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Paul mentions advantages to singleness. In what ways could being single benefit someone in following Christ? In what ways is it harder?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. If the letter of 1 Corinthians was written today, do you think it would include more teaching or less teaching about marriage? What about singleness?

7. What does it tell us about God that no matter whether married or single we can serve Him and find joy?

8. What role does contentment play in the life of the believer, particularly in the areas Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 7?

## LESSON 5

# LIVE AND LOVE FREE



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 8–9**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 8** and **1 Corinthians 9**

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Many new Christians often have more questions than answers. Though filled with the joy and thrill of now knowing you have a relationship with God through faith in Jesus Christ, you still have questions about how to live differently than you did before deciding to believe in Him. Can you relate? Thankfully, God’s Word helps us sort all that out.

Most religions emphasize the importance of sticking close to the rules, rituals, and regulations about how to live. Likely you know exactly how confusing and impossible that feels.

God wants you to know that when you trust Jesus as Savior, He frees you from the heavy burden of those religious expectations. Jesus provides the freedom to live in ways that honor Him while at the same time brings you peace of mind.

That doesn’t mean we live however we choose. No—God’s Word tells us about certain ways to act that aren’t appropriate for anyone who knows Jesus as Savior. Those teachings are clear and always framed for us in the Bible in terms of how we should now “want” to live because of what Jesus has done for us.

Still people struggle, even after experiencing God's grace. Maybe you feel confused, too. But God doesn't want you to be frustrated about how to live. He really wants you to feel free ... because you *are* free.

But you need to avoid a couple of things: First, get rid of any pride toward others that makes you look like you know more than they do. God always rejects pride and wants us to relate to one another with genuine humility.

Second, not every Christian has grown to the point in their experience with Jesus to feel totally comfortable with things that once caused them trouble. For instance, though the Bible commands followers of Jesus not to "be drunk" but instead be "filled with the Holy Spirit" (Ephesians 5:18), the Bible doesn't say you can't have a glass of wine or alcohol occasionally. But if Jesus delivered someone from a life wrecked by alcoholism, he or she might struggle watching another Christian enjoying their freedom in Christ to drink alcohol. You get the idea?

Still, God wants us to learn a healthy balance between enjoying our freedom through Jesus and caring for those around us who are sensitive through life experiences to that level of spiritual freedom.

For the Corinthians, the issue was whether they could eat the meat that was once associated with temple worship. Some Christians in Corinth were really hung up on this issue of temple food. A few Christians understood they had freedom to eat what they pleased. But other believers, however, thought eating that meat was off-limits because it was once offered in pagan temple rituals. So, there was conflict.

In this situation, Paul warned some of the Corinthian believers against setting themselves up as better than others because they had made it past that issue. Proudful boasting for any reason is outside the boundaries of Christ's unconditional love.

You might understand the issue better and know more about the topic, but flaunting that freedom only hurts others and breaks down relationships.

The Word of God helps you balance between experiencing genuine freedom and being gracious and loving toward others.

Yet, often new Christians struggle to separate completely from their old ways of religion and the restrictions on their lives. That takes time, a study of God's Word, and someone more experienced in the faith to guide them to maturity and freedom. What matters most to God is our heart and whether we grow in our devotion to Him along the way.



God wants us to live in ways that honor Him but also respect and show concern for others who may not yet understand the truth about our new life in Christ. That takes patience and a commitment to being loving and not judgmental.

God wants us to care deeply about the spiritual well-being of our fellow Christians. We don't want to live in a way that our freedom in Christ causes someone else to struggle with their faith, or worse, walk away from it. That would miss the whole point of why Jesus died. Because Jesus has set us free, everything is permitted for us, but not everything helps others see Jesus the way we do. God wants us to think of others above ourselves and to commit to ways that encourage others to trust Him more.

That freedom certainly applies to those whom God calls to serve in ministry, just like the apostle Paul. When Paul wrote to the Corinthian believers, he felt the need to remind them of his spiritual authority. Because he had personally encountered the risen Christ, he was set apart as one who had authority in their lives.

Ministers of the gospel of Christ have both the authority and the freedom to serve God and represent Him to the world. That was true of Paul and anyone God has called into ministry today. This calling on your life from Jesus compels you to serve Him freely. By responding to His call, you obey Him and go where He leads you. But that doesn't cancel out the freedom Christ gives you. Most ministers of the gospel serve Jesus out of love and often at great personal sacrifice. They respond out of obedience to a clear call from the Lord.

In fact, that's why God expects His people to help financially support those He has called to serve Him. Some Christians sadly feel that pastors and ministry leaders should serve with limited resources and somehow take a vow of poverty in order to be found worthy. But nothing could be further from the truth. In the same way a farmer who works the fields benefits from the harvest, a pastor or servant of Jesus ought to be compensated for his or her service in the gospel. Even the ox that pulls the harness to reap the grain could eat some of the corn that fell to the ground.

In those days an ox was used to tread out the corn. The farmer hitched his animal to a horizontal wheel, and he walked around in a circle over the grain. That process separated the grain from the chaff. The chaff was pitched up into the air so the wind would blow it away, and the good grain would fall down onto the threshing floor. Since the ox worked to tread the grain, the

animal was permitted to eat the grain as it worked. Ministers of the gospel work hard to care for God's people, teach the Scriptures, and serve the church. In the same way, they ought to enjoy the benefit of their labor.

But also, like Paul, some ministers choose to work other jobs while continuing to serve the church. The apostle Paul made tents to sell in the local market because he wanted to be able to serve Jesus without feeling obligated to others. He wanted to be free to exalt Jesus and not be put in a position of appearing to serve for selfish gain. In fact, Paul wrote that he would have rather died than be put in that awkward position. He viewed the rewards of heaven to be his ultimate compensation for serving the Lord.

But it's not wrong for the minister who has been a blessing to his people to also be supported by God's people. Christians who are blessed by a pastor's faithful ministry and devotion to Christ should gladly and joyfully financially support him or her.

For many pastors, missionaries, and ministry leaders, supporting their families becomes such a challenge, sometimes even a distraction if they are continually in financial need. Still, God faithfully supplies the financial needs of those who serve Him. Most often, He uses His own people to be gracious, understanding, and generous. Christians are responsible to care for those who serve them on behalf of Christ.

Paul didn't preach the gospel for any underlying motives and neither do most ministers. Yet God has promised a reward. And He is always faithful when we faithfully serve Him.

There is a genuine joy in serving Jesus and freedom in believing God will meet our needs. In fact, because God promises to care for those who serve Him, we are actually free to choose to be His servants. Paul had the freedom to make himself a servant.

Thankfully, we all have the joy and freedom of serving others for the sake of the gospel. Serving Jesus like that is like running the race of our lives. We run to reach the finish line and win the prize. But unlike the trophies and medals handed out at the end of a marathon, we as followers of Jesus can hope for an eternal prize, a crown of eternal value. The awards God gives may not swell your bank account while on earth, but the spiritual treasures will add up nicely for your eternal reward.

That is why God calls all of us to live disciplined, godly lives, like athletes training for the big race. We need to be spiritually fit, our minds and emotions kept alert, so that we can serve Him without distraction and with an unswerving commitment to finish strong. We commit to taking care of ourselves physically, emotionally, and spiritually, doing whatever it takes to stay in the race. That way we maximize our opportunities to serve Him with great effectiveness and longevity for His glory.

Let's not play games with our bodies or live with careless abandon. We have a joyful obligation to be the best servant possible—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. God will take care of His own. His people will lovingly and generously support us. But we have our parts to play in staying fit for this wonderful work of the gospel.

Paul took his responsibility to live his life well very seriously. We should, too.

After all, we want to get Jesus Christ's approval when we stand before Him someday as He evaluates our lives. Let's all stay motivated to keep running the race of faith in a way that guarantees glory and honor to God and the promise of receiving our ultimate prize: "Well done, good and faithful servant" (Matthew 25:21).

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**NEXT: How to live as free as you are.**

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## LESSON 5



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What is the difference between following rules and regulations, and living in ways that honor Christ?
2. Why is humility a necessary component of freedom in Christ?
3. How is it that two Christians can come to different conclusions about whether or not something is a sin, and both be right in the eyes of God?



7. How tempting do you think it was for the Apostle Paul to give the Corinthians, who were mistreating their freedom in Christ, a few more rules to follow? Did he?

## LESSON 6

# MORE ABOUT LIVING IN FREEDOM



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 10**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 10:1-22**  
and **1 Corinthians 10:23–11:4**

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Remember the great stories in the Old Testament of people who lived and died by faith? Some were amazing; some were tragic. All of them were meant to teach us what it looks like to walk with God.

Paul retold some of these stories when he urged the Corinthian Christians to live humbly and not flaunt their newfound freedoms in Christ. Freedom should never be used to justify lifestyles that dishonor God.

Remember the way the children of Israel wandered the wilderness for 40 years? They almost died after escaping Pharaoh's bondage, but then God provided for them day after day, night after night, after leading them through the sea on dry ground. They were baptized on dry land—meaning they trusted God and found the freedom of salvation. When the Bible talks about “baptism,” it means to identify with something/someone by faith. (When you are baptized with water, you are saying you identify with Jesus' death and resurrection.) The Israelites were baptized by faith when they trusted God's leading through Moses. For Christians today, our baptism comes through faith in Jesus.

The children of Israel were identified with Moses. By faith they passed through the Red Sea. Whose faith was it? Not theirs; they didn't have any. *Moses* had the faith. *Moses* went down to the water and reached out across the Red Sea as God had commanded. *Moses* led God's people across the Red Sea on dry ground. When they got to the other side, the people sang a song of praise to God (Exodus 15). The people of Israel identified with Moses.

This is a good picture of our salvation. Jesus Christ went through the waters of death. We are brought through by His death and are now identified with Him as our living Savior. When we trust Christ, the baptism of the Holy Spirit places us *in* Christ.

Followers of Jesus can look to those great stories of God's people in the wilderness as examples for how we should respond when God shows us grace. They remind us of the real danger when we don't trust God's Word and shrink back into harmful patterns of trusting ourselves. They also warn us against the dangers of living sinful lives, guided by our own lusts. Despite having experienced God's grace in deliverance from Pharaoh and the Red Sea, God's people abused their new freedom. And they paid a heavy price. We should pay close attention to these lessons, as relevant as ever.

This is how sin works in our lives. It begins as a desire and then leads us into outright rebellion against the Lord. That is the essence of sin. Sin took root back in the Garden of Eden when Eve was tempted by her own desire for control to disregard God's clear instructions not to eat from the tree (see Genesis 3:6). Sin came from wanting something outside of God's will. The Corinthian Christian wasn't immune to such desires. But neither are we. We lust after sinful idols that lead us far from God's best.

God's people struggled with the sins of idolatry. (Idolatry is loving anything more than God.) They continually murmured and complained against God. They openly disregarded what God provided and whined about His servant, Moses. They wanted what they wanted, even if it was outside God's will. God always has something good for His people. That was true then, and it is still true now. We can learn valuable lessons from them (but not the good kind).

As Christians, we should want what God wants for us. We have freedoms, but we should want His best. Too easily any of us can fall into sin. The drift is often slow, the clues subtle, at times undetectable. Pay close attention to your heart's attitude toward God's truth. You can be a mature Christian, a real saint, and still fall. So be careful. Follow the Lord closely and step



in tune with His will. The good news is that when we do feel those strong leanings toward sin (the Bible calls them “temptations”), God promises to provide a way of escape to lead us safely back to Him.

Sometimes it’s easy to think no one else has endured temptation like you have. Yet, no matter what temptation you are hit with, others have had the same temptation. God is faithful; He won’t let you be tempted beyond what you can resist. Just do everything in your power to turn your back on the things that easily become idols in your life.

And even though idols are not alive, powerful evil forces lay behind those things that tempt us away from worshiping God alone. So with our freedom in Christ comes the sober realization that sin is always with us and threatens to diminish our experience of God’s power and presence. It even impacts our ability to enjoy intimate communion with Him. Don’t risk such a precious gift like that.

In fact, it’s all related to our freedom in Jesus. Everything is lawful for us, but not everything is beneficial. That means, we may have freedom to do certain things, but it may not be wise to do so. Just because you can, doesn’t mean you should. God provides a special wisdom to us to help us make that determination. The Bible calls it “discernment,” the ability to make godly decisions.

Since the Bible is silent on many things that aren’t in our best interest to engage in, pray for discernment. Think about how what you do impacts those around you, rather than just what you *can* do in Christ. Don’t let your life be driven by freedom. A Christian is not pinned down by rules and regulations. But we are controlled and compelled by Christ’s love.

Love limits what we do because we want the best for our neighbor—especially those who don’t yet know Jesus Christ as Savior. If a neighbor invites you to dinner and offers you something you might not otherwise approve of, don’t make a big deal out of it. You risk losing an audience with them because of your rigid attitude toward things that truly matter little to God.

On the other hand, if someone makes you aware of an issue they struggled with in the past, respect that and honor their concern. In this way, love wins over freedom.

So many Christians are harsh in their dealing with others because their motive is legality—"I don't do this, and you shouldn't do it." However, if their motive was love, their approach would be different. Love for others motivates how you live.

*Why should I be restricted by someone else's struggle?* Because the love of Jesus compels you to. Grace covers all of it. People have quite different pasts and carry with them deep hurts and issues that cannot be easily shaken, even though they know Jesus. Growth, healing, and maturing in the things of the Lord often takes years of patient instruction, grace-filled acceptance, and unconditional love. God longs for us to love each other with that level of Christ-like love, even though we may be free to live as we please. What ought to guide our decisions, our words, responses, and actions no matter what the circumstance? Do everything for the glory of God—that's where the real freedom comes from in the Christian life. Living for the love of others and the glory of God ought to be the guiding principles of our Christian lives.

The body of Christ should be the most loving and accepting group of people on earth. Love ought to rule the day, even when we realize how different we are. That would include loving families who have children with disabilities or who battle anxiety or struggle with various forms of mental illness. Love always rules the day. Jesus doesn't see racial differences, and we shouldn't either. If you love Jesus, you can show it by loving others the same way He unconditionally loves you. And all that results in the glory belonging to God alone and none of it to us. By loving others first, even if that requires sacrificing our freedom to live as we want, we want to make sure we're not standing in the way of someone trusting Jesus.

Everything we do we are to do for the glory of God—"Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God" (v. 31).

We belong to Jesus. Let's live like it. Let's say it with our words and especially with our actions. God loves it when we show His love and grace toward others. That's when our lives can best be examples for others to follow as we point them to Jesus Christ all the way to heaven.

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**NEXT: Come celebrate the Lord's Table.**

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## LESSON 6



# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. What good are the stories of the Old Testament for modern-day believers?
2. Why is it so important that we identify with Christ and His death?
3. If the Old Testament believers and the Corinthian believers struggled with sin, what hope do we have for seeing victory over sin in our lives?



7. Paul told the Christians to “do all to the glory of God.” Imagine the things in your life that seem the most boring or frustrating. How could you do those things to bring God glory?



LET'S LIVE OUR LIVES  
IN *humility* AND *obedience*  
AS REPRESENTATIVES OF THE  
*wonderful grace*  
NONE OF US DESERVE.



THRU the BIBLE

## LESSON 7

# COMMUNION WITH JESUS



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 11**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 11:4-16**  
and **1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

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How do you come before God?

He is holy and we are not. Do we bow? Do we put on sackcloth and ashes? Do we cover our heads? Our faces? Our knees? What's the answer that transcends culture?

God looks at our hearts. He expects us to come before Him in humility and reverence. In simple ways we acknowledge God as He deserves.

In Corinth, they wrestled with the issue of whether or not to cover your head when you come to worship. The Old Testament taught that when you serve, you cover your head—anything less is to be irreverent.

But Paul is teaching now that that men serving in the church ought *not* to cover their heads. A man created in the image of God, who is in Christ by redemption, is to have his head uncovered as a symbol of dignity and liberty. This was a new thought in the first century. A man should not cover his head when he prays or when he prophesies. When he is praying, he is speaking to God for others. When he is prophesying (teaching), he is speaking to others for God. Whenever he is standing in either of those two sacred positions, his head should be uncovered.



On the other hand, women should cover their heads during times of prayer and worship. There was a cultural reason, specific to Corinth. The unveiled woman in Corinth was a prostitute. The women who practiced prostitution in the temple of Aphrodite often shaved their heads. Apparently some women in the Corinth church didn't want to wear head coverings during corporate worship. They were free in Christ and they didn't have to. However, in their time and culture, it was hard to distinguish between the prostitute and the godly women in the church. Unless a woman covered her head, it could be assumed she was living an immoral life.

God never expects women to be treated with lesser status anywhere, but especially in the body of Christ. You will bring glory and honor to God when you humble yourself in prayer and worship. Sometimes that means you wear the head covering, so to speak. You worship the Lord in a reverent, orderly way.

God ordained order when He designed marriage and the relationship between Christ and His body, the church. In the marriage relationship, a husband and wife are to serve and submit to one another, but each have a unique, God-given role to fill.

The woman's role is to help her husband; she is to be the other part of him. No man is complete without a woman except where God has given special grace to a man for a special work. They are to honor and serve one another and provide loving and nurturing support, protection, and grace. That's God's design and purpose.

This is a mystery that all creation notices. In fact, we are on a stage in this little world, and all God's created intelligences are watching us. Even the angels are finding out about the love of God because they know we are not worthy of it. We aren't! But He loves us anyway. That display of His love is in His grace to save us. The angels must marvel at His grace and patience with us. The angels take notice when we honor the Lord in the way He has designed for us, especially in the marriage relationship.

A man and woman are inseparable. Man is not a sphere, but a hemisphere; woman is not a sphere, but a hemisphere. It is nonsense for either men or women to talk about liberation. The man needs the woman, and the woman needs the man. This is true liberty in the glorious relationship of marriage.



God created men and women, male and female, to reflect His image in every possible way. And we are to live in the way God ordained that we live, in mutual respect and humility before each other and before Him. We do not call attention to ourselves with dramatic ways of dressing or extreme hairstyles or extravagant clothing.

As Christians we have a wonderful freedom because of what Christ has done. But everything we do, even the way we wear our hair, ought to point people to Jesus and not bring attention to ourselves. Even our bodies can offer a witness to the goodness and grace of Jesus.

God cares most about our inner life, our character. God calls that our “heart.” Our outward appearance is of little consequence to Him, unless it becomes a distraction that keeps others from seeing Christ in us. That is when we have crossed the line. That’s when our freedom becomes a barrier to those who need His grace.

## **COMMUNION WITH JESUS— CELEBRATING THE LORD’S DEATH**

The Lord’s Supper is the highest expression and the holiest exercise of Christian worship. Christians all over the world celebrate the death of Jesus in this most solemn and meaningful act of worship.

Paul attached personal significance to the Lord’s Supper because of his own conversion experience with the risen Jesus. The Lord Jesus Himself gave Paul special instructions concerning this special time of worship around His table—remember Paul was not in the room with the other disciples when they celebrated the Passover as their last supper with Jesus the night before He was crucified.

The church in Corinth followed that example and always had a meal in connection with the Lord’s Supper. After all, on that last night, Jesus took bread and broke it and did something totally new. On the dying embers of a fading feast, He erected a new monument, not of marble or bronze, but of simple elements of food—the bread His body, the wine His blood.

Now in the first century, Jesus’ followers celebrated these dinners for fellowship, called an agape feast, or “love” feast. This was a part of the fellowship of the church, known as the *koinonia*. In that day, the agape meal led right into the Lord’s Supper.

But in Corinth, people were apparently abusing the tradition of the agape feast. Thinking only of themselves, they used to stuff themselves and ignore someone next to them going hungry. If they weren't going to share in true fellowship, they should have eaten at home, Paul said. Some were actually getting drunk during this agape love feast. They were in no condition to remember the death of Christ at all. It would be all fuzzy and hazy to them. What they were doing was fracturing and rupturing the church and running counter to how Jesus intends for His followers to live. This was especially shameful since the agape meal was connected to celebrating the Lord's Supper.

When the Corinthian believers came together, their fractured relationships and undisciplined lives were on full display. True followers of Jesus should be known for their love for one another and for a genuine spirit of humility. That apparently was not the case in Corinth.

Whenever God's people come together for fellowship or worship, there must first be an attitude of reverence for the Lord and a mutual affection for each other. Jesus deserves the full devotion of our hearts with purity and goodwill at the center, not our sinful behaviors .

## THE REVELATION TO PAUL

Why is the Lord's Supper, or communion as some call it, such an important practice? It's because Jesus started it. On the same night in which Jesus was betrayed, just hours from the Cross, at their last supper Jesus took bread and broke it as a symbol of His body being bruised and abused for our sins. Paul described that very moment as if he had heard it from Jesus Himself! Can you imagine having Jesus Himself describe for you in vivid detail the night He was betrayed and on which His destiny of death was sealed? How personal this must have been for Paul to write this to the Corinthian believers.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper is profoundly personal for us, too. We need to take our attitudes toward it seriously. Our heart matters to Jesus.

With the Cross just hours away, Jesus gave thanks to His Father in heaven for the bread and the wine that would symbolize His brutal suffering and death. What love is this!

When He broke the bread, it symbolizes His message to be shared. Just as Jesus shared the symbol of His broken body for us, we must share the grace of Jesus in our brokenness with others. Our transparency before others can lead to an experience of grace that most have never known.

When Jesus took the cup, He spoke of the new covenant in His blood—a promise God would make to show favor to anyone who would receive the righteousness of His Son, Jesus by way of His shed blood on the cross.

Again and again God’s Word reminds us we have forgiveness of sins because of the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. God did not open the back door of heaven and slip us in under cover of darkness. No—we are invited to enter through the front door as *children* of God clothed in the righteousness of His Son, Jesus. God brings us in the front door as children because the penalty of sin was paid by Jesus when His righteous demands were met. We must never forget that truth—hence, the reason we observe the Lord’s Supper. In a culture that believes God is only loving and turns a blind eye to sin, we have the Lord’s Supper to remind us of the enormous price He paid for us. The cup of the new covenant symbolizes the blood Jesus shed to take away our sin!

God in the New Testament is always opening a door or raising a shade, letting us see something new. That is certainly true about the Lord’s Supper. We are to observe it together until Jesus returns to earth. When we observe the Lord’s Supper, that table looks in three different directions.

First, it is a commemoration. We observe the Lord’s Supper to remember Him and the price He paid for our salvation. It cost Jesus everything.

Second, the table is a communion, emphasizing the present relationship we have with Jesus.

Third, the Lord’s Supper represents a personal commitment the Lord Jesus made to return to earth. Jesus told us to remember Him this way until He comes again. The Lord’s Supper is only temporary.

The Lord Jesus Christ took these frail elements—bread and wine, which will spoil in a few days, the weakest things in the world—and He raised a monument to our great salvation. It’s not of marble, bronze, silver, or gold; it is *bread* and *wine*—His body and His blood. But it speaks of Him and reminds us what it cost for us to know Him.

Finally, God wants us fully to understand and enter the experience of Christ’s death when we observe the Lord’s Supper together. This isn’t some spooky, existential experience but fully appreciating what Jesus accomplished for us by dying for our sin.

While you observe the Lord's Supper, Jesus is present. Yes, He is! This is not just a symbol. That is what it means to discern the body of Christ. You have bread in your mouth, but you have Christ in your heart. When you drink the juice, you reaffirm your willingness to drink the cup of suffering for His name. May God help us come to the table with the profound realization that Jesus Christ is present with us.

It's a serious thing to make the Lord's Supper some dead, formal ritual. Some Corinthian Christians had gotten deathly ill and even died shortly after celebrating communion. Why? Because they had participated in the Lord's Supper "unworthily"—somehow they had taken Christ's death for granted and it cost them their health and, for some, their lives.

This closer look on communion deepens our perspective on Jesus' gift of salvation, doesn't it? This is the essence of our relationship to God—fellowship with Him by way of His death on the cross. Makes you want to praise Him, right? Go ahead—thank Him. Let Him hear your voice.

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**NEXT: What's the greatest virtue of all?**

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4. Why does God tell the church in Corinth that the Lord's Supper is so important to Him?
5. Rather than showing love and sacrifice at the Lord's Supper meal, the Corinthians were exhibiting selfishness. What effect did this have on the rest of the church?
6. Paul was not there when Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper, yet he talks about it in vivid detail. How do you think Paul knew so much about that important event?

7. When Christians observe the Lord's Supper they are looking back to the sacrifice of Christ, but why do you think how they observed mattered?

## LESSON 8

# THE LOVE CHAPTER



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 12–13**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](http://TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 12:1-7**, **1 Corinthians 12:8-31**, and **1 Corinthians 12:31–14:2**

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Spiritual gifts are the special capability His Spirit gave you at the time you were saved. Yes, that's right—you were given a “birthday” present. Literally, you were given “spiritualities,” in contrast to “carnalities.” You were given the ability to accomplish something that those who don't have God's Spirit can't do.

As you grow in Christ, the things that concern you grow up, too. When people are baby Christians, they're concerned about things that reflect those carnalities, what they were saved out of. They want to talk about their conflicts and about different leaders. They ask about adultery, about going to court against a brother, about the sex problem, about how women dress and men cut their hair. They're worried about fairness and selfish behavior. That's all carnality; the same thing happens in churches today. Now Paul has covered those corrective issues and he likely breathed a sigh of relief, happy to change the subject.

... And what a great subject! Paul now wants to communicate to us how God's Spirit unifies us, how we can live by the law of love, and the victory we have in the Resurrection.



The gifts that the living God gives to believers are so unlike the dumb idols the Corinthians used to be so taken by—idols who couldn't say anything. But now they know Jesus is Lord; the Holy Spirit stirs that truth in our hearts, and is the conviction of our souls. It unifies us with Jesus Christ, alive and powerful—which is the central truth of the Christian faith. We come to the Cross of Christ to be saved, but we do not stay there; we become united to the living Christ. He is the Lord. His sovereignty is the important thing in the Christian life.

The Holy Spirit both commands and helps our souls to obey and be devoted to Jesus. The true church is made up of those who have gathered around the truth that Jesus is Lord. He interprets the lordship of Jesus to my life. Remember when Jesus asked His disciples that great question, “*Who do you say I am?*” (Matthew 16:15). He’s asking you the same question. Whoever you are, wherever you are, however you are—Jesus asks you, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered for us, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). Jesus Christ is the Anointed One. He is the King. He is the Lord. No man is fit to serve His church unless he has been mastered by Jesus Christ.

The Holy Spirit unifies us today by revealing the lordship of Jesus. Within this unity, He has given us a variety of gifts to serve one other—different gifts to different people, but the same God works in all of us. Your gift—energized by the Holy Spirit, directed by and used by the Lord Jesus Christ—glorifies Him when you use it to point people to Jesus.

This reminds us of the Trinity. One God—three Persons. The Trinity works together. Unity in diversity. All of this is for the one purpose of putting Jesus in first place and showing the world how wonderful He is.

Want to find out more about this gift you’ve been given?

First, a spiritual gift is a way you personally serve God best. It’s more than serving the Lord with your natural abilities. Instead it proves the Spirit is the One at work in you. Every believer has been given a spiritual gift—no exception. If you are a child of God, you have a gift. You are a member of the body of believers, and now you are equipped to build up the body. Your spiritual gift enables you to serve the Lord by serving the body.

What do these gifts look like?

Some are given “the word of wisdom”—insight into the truth of God’s Word.

Others are given “the word of knowledge through the same Spirit.” They are able to investigate or dig into the truth.

“To another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit.”

Faith, the substance of things hoped for, is also a gift (see Hebrews 11:1).

In Paul’s day, the gift of healing was given to apostles in the early church. That gift isn’t needed today since we can take our case directly to the Great Physician. The Spirit gives certain gifts for specific seasons so the whole body can benefit from it. Miracles happened in that first century when apostles led the gospel movement, but today we see greater things—we see God using us.

To “prophesy” means to declare God’s will—to preach the Word of God and then trust God to use that Word through His Spirit.

Some people have been given “discerning of spirit,” the ability to distinguish between true and false.

Some have been given the gift of “tongues.” These are not unknown tongues but are known languages. The gospel still needs to be translated into many new languages.

In this whole passage, Paul compares the use of gifts to a human body. As a body is made up of many members performing different functions, so the members of the church need to perform different functions—hundreds, thousands of functions. Same as in the body of Christ, there are perhaps thousands of gifts.

It’s the Spirit who places each one of us, with our spiritual gift, into this body. He baptizes us into His body so it can function in all the necessary ways. It’s God who sovereignly gives the gifts, and He gives them as He pleases—after all, He is the One to be pleased. He established His body to need each other. If God has called you to bake a cake or counsel a young person or preach a sermon, then do it. Use your gift under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Spirit will help you. One of the most thrilling things in life is to find out what God wants you to do. What an adventure to actually do it!

Paul warns us that we shouldn't let our gifts divide us. Don't let jealousy in the door. Love how God made you to serve and care for each other the same way. We are members of the same body—if one is honored, we all receive that honor. And when one member suffers, we all suffer with him.

Some spiritual gifts have disappeared because they are no longer needed. Because we have the Holy Spirit and His Word, we no longer need apostles in the church, nor prophets, those able to foretell future events.

Although the Holy Spirit is sovereign in giving us spiritual gifts, He says we can ask God for the gift we want (12:31). You can ask God for the *best* gift.

Why are these gifts given? To serve the body. How should these gifts be exercised? In love—and only the Spirit of God can do that in us. That's a great transition to one of the greatest chapters in the Bible, 1 Corinthians 13, the *love* chapter. It purposely follows the chapter on the gifts of the Spirit, because only by the Spirit's power can we love and serve God and each other.

This chapter pictures God's love. More than emotional love, this is love in the will—it chooses its object. This kind of love defines God. God's kind of love is an act of the will, the heart, and the mind. Linger long over this descriptive list:

“Love suffers long,” which means it's patient and kind. Love is impossible without kindness. Love without kindness is like springtime without flowers, like fire without heat.

Love doesn't envy, but is content with what God has given. Love recognizes there are inequalities, but love is satisfied.

Love doesn't parade around. It's not boastful or showy. It's not “puffed up.”

Love doesn't behave badly. It doesn't insist on its own way. It examines your own motives. It asks itself, “Why am I doing this? Is it out of love for Christ?” Love is the secret of service.

Love isn't easily set off. It doesn't have a bad temper.

Love doesn't thrive on gossip. Nor does it keep score of others' sins. It isn't happy to hear about wickedness, but instead, the truth brings joy to your heart. Love puts up an umbrella for others.

Love trusts God always (even when people fail), it looks for the best, and remains strong through testing.

Love never fails. It abides. It's permanent. There will be a time when we don't need prophecies anymore. Tongues will stop. Knowledge will vanish. The object of our faith will be fulfilled. All our hopes will become reality. There will be nothing left to hope for; so hope will disappear. There will be no need for faith. However, love will keep going. Faith, hope, and love—"but the greatest of these is love," God's kind of love in us.

It may seem like this kind of love is an abstract concept, but it's not. This chapter on love is a biography of Jesus Christ. He will continue to love us right to the end (see John 13:1). His is an eternal love. Jesus Christ will never stop loving you.

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**NEXT: How to use your spiritual gifts.**

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4. Why do you think Paul felt it necessary to warn about gifts bringing division rather than unity?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. The gifts aren't just given by the Holy Spirit; they are also how the Holy Spirit works in our lives. How can you willingly allow the Spirit to lead in this area?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
6. The list of spiritual gifts in this passage isn't exhaustive, as there are many gifts not listed in Paul's letter to the Corinthians. What are some other gifts you would have listed if you were writing this letter?

7. What do you think was the Apostle Paul's purpose in making it clear that, even as fantastic as some of the spiritual gifts are, love is superior to them all?

## LESSON 9

# HOW TO USE SPIRITUAL GIFTS



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 14**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](https://www.TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 14**

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When you were saved, the Spirit gave you the ability to serve the body of Christ through spiritual gifts. As a whole, the body was given a huge variety of gifts, all intended to serve the many needs and to unify the many members of the body. You can do what perhaps someone else can't and vice versa.

God puts us into the body of Christ through the Holy Spirit to show His love, which is even better than the best gift. He wants you to express His love your unique way and keep looking for ways to use your spiritual gifts.

These spiritual gifts are different from the fruit of His Spirit (see Galatians 5). When His Spirit is in control of your life, you become a visual example of His life. His control of your life becomes obvious when you express love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. These character traits are even more important than the gifts of the Spirit. when you pray for other Christians, pray they would have more fruit. Only the Spirit of God can produce it in our lives.



It's good to pursue spiritual gifts, but Paul wrote it's better to give out the Word of God and to speak it simply and intelligently. The Corinthians were preoccupied with speaking in tongues. Paul pleaded with them not to get fanatical or emotional about this gift, but to hold all things in their right proportion. Someday, he wrote earlier in the letter, tongues will stop.

It's interesting to note that Jesus never spoke in tongues. No record reports the apostles speaking in tongues after Pentecost. No historical record reports Paul speaking in tongues or any sermon delivered in a tongue—although we know from 1 Corinthians 14:18 that Paul had spoken in tongues more than any of them.

But what kind of tongues did Paul mean? By “tongues,” Paul meant languages. He spoke as the apostles did on the Day of Pentecost when every person heard the apostles speak in their own language. He probably said to the Corinthians, *“If you want tongues, go out on the mission field and start speaking in the languages of those people.”*

We know at one time Paul was caught up to the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:1-6). There, he tells us he heard “inexpressible” words. These weren't *unknown* words or unknown tongues; they were words he was not permitted to speak. Tongues are not a rapturous, ecstatic, mysterious language. They are not a mixed-up medley of rhapsody. Tongues were foreign languages. On the Day of Pentecost the apostles spoke in foreign languages so every man there heard the gospel in his own language.

This chapter on spiritual gifts (chapter 14) is an extension of the love chapter (chapter 13). It says to pursue a life of love. Set your heart on the gifts of the Spirit. And above all, to be able to speak God's Word.

Nowhere in the Bible does it speak of speaking God's Word in an unknown tongue. No one would be able to understand you. So, Paul says not to speak in a language that no one in the group understands—unless somebody there can interpret. How else can people learn? Instead, teach the Word of God which will build people's faith and encourage and comfort them. The tongue, when it is spoken only for the individual, is a selfish sort of gift, but prophesying or teaching edifies the whole church. So make sure there is an interpreter, and the message must conform with the Word of God. If it doesn't, then the Spirit of God is not in it.

The Bible refers to tongues on three occasions, and each time tongues were used to show grace. On the Day of Pentecost when the gospel went to the nation of Israel, there was speaking in tongues. At Cornelius' home when the

gospel was opened to the Gentiles, they spoke in tongues. And finally, there was speaking in tongues in Ephesus when the gospel moved out into the uttermost parts of the earth. (See Mark 16:17; Acts 2:3-4, 11; Acts 10:46, 19:6.)

Communication happens when two people speak the same language. If you speak in a language no one in the church understands, how can this edify the church? Building each other up is the goal. In other words, say something useful so a brother can say “amen” to it.

Some say they speak in tongues for their private devotions. But still, if you don’t understand it, it’s not fruitful—that is, the Holy Spirit is not ministering to you.

*Paul says, “When I teach the Word, I’m going to speak to people in their tongue. When I go out to the mission field [let’s say Antioch in Pisidia], they speak a different language, so I speak to them in their own tongue (even when I don’t understand it). When they hear the gospel in their own language, they believe. They understand what I said, even when I didn’t. When I speak to people in Israel, I speak in the language we all know and no one needs it interpreted. That’s how I teach the Word of God to them.”*

People today are smart, scientific, and sophisticated. They want a message they can understand—a logical, meaningful presentation of the Word of God. Preach the Word, and if an unbeliever comes to your church, pray they will understand the gospel, come under the Spirit’s conviction, and be rescued by God’s grace.

A church service is to be orderly. There are to be interpreters if there is speaking in tongues. If everyone speaks the same language, then teach in that language everyone understands. And what about that “let your women keep silent” directive (14:34)? Paul is not saying a woman is not to speak in church; he is saying she is not to speak in tongues in the church.

The point is, God is not a God of confusion but of peace. He is a God of order. The best way to serve each other is to teach each other well and listen to each other. And do it decently and in order.

Gratefully use the gifts of the Spirit but above all, keep loving each other and speak God’s Word the clearest way you know to build people’s faith and to encourage and comfort them.

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**NEXT: The most important part of the gospel.**

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## LESSON 9



## FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How does the idea that using your spiritual gifts as a way for you to express God's love change the way you think about yourself and your gifts?
2. What value would the gift of speaking in different languages have had in the world of the Corinthian Christians?
3. All of the spiritual gifts were given by God to encourage and build up the body of Christ. How could focusing on that change how you view fellow believers?



7. Imagine living in the first century and hearing the gospel for the first time in your own language. How would it make you feel that God had supernaturally gifted someone to give you that message?

A close-up photograph of two hands clasped together in prayer or support. The hands are positioned over an open Bible lying on a dark wooden surface. The person on the left has blonde hair and is wearing a gold bracelet and a ring. The person on the right is wearing a green long-sleeved shirt and a ring. The lighting is warm and focused on the hands and the Bible.

ABOVE EVERYTHING ELSE,

*love needs to be obvious*

IN A CHRISTIAN'S LIFE.



THRU the BIBLE

## LESSON 10

# THE ONE THING



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 15:1-19**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](http://TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 15:1-8** and **1 Corinthians 15:1-44**

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If you selected ten of the greatest chapters of the Bible, 1 Corinthians 15 would be on your list and on practically all the lists ever made. It's *that* important! This chapter not only lays the foundation of our faith in Jesus Christ, but it answers the first heresy of the church, when people denied Jesus actually, *physically*, rose from the dead.

In this chapter Paul describes the third great spiritual truth of this letter. In review, first he dealt with carnalities, the things the immature Corinthians felt were so important (and many still see as important today). Instead, Paul turns their thinking from the carnalities to spiritual gifts. How great it is to know that every believer has a *gift* from the Holy Spirit and gets to be partners with Jesus Christ in the tremendous enterprise of making Him known!

Then Paul goes on to the great love chapter (1 Corinthians 13). All our spiritual gifts are to be exercised in love, and that love comes from the Holy Spirit as fruit of our relationship. We can't work up this kind of love, it's given to us. Above everything else, this love, this fruit of the Spirit, needs to be obvious in a Christian's life.

Now we come to the third great spirituality, which is the fact of the resurrection of Jesus Christ and our own resurrection. Think of that. The glory of the Christian faith is that it never views life as ending with death.



This life is not all there is. The Christian faith always looks beyond the sunset to the sunrise. It looks out into eternity—and offers a blaze of hope. This alone gives meaning and purpose to life.

The Resurrection is the most important part of the gospel. Without that, everything else—even Jesus’ death—is meaningless. Romans 4:25 says He was delivered for our offenses and was raised again for our salvation. In His death He subtracted our sins, but in His resurrection He gave us a sure entrance into heaven. We stand in His righteousness.

But what does “the Resurrection” mean? First, when the Bible talks about a resurrection, it always means a *physical* resurrection, not spiritual. The word “resurrection” literally means the “standing up of a corpse.” Resurrection means “to stand up.” *Jesus stood up again, physically.* He didn’t vanish or disappear. He rose again. The tomb is empty. Jesus Christ is alive today. These are historical facts, not a subjective experience.

There is simply no gospel without the Resurrection. Christianity doesn’t rest on a set of ideas or creeds. The gospel is not the Ten Commandments or the Sermon on the Mount. It’s not a theory, not a religion but it’s a series of objective facts concerning a person—Jesus Christ.

In the Greco-Roman world of Paul’s day, three philosophies taught about life after death. Stoicism said the soul merged into deity at death. You simply stopped being and became a nonentity. Epicureanism, which was all about enjoying today, taught death was the end. You simply stop existing beyond death. And Platonism taught the immortality of the soul, believing that the soul went through transmigration, moving from body to body. Platonism can still be found today in eastern religions. It denies the bodily resurrection.

Because of these philosophies, when Paul taught about Jesus’ resurrection in Athens, they thought he was talking about a new God.

But understand this—Paul isn’t talking about a *spiritual* resurrection. Paul says our physical bodies will be made alive as spiritual bodies. The soul does not die. The minute a body dies, the person goes somewhere. If the person is a child of God, to be absent from his body means to be present with the Lord (see 2 Corinthians 5:6-8). If someone is not a child of God when he dies, then he goes to the place of torment—that’s what the Lord called it.

The question sometimes is asked about whether Paul made up the gospel. Did it start with him? He says to that, “*I delivered to you what I received from the Lord*” (11:23). So who gave Paul what? Remember that shortly after



his experience on the Damascus road, Paul went to the Arabian desert for three years. The Lord took him there to teach him. On the road to Damascus, when Paul was first confronted by the Lord, he didn't know Jesus was back from the dead. "Who are You, Lord?" (Acts 9:5). He didn't dream that "the Lord" was Jesus. He had to be convinced of Jesus' resurrection. Paul didn't think up the gospel; he learned it.

Paul says he declares the gospel to them. What is this gospel? The gospel doesn't tell us something we must do. The gospel tells us what Jesus Christ has already done for us. "Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures ... He was buried, and ... He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (15:3-4). Without these three facts, there is no gospel. Jesus Christ died for our sins, He was buried, He rose again the third day. That is the gospel—it's good news.

Here are three proofs of the gospel:

**PROOF #1**—Jesus was buried after He died. Very few deny this historical fact. Why is it so important to believe He was buried? It proves He didn't just disappear. It means they actually, literally, handled a body. Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea and the others who saw Him crucified *knew* Jesus. They remember burying Him—a dead body. But then He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures. The tomb was empty. This is the first proof.

**PROOF #2**—The church is the proof of the Resurrection. In the days between Jesus' death and resurrection, eleven discouraged men sat around Jerusalem. They were ready to go back to fishing. Some accused them of stealing Jesus' body, but they had been through enough trouble. They wouldn't break a Roman seal and face a Roman guard to steal a body that could only bring them more trouble.

Then what happened? Word came to them that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead! That one fact transformed them. That revolutionary fact brought the church into existence. And the wave has continued through the centuries—millions of people have said Jesus Christ is alive. Their experience proves you don't believe in vain when you believe the gospel. You simply cannot explain the church apart from the Resurrection.

**PROOF #3**—Did you notice in our facts about the Resurrection the phrase "according to the Scriptures?" He died for our sins *according to the Scriptures*, and He was buried and rose again the third day *according to the Scriptures*. What Scriptures? It's the Old Testament!

Wouldn't you have just loved to have been with Paul the apostle when he arrived in Europe and went to Philippi, Thessalonica, then down to Athens, and over to Corinth? Tucked under his arm was a parchment which was the Old Testament. Imagine him going into a synagogue and mentioning the death of the Lord Jesus. And the Jews would say, "But this is not in our Scriptures." Then he would turn to the book of Genesis and say, "I'd like to remind you about the offering of Isaac and how Abraham received him back from the 'dead'—he was ready to kill the boy. Now God spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up freely for us all." Then he would turn to the Mosaic system of sacrifice, to the five offerings in Leviticus, and show them how they pictured Christ, then to the great Day of Atonement and the two goats that pictured Christ's death and resurrection. Also he would cite Aaron's rod that budded and the book of Jonah, which typifies resurrection. Then he would turn to Psalm 22 and Psalm 16. He would show them Isaiah 25, and in Isaiah 53 he would point out that He was wounded for our transgressions and bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned everyone to his own way, and the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of all of us. Paul could have shown them from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus Christ was to die and rise again.

The expectation of the Old Testament was not only for this life but also for the life to come. Some people (then and now) say they do not believe in a "hereafter religion"; they want a here-and-now religion. We have both—a here-and-now religion and a hereafter religion (see Romans 6).

Another proof of the Resurrection are the people who saw Jesus alive again. You just can't get around witnesses. Any lawyer today would love to have as many witnesses for their position as Paul lists here as proofs of the Resurrection.

He mentions Peter first, to whom Jesus appeared privately. What took place between them is not recorded for us. Peter had denied Him, so now he needed to get things right with the Lord.

Then Jesus appeared to His disciples. After that, 500 people at one time saw Jesus around the Sea of Galilee. Per His instructions, His true followers went up to Galilee to meet Him there.

"He was seen by James" (v. 7)—this was probably a private meeting between brothers (James was Jesus' half-brother). Lastly, Jesus was seen by Paul on the road to Damascus. It's very difficult to argue with a person who has seen Jesus alive.

Paul calls himself the least of the apostles. He is being very modest here. He likely felt he wasn't worthy to be called an apostle because he persecuted the early church. He called himself "chief of sinners," yet he was the hardest worker of any of the apostles. Candidly, Paul tells us it was God's grace that enabled him to accomplish what he did, and we can certainly believe him.

The Resurrection is so important that you can't deny it and be a Christian. When the Corinthians heard the gospel, they believed, and that is when they became Christians. Paul praised them for their faith. *We spoke God's truth and you entrusted your lives to it* (v. 11). The Corinthians received the gospel and they believed it.

What does it mean to receive Christ? John 1 says Jesus went to His own people, but they didn't want Him. But those who did want Him, who believe He is who He claims to be and are willing to do what He says, He empowers them to become the sons of God. To receive Christ means to believe on His name. You put all your confidence in Him and then you stand on it. That's where the Corinthians stood and where we can stand today in a living faith in relationship with a living Lord Jesus Christ. Where do you stand today?

The gospel saves, but not just by understanding the facts. Jesus is the One the gospel speaks about, and He is the only One who does the saving—by the payment of His blood. When you accept the facts of the gospel and then put your confidence in Jesus Christ absolutely, then you are saved. If your faith doesn't rest on the facts, then your faith doesn't do any good. Faith by itself means nothing. The object of your faith is what is important—in *whom* you believe. Have you trusted a Savior who died, who was buried, and who rose again from the dead?

Some say, "Well, we can't be sure about the Resurrection, so let's not emphasize it too much." But when we talk about Jesus' resurrection, we stand on a rock. Never does the Bible falter on this truth: Jesus came back from the dead.

Paul explores how important this truth is with a series of "ifs":

- "If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen" (v. 13). They are linked together. Because Jesus rose from the dead, He is the firstfruits, meaning there will be more resurrections to follow of those who are His.

- “If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is empty” (v. 14). Not only that, but our faith is futile. You might just as well drop your church membership; it’s no good. If Christ is not raised bodily from the dead, then what’s the point of church or Bible study?
- *If Christ is not risen, then all the apostles were liars* (v. 15). If Christ is still in the grave, every one of these men was a false witness. But people don’t die for that which they know to be a lie. People *do* die for a lie, but they think it is the truth. The apostles testified they saw the risen Christ, and they were willing to die for it.
- *If Christ is not raised, then we are lost, hell-doomed sinners* (v. 17). And that is all we can ever be. If Christ be not raised, every one of us is still in our sins.
- Millions of believers have died trusting Christ as their Savior. *If Christ is not risen, then every one of them has perished* (v. 18).
- *If Christ be not raised, we have been fooled and we are about the most miserable people in this world today* (v. 19).

But we’re not! We’re rejoicing!

That is the end of Paul’s “ifs.” Will you face the possibilities he presents? Go through the “ifs” logically and you will see the human family is lost and hopeless if Christ had not been raised from the dead. That’s how important it is to believe in Jesus’ resurrection.

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**NEXT: Learn the most glorious truth of the Christian faith.**

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## LESSON 10



## **FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION**

1. Why is it so foundational to the truth of Christianity that Jesus physically rose from the dead?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. How does knowing that this life does not end in death bring hope to the believer? What effect would that knowledge have on an unbeliever?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. If the Resurrection isn't just an idea, but a fact of history, what difference should that make in how we live our lives?



7. Has there ever been a time when you received Christ? If yes, what convinced you of the truth of the gospel? If not, what would it take for you to believe?

## LESSON 11

# WHAT'S SO AMAZING ABOUT THE RESURRECTION?



Begin with prayer



Read **1 Corinthians 15:20–16:24**



Listen at [TTB.org/1Corinthians](http://TTB.org/1Corinthians) to **1 Corinthians 15:35-58** and **1 Corinthians 16**

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In the Old Testament, when God's people celebrated the festival of firstfruits every spring during the barley harvest, they would bring the first sheaf of grain to the Lord as an offering. It was like a deposit, promising more to come.

When Jesus came back from the dead in a glorified body (the only One who ever did), He was called the firstfruit. More resurrections were to come.

After the festival of the firstfruits came Pentecost, 50 days later. When the church began on Pentecost, that found its fulfillment in the New Testament. It will find its ultimate fulfillment when Christ comes for His own and we all rise to meet Him in the air. That will be the real Pentecost.

“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [meaning the sleep of death] .... For as in Adam all die [the proof you are in Adam's family is that you are going to die], even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (15:20, 22). The proof of your salvation will be when Jesus raises you from death. He is, after all, the Resurrection and the Life.

Christ is the firstfruits, and then “afterward those who are Christ's at His coming” (15:23). That's us! We will be raised afterwards when Jesus comes for His church. “Then comes the end” (5:24)—the end of the age. How will it end?



First, there will come the Great Tribulation and then the millennial Kingdom here on the earth. At the end of the millennium, Christ will put down all rule and all authority and power. Satan will be under His feet. The last enemy that will be destroyed is death itself. Then Jesus will establish His Kingdom.

Someday, God is going to pull every one of His children up on their feet alive. This fact of our coming resurrection is what keeps us going. If we aren't convinced our eternal life was guaranteed by the resurrection of Christ, then our faith would be worthless.

When we are saved, we are immediately baptized by the Spirit. To *baptize* means to identify with someone or something. When we are baptized or identified with Jesus Christ, who died for us and now has risen from the dead, we are dead to the world and alive to Christ.

If Christ did not rise from the dead, we are foolish to identify with Him. It would be foolish to put your life on the line. Paul asks, *"Why should I be put in a lions' cage for my faith in Christ if He did not rise from the dead? I am identified as a dead man because I am joined to a living Christ."*

But Jesus Christ *did* rise from the dead, and so we can identify with Him. Romans 6:3-4 says that since we were baptized into Jesus' death and are buried with Him by baptism into death, so then, when Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, now we too can walk in newness of life. We join ourselves to a resurrected, living Christ.

If Jesus didn't rise from the dead nor anyone after Him, then we might as well say, *"Let's eat and drink; for tomorrow we die,"* like the Epicureans of Paul's day touted. *That's all there is.*

But don't let yourself be fooled. That's not all there is. Don't believe those who question the Resurrection. The Corinthians were listening to those who had plenty to say but no knowledge of God. No doubt if you get the wrong information, you will act wrongly. *Stop sinning,* Paul said, *believe there will be a resurrection.*

But *how* can a body that died be raised up again and be the same? Paul looks to nature in his answer. He says the bodies are the same but they're not identical. *Like a seed when it's planted,* he says. A planted seed will produce seeds that are essentially the same as that seed. When you sow wheat, wheat comes up—not barley or corn. That little grain that forms on the stalk is like the one you sowed—not identical, but certainly very similar. But the seed itself has died and disintegrated, so that the seed it produces is not the very seed that died.

What is death? Death is a separation. It is not the end of your spirit or your personality. These do not die. The real “you” goes on to be with the Lord if you are a child of God. It is the body that disintegrates. Death separates the body from the person. The body disintegrates, decays, decomposes. Dust to dust and ashes to ashes applies only to the body, not to the real you.

Paul now answers the second question: *What* body is raised up? Like in the seed and the planting of grain, Christ is the firstfruits, then we’ll be coming along later. We wait for the rapture of the church when Christ takes the believers out of the world. If you are already dead at the time of the Rapture, you will be raised up. If you are alive at the Rapture, you’ll be caught up and changed. The seed doesn’t provide itself with a new body, neither does the sower, but God provides it.

All this is the mystery of life, and the mystery of life is greater than the mystery of death.

Now Paul explains our resurrected body, moving from botany to zoology. He says the difference between a dead body and the resurrection body is greater than the difference between men and beasts, fish and birds. All flesh is not the same flesh.

Then Paul explains our resurrected body from the realm of astronomy and says that all the bodies of the solar system are not the same. The sun is not the same material as the moon, neither is it the same as the stars. The stars differ from each other.

Same as for our resurrected body. It is planted with sin but raised without decay or death. The body that was given Adam was always subject to death. But our resurrected bodies will never die. We will get glory and color and beauty and power—all of these things—with the new body.

The first man, Adam, was physical and psychological—earthy. Made of clay. The last Adam (Jesus Christ) is spiritual. When you are in Christ, you are joined to Him, and therefore you have a hope of the resurrection into an eternal body which will forever be with Christ. Today we bear the image of the earthy, but we look forward to the day when we will bear the image of the heavenly.

Flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. Our old bodies are not going to heaven. God is not going to send these bodies into a repair shop. Corruption cannot inherit incorruption. This body must be put into the ground, like a seed. It will come up a new body, a new tabernacle for us to live in. It will not be identical to the old body, and yet it will be like the old body.

Now we're getting to the crescendo.

Paul says this is all a mystery. A mystery is something that had not been revealed in the Old Testament but is now revealed in the New Testament. It is something you cannot learn with your senses or your imagination; a mystery is a fact God reveals.

The mystery is we are not all going down through the doorway of death. But whether you die or don't die, you must still be changed. Before any of us can go into God's presence, we'll have to be changed. And that will happen "in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" (15:52). "A moment" means in the smallest particle of time (literally, in an "atom") we shall be changed—in the twinkling of an eye.

John tells us in Revelation that the trumpet sound is Jesus' voice. On His last call to mankind, He will call the dead back to life. The dead will be up and out of their graves, beyond the reach of death, never to die again. At the same moment and in the same way, we'll all be changed.

We cannot go to heaven with these old bodies. Our bodies are so limited here. If we went to heaven as we are now, we'd miss half of what was taking place. We see and hear so little of the spectrum of sound and light. We are almost deaf and blind as far as heaven is concerned. We wouldn't be able to see what is really up there, nor could we hear the music. So because we don't want to miss a thing, we're going to need new bodies—and so "this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (15:53). When this happens, death will be swallowed up in victory. "O Death, where is your sting? O Death, where is your victory?" (15:55). This is the real victory of Jesus' resurrection. He defeated death. What is death's sting? It's sin. But when Jesus defeated death, death lost its sting; sin no longer has power over you.

When you look way out beyond death, you'll see a doorway opening to the vast regions of eternity. Death only starts us down the hallway, not of time, but of eternity. To be honest, no one likes going through that door of death but Jesus Christ has been down that way ahead of us. He went through death's door for you, and He tells you, *"I'm your Shepherd. Remember, I not only lead you through this life, but I'll lead you through the deep waters of death, and I will bring you into eternity."* So like a little child who's afraid, put your hand in His nail-pierced hand and let Him lead you to the other side.

Where is the grave's victory now? It's swallowed up in Christ. Do we get the victory because we are smart, clever, and are overcomers? No, the victory is through our Lord Jesus Christ. Only by the blood of the Lamb will any of us overcome death. Life is ours. Death is ours, for we have the One who is victorious over death. The things of time and the things in the future are all ours. We are more than conquerors through Him who loved us!

That is the most glorious truth of the Christian faith.

So, you'd think after discussing our glorious resurrection that Paul would want to stay up in the clouds. Instead, his letter takes a sudden turn to talk about earthly, practical things like money. He's taking up a collection of money for the poor saints in Jerusalem and in so doing, Paul lays out a model for Christian giving.

Surprisingly, Paul says nothing about tithes. Instead, he says when you get together to remember the Lord Jesus in His death and His resurrection on the first day of the week (Sunday, not the Sabbath), be as generous as you can. Give according to how God has prospered you. Give with "liberality," the word for "grace."

*"Then, put that offering aside so that it's ready when I come,"* Paul writes. He didn't want his meeting with them to be spoiled by high pressure methods of taking up a collection. Finally, he asks them to organize a committee to go with him to Jerusalem to deliver the gift. More than one person should be responsible for the offering to protect everyone from temptation.

As Paul signed off on his letter, he told them he didn't know where he was going next. He didn't have a road map from the Lord telling him the plan. The Lord just led him along. Paul is in the wonderful position of being gloriously unsettled. Isn't this great to know since we don't know the future either? He leads us from day to day. We are also gloriously unsettled.

By all means we should make plans, but those plans always should be open to the will of God. We should be willing to shuffle things around.

*"For now,"* Paul writes, *"I plan to stay in Ephesus until Pentecost."* So we see Paul, gloriously content, rejoicing in the will of God, happy to go where He wants. If the Lord wants him to go to Corinth, he'll go.

Finally, Paul greets some friends. Remember these folks knew the Lord and lived for Him, walking down the streets of Corinth—a corrupt, sensual city given over to immorality. They knew more about illicit sex than this generation knows today, yet they kept themselves clean in spite of their world.

First Paul commends Timothy to them. *“Accept him,”* Paul says. *“Though he is young, he is a preacher of God’s Word.”*

Then Paul commends Apollos. The Corinthian church had divided themselves over “following” Paul, Apollos, and Peter, but Paul makes it clear they are all serving the Lord together.

Then Paul fires quick instructions and challenges to them: Keep your eyes open. Stand firm in your convictions. Be determined in serving Jesus. Love without stopping. He asks that they honor a certain church family who were “addicted” to the ministry of the saints, and he’s grateful for the group of men who delivered the letter from their church. “They represent you well!” he said. *“They refreshed my spirit and made me miss you a little less. Give them a vote of thanks when they get back.”*

Finally, Paul charges them: *Keep loving each other and keep loving Jesus Christ*—for that is the proof of our salvation today. If you love the Lord Jesus, you will love the saints. On that high note of love, Paul says goodbye.

## LESSON 11

# FOR DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION

1. How should it encourage us to know that even the feasts of the Old Testament point to Jesus?
2. Does seeing God's complete control over the events of the past change how you think and feel about the future, or even the struggles of today?
3. How could remembering and reflecting on your baptism help you in your struggle against sin?

4. Does Paul's illustration about the seed help you understand the future resurrection of the bodies of believers?

5. Why do you think some of what is to come for the believer is still a mystery?

6. Imagine what it will be like to have a perfect body. How would you describe what you think it will be like to have a body free from pain and imperfection?


7. At the end of this letter Paul revisits love yet again. Even if you've already considered it, think again. What are ways you can love people with your words and actions? What is the significance of Paul continuing to mention love?





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