

Men's Sunday Night
The Book of 1 Corinthians
Christian Conduct
Lesson 1 - 1 Corinthians 1:1-31
"The Christian Calling"

Have you ever found a Christian group that doesn't have any problems? If so, don't join it, you'll ruin everything! In a most sensitive way, Paul opened his letter by reminding the believers of the wonderful blessings they had in Christ. He does this before he rebukes them for their sin, for they were "taking advantage" of their privileges as Christians. They were not walking in a manner worthy of their calling in Christ.

The local church here in Corinth was in serious trouble. Sad to say, the problems did not stay within the church family. Their compromise was known by the unbelievers outside the church. To begin with, the church at Corinth was a defiled church. Some of its members were guilty of sexual immorality; others got drunk, still others were using the grace of God to excuse worldly living. It was also a divided church, with at least four different groups competing for leadership. This meant it was a disgraced church. Instead of glorifying God, it was holding back the progress of the Gospel. How did this happen? The members of the church permitted the sins of the city to get into the local assembly. Corinth was a polluted city, filled with every kind of vice and worldly pleasure. About the lowest charge you could make against a man in that day would be to call him "a Corinthian." People would know what you were talking about.

Corinth was also a proud, philosophical city, with many traveling teachers promoting their speculations. Unfortunately, this philosophical approach was applied to the Gospel by some members of the church, and this cultivated division. The congregation was made up of different "schools of thought" (Both Roman and Greek philosophies) instead of being united behind the Gospel message.

If you want to know what Corinth was like, read Romans 1:18-32. Paul wrote the Roman epistle while in Corinth, and he could have looked out the window and seen the very sins that he listed! Of course, when you have proud people, depending on human wisdom and adopting the lifestyle of the world, you are going to have problems. In order to help them solve their problems, Paul opened his letter by reminding them of their calling in Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9 and answer the following questions:

Back in Paul's day, the first century church was also far from ideal, especially in Corinth. Pressured by a pagan culture, the Christians were divided by conflicts and immorality. Though the church at Corinth was gifted, it was spiritually immature. In many ways it was like some young churches today. These problems brought discouragement. Paul wrote to this church to bring them hope and comfort. They needed to change, and God was able to help them. This letter also gives us hope today, whether our problems are at home or at church.

1. What theme does Paul repeat several times in verses 1-9? What does this tell you about Paul's objective?

2. What does it mean that God has given us **Grace** and **Peace**? In Paul's greeting, why don't we ever see **Peace** listed before **Grace**?

3. Why did the Corinthians "*eagerly wait for the return of the Lord Jesus Christ*"? What does this mean to you? How does this apply to your responsibilities and commitments as a believer today?

4. What does it mean that God is faithful? Note some ways in which God has been faithful to you, past, present and future.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17 and answer the following questions:

The Church in Corinth was far from perfect. Paul had heard a long list of complaints about this eager but misguided flock. As he attempted some long distance pastoring, the question remained, where should he begin? One of the main issues at hand was that of conflict and splits. Today, cliques and quarreling might remind us of our junior high days in school. But they also characterize many of our modern day churches. Some Christians become very

attached to one particular leader. They read only his books and listen only to his recorded messages and lessons, taking great pride in being followers of “his ministry.” Paul now addresses this very relevant problem and instructs us of the importance to worship the Creator not the creation.

5. What does it mean for Christians to be “*perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment*”?

6. Why is it important for Christians to be united?

7. What practices can help us be more united with other Christians?

8. How can division among Christians empty Christ’s message of its power?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31 and answer the following questions:

Conventional wisdom says that changing the world requires high profile spokespersons, popular leaders, and the use of power. Instead, in God’s economy He uses ordinary, humble, and powerless people to do His work. And most amazing of all, he used the cross. Who would expect a Savior to die as a criminal? No wonder God’s ways seem foolish to the world. The cross alone is the answer to a divided church, not words of human wisdom. Human wisdom can never solve the divisions within the church, nor within the world. Why? Because love is the only remedy for division, and the greatest demonstration of love ever witnessed upon earth is the cross of Christ. It is the cross that reveals the love of God and challenges man to love his fellowmen. The cross of Christ is the answer both to the divisions among men and to the problems that plague men and their world. The problem with the Corinthian church was that people were still looking at life from the world’s perspective. Here Paul brings the Corinthians back to the basics of their new found Christian faith.

9. The Corinthians boasted in worldly wisdom and those who taught it. How does the message of the cross destroy all such boasting?

10. Paul contrasts “the message of the cross” with “the wisdom of the world.” What is the message of the cross? (See 1 Cor. 1:18, 15:3-4; Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:19-23)

11. What is God’s reason for choosing the foolish and weak to shame the wise and strong? How does this belief contradict the typical image of success and power?

12. What does 1:18-31 tell us about God’s character, personality and values?

Life Application

Compare your notes and daily Scripture references. Take some time to pray and meditate on what God showed you in a practical way this week and how you can apply it to your Christian walk. Write your takeaways down for review, group discussion and application.