

1. I Corinthians was written to the church Paul established in Corinth on his 2nd missionary journey, after Paul had a vision and was exhorted by a man from Macedonia to “Come over and help us.” He planted a vibrant church at Philippi, but he and Silas were beaten. Next they planted churches in Thessalonica and Berea, but were forced to leave when rioting. Paul went on alone to Athens, while Silas and Timothy stayed to establish the Berean church. In Athens there was no strong church when Paul left to go to the city of Corinth, famous for sexual immorality.
2. Paul says he came in weakness, fear and trembling. God reassured him of His presence and certain success. The Lord said, “I have many people in this city.” He stayed, working for 18 months with Aquila and Priscilla before he was arrested.
3. I Corinthians was written from Ephesus. This is the second letter he has written to them. We do not have the first letter. The Corinthians have written him a letter asking specific questions. Paul has also gotten news of the church from Chloe’s people; he is responding to that in the first few chapters.
4. Big problems in the Corinthian church: first, there is no unity in the church. There are apparently four groups each centered around a prominent teacher in the church: one follows Paul, another Apollos, the third, Peter (Cephas), and the last says that they “follow Christ only.”
5. Disunity in a church is a very grave sin. On the night Jesus was betrayed, he prayed that we would be one so that the whole world would know that we were His disciples, by our love for one another and by our unity with each other. Secondly, by that unity the world would judge the validity of His claim to be deity.
6. We do not always have to be unanimous but we do always have to be “one.” The early church was one in heart and purpose.
7. Since there were no substantial differences between the content of the teaching of Paul and Peter and no disagreement mentioned with Apollos, we may safely surmise the difference was in their style of speaking or leadership. Paul seems to support that by what he says.
8. Paul says that “I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified....” God deliberately chooses weak, common, foolish instruments to do His work. He can use us. Our ordinariness does not disqualify us. It makes it easier for Him to use us.
9. Paul reminds us that we ourselves “are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in us.” We must keep God’s dwelling place clean, holy and fit for His habitation. It is because we are His temples that purity is so important.
10. Paul has some good things to say about the Corinthian church - the church was enriched in everything, in knowledge, in the ability to communicate that knowledge, and in spiritual gifts.
11. Paul is confident that God will keep them strong to the end because God is faithful.
12. A concept repeated again and again in Paul’s writing is when we become Christians and repent of our sins, the Spirit of Christ and the Holy Spirit dwell in us. We are the dwelling place of the very Spirit of the omnipotent God. We are only creatures of God, but God’s Spirit dwells in us.

1. Pride-filled rebellion made the church unwilling to submit to the apostle Paul's leadership.
2. Paul was the spiritual father of the church at Corinth. He and others had come to guide them to Christian maturity and have been faithful teachers, answerable to God for what they have said and done. These believers do not think they need guidance from the apostles.
3. Many people in the church today think they have arrived at a level of spiritual maturity which allows them to judge others and the servants of God who minister to them. We need to be careful of our standing before Christ before we pass judgment on the value of one whose life testifies to a servant's heart and love for Christ.
4. The church at Corinth was tolerating gross immorality. A man had married his father's wife. Paul writes that even the pagans would not tolerate this. He insists that they deal with the sin.
5. The pendulum regarding church discipline has swung so far to the side of understanding and forgiveness, that we almost never exercise biblical church discipline. We must always deal with one another with understanding, but we should not tolerate sin, or God will judge us.
6. Paul tells the Christians at Corinth to "excommunicate" the offender. Matthew 18 gives us clear teaching how we should proceed. The motive must always be redemptive - to win back the offender and restore them in love. The procedure must be fair, never on the strength of an unsubstantiated rumor, or evidence of one witness.
7. Sexual sin is rampant in the church in America today.
8. We do not wish to be labeled as "judgmental" people. We can be afraid of litigation. We do not confront it because we know of too many areas in our own lives where we are sinful.
9. Paul had a clear conscience; what other people said about him did not matter. That the principles of God's Word were not compromised by believers was important.
10. Because of the man's impenitence, Paul told them to publicly assemble and "hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord." We have no mandate to judge the people of the world, but we have an obligation to hold fellow believers accountable to the person and will of the Lord.
11. The greatest reason Paul gives for being concerned about purity in the church is that it calls us to reflect on Christ's death on the cross. "Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast - as you really are. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed..." (5:7-8)
12. The problem of lawsuits between believers: We are to love one another; the people most qualified to mediate any dispute are not in the courts but in the church; the day is coming when the saints will be judges. We should be able to settle our disputes.
13. Paul tells us that believers will from time to time disagree. Paul says the best way to handle it may well be to yield to your brother. God will bless you. If the circumstances are such that you cannot yield, then the clear teaching is that you must seek mediation within the church. Scripture does not give us any reason to take another believer into the civil court system.

1. Chapter 7 addresses their questions about marriage and divorce. Paul is very careful to distinguish between his opinions and what the Lord says. It is very important that we communicate carefully what is God's Word and what is the opinion of a pastor or a Bible teacher.

2. Paul, noting the dangerous times in which he was living, advises young people not to marry. A single person can focus wholly on what will glorify God, while a married person must keep one eye upon the needs of the family. His advice for most people, "...it is better to marry than to burn with passion."

3. To those who are married, Paul says that spouses should not neglect the physical side of their relationship. The only reason for prolonged physical separation is a spiritual one and then only by mutual consent. Paul knows that it is in the area of sexual temptation many marriages fail.

4. Paul believes that divorce is wrong. If an unbelieving spouse is willing to stay with you, you must not divorce them because unbelieving spouses are "sanctified" (literally made holy), by their believing partner. At the very least, this passage teaches us that even though it may not be evident, unbelieving spouses are affected by the partner's faith in positive ways. This does not teach that any man or woman will go to heaven without having put their faith and trust in Christ as Lord. But it does make a difference, and have an effect even on the children of such a union.

5. Paul realizes that sometimes marital separations occur. If a Christian takes the initiative in such a separation, which Paul discourages, they must live as a single person or be reconciled. There is no place for divorce in that instance. If the non-Christian refuses to stay with the Christian, Paul says, "let them go." The believer is not bound in that instance according to some Bible scholars; others believe that the "freedom" given is simply that of accepting a separation.

6. If you are a believer, according to Paul, you are only free to marry another believer. This is probably the most violated command of Scripture. God has given this rule for our protection.

7. Each person should retain the place in life he had when God called him to salvation. If you are married, stay married. If you were divorced and remarried, stay with your second spouse. If you were divorced and are single, reconcile with your mate or stay single. If you were not married when you became a Christian, you cannot marry a non-Christian. It will cause you great pain.

1. Greek and Roman societies were completely saturated with pagan idolatry. When sacrifices were made in the temples in Corinth, the first portion of the meat was given to the deity being worshiped and would be burned up. The second part was given to the person offering the sacrifice and he would take it home for his family. The third part belonged to the priest. They could not possibly use all the meat, so it was taken to the market where it would be sold. The two questions being asked were: (1) Was the meat contaminated? (2) If you ate the meat, would it harm your Christian brothers who might be offended?

2. This problem brings us the question of Christian liberty. We must learn what it means to be “in the world” without being “of the world.”

3. The first question is easy to answer. Idols have no power, so the meat is fine to eat. The second question is more difficult to answer. “If the meat is okay, should we eat it?” We have an enormous amount of freedom in Christ, but if it will hinder someone in coming to Christ, or hurt a Christian brother or sister who is weak, we should not exercise that freedom, but deny ourselves for the sake of others.

4. Paul gives us another example. He says a spiritual teacher has a right to expect the people among whom he labors to support him financially. Mostly Paul chose not to accept any payment (though there were sometimes when he did). He supported himself so he would not cause the people there to stumble.

5. The word “tentmaker” describes one who engages in some kind of ministry while supporting himself by doing secular work. Paul was the original tentmaker. While in Corinth he made tents. Jewish rabbis could not begin their spiritual ministries until they were 30 years old and had mastered some trade, so they could support themselves.

6. Under most circumstances, it is desirable for God’s people to financially support the pastors who serve them. It frees the pastor to spend more time and energy in pastoral pursuits and encourages the congregation to know that they are caring for their shepherd.

7. What Paul is talking about in these chapters can be summarized by his words “I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some.” We call this “incarnational” because Jesus became like us so that we would be able to hear and respond to Him.

8. History is full of examples of men and women who built their ministries on this principle. Hudson Taylor, founder of the China Inland Mission, got no response to the gospel until he gave up his western attire and habits and began to dress and live like the Chinese. He lost many of his English supporters, but the Chinese people started coming to Christ.

9. The first verse of Chapter 11 concludes the passage we read today. “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ. Follow me as I follow Christ.”

10. If we follow Paul’s verses we will change the world for Christ, just as he did. He said, “I have extraordinary freedom but I will lay it aside and be a slave for you; my eye is always fixed on the glory of God. That explains everything I do, and I want you to follow me because I’m following Christ.”

1. Paul is dealing with issues relating to public worship. The Corinthians were not a disciplined people and that shows itself in the way they worshiped and in competition as they exercised their particular spiritual gifts. Paul deals with the issues of proper decorum in public prayer for men and women, appropriately celebrating the Lord's Supper, and using our spiritual gifts.
2. An understanding of the standing of women in the 1st century: women had few rights and were treated as property. When the Gospel reached the Corinthian society, both men and women responded. Women found great freedom in Christ – they were equal with their husbands before God. Jews and Gentiles, slave and free, men and women were all equal before God.
3. Engaging in worship with a woman's head uncovered seemed scandalous. It challenged the husband's authority. Equality before God does not necessarily mean identical roles or functions before God. Paul clearly taught that women are to be in submission to men, in the family and church.
4. We may not understand Paul's argument, that woman was taken out of man, or the reference to angels. Perhaps the reference to angels is to remind us that Scripture tells us that angels minister to God's people when they worship.
5. It is clear that women were to worship in such a way that, despite their equality before God, they would demonstrate their submission to men in the context of family and church.
6. The lack of discipline was evident in the communion service also. The early church celebrated the Lord's Supper every time they came together and shared a full meal together, just as Jesus and the disciples had done before He was betrayed. The problem was gluttony and neglect of the poor who could not bring a meal. This lack of discernment and respect was responsible for the sickness and death of some of the sinning church members. Paul warns us that we should judge ourselves if we do not want to face God's judgment.
7. The 3rd area of their lack of discipline: the way they were using their spiritual gifts in the worship service.
8. Spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit to build up the church. They are given to bind the body of Christ together in unity, not to show one part of the body to be superior to another. A simple test to judge a spiritual gift is whether it unites the body of Christ or polarizes it.
9. Similarities and differences in the gifts mentioned in I Cor. and those found in Rom. 12 and Eph. 4: these list of "gifts" may be representative of a much longer list given to individuals to build up the body of Christ.
10. "Tongues" Acts 2 were known languages the disciples had never learned but were able to speak at that event. "Tongues" in I Cor. 12, was an ecstatic kind of worship or prayer language. It is clear here, that the Corinthians were using the gift differently than the apostles had earlier, and they were using it inappropriately.
11. The undisciplined and immature Corinthians put a higher premium on the more spectacular gifts. Paul argues that every part of the body is important, whether visible or invisible. Next Paul moves on to I Corinthians 13, the love chapter.