

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

Introduction

Paul first came to Corinth on his 2nd Missionary Journey somewhere between 50 and 52AD. He had first traveled to Thessalonica (Acts 17), and was chased out of the city. He went to Berea and met people who searched the scriptures to prove whether his teaching was true. These believers welcomed Paul, and were eagerly learning from him. But angry Jews from Thessalonica followed Paul to Berea and stirred up trouble there. So Paul moved on to Athens.

Paul reasoned with them about God, but they were not moved. He preached a famous message in Athens, using some Greek poetry in his message in order to introduce these people to Jesus, the unknown God. Paul found a few disciples, but then left for Corinth.

Corinth was a metropolis to the west of Athens. A center of commerce, this was a great place to plant the seeds of the church in the Greek and Roman world. Merchants traveled here from Asia to the east, from Macedonia to the north, and from Rome to the west. And shipping came to Corinth as well, opening doors to all the ports throughout the Mediterranean.

Paul met up and stayed with tent makers Aquila and his wife Priscilla. The three of them spent their time preaching and teaching of Jesus, making disciples and planting the Church. During this stay, Paul wrote his letters to the believers in Thessalonica, letters we know as First and Second Thessalonians.

Paul left Corinth for Ephesus having spent 18 months in Corinth. Soon after, he wrote a letter to the church in Corinth to deal with fornication being tolerated in the church. We read about this letter in 1 Corinthians 5, but nobody seems to have that letter. Paul followed with another letter that brought answers to questions raised by the believers in Corinth. We know of this second letter as 1 Corinthians. This is the first letter that we have in hand, which Paul wrote the church in Corinth.

As Paul answers the Corinthians, he teaches us as well. Let's take a walk through 1 Corinthians in the chapters ahead. We will cover the whole letter, one small section at a time. Each snippet will begin with what Paul wrote in the letter, followed by some notes.

Here's the plan. As we look at what Paul wrote to the believers in Corinth, we will ask Holy Spirit to illuminate for us the principles and practices He has for us. We ask for insight, for direction, for guidance and instruction. As the Psalmist declared, "Your word is a lamp for my feet and a light for my path." My hope is that you meet the Lord in reading His word.

Any insights and gems you may find – these belong to the Lord. Any issues and errors – these belong to me, though I would appreciate your bringing these to my attention. May God richly bless you as you dive into His word!

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Chapter 1

This letter is from Paul, chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from our brother Sosthenes.

I am writing to God's church in Corinth, to you who have been called by God to be his own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he did for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

I always thank my God for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. Through him, God has enriched your church in every way—with all of your eloquent words and all of your knowledge. This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true.

1 Corinthians 1:1-6

Paul says that we have been made holy, a separated people to the Lord! This promise is for everyone who believes in Jesus!

And the proof? He has given us gifts! Knowledge, wisdom, prophecy, healing, leadership, languages, and more! Every believer gets His gifts, the ones Jesus has for him or her! This means you!

And to you? Grace and Peace! Grace to overlook any obstacles and give you what the Father gave Christ. And Peace - we are acceptable to Him, just as we are right now!

CELEBRATE!

Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ.

He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

1 Corinthians 1:7-9

He is faithful!

He's given us each gifts.

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He will complete what He has begun.
Be still my soul, and rest in Him!

"I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?"

1 Corinthians 1:10-13 ESV

Oh we need unity. We need to think the best of others, and work together to understand and encourage. Our African Leaders are working so well, and are bringing forth a new day in Africa. What joy we have shared together! And what fruit the Lord has brought!

"I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, for now no one can say they were baptized in my name. (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.) For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to preach the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the cross of Christ would lose its power."

1 Corinthians 1: 14-17

Hey I am really glad I didn't baptize anybody. But we are exhilarated when people pass through the waters of baptism. But it's not who baptized me. And it's not where I was baptized.

I've been to the water, the place where my life was buried into Christ. I have died with Him. My soul was condemned, and then died. And then by His power I was raised to new life, washed by His blood, and set apart for Him, to do His work.

The message is not the baptizer, or the fountain, but Christ, with whom we are joined. Cancel the divisions, and be one body of new life people, raised with Him!

"The message of the cross is foolish to those who are headed for destruction! But we who are being saved know it is the very power of God. As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise
and discard the intelligence of the intelligent."

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So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. Since God in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our foolish preaching to save those who believe. It is foolish to the Jews, who ask for signs from heaven. And it is foolish to the Greeks, who seek human wisdom.'

1 Corinthians 1:18-22

God keeps a different score. He knows that despite all our wisdom and philosophy, we will transgress Him. We will cross Him, reject Him, offend Him, and directly disobey Him. The Philosopher wants to get to God by his own logic, thinking, brilliance. So he misses the real opportunity.

And the Jew looks for a sign. Oh the arrogance! God has laid out His own plan for a Savior. He promised a son would be born to a virgin. And yet the Jew disregards what's in front of him, and seeks a different messiah. No sign will be given.

God's accounting leaves me wholly incapable. I am absolutely stuck, with no resource. I don't live up to the design He has for me. So I come empty-handed, humiliated and incapable. Then, right there, God's own Son intercedes for me, my Savior. This is foolish to the lost. But to me it's everything!

"So when we preach that Christ was crucified, the Jews are offended and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense.

But to those called by God to salvation, both Jews and Gentiles, Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God. This foolish plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes or powerful or wealthy when God called you.

Instead, God chose things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chose things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. God chose things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and used them to bring to nothing what the world considers important. As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom itself. Christ made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he freed us from sin. Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to boast, boast only about the Lord."

1 Corinthians 1:23-31

Wow, God chose us. A foolish plan, maybe in man's thinking. And yet we have found life through the wisdom of God! His plan is simple, not complex. His plan shows His design from before time began, and results in a wide open welcome for any who wish to come in! God's plans are never foolish!

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Some want it more religious. Some want to earn it. Some want to justify themselves. But we were lost, separate from God, with no hope... And then He did it!

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Chapter 2

"When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's secret plan. For I decided that while I was with you I would forget everything except Jesus Christ, the one who was crucified. I came to you in weakness—timid and trembling. And my message and my preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom but in the power of God."

1 Corinthians 2:1-5

How to show up. Paul gives us a quick lesson. With all his credentials, he didn't use them. With his "Power Points" he instead came with humility and simplicity. Paul chose to let the news of Christ, and the power of the Spirit be the persuader.

We are not in a comparison game, We are not trying to "out-do" the opposing sirens who call. We are stepping into darkness, declaring the light, praying for healing and restoration, and showing the simplicity of the good news of Jesus. He is up to the task. We just go, and we tell.

"Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"— these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God."

1 Corinthians 2:6-10 ESV

So you know that we only preach Christ and him crucified. We don't come on our own strength, or on our own credentials. We come because of Christ.

Nevertheless, we do work with the more mature and we do teach and mentor and we impart the secret that has changed our lives. The secret is this, that God gives his Spirit and leads us and guide us and imparts wisdom. There's direction, there's understanding, there's even revelation of things that are hidden. Holy Spirit changes everything. And He can change everything for you. This is the secret that Paul brings. And this is the secret that changes our lives and your life as well. If any of this is confusing, send me a private note and I would be happy to spend time with you on it. Holy Spirit is for you.

"No one can know a person's thoughts except that person's own spirit, and no one can know God's thoughts except God's own Spirit. And we have received God's Spirit (not the world's spirit), so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.

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When we tell you these things, we do not use words that come from human wisdom. Instead, we speak words given to us by the Spirit, using the Spirit's words to explain spiritual truths. But people who aren't spiritual can't receive these truths from God's Spirit. It all sounds foolish to them and they can't understand it, for only those who are spiritual can understand what the Spirit means. Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others."

1 Corinthians 2:11-15

How is it that we come to understand truth? How do we know about God? How do we know about the world? How do we even know about ourselves? It's in our spirit. And it's in God's Spirit. When we come to Jesus, we are filled with His Holy Spirit, and suddenly we begin to learn from Him. Spirit reveals His character to us, and then mixes that character into us, and we grow in Him. We begin to understand the world from Him.

Oh to take time each day, reading His Word, speaking to the Father, listening to Him by His Spirit, learning. Holy Spirit, teach me today - I am following!

"Those who are spiritual can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. For,

"Who can know the Lord's thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach him?"

But we understand these things, for we have the mind of Christ."

1 Corinthians 2:15-16

When we follow Christ, He embeds His Spirit in us. Spirit changes us, teaches us, counsels us, corrects us, establishes us.

I'm not under scrutiny. You are not under scrutiny.

We have passed from scrutiny to children of God, redeemed by the Father, filled with His Spirit. He's given us His Word, and He illuminates His truth so that we hear him, and follow Him.

So read His Word, every day. Submit to His counsel, every day. Take quiet time to listen, every day. Share your plans, every day. Then set them aside, every day. Oh God, not my plans, but your leading... Start there!

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Chapter 3

"Dear brothers and sisters, when I was with you I couldn't talk to you as I would to spiritual people. I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. I had to feed you with milk, not with solid food, because you weren't ready for anything stronger. And you still aren't ready, for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn't that prove you are controlled by your sinful nature? Aren't you living like people of the world?"

1 Corinthians 3:1-3

SO there's a time to open the can of worms. These people, friends of Paul, and followers of Christ, they have a problem. And it's crucial to address the problem and help them grow past it....

We have a responsibility to grow to maturity in Christ. Unacceptable is the refusal to grow. Disciples grow. They take in His Word, they apply it. They repent of sin, and change ill-behavior. These people refused.

Paul wasn't willing to forget them and go work with others. No, he stepped in, and confronted. First he points out that they really are refusing to grow. And then he will lead them into growth, pursuing maturity in Christ, and letting God change them to better their whole community. That's what the Gospel does.

Here he starts with the problem: they are stuck! Choosing sin, they refuse the Holy Spirit's work to convert their wicked hearts, and to follow Christ. Paul won't leave them there. I won't leave you there either. Take a survey - are you growing? Do you want to? We can help...

"When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," and another says, "I follow Apollos," aren't you acting just like people of the world?"

After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. It's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed grow.'

1 Corinthians 3:4-7

Splitting the church, creating factions, using highlights to create division, all of these are satan's work. Some claimed to be followers of Paul. Others claimed to follow Apollos. But neither Paul nor Apollos ask for acclamation. They want you to follow Jesus.

The same principle is true for John MacArthur, John Piper, Greg Laurie and Allistair Begg, among many others too. They want you to follow Jesus.

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But Satan wants to divide the body. By the way, Allistair was right. If your grandkid knows you love and follow Jesus, and that you can never condone a life of sin, it's OK to go to the family celebration and still offer your love. The sinning kid won't mistake the message. You love him as you follow Christ.

Satan used this issue to divide the body over Allistair Begg. He's a fantastic teacher, obeys the Lord, and AFR can keep their 180 radio stations for themselves... Side note. Sorry.

We preach Christ. We wish every man woman boy and girl would find themselves loving and obeying Jesus. My words might falter, but Jesus' redemption and work will change you!

"The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. For we are both God's workers. And you are God's field. You are God's building."

1 Corinthians 3:8-9

Once again, no factions! Those who plant seeds are awesome: they get it going! We are so grateful for them, and we value their work! And the ones who water, and nurture and care, they are also crucial. They ensure the work is fruitful. Where would we be without them? Waterers ensure the life grows and matures!

What's really important is that God's Family grows. More are added. Like seeds planted, then watered, they grow into a garden, and more. It's God's family, and we are but workers in the field. Satan wanted to divide by naming names. We celebrate those names, but we are together. And through this growing body, the whole world will come to know our Jesus! So stand together, and keep it growing!

"Because of God's grace to me, I have laid the foundation like an expert builder. Now others are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one we already have—Jesus Christ.

Anyone who builds on that foundation may use a variety of materials—gold, silver, jewels, wood, hay, or straw. But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of work each builder has done. The fire will show if a person's work has any value. If the work survives, that builder will receive a reward. But if the work is burned up, the builder will suffer great loss. The builder will be saved, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames."

1 Corinthians 3:10-15

We are witnesses. We are fellow-travelers. We are experienced. We are God's kids. As we walk, we begin helping, sharing, pouring into others. And it's fantastic! Keep doing so.

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But please be aware, we are also responsible. Our work is not to detract, but to build up. Every word, every act, every time we engage, and every time we take a pass, we are shaping someone else. And God calls us to do so excellently.

Be careful to build well. Help others grow in faith, in love, in praise, in worship, in service, in making disciples. There's too much at stake to do this poorly. Therefore, be diligent, and work hard. Let's build the body well!

"Don't you realize that all of you together are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God lives in you? God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. For God's temple is holy, and you are that temple.

Stop deceiving yourselves. If you think you are wise by this world's standards, you need to become a fool to be truly wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,

"He traps the wise
in the snare of their own cleverness."

And again,

"The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise;
he knows they are worthless."

So don't boast about following a particular human leader. For everything belongs to you—whether Paul or Apollos or Peter, or the world, or life and death, or the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God."

1 Corinthians 3:16-23

Let's be humble and not over-rate ourselves. It's not our wisdom, but the grace of God that saved us. It's not our choice of leaders to follow, but the Holy Spirit working inside us. So let's lift everyone up, encouraging and building each other, until we arrive in heaven with Jesus who makes it all so...

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Chapter 4

"Think of us as servants of Christ who have been given the work of explaining God's mysterious ways. And since our first duty is to be faithful to the one we work for, it doesn't matter to me if I am judged by you or even by a court of law. In fact, I don't judge myself. I don't know of anything against me, but this doesn't prove I am right. The Lord is my judge.

So don't judge anyone until the Lord returns. He will show what is hidden in the dark and what is in everyone's heart. Then God will be the one who praises each of us."

1Corinthians 4:1-5

Servants do the work assigned. We don't judge the work, we simply are faithful to perform it. If teaching, we teach. If helping, we help. We don't judge ourselves or others. God judges - that's His role.

My role? It's to serve. And in this case, to teach, and shepherd. That's the role assigned to me. Holy Spirit will guide, shape, and evaluate. He's the judge!

I bless you. I am not your judge. God is and He has you covered!

"Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?"

1 Corinthians 4:6-7

Don't divide the church by leaders. Don't pick minutia and detail arguments to create separation. We are one body, and God has given teachers, apostles, prophets, shepherds and evangelists in order to build the whole church.

These Corinthians loved to pick favorites and ignore others... We do so to our own peril, and our downfall is nearby... The only things we actually have are what God has given us. Following Him, hearing His provided leaders, this is crucial. Let's live as one, and act as one, and let's bring our nuances under the guidance of the whole body.

Christ is worthy, and without Him we are worthless...

"You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God's kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then

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we would be reigning with you. Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.

Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don't have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home. We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment."

1 Corinthians 4:8-13

Don't think more highly of yourself than you ought. Paul and the other apostles were destitute. They were demeaned, belittled and had little. Their focus was helping others grow up in Christ, to follow well, to listen and obey the Spirit of God. These young believers in Corinth were all proud of themselves. It's a warning to us. Be humble, listen and grow!

"I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. So I urge you to imitate me.

That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go."

1 Corinthians 4:14-17

We are ever working to lift up our brothers. We strive to help them grow. Sometimes stern comments are there, but not for our sake. No we speak as responsible leaders, to strengthen and encourage. Never to diminish, or harm, or shame, but to bring fruit, bring closeness to Christ, build the relationship which pours in living water!

"Some of you think I am not coming for a visit, and so you are bragging. But if the Lord lets me come, I will soon be there. Then I will find out if the ones who are doing all this bragging really have any power. God's kingdom isn't just a lot of words. It is power. What do you want me to do when I arrive? Do you want me to be hard on you or to be kind and gentle?"

1 Corinthians 4:18-22

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Paul challenges the Corinthian believers to demonstrate their faith not by allegiance, nor by knowledge. The proof is in the actual life of Holy Spirit working, leading, showing power, answering prayer. We long for real life with Christ, He speaking, us hearing, He leading, us following.

For you, take some time, and ask Him, "What would You want me to know from You, and then do today?"

Then take 10 minutes to be still.

Be quiet. set aside other thoughts. Ask Him for His word and your next steps.

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Chapter 5

"I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother.

You are so proud of yourselves, but you should be mourning in sorrow and shame. And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church."

1 Corinthians 5:1-4

While we welcome everyone to come to Christ, find a place of forgiveness and new life, we must stand for righteousness. Abject sin must be called out, and the believer must have no part in it!

Paul speaks to these believers about one of their own, living in defiant sin/ Worse, the church tolerates it! Don't live this way! Call the church together, and take a stand. We have plenty of grace and forgiveness, but defiant sin cannot be allowed in the church.

"I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to Satan so that his sinful nature will be destroyed and he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are."

1 Corinthians 5:5-8

Don't relish the sin, separate from the sin. Welcome repentant sinners back, and build them up. But don't celebrate the sin. Church discipline is hard, so let's get it right. People matter, let's build them up into Christ!

"Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth."

1 Corinthians 5:8

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Keep perspective. Draw near to the Lord, and obey Him. Put away the sin, and take on Christ! He is the Passover for us. In Him, God passes over us and we are not smitten by God's judgment, but instead we are rescued. So we celebrate!

"When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. But I wasn't talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a believer yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even eat with such people.

It isn't my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning. God will judge those on the outside; but as the Scriptures say, 'You must remove the evil person from among you.'

1 Corinthians 5:9-13

Purify yourselves, Dear Saints! Ours is to build up the body of Christ, to mentor and lead, pray, guide, and exhort that each one distance from sin and draw near to the Lord. Ours is not to change the world - God does that. Instead we proclaim Jesus to the world, and exhort believers in the body of Christ!

So let us pray for each one. Let us quietly admonish our brother if we can help him. and let us declare the power of God in Jesus, to the world!

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Chapter 6

"When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers! Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves? Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life. If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues? But instead, one believer sues another—right in front of unbelievers!"

1 Corinthians 6:1-6

Living for Jesus means living under the leadership and discernment of the Church. Believers must offer justice. Elders and Leaders must help provide fair discernment and justice. One day believers will be rulers, but today we must already be listening and rendering judgment. The world is watching. They must know that we trust our leaders in decision making. Believers have no business filing lawsuits against each other, when instead we ought to go before the brothers and have them discern and judge. The world is watching: what are they seeing? What should they see?

'Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers. Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves.

Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. Some of you were once like that.

But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.'

1 Corinthians 6:7-11

You were like that too, and Jesus changed you! What a concept... Paul argues that it might be better to suffer a wrong than to go to court and argue for your rights. Think about this: serving Christ means serving others, even at our own expense... Will you do this? You'll become such a contrast to the sinner you once were. And the world will watch and see what regeneration is. And our brothers and sisters will be encouraged and exhorted as well. This is how we do it.

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'You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.)

But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. And God will raise us from the dead by His power, just as He raised our Lord from the dead.'

1 Corinthians 6:12-14

I have absolute freedom, choice, and by God's grace I live no matter what. But God hasn't given me such freedom so I can live in sin. Abstain, walk away, seek Him instead. God actually made me to enjoy relationship with Him. Just like Adam in the garden, God made me to learn and know from God, not from pursuing the forbidden. Likewise you: seek Him, draw near to Him, walk with Him and learn of Him. And turn away from sin!

'Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! And don't you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him. Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.'

1 Corinthians 6:15-20

You are joined with one. Marriage is a great picture, of union, love, depth, growth, one-ness. Our spirit works the very same way. I can be joined in sin to a prostitute. I can be joined in another sinful pursuit. But instead, I can be joined with our Lord Jesus, by choice to love, follow, spend time with Him. Take time, and learn what a real Spirit relationship is. He does speak. He knows you. You hear His voice. You follow. This is how we do it.

Start with 10 minutes quietly with Him today. Read a bit of the Word of God - maybe John 10. Then ask Him what He wants for your relationship. Then be silent and await His answer....

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

Chapter 7

"Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to abstain from sexual relations. But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.

The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife."

1 Corinthians 7:1-4

In the marriage, love each other. One man. One woman. Completely devoted. No others.

Be intimate. Each gives authority to the other. We trust each other. She's in charge of Him. He's in charge of her. Draw close, stay close. Kind, loving, serve each other. This is how we married do it!

"Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command."

1 Corinthians 7:5-6

OK married peoples - stay close to one another. Be intimate. Yes, take time for prayer, but know each other deeply, and focus on your relationship. Don't be tempted outside your marriage, but love deeply inside your marriage instead! This is how we do it.

AND - Single People - Paul has words for you – next lesson...

"But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.

So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust."

1 Corinthians 7:7-9

Married? Single? Oh which is best?

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Paul says to start with serving the Lord - that's the beginning point. And after that, as He gives you grace, make your choice. You do get to choose. But do so in a posture of your walk and service to the Lord. What helps you serve better?

For Me? Married. Definitely better...

'But to the married [believers] I give instructions—not I, but the Lord—that the wife is not to separate from her husband, (but even if she does leave him, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not leave his wife. '

1 Corinthians 7:10-11

Here's a tough command, especially in our culture where marriages fail. I take it as God's best plan. And I know that sometimes these do fail. God heals, renews, rebuilds and takes people forward.

His design is as follows: Believers - when you marry, marry. Stay married. This is from the Lord. God's best desire is here. But if you must separate one from another, stay married, but be separate...

'Now, I will speak to the rest of you, though I do not have a direct command from the Lord. If a fellow believer has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to continue living with him, he must not leave her. And if a believing woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to continue living with her, she must not leave him. For the believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy.

(But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace.) Don't you wives realize that your husbands might be saved because of you? And don't you husbands realize that your wives might be saved because of you? '

1 Corinthians 7:12-16

So you have believed in Jesus and are now walking with Him - FANTASTIC!!! God is blessing you. And He is blessing your family too! Are you married? Stay with your spouse - God will bless them too. Serve and love them, care for them. In due time He will show Himself to them as well. Don't break this up!

But if the spouse wants to leave, that is their prerogative. You, love and serve, and best as you can, keep the family together!

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'For the believing wife brings holiness to her marriage, and the believing husband brings holiness to his marriage. Otherwise, your children would not be holy, but now they are holy. (But if the husband or wife who isn't a believer insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the believing husband or wife is no longer bound to the other, for God has called you to live in peace.) Don't you wives realize that your husbands might be saved because of you? And don't you husbands realize that your wives might be saved because of you? '

1 Corinthians 7:14-16

Stay with your husband or wife, just as you are. They will see and learn of God's grace through you. Don't run, don't flee, but be the purveyor of God's love to them! He knows what He is doing in you, and through you. Enjoy it, but don't crush it...

I know it sounds great if you could just trade up your unbelieving spouse, but God called you first. He is also going to call them! Hang in there, it's best for everyone, including you!

'Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the churches.

For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now. For it makes no difference whether or not a man has been circumcised. The important thing is to keep God's commandments.

Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, take it.

And remember, if you were a slave when the Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord. And if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. God paid a high price for you, so don't be enslaved by the world. Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, should remain as you were when God first called you.'

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

Paul shares his guideline, and it's his, not necessarily from God. Nevertheless, it's a very good starting point! Stay as you are, and let God work in you from there! He even addresses slavery! His point is that we should obey Jesus, as we are! And then if opportunity arrives for more freedom, take it. But Obey Christ!

'Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be

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trusted, and I will share it with you. Because of the present crisis, I think it is best to remain as you are.

If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. But if you do get married, it is not a sin. And if a young woman gets married, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.'

1 Corinthians 7:25-28

More advice on marriage versus singleness, Paul is expecting Jesus to return any day! His advice to women is to stay as you are, and work for the Kingdom. Jesus is soon back, so don't complicate things...

Jesus' return is imminent, but seemingly delayed more than Paul expected. So, what's the advice? Keep expecting Jesus to come back. Continue sharing and working for His Kingdom. And if He guides you to marriage, then do so! If you are already married, stay so!

'But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: The time that remains is very short. So from now on, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

I want you to be free from the concerns of this life. An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to please him. But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and holy in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband.

I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.'

1 Corinthians 7:29-35

Paul's admonishing us to live freely, expecting the Lord's return, doing His work. Let's bias toward doing His work rather than doing our own pleasures. Yes there will be some of each, but bias toward serving Him. We want to be the servants who were found working when the landowner returned!

'But if a man thinks that he's treating his fiancée improperly and will inevitably give in to his passion, let him marry her as he wishes. It is not a sin. But if he has decided firmly not to marry

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and there is no urgency and he can control his passion, he does well not to marry. So the person who marries his fiancée does well, and the person who doesn't marry does even better. A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but only if he loves the Lord. But in my opinion it would be better for her to stay single, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.'

1 Corinthians 7:36-40

You do well to marry, and you do even more so if God calls you to be single. Whichever way, God is blessing you. Build strong marriages, and serve the Lord. He is why we live, breathe, serve!

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Chapter 8

'Now regarding your question about food that has been offered to idols. Yes, we know that “we all have knowledge” about this issue. But while knowledge makes us feel important, it is love that strengthens the church. Anyone who claims to know all the answers doesn't really know very much. But the person who loves God is the one whom God recognizes. '

1 Corinthians 8:1-3

Piety is the actions and practices that we take on which keep us holy. Paul brings up the rules, the daily efforts we make to somehow be closer to God. For the Corinthians, the daily rules were about buying meat in the market and eating it. Had the meat been offered to idols? Is that OK?

So the Corinthians claimed knowledge, and they had the answer. They had rules and freedoms, and were very proud of what they knew. And Paul calls them out for it.

The issue they had was pride and arrogance. They were not loving one another, they were judging and blaming one another, and claiming they had knowledge. Paul knocks that all away, and brings them back to love. That's the only thing that matters.

We will see his thoughts on the food next. But their attitude to one another was wrong. And their piety was fake. Without love, none of the other things matter.

Love God. And love each other a bit too.

'So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, we all know that an idol is not really a god and that there is only one God. There may be so-called gods both in heaven and on earth, and some people actually worship many gods and many lords. But for us, There is one God, the Father, by whom all things were created, and for whom we live. And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things were created, and through whom we live. '

1 Corinthians 8:4-6

The truth about idols is they are not gods. They are man-made and powerless. As a believer, we must start with the truth, if we are to understand God's best. Idols are not real, but God certainly is. For our foundation, we start with the truth of who God is. God in heaven, He is our God. His son, Jesus is our Lord. Jesus directs, commands, and leads. He is the one we learned from, and by whom we live.

"However, not all believers know this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of it as the worship of real gods, and their weak consciences are violated. It's true that we can't win God's approval by what we eat. We don't lose anything if we don't eat it, and we don't gain anything if we do.

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But you must be careful so that your freedom does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. For if others see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, won’t they be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol? So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be destroyed. And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. So if what I eat causes another believer to sin, I will never eat meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.”

1 Corinthians 8:7-13

I have full freedom to eat what I like, and I am not stumbling. The food in the market could be from anywhere... Still, other new believers may worry. For them, the food at the market may associate with idols, and this causes them to fear. They don't want to worship idols, and for them, this is a situation too close to that.

For their sake, I will skip eating that meat. It doesn't matter to me, but it does to them. So I won't use my freedom if the action causes them to stumble in their faith.

Let's be careful for our brothers and sisters. Let's do everything to help them grow and flourish in Christ!

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Chapter 9

'I am free. I am an apostle. I have seen the Lord Jesus and have led you to have faith in Him. Others may think that I am not an apostle, but you are proof that I am an apostle to you. When people question me, I tell them that Barnabas and I have the right to our food and drink. We each have the right to marry one of the Lord's followers and to take her along with us, just as the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Peter do. '

1 Corinthians 9:1-5

Paul has every right to be married, to be paid for working as a messenger of the Gospel, to be rewarded for the work he does. He and Barnabas have labored, without pay, to bring the good news of Jesus, and Corinth is evidence of the great benefits of the Gospel. These people's lives have been changed. Such is the result of the work the apostles do.

Gospel Workers are worthy of their pay, and ought to be supported. This is God's economy. And it's still true today!

Are you supporting the messengers who bring God's Word to you? Do so!

'Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves? What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn't have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn't allowed to drink some of the milk? Am I expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing? For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this? Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.'

1 Corinthians 9:6-10

Paul and Barnabas worked hard to pay their own way, trying to make the Gospel as available as possible. Apparently the Corinthians didn't value this effort very much - and Paul goes after this issue. He has every right to be supported, as he worked to teach, to preach, to exhort, to encourage - all the pastoral care needed to establish these believers in their faith.

And Paul shows how God Himself planned that the pastoral worker be supported by the ones who are cared for!

'Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported?

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But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ. Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. '

1 Corinthians 9:11-14

In God's economy, the worker who sows the Gospel is due his compensation. God planned the workers and leaders in faith to receive their compensation from those who are hearers and followers of the Gospel. Melchizedek was the priestly king of Salem, and received offerings from Abraham. Levi's whole family and ancestral line were designated to lead spiritually, and to be the priests for Israel. All the offerings were given through them, and the priests took their own food from what was given.

Paul is reminding the Corinthian believers that they should not only respect Paul and Barnabas, but that they have a God-given duty to care for and provide for Paul and Barnabas. The Corinthians had been disregarding these two and Paul calls them out for it.

'Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge. Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News! If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. What then is my pay? It is the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.'

1 Corinthians 9:15-18

Paul is doing all he can to preach Christ without cost. He wants the Gospel out there, where everyone can run to Jesus, find God's grace, forgiveness, and be saved.

And Paul boasts that he has done this freely. In Corinth he was derided for this - but it's actually a bonus to his credit that he brought Jesus to them!

Nevertheless, cover the costs for your pastors and teachers!

'Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. When I was with the Jews, I lived like a Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Jewish law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the law. When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ. When I am with those who

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are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.'

1 Corinthians 9:19-23

So - how is my conduct? I know it's right. I obey the Lord. I make my decisions according to the culture and standards of those I am with. I want to win them to Christ, so I strive for excellence among them. If they won't eat fish, then I won't eat fish. If they follow certain schedules, then so will I. Oh that each group would embrace Jesus and serve Him!

"You know that many runners enter a race, and only one of them wins the prize. So run to win! Athletes work hard to win a crown that cannot last, but we do it for a crown that will last forever. I don't run without a goal. And I don't box by beating my fists in the air. I keep my body under control and make it my slave, so I won't lose out after telling the good news to others."

1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

Work hard. Do the tedious boring things. Keep looking at Jesus, obeying His call on You, and get after it. We follow. We do so, faithfully. He is at work, and we get to be a part, to see a glimpse of all He is about!

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Chapter 10

' Friends, I want to remind you that all our ancestors walked under the cloud and went through the sea. This was like being baptized and becoming followers of Moses. All of them also ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink, which flowed from the spiritual rock that followed them. That rock was Christ.

But most of them did not please God. So they died, and their bodies were scattered all over the desert. What happened to them is a warning to keep us from wanting to do the same evil things. They worshiped idols, just as the Scriptures say, "The people sat down to eat and drink. Then they got up to dance around."

So don't worship idols. Some of those people did shameful things, and in a single day about 23,000 died. Don't do shameful things as they did. '

1 Corinthians 10:1-8

We've been reading about piety - how to walk with Christ, and not give in to religious rules. We receive freedom in Christ.

But this freedom is not so we can sin. We love the forgiveness and grace of God through Jesus, but this is not license. Paul reminds us to walk not in sin, but in loving relationship with God. And he uses Israel as an example of why we must do so.

'So, my dear friends, flee from the worship of idols. You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true.

When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we sharing in the blood of Christ? And when we break the bread, aren't we sharing in the body of Christ? And though we are many, we all eat from one loaf of bread, showing that we are one body. Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they united by eating the sacrifices at the altar?

What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods? No, not at all. I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. And I don't want you to participate with demons.

You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too. What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than he is?'

1 Corinthians 10:14-22

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

We don't worship idols. If this means you skip eating the meat, then skip it. Instead, lift holy hands in praise to our Lord Jesus, worship and honor Him. He is the one worthy, and His blood brought all of us into His family.

Don't worship other gods or other objects. Our Father is jealous that we would be in relationship with Him. So, Go There - enter and grow in relationship with Him. Yes, you do hear His voice. He knows you. And you follow Him. So press on, keep going. John 10:27 is solid for you!

' Some of you say, "We can do whatever we want to!" But I tell you not everything may be good or helpful. We should think about others and not about ourselves. However, when you buy meat in the market, go ahead and eat it. Keep your conscience clear by not asking where the meat came from. The Scriptures say, "The earth and everything in it belong to the Lord."

1 Corinthians 10:23-26

We don't get to selfishly choose anything we want. But considering others, we are free to make choices, as everything really does belong to the Lord. Keep Him in mind, consider others, don't sin, and then go forward with freedom!

'If an unbeliever invites you to dinner, and you want to go, then go. Eat whatever you are served. Don't cause a problem for someone's conscience by asking where the food came from. But if you are told it has been sacrificed to idols, don't cause a problem by eating it. I don't mean a problem for yourself, but for the one who told you. Why should my freedom be limited by someone else's conscience?

If I give thanks for what I eat, why should anyone accuse me of doing wrong? When you eat or drink or do anything else, always do it to honor God. Don't cause problems for Jews or Greeks or anyone else who belongs to God's church.

I always try to please others instead of myself, in the hope that many of them will be saved.'

1 Corinthians 10:27-33

Stop the rule-following. It's killing the spread of the good news of Jesus. We are free in Him, and our friends can be too. But when we insist on rules that somehow make us better or holy, we are denying the complete grace and freedom we have in Christ. SO give it up.

Let's serve our friends, and stop the religious things that are not helping! Have that burger, or even pork chop!

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

Chapter 11

' Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ. Now I commend you because you remember me in everything and maintain the traditions even as I delivered them to you.

But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of a wife is her husband, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head, but every wife who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, since it is the same as if her head were shaven.

For if a wife will not cover her head, then she should cut her hair short. But since it is disgraceful for a wife to cut off her hair or shave her head, let her cover her head. For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God, but woman is the glory of man.

For man was not made from woman, but woman from man. Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. That is why a wife ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.

Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man nor man of woman; for as woman was made from man, so man is now born of woman. And all things are from God. '

1 Corinthians 11:1-12

Written two thousand years ago, this is one of the “untouchable passages” where teachers avoid the hard parts. But we will go there today! The Lord has given us some gems here!

First of all, note the last verse in this passage. Men and women are dependent upon each other. One is not greater than the other.

Second, there are two genders, and appropriate roles and behavior for each. There are not 97 genders with appropriate pronouns. You can take that one up with Holy Spirit!

Third, Paul wrote this two thousand years ago, and some things were different then. Corinth was a city of immoral behavior. Women were to cover their heads so that men would not lust after their hair. Any woman with hair let loose and uncovered was considered a loose woman, an immoral woman. And shaved heads for women was a sign of prostitution or slavery. In all this, Paul is promoting moral behavior, with modesty.

Roles were established in marriage as well. Men were to keep their hair shorter, not long. And women were to keep their hair covered. They respected each other, and knew how their culture worked.

Now the amazing part. Paul gave place for both men and women publicly to pray, to prophesy. Women had a public role which was previously unseen in their culture. All the authority stems from God Himself. And God has a hierarchy of authority. Somewhere, the angels learn from this too...

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Men, you are responsible. Women as well. Each person is valuable in the Lord, and in marriage. And there are roles to fulfill. There are needs to be prayed for. There are announcements from the Lord to be prophesied, and there are declarations from God's Word which are to be conveyed.

Men and women both have a place in this, and they are both dependent upon the other. What an amazing God we have. He makes us individually, and with huge value. And He differentiates – as should we!

'Ask yourselves if it is proper for a woman to pray without something on her head.

Isn't it unnatural and disgraceful for men to have long hair? But long hair is a beautiful way for a woman to cover her head.

This is how things are done in all of God's churches, and this is why none of you should argue about what I have said. '

1 Corinthians 11:13-16

We really do live in a world which God designed. He gave us roles, not simply rules. The roles reflect the differences between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

Father is different from the Son. Jesus is different from the Spirit. Each one works their part, and together there is a mystical tri-unity. But each one is different, yet fully God, and united as one.

Men and women have separate roles too. Two sexes. Modest and moral. Created this way!

Our society struggles, mostly out of disregard for God's plan and design. Some of it is in defiance of any authority which God might assert. Let's get back to God's design!

'But in the following instructions, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. First, I hear that there are divisions among you when you meet as a church, and to some extent I believe it. But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that you who have God's approval will be recognized!

When you meet together, you are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. For some of you hurry to eat your own meal without sharing with others. As a result, some go hungry while others get drunk.

What? Don't you have your own homes for eating and drinking? Or do you really want to disgrace God's church and shame the poor? What am I supposed to say? Do you want me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

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Here's a problem. When they meet together, they are not really interested in the Lord's Supper. They go, some to drink and get drunk, others just to fill themselves with the food. And they don't care about one another.

I notice the Lord's Supper is something that happens when the church meets. Jesus said to do this as often as you gather. That's a reminder to me. The bread and the cup remind us that Jesus did the work to redeem each of us, and we celebrate that together.

Each member is important, and we are to care for each one. So celebrate the Lord, His body and blood, and the redemption which we have received because of Him! And do so with the other brothers and sisters. Take and eat with love for God and one another!

'I have already told you what the Lord Jesus did on the night he was betrayed. And it came from the Lord himself.

He took some bread in his hands. Then after he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is given for you. Eat this and remember me."

After the meal, Jesus took a cup of wine in his hands and said, "This is my blood, and with it God makes his new agreement with you. Drink this and remember me."

The Lord meant that when you eat this bread and drink from this cup, you tell about his death until he comes.'

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

When we eat this bread and drink from this cup, we tell about His death until He comes. We must do this. Our work is telling of His death. We tell about how His body was given for us. We should have been on that middle cross. Our sins would put us there. We should have been beaten and flogged, mocked and cursed. We deserved it.

But His body was given for us.

When we drink the cup, we proclaim how His blood was the covering for our sin. It was not only the perfect sacrifice, but it was a new agreement where God accepts this and covenants to always see us washed clean. This new covenant we celebrate every time we drink it.

For us.

Be sure to bring this to others. Tell of what Jesus did, and what it means to be His. Then pull out the bread, and the cup, and help them celebrate too!

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'So anyone who eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord unworthily is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. That is why you should examine yourself before eating the bread and drinking the cup.

For if you eat the bread or drink the cup without honoring the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. That is why many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

But if we would examine ourselves, we would not be judged by God in this way. Yet when we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned along with the world.'

1 Corinthians 11:27-32

Let's take the Lord's cup and bread, in honoring Him. Our posture and approach is humility, gratitude, recognizing He died in our place, for us. And we love Him, appropriately responding to His love. This is how we do it.

The Corinthians didn't think about Jesus at all, and were just going through the motions. That's not how we do it. Sickness or worse awaits those who care not for the Lord's table.

'So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather for the Lord's Supper, wait for each other. If you are really hungry, eat at home so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters after I arrive.'

1 Corinthians 11:33-34

Take time for your brothers and sisters. Wait for them. This is about all of us, not just you. So wait for each other. If you are really hungry, eat something at home first.

But come together to celebrate how Jesus gave Himself for us. For all of us. As many as receive Him, He covers their sin by His blood. So it's for all of us.

And when we eat, we celebrate together!

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Chapter 12

'Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this. You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit. '

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

We are no longer pagans, and no longer swept along to worshiping vain objects. No, we have come to Jesus who lives. Can you lift your hands, and proclaim Jesus is your Lord? He is in charge? This is because Holy Spirit lives in you. He gives us life, and He enables us to offer glory and praise to Jesus. This truth is the foundation of everything related to spiritual gifts. They start with Holy Spirit, and they operate under Jesus as Lord.

'There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us. A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other.

To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice ;
to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge.

The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and
to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing.

He gives one person the power to perform miracles,
and another the ability to prophesy.

He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God
or from another spirit.

Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages,
while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said.

It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.'

1 Corinthians 12:4-11

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What a wonderful orchestra of gifts! We know people who God has made wise – and we respect them for such wisdom! It's from the Lord, and meant to help everyone.

Some have special knowledge – because God reveals to them what they and others need to know. Wow, we are blessed when we experience that.

Others are so strong in their faith, able to continue through trials, hardships and the unknown. It's from God too.

There are those who speak over sickness, and people are healed. It is Jesus' stripes that effect it, and yet some are really gifted to apply Jesus to sickness!

Power and miracles are given yet to others, to confirm the gospel and encourage the brothers.

Others are able to declare the truth publicly, both from God's Word and for future events.

Still others know when a word is from God or from satan and his minions. They can separate and recognize God's truth, and it helps everyone.

Some are given incredible languages, knowing to speak without having studied and strived. And others gained a heavenly ability to understand these languages and tell the meaning.

God has given every believer gifts, and He creates this great assembly to bless everyone. Together we see Holy Spirit teaching, leading, encouraging, healing and declaring – all so we can worship and follow Jesus!

"The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything? But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. How strange a body would be if it had only one part!

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Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. The eye can never say to the hand, “I don’t need you.” The head can’t say to the feet, “I don’t need you.”

1 Corinthians 12:12-21

The believers in Corinth were divisive – in everything. First it was about who they were each following. And then it was about who could better follow the rules to be the most holy. There was argument about eating meat, or not eating meat. Deep down they each wanted to win, to be better than the other. And Paul is working to settle this all down. The issue is a sin issue, a pride issue. And it is a discrimination issue, where their values were not God’s values.

Here is a message for them. We are one body, of many different backgrounds. We are Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free. Yet we have come to God in one baptism, made into one body by one Spirit, and we share the same Spirit. We are one.

And we are different, one to another. The difference is God’s design, and God’s gifting. He makes each one different and blesses each one separately, with a purpose. Together we form one body, of many parts. And each part needs the others. We need each other.

So stop dividing and judging. Begin appreciating the others. We must do so, otherwise we will be lacking ourselves, and our whole body will not be healthy. We need every person in this body! And we need what each person brings too.

'In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad. '

1 Corinthians 12:22-26

We must stop judging others by our own measure. The Lord has made every person, and each one has a place in His church. We don’t think so for some of them. That is my blindness. That is your arrogance. We cannot keep doing this. God has made each person as part of His body, so that together we may work and act in harmony. His best blessings come when His whole body is working together. So we must not judge anyone, but instead we must value everyone and seek God’s best through them!

'All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it. Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,

second are prophets,

third are teachers,

then those who do miracles,

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those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.

Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages?

Of course not! So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts. But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.'

1 Corinthians 12:27-31

Here's what those "body parts" are really all about. The gifts we have received, and the call to build up the body of Christ, go hand-in-hand. We need the teachers. We need the leaders. We need the speakers of unknown languages. We need the healers. None of us can do them all. All of us are missing some gifting.

I teach, and proclaim Christ. I pray for healing, and sometimes people are healed. What gifts have you received, and how are you using them? We must value each member and encourage their using of their gifts too. We get it all done together!

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Chapter 13

'If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn't love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.'

1 Corinthians 13:1-3

Paul finished yesterday with, "But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all." The Corinthian believers weren't experiencing this "best of all" life. Where did it go? Satan had stolen it. Satan had gotten in their midst, and he pushed "Self", "Me", "My" and "Mine". The believers showed up for what they could get, with little concern for others or for what they could give. So Paul just spoke of all the gifting and roles given to the church by the Spirit. But it doesn't really matter if they are not operating in love. Jesus spoke about this too - the world will recognize by their love, that they have been with Jesus.

Languages become a noisy cymbal if not used with love. Speaking God's truth, growing in knowledge, trusting by faith - all mean nothing if not done with love. Giving to the poor is meaningless - without love.

Friends, we must love one another, first and foremost. Only then will our lives begin to have meaning and impact.

'Love is patient, love is kind, it isn't jealous, it doesn't brag, it isn't arrogant, it isn't rude, it doesn't seek its own advantage, it isn't irritable, it doesn't keep a record of complaints, it isn't happy with injustice, but it is happy with the truth. Love puts up with all things, trusts in all things, hopes for all things, endures all things. Love never fails. As for prophecies, they will be brought to an end. As for tongues, they will stop. As for knowledge, it will be brought to an end.'

1 Corinthians 13:4-8

What does love look like? How does it show up in what we do? Paul tells us specifically. Love is

- patient
- kind
- not jealous
- doesn't brag
- isn't arrogant
- isn't rude

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- doesn't seek personal advantage
- isn't irritable
- doesn't keep score of complaints
- seeks justice
- seeks truth
- puts up with all things
- trusts in all things
- hopes for all things
- endures all things
- never fails

So put your name there. And now you can see how you're really doing. Is Brett patient? Is Brett Kind? Is Brett not jealous? And so on down the line.

Oh Jesus make me like you. Teach me to really love, all the way down the line. And just imagine what our church body would be like if we put on love! Corinth had this problem. We have the same problem today! So let us stop what we are doing, and put on love! It's the only thing that lasts!

'Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.' Let love be your highest goal!

1 Corinthians 13:13

Simply put, when all is said and done, start with love.

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Chapter 14

But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to prophesy. For if you have the ability to speak in tongues, you will be talking only to God, since people won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be mysterious. But one who prophesies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. A person who speaks in tongues is strengthened personally, but one who speaks a word of prophecy strengthens the entire church. I wish you could all speak in tongues, but even more I wish you could all prophesy. For prophecy is greater than speaking in tongues, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be strengthened.'

1 Corinthians 14:1-5

Start with love. But seek from the Lord the higher gifts, the ones which build up others, the ones which strengthen the body and beckon the unbeliever. Languages are good, and heavenly languages are a gift from the Lord. But seek wisdom, prophecy, and opportunity to build up your brother and sister. We all get there together, and the body of Christ needs you and your gifts!

'Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in an unknown language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful. Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the melody. And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle?

It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space. There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. And the same is true for you.

Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church. So anyone who speaks in tongues should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. For if I pray in tongues, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying.'

1 Corinthians 14:6-14

The gifts are for the church. Corinth had a competition problem, where believers were "performing" rather than building each other up. They would seek acclamation, rather than pursuing edification. So the more visible gifts were being used to show off.

Paul went after them for it. This theme had shown up earlier when people were being divisive over who their leader and baptizer was. Then the theme showed up again in the religious rules and measuring

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sticks used. Specifically there was judgment over whether you ate meat from the market which might have been used in a temple.

Now the divisiveness is showing up in the gatherings. At a time when healing and encouragement ought to be happening, there was competition. This is vanity. If you find yourself in a place of comparison, measuring others and thinking of ratings and rankings, please stop. Repent. Give yourself instead to Holy Spirit, and ask Him to use you. Offer yourself for any gift and ministry, and then operate in that. Love and care for one another.

'Well then, what shall I do? I will pray in the spirit, and I will also pray in words I understand. I will sing in the spirit, and I will also sing in words I understand. For if you praise God only in the spirit, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you?

How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you.

I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you. But in a church meeting I would rather speak five understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.'

1 Corinthians 14:15-19

Some of God's gifts are for you - to boost your personal walk with the Lord. They are for intimacy and communion with Him. Use them this way! Languages/Tongues is like this... But in the gathering, don't use such gifts as a matter of looking more spiritual than someone else. This isn't for show. In the gathering, pray so others can join in. Praise so others can be edified too. Let's use the gifts as the Lord would have us do, and let's build up each other when we do!

'Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind. It is written in the Scriptures : "I will speak to my own people through strange languages and through the lips of foreigners. But even then, they will not listen to me," says the Lord .

So you see that speaking in tongues is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Prophecy, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers. Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in an unknown language, they will think you are crazy. But if all of you are prophesying, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. As they listen, their secret thoughts will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you."

1 Corinthians 14:20-25

Don't be childish, but be innocent and wise. Tongues are from God, and a sign to unbelievers. Prophecy builds up, exhorts, encourages the believer. And prophecy convicts the unbeliever, because the Father

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knows their deepest secrets, and ours too. Seek that He will speak, that He will cut us to the core, and build us up to be just like Him. May many unbelievers be convicted and repent as well.

'Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, one will speak in tongues, and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

No more than two or three should speak in tongues. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak in tongues to God privately.

Let two or three people prophesy, and let the others evaluate what is said. But if someone is prophesying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. In this way, all who prophesy will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. Remember that people who prophesy are in control of their spirit and can take turns. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.'

1 Corinthians 14:26-33

Funny, I was in a meeting last night, and there was terrible discord. People shouting one over the other. Disagreement was coupled with anger and vehemence, and it was terrible. Likewise in the church, we must care one for the other. As we use our gifts, we must build up each other. We must give room for the next to prophesy. Paul reminds us that God gives these gifts, but the spirit of each man and woman is under their control, and we can remain quiet until our turn.

Love operates kindly and respectfully. Let's keep it this way, while building each other up!

'Women should be silent during the church meetings. It is not proper for them to speak. They should be submissive, just as the law says. If they have any questions, they should ask their husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in church meetings. Or do you think God's word originated with you Corinthians? Are you the only ones to whom it was given? If you claim to be a prophet or think you are spiritual, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. But if you do not recognize this, you yourself will not be recognized. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. But be sure that everything is done properly and in order.'

1 Corinthians 14:34-40

Women. They can't speak in church. Got it. Except that in 1 Corinthians 11, women were both praying and prophesying. And that wasn't the problem. Elsewhere Paul says we are one, and there is no Jew or Greek, no man or woman... The key to this passage is the last statement. Everything must be done in an orderly fashion. Corinth was divisive, confrontational and disorderly. Men and women would be speak

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over each other, and the disorder was disrupting the Holy Spirit moving in tongues, prophecy, healing and miracles. Here's my take. The women were separate from the men in the gathering, and the women would shout to their husbands with questions or with opinions. This was over the top when someone else was speaking, teaching, prophesying. Paul says no. He is standing for order.

We desire God's gifts, and long for them to be used to build up the church and declare the gospel. This is the simple intent. And yes, in such a context, both I and my wife would be welcome to speak. In order though, speak only in order...

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Chapter 15

'Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place. I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles.'

1 Corinthians 15:1-7

Paul is done with exhorting good behavior among believers. He wants to get to the core of what is really important. We have been saved. We have been welcomed into God's family. Our invitation came because of what Jesus did on the cross. Our proof is His resurrection, and the eyewitnesses who saw it. Many were still alive when Paul wrote this letter. So think about it, and then stand strong. Tell your friends. Send messengers to people who have never heard. Heaven's gates are wide open, and Jesus has made a way for men to return to God! Go tell!

'Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church. But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor on me—and not without results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all preach the same message you have already believed.'

1 Corinthians 15:8-11

Among all the leaders who the Corinthians know, Paul was the last to come to faith. He was a persecutor of the church, working to kill disciples, and destroy the faith. But Jesus met him on the road, confronted him, and converted him. Since that time, Paul worked and worked to share the faith and build disciples. He recognized that he had been saved, rescued from a life of hypocrisy and deceit, and had received a whole new life in Jesus Christ. His goal ever since then has been to build the body of Christ.

So he says "we all preach the same message you have already believed." He is working for their belief. And this is why I work. Hopefully this is why you work as well. There's a third of the world's population who has yet to hear of Jesus Christ. We who believe hold the keys to their faith. And so we work. Here's a call to you – please also do the work!

'But tell me this—since we preach that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? For if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is useless, and your faith is useless. And we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that

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God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no resurrection of the dead. And if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith is useless and you are still guilty of your sins. In that case, all who have died believing in Christ are lost! And if our hope in Christ is only for this life, we are more to be pitied than anyone in the world. '

1 Corinthians 15:12-19

Say, what? Corinth has even more problems. It's like any of our churches. There was at least some in Corinth who preach that nobody rises from the dead. "There is no resurrection." This is a more classic Greek view. For example, in Aeschylus's play *Eumenides*: "Once a man has died, and the dust has soaked up his blood, there is no resurrection." Our faith came into a world where the central claim was known to be false. Yet the eyewitnesses were still alive when Paul wrote to Corinth. Hundreds had seen and spent time with resurrected Jesus. And then there is Paul's experience as well. Paul is correct. If there is no resurrection, then we have an empty hope.

But if Jesus did rise from the dead, then everything He said is true. Furthermore His teaching, His sending of Holy Spirit to us, His promise that we hear His voice, all these things are true. And they become confirmation. When God answers prayer, heals, speaks, directs and comforts, He confirms the resurrection.

'But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest of all who have died. So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back. After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. '

1 Corinthians 15:20-25

The truth is that Christ has risen. He is the first. Death came through one man, and we all participated in it. All of us joined in sinning, living apart from God. But the Father sent His son Jesus, who lived, taught, died, and arose. Jesus brought us life, and that life is forever. Jesus is risen, alive, and next His followers arise, for eternity. After all His have come in, then the Kingdom of God will be turned back to the Father. Enemies done, we will be together forever!

'And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God himself, who gave Christ his authority.) Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God's authority, so that God, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again? And why should we ourselves risk

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our lives hour by hour? For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, that I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what Christ Jesus our Lord has done in you. And what value was there in fighting wild beasts—those people of Ephesus—if there will be no resurrection from the dead? And if there is no resurrection, “Let’s feast and drink, for tomorrow we die!” Don’t be fooled by those who say such things, for “bad company corrupts good character.” Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don’t know God at all.’

1 Corinthians 15:26-34

Every Christ did was proven complete by His resurrection. And everything promised is also proven true – because He did rise from the dead. His work redeemed sinners, and established the fulfillment of Christ’s Kingdom being established, and turned back over to God the Father.

Every practice we do, every work of faith ever done, it’s vindicated because it’s predicated on the Living God having raised His Son from the dead. And we find our secure place in Him, because God has raised Christ from the dead. Those who put their trust in Christ’s resurrection are the ones who actually do know God!

‘But someone may ask, “How will the dead be raised? What kind of bodies will they have?” What a foolish question! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn’t grow into a plant unless it dies first. And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed.

Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish. There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.

It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies. ’

1 Corinthians 15:35-44

We will be raised with in glory. Beautiful new bodies, designed by the Lord. And these will be strong. In other passages we learn that we will be known and we will know. There’s recognition of who we are too, and it will be clear, not foggy, as looking through a glass... But absolutely we will be raised in a new body, ever to be with the Lord. And with our brothers and sisters in Christ as well. So the real question is, do I trust the Lord now, for what will be then?

‘The Scriptures tell us, “The first man, Adam, became a living person.” But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second

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man, came from heaven. Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man. What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret. We will not all die, but we will all be transformed! It will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, when the last trumpet is blown. For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies. Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

“Death is swallowed up in victory.
O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting? ”

For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. But thank God! He gives us victory over sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ. So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable. Always work enthusiastically for the Lord, for you know that nothing you do for the Lord is ever useless.'

1 Corinthians 15:45-58

It happens so quickly, you won't believe it. Our dusty frame gets replaced immediately with a heavenly sinless frame. Our Father does this in an instant, and we are whisked into Heaven with the Lord. Death has no sting because we are not there. The pain and suffering are gone, our sin and failures are gone. Jesus carried those and instead the works of the Spirit are what we carry, redeemed, resurrected and right into Heaven.

We will still be known even as we then know each other. We will be reconcilable, but completely free of the ugly sinful baggage. Oh what a day that will be. What a wonder!

So how should we then live? Paul tells us: Be strong. Be immovable in your faith. Always be working, with enthusiasm, for the Lord. And celebrate that every single work and task you do will be fruitful! This is how we do it!

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

Chapter 16

'Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once. When I come, I will write letters of recommendation for the messengers you choose to deliver your gift to Jerusalem. And if it seems appropriate for me to go along, they can travel with me. '

1 Corinthians 16:1-4

Paul teaches us about giving. And he demonstrates the biblical mandate, the actual percentage! He says, "some" and he says, "each week."

So when you are figuring it out, give "some" to care for others beyond your local church. Set the money aside regularly too. We believers are to give, generously, as we are able. And moreover, we are to select men and women to deliver the gift. Sometimes it's a banker to get the check done. Sometimes it's the messenger to bring it. And other times, it's the worker who goes with the gospel and delivers both goods and the message of redemption in Jesus. You get to choose who it is as well! Let's be people who give!

'I am coming to visit you after I have been to Macedonia, for I am planning to travel through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay awhile with you, possibly all winter, and then you can send me on my way to my next destination. This time I don't want to make just a short visit and then go right on. I want to come and stay awhile, if the Lord will let me. In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me. When Timothy comes, don't intimidate him. He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. Don't let anyone treat him with contempt. Send him on his way with your blessing when he returns to me. I expect him to come with the other believers. '

1 Corinthians 16:5-11

Paul is planning a return to Corinth, He wants to stay a while if the Lord lets him. What for? He will teach, encourage, demonstrate, and disciple. And we do what Paul does. We make disciples and train leaders so we can ignite a movement of disciple-makers. This is how we do it. Corinth is not only a big city where many can come to follow Jesus. Corinth is also a launch pad, where the believers can help send Paul on to further fields. Believers become disciples, and disciple-makers. And they become glad senders as well, thrusting the gospel forward!

Paul is sending Timothy in the meantime, to mentor, disciple, teach and lead. With all of Corinth's history, Paul takes a moment to admonish the believers so they will bless Timothy and not discourage him. The choice is ours as well – will we welcome new leaders, or will we scorn them. Let's build the church, and then spread it!

A Walk through 1 Corinthians

'Now about our brother Apollos—I urged him to visit you with the other believers, but he was not willing to go right now. He will see you later when he has the opportunity.

Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. And do everything with love.

You know that Stephanas and his household were the first of the harvest of believers in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to God's people. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, to submit to them and others like them who serve with such devotion. '

1 Corinthians 16:12-16

Even in Ephesus, Paul is working so that the church in Corinth would have good leadership and would walk as mature believers. Apollos couldn't go right now. Timothy is coming. And Paul recognizes Stephanas and his house were among the first believers. Paul encourages the brothers and sisters to follow Stephanas, and allow him to lead them. And what does following look like?

- Be on guard.
- Stand firm in the faith.
- Be courageous.
- Be strong.
- And do everything with love.

Friends, this is how we do it!

'I am very glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come here. They have been providing the help you weren't here to give me. They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you. You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well.

The churches here in the province of Asia send greetings in the Lord, as do Aquila and Priscilla and all the others who gather in their home for church meetings. All the brothers and sisters here send greetings to you. Greet each other with a sacred kiss.

Here is my greeting in my own handwriting—Paul. If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed. Our Lord, come! May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus.'

1 Corinthians 16:17-24

So how does Paul wrap up his letter? He shows the unity of Christ's church, His body. There are great teachers who are known in Corinth and presently serving in Ephesus. There are greetings from one gathering to another. There are reminders to love and respect the teachers who are making disciples and training others.

Paul yet admonishes that each person must choose to love the Lord, and the consequences of not doing so are eternal. And finally, he reminds that Jesus covers us all with His grace and love.

And so, dear reader, I admonish you as well. Soak up the love and grace of Jesus. Love and respect your leaders. Resist sin and instead draw near to the Lord. Grace and peace to you, in Christ Jesus!

A Walk through 1 Corinthians