

1 CORINTHIANS

HOLD FAST

READING PLAN

STUDY GUIDE

PART 2

HOW TO USE THIS STUDY GUIDE:

The book of 1 Corinthians is a letter written from the Apostle Paul to the Christians in the city of Corinth. Over the next 16 weeks, we are going to walk through each chapter of this letter together to learn more about what God was teaching the Corinthian church as well as what lessons He wants to teach us through His word. We've broken each week into 5 different sections to help you aid in your study of this powerful and important text.

1 DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

Each week we will focus on just one chapter and each day will have a bite-sized portion of that chapter for you to read in your personal Bible time. If you read along, following the daily reading challenge, in 16 weeks you will have read the entire book of 1 Corinthians! Reading it in small, daily pieces will help you relate better to the content, understand what you are reading, and catch nuances that you might otherwise miss.



Don't fall into the trap of reading each day to just check a box. Make this a time for you to connect with Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to speak. Also, if you miss a day, don't get discouraged. Each day's reading is small, so you can easily get caught up with a little extra time the next day.

2

BIG IDEA

Sometimes it is easy to miss the big picture when we study in this way. So, each week we will give you a big picture snapshot of what is going on, what Paul is writing about, and the message God is giving His people.



As we take a look at scripture, it is really easy to read our own language, culture, ideas, and even biases into the text. But we cannot know what the Scriptures means for us until we know what they meant for the original hearers. Taking a look at what God's message was for them will help us to understand what His message is for us.

Remember, God's truth never changes. So, we can trust that what was true of God then will remain true for us today.

3

FACTOIDS

As we dive into the book of 1 Corinthians, we want to share with you some interesting facts and details about the times, culture, people and more that you might otherwise miss that will help you to better understand the scriptures and apply them to your life.



The Bible is always our #1 source of truth. But it's easy to forget that it is a collection of writings that were written in a certain place, to certain people, with certain problems, and certain cultures. The more we understand the history surrounding the Bible, the better we can understand what God's message to us is in it. And because the word of God is active and living, we can continue to learn His truths even thousands of years later!

4

CONNECT THE PIECES

Scripture will never deny itself because it is the inspired word of God and God cannot change and cannot lie. So, as we dive into the biblical truths of 1 Corinthians, we want to challenge you to look for other places in the Bible where God shares similar truths that confirm His word. This section will give you some verses to get started!



It's really tempting to skip this step and just stick to the daily reading and if that is all you can do at this time, that's great! We're so glad you are reading through 1 Corinthians with us. But we also want to challenge you to dig deeper into your Bibles and start to see connections between the texts. So, we challenge you to take it to the next level and look these extra verses up too. We promise it will be worth it!

5

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

In this section we want to give you a space to write about what you are learning and how it applies to your life. We'll give you some prompting questions to get the ball rolling. But this space is for you to journal each week about the things that God is teaching you or the questions you want to find answers to.



Even better is if you do this part in community! Talk to a friend and commit to touching base each week to discuss what you're reading and what you're learning. Share this with your small group and get a group discussion started. However, you choose to do it, learning is always amplified in a community of believers!

SEASON 2

PURE SEX

WEEK 5: CHAPTER 5

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-2

MONDAY:

VERSE 3

TUESDAY:

VERSES 4-5

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 6-7

THURSDAY:

VERSE 8

FRIDAY:

VERSES 9-10

SATURDAY:

VERSES 11-13

BIG IDEA

THERE ARE NO HARMLESS SINS IN THE CHURCH

This chapter of Corinthians can be really confusing and, if we are not careful to read it properly, can be taken to mean what it does not say. Paul is not only calling on the church to take a stand against the sexual sin that was happening in the church, but to stop boasting about it! (vs 6) See, the issue wasn't that a person, or a lot of people, in the church were struggling with sexual sin. The issue was that instead of coming alongside people and helping them find freedom from sexual sin, they were proud of the fact that they were so affirming and allowing. Instead of taking a stand, encouraging righteousness, and doing the hard work of discipleship, they were allowing the church to be diluted by sin.

The Corinthian church had bought the lie that they could be accepting of some sins and still remain a positive influence. They believed that sexual sin, something commonly practiced and praised in the Greco-Roman world, was harmless. But in God's economy, there is no such thing as a harmless sin in the church. We can't look at any sin, from sexual sins, to pride, to lying, to gluttony, to any other sin as "acceptable" or "harmless". The goal of the Christian life is to constantly be walking in grace, identifying the areas where we need to look more like Jesus, and looking for ways to step away from sin.

Greece and Rome, (not too different than our current culture), pushed the acceptance and affirmation of various differing ideas, many of which were not conducive to the Gospel. In that social atmosphere, it becomes all too easy to lose sight of the truth that accepting and affirming sin is walking on a path that will only carry us away from God, never toward Him.

It's important to note here that God is not calling the church to be perfect. None of us can be. We will all struggle with sin. But the point is that we have to continue to struggle with it instead of giving in and accepting it. We are called to be set apart, holy before God. And as the Holy Spirit does His amazing work of sanctification in our hearts, He helps us to defeat and overcome sin. The problem comes when we stop trying to do that or stop listening to the conviction of the Holy Spirit.

FACTOIDS

In this chapter Paul refers back to the Old Testament practice of removing all traces of all types of leaven (an agent, usually yeast, added to dough to make it rise) from one's home in preparation for the Passover celebration (Exodus 12:15). Throughout scripture, leaven has often represented sin. In Matthew 16, Jesus tells His followers to “beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees” calling out the false doctrines and beliefs that these religious leaders were letting infiltrate the people of God.

Leaven is also commonly used as a metaphor for something added to an environment that infiltrates and changes it fundamentally from the inside out. And the thing about leaven is that you only need a little bit to cause a lot of change. The point in this analogy is that even a little acceptance of sin, even a little “leaven”, can change a person and a church fundamentally from the inside out.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Exodus 12:15
- Matthew 16:5-12
- Mark 8:15
- Luke 12:1
- Galatians 5:7-10

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Much like the Greco-Roman world, the trending ideas of our current culture scream the lie that you can define your own truth and that if it's acceptable to you than it's acceptable overall. How does this train of thinking hurt those it effects and the church as a whole?

Are there any areas in your own personal life where you have deemed certain sins as “lesser sins” or “acceptable” sins? What steps can you take to allow the Holy Spirit to move in your heart and root those sins out?

SEASON 2

PURE SEX

WEEK 6: CHAPTER 6

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-3

MONDAY:

VERSES 4-6

TUESDAY:

VERSES 7-8

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 9-11

THURSDAY:

VERSES 12-13

FRIDAY:

VERSE 14-17

SATURDAY:

VERSES 18-20

BIG IDEA

OUR BODIES ARE INSTRUMENTS OF WORSHIP

In chapter 5, Paul had started to call out a big problem in the church, the acceptance and even boasting of sin. It can feel like Paul takes a bit of a rabbit trail for the first half of this chapter as he talks about judging each other, lawsuits, and legal matters. But when we take it in context of the previous chapter, it makes more sense. In contrast to his previous statement that the Corinthian church is tolerating and even celebrating legitimate sin, he now chastises them for petty arguments and legal squabbles about things that don't have eternal value. They are making the small things big and ignoring the bigger issues at hand.

Paul is systematically addressing specific concerns and issues that all tie back to the same root problem- Self-centeredness and selfishness. Remember, many popular philosophies and ideas of the time taught that you were the center of your own universe, that you had a right and even a need to look out for yourself above anyone else, and that seeking the most pleasure possible while avoiding the most pain was ideal. If we look at this chapter through that lens, we see the deeper heart issue behind the problems the Corinthian Christians were facing. Life was all about themselves and the bickering and fighting was tearing them apart.

Another symptom of that mindset was the insatiable pursuit of sexual pleasure that plagued this city and this time. Paired with the lie that this life was all that mattered, and that pleasure was the ultimate goal, the culture in Corinth celebrated sexual expression, experimentation, and even sexual dominance in any form it took.

But Paul reminds the church that they have been cleansed from such things (vs11) and encourages them to start looking at not only their life but their bodies through a different mindset. He reminds them that Christ died for not just their souls, but for them completely- body, mind, spirit (or will), and soul.

As believers we belong to Christ entirely, wholistically, and completely. There is no part of our lives that is separated from the redemption of Christ. So, how we use even our bodies matters. God calls us to live a life of wholistic worship- one where we don't just honor Him with our minds or our words, but with everything we are, including our mortal bodies. We belong completely to Him now, so we are to treat our bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit that they are and honor God in all that we do with them.

FACTOIDS

Historians argue about the level of depravity that existed in Corinth. Some argue that it was the most debauched and depraved city of the ancient world. While others would argue that it was no worse than that of Rome or Ephesus- though that statement isn't saying much because we know both those cities were rampant with depravity as well. It is rumored that the greatest insult you could give a woman of virtue was to call her a "Corinthian". It was, outside of Corinth, considered an affront to her purity, chastity, and virtue.

In a city where sexual promiscuity was celebrated and encouraged, the Christians were struggling to separate the culture in which they were raised from the calling of Christ. Letting go of what they had come to expect as "normal" or "good" and grasping onto the Gospel truth was not an easy task for any of them. Though Paul's letter may sound harsh, he in fact had a deep love for the people of Corinth and desired to see them succeed and flourish in the Spirit.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Romans 6:12-13
- Romans 12:1
- Galatians 5:19-25
- 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7
- 2 Timothy 2:21-22

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

How does viewing your body as an instrument of worship differ from the view the culture around us has, how you were raised, or what you have previously thought? Is there any part of that imagery that is particularly challenging for you?
Why?

What habits, thoughts, and actions might you change if you were to truly embrace the idea of your body being an instrument of worship? What's one practical step that you can take this week to work toward making that change?

SEASON 2

PURE SEX

WEEK 7: CHAPTER 7

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-5

MONDAY:

VERSES 6-11

TUESDAY:

VERSES 12-16

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 17-24

THURSDAY:

VERSES 25-31

FRIDAY:

VERSES 32-35

SATURDAY:

VERSES 36-40

BIG IDEA

GOD USES OUR COMMITMENT TO REVEAL JESUS TO OTHERS

Since the time garden, marriage and our commitments to each other and to God have been some of the ways through which God tells His story of love, mutual submission, and sacrifice. So, likewise it is understandable that these areas have been under attack since sin entered the world. The enemy has sought to turn our commitments away from glorifying God and instead make them focused on us, our comforts, and our desires.

Through this entire chapter, the apostle Paul wrote to address issues that were arising in the Corinthian church surrounding marriage, divorce, singleness, and commitments. The basic message of this chapter is this: Honor God in your commitments, regardless. Whether single, married, widowed, slave, or free, God calls each of us to honor our commitments to one another in a way that both uplifts the other person and gives glory to God. Because ultimately, our commitments were always meant to tell His story, not our own. They were always meant to point to Jesus and His faithfulness.

For the married, Paul instructs them to honor the marriage commitment in a way that points to Jesus and not to themselves. For those who were single or married, Paul encourages them to honor their commitment to Christ, not seeking after marriage as an idol, but living a life committed to serving God with their singleness, not in spite of it. For those who came to the Lord while serving as a slave, they are reminded that in even that they can bring glory to God through serving with honor.

See, at the end of the day the point is Jesus. And when we choose to use the commitments we have in our life to honor and glorify Him, those commitments become symbols of His story and instruments of praise.

FACTOIDS

Many scholars have noted Paul's use of two different terms in verses 10-11 that we tend to translate as divorce. When he speaks to the wives, he uses the Greek term *chorizo* which means to separate or to divide. Then speaking to the husbands, he uses the Greek term *apheimi* which means to send away, to let go of, or to give up on.

Interestingly, Paul is the only New Testament author who uses the term *apheimi* in the context of divorce, and both divorce and separation were seen as legal and legitimate ends to a marriage in the Greco-Roman world of this time. Some scholars suggest that Paul intentionally uses both terms in this passage to draw attention to the traditional Jewish tradition of "putting away" a wife and giving her a bill of divorce as the same as the Greco-Roman practice of separation to end a marriage (often without the traditional bill of divorce). In so doing, Paul may have been addressing a technicality that some could have been using to justify separation and making the point that neither the traditional Jewish bill of divorce, nor the Greco-Roman practice of separation were God's best for their lives.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Malachi 2:16
- Matthew 5:31-32
- Matthew 19:3-9
- Mark 10:2-12
- Ephesians 5:22-33

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Viewing our commitments to each other as a way for us to tell God's story is not the lens through which we often see them. How does looking at them this way change your view?

How does this idea of our earthly commitments being more about Jesus and less about us hit you? Does it bother you in any way? Does it bring relief? Why or why not?

SEASON 3

LOVE, LIBERTY,
& LEGALISM

WEEK 8: CHAPTER 8

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSE 1

MONDAY:

VERSES 2–3

TUESDAY:

VERSE 4

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 5–6

THURSDAY:

VERSES 7–8

FRIDAY:

VERSES 9–10

SATURDAY:

VERSES 11–13

BIG IDEA

YOUR FREEDOM MUST BE BALANCED WITH CONCERN FOR OTHERS

Corinth, being a city heavily influenced by trade and commerce, was a veritable melting pot of cultures, backgrounds, religions, and traditions. And the church in Corinth was no different. These first century believers brought with them baggage, ideas, fears, and traditions from their cultures and previous religions. Finding freedom in Christ from superstitions, religious regulations, and even cultural implications, these Christians were erring on the side of arrogance instead of edification.

Speaking into this arising problem, Paul reminds them that though we have been given freedom in Christ, if that freedom is hurting others, we are not living under the law of love that Christ taught. Instead of pushing for our “rights” and our freedoms, God calls us to live in a way that chooses not to stand as a stumbling block to others, especially those who are young in their faith or have not yet been able to fully embrace the freedom of Christ. Paul encourages believers to sacrifice for the good of others instead of focusing on selfishly exercising their new freedoms.

The second half of verse one sums up this entire chapter beautifully: “Knowledge makes one arrogant, but love edifies.” Love builds each other’s faith up, whereas arrogance and selfishness just tear people down. If our liberties in Christ cause us to let go of the love of Christ, then our liberties, or lack thereof, become legalism. And legalism always hurts the Church

FACTOIDS

In this chapter, Paul specifically addresses the arguments arising around eating meat that had been sacrificed to idols. In the various temples of Corinth, worshipers would bring meat sacrifices. Of these meat sacrifices, the temple workers sometimes kept part and then sold the remaining meat. Many Corinthian Christians had correctly realized that idols held no real divine power and were using this truth to justify purchasing and eating meat that had previously been offered as a sacrifice to an idol.

Arguments arose, however, over whether this meat was tainted and if by consuming it, believers would also be tainted by the sin of idolatry. Legalism was worming its way into the early church and Christians were turning on Christians in judgement and pride. Paul helps to correct bad theology on both ends of the spectrum pointing out that food is just food. We should neither be controlled by it nor should we allow it to come between us as the family of God. Instead of focusing on the strict legalism of whether one should eat meat sacrificed to idols or not, Paul shifts their focus back toward loving each other in a sacrificial way.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- John 13:34-35
- Romans 12:10
- Romans 14:13-21
- Galatians 2:20-21
- Ephesians 2:8-9

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Have you ever found yourself in a situation where someone you were close to was convicted of something that you were not? How did you handle that? What was the result?

What do you think is the number one obstacle we face when choosing to give up our “rights” to serve a brother or sister? How do we know we aren’t stumbling into legalism or sacrificing love with our actions?

SEASON 3

LOVE, LIBERTY,
& LEGALISM

WEEK 9: CHAPTER 9

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-2

MONDAY:

VERSES 3-6

TUESDAY:

VERSES 7-10

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 11-15

THURSDAY:

VERSES 16-18

FRIDAY:

VERSES 19-23

SATURDAY:

VERSES 24-27

BIG IDEA

WE DENY OURSELVES FOR THE GOSPEL

In this chapter, Paul continues his call for the Corinthian Christians to live a life of sacrifice for each other and for Christ by giving them a personal example from his own life. He points out that he has every earthly right to certain freedoms, rewards, and even payment for his ministry in the same way that other renown leaders in the church do. And yet, because he recognizes the great gift of being able to serve and that those earthly rights could potentially hinder his ministry, he explains that he chose a life of denying himself so that the Gospel might spread more!

Paul explains that he had become “all things to all people, so that [he] may by all means save some.” It wasn’t that Paul suffered with a people-pleaser complex. Just the opposite in fact. Paul was so certain of who he was in Christ and the mission that God had called him to, that he didn’t care if it meant changing how he ate, dressed, talked, or lived if in doing so he could better relate to people and bring them the gospel. He was willing to deny himself anything necessary to help break down barriers for people to come to Christ!

FACTOIDS

Did you know that Paul was a tentmaker? In Acts 18 we are told that Paul met Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth and, because they were all of the same trade (tentmaking), they stayed together and worked together to produce a living. Then, Paul would go to the synagogue every Sabbath to preach the Good News.

However, the Jews in Corinth were not receptive to the Gospel. So, Paul being led by God, shifted his focus to the Gentiles of Corinth, sharing the Gospel under the divine protection of God while he stayed in Corinth. He lived there for about a year and a half and planted the church of Corinth, all the while supporting himself on his skill while serving in the ministry unsupported financially- something uncommon for preachers and religious leaders of the time.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Mark 10:42-45
- John 12:25
- Romans 15:1
- Philippians 2:3-4
- Hebrews 12:1-3

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Just because we should have a right doesn't mean we always have to exercise that right. Can you think of a time where you would have the right to ask for something but shouldn't? How does loving others sometimes mean laying down our rights?

How are you challenged by Paul's declaration that he has chosen to become all things to all people so that he might save some? Is there an area in your life this particular idea really chafes?

SEASON 3

LOVE, LIBERTY,
& LEGALISM

WEEK 10: CHAPTER 10

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-5

MONDAY:

VERSES 6-11

TUESDAY:

VERSES 12-17

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 18-22

THURSDAY:

VERSES 23-24

FRIDAY:

VERSES 25-30

SATURDAY:

VERSES 31-33

BIG IDEA

SEEK THE WELLBEING OF OTHERS OVER YOUR OWN

Paul concludes this section of 1 Corinthians with a reminder of the mistakes the people of God have made over the years. It's almost as if he is drawing for them an object lesson, as if to say, "here are examples of why everything I am saying is so important." He explains that the things of the past are meant to be a reminder to us now not to make the same mistakes. He then speaks this promise over the people of God, "No temptation has overtaken you except something common to mankind; and God is faithful, so He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape so that you will be able to endure it." What an amazing truth!

The overarching theme of this chapter is to learn from the mistakes of the past, flee from idolatry, and trust in God in the midst of temptation. Paul reminds us that just because we can do something doesn't mean it is actually good to do it- for us or for those around us (vs. 23). Instead of seeking our own advantage, we should seek to serve others. And above all else, we should seek to glorify God in all things.

FACTOIDS

One of the number one driving principles of the Roman empire was that of dominance and power. In this culture, it was seen as weak, foolish, and even wrong to look out for the needs of others. So much so that many of Rome's ethics were built on the hunger for power and dominance, driving them to conquer and gain more land. This attitude and culture would have been present in Corinth at this time. So, when God uses Paul to call the Christians to a higher standard of putting others first, this would not have only meant denying their own selfish desires, but also denying the culture around them.

God called his people in Corinth to stand out from the crowd just as He calls us to do the same today. You've probably heard the saying that "might determines right". But God had something better in store for His people. Throughout history, through the person of Jesus, and through His Church, God shows us that self-sacrifice, love, and honor are much better ways to live. And in a culture that shies away from these things, Christians are called to be a beacon of hope in a dark world.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Matthew 5:16
- Matthew 22:35-40
- Philippians 2:4
- Colossians 3:12-17
- 1 Peter 4:8-11

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

So often we are tempted to seek only our own good. But God promises that He will give us a way to withstand that temptation as well as any others we face. What is one practical step you can take this week to walk away from the temptation of being self-serving?

In a world where might often determines what the general consensus says is “right,” how can living in a sacrificial way help move the Kingdom of God forward and share the Gospel message in a practical way?

