

1 CORINTHIANS

HOLD FAST

READING PLAN

STUDY GUIDE

PART 1

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 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 1

POWERED UP

WEEK 1: CHAPTER 1

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-3

MONDAY:

VERSES 4-9

TUESDAY:

VERSES 10-13

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 14-19

THURSDAY:

VERSES 20-24

FRIDAY:

VERSES 25-29

SATURDAY:

VERSES 30-31

BIG IDEA

DIVIDED BY PREFERENCE, UNITED AS FOOLS.

The Christians who were a part of the church in Corinth were made up of many different backgrounds. Some were former Jews while others were Gentiles, which caused a natural division among some. Even more, they had started to argue about allegiances to certain teachers- namely Paul, Apollos, and Cephas (also known as Peter). As if choosing teams, these Christians had started to argue and disrespect each other based on what “team” they were on.

Paul wrote to remind them that these quarrels were trivial and pointless. He goes on to explain that in Christ we are all one. He points out that we are all equal, including those who God has called to be teachers and leaders. Only Christ is to be exalted, not leaders or teachers. And he reminds them that we are all on the same team, at the same level, and all equally in need of the same Savior.

Paul takes it one step further, drawing everyone’s attention to his own past and the fact that apart from Christ he would not be fit for the Gospel. He uses his life as an example of the fact that the wisdom of God is so much higher than that of men. It’s as if Paul is reminding them not to put him, or anyone else, on a pedestal. But instead to turn to the wisdom of God over the wisdom of any man.

FACTOIDS

Corinth is located in present-day Greece. At the time of Paul's writing to the church in Corinth, it had become a Roman colony. However, it still retained some of its Greek culture and heritage. Though primarily a Roman city, the people of Corinth during this time would have been influenced by both Roman and Greek ideas, traditions, and beliefs.

This largely influenced the way the church in Corinth processed the Gospel as well. It was common for both Romans and Greeks to align themselves to particular teachers as well as particular gods or demigods. Partiality to a certain leader or following would have felt natural and normal, and disputes over preferences would have been commonplace.

With this in mind, it makes sense that the people of Corinth were "taking sides" in their newfound faith as well. But God uses Paul to remind them that their true allegiance and their identities were not meant to rest on any human leader but on Christ alone. It is through Christ that we are all united as one.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

Throughout scripture we are reminded that God's wisdom is the only sure wisdom that we can depend on. Take a look at a few other verses that speak to this truth:

- Proverbs 2:6
- Psalm 111:10
- Jeremiah 8:9
- James 1:5
- Ephesians 5:15-16

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

Have you ever found yourself partial to a specific teacher, church, or even institution in a way that created division between you and someone else?

How does your allegiance to Christ help create equality in your relationships with others and break down dividing walls that might otherwise be there?

SEASON 1

POWERED UP

WEEK 2: CHAPTER 2

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-2

MONDAY:

VERSES 3-5

TUESDAY:

VERSES 6-9

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 10-11

THURSDAY:

VERSES 12-13

FRIDAY:

VERSE 14

SATURDAY:

VERSES 15-16

BIG IDEA

WISDOM COMES THROUGH GOD'S SPIRIT.

Throughout the history of ancient Greece, many noteworthy and influential philosophers tried to explain what truth was. The people of Corinth would have been raised to debate these differing ideas and many held the belief that one man or another had figured out the truth about God, the world, and even the meaning of life. Paul, understanding this influence on the Christians of that time, wrote to remind the believers that true wisdom comes from God alone.

From as early as the Garden of Eden, mankind has been looking for ways of becoming wise apart from the plans and the truth of God. Satan even used the search for wisdom in his temptation of Eve! (Genesis 3:5-6)

Through all our searching and striving, one thing has remained true - God is the only source of truth and true wisdom comes from Him alone.

Jesus, when explaining that He would send the Holy Spirit to us, called the Holy Spirit the "Spirit of Truth" (John 16:13). It's not that God just knows truth or has attained truth... He literally is truth! And apart from the truth of God, wisdom has no foundation on which to stand!

FACTOIDS

In the first century, philosophers were commonly praised for their insights on the world, the universe, and on the inner man. Differing ideas and philosophies battled for top shelf in the Greco-Roman world. For centuries before Paul wrote to the Corinthian church, the search for true wisdom had become a battle ground of hypothesis, conjecture, and attempts to understand the world around us and beyond.

The word philosopher literally means “lover of wisdom” and defined a collection of popular and esteemed key people throughout Greek and Roman history. Each philosopher sought to make sense of the most basic of questions, “What is the meaning of life? And what is truth?”

Socrates believed in a single Creator God. He insisted that he himself held no knowledge but asserted that one could find the truth by asking questions, doubting everything, and examining himself. Though he believed in a Creator God, he insisted on a system of morality that was separate from any deity so that it would remain constant for even the non-religious or differing religious views of society.

Plato, a follower of Socrates, took his ideas even further, arguing that absolute truth could not be found within, but must have a perfect and unchanging God on which to stand. He is most famous for his concept of “forms” which he defined as eternal unvarying ideals. He believed that these “forms” were an expression of the spiritual attributes of God and that they were, in fact more real than the temporal or physical parts of our lives. This idea later morphed into Gnosticism and the false idea that the physical world didn’t matter at all.

FACTOIDS, CONT'D

Aristotle rejected the ideals of his predecessors, believing that if there were a Creator God, He would have been so perfect in His entirety that He would have no need to be a part of our world. He believed that God created the world and then ceased to participate in it from that point on. Aristotle is credited for the invention of logic and the practice of empirical observation, believing that all truth could be found through testing and science. He argued that the only thing necessary for one to be able to define truth was the ability to prove it through the science of logic and reason, and that truth had nothing to do with a deity of any sort.

These are only just a few of the most famous philosophers that would have influenced the Greco-Roman world of the first century (and even still today). With this in mind, we can better understand why Paul spends so many verses and uses such strong language to help convey the truth that though man searches for wisdom, apart from God, he will always search in vain. To separate God from truth is to render it completely useless and false. Because God is truth... not just has truth, but literally is truth. (John 14:6)

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Psalm 86:11
- Proverbs 30:5
- John 8:32
- John 16:13
- John 14:6

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

How have you seen the world, or even yourself, search for truth apart from God? What problems do you see with this kind of search for truth?

In a culture that tells us we get to define what is true for ourselves, how have you seen deviating from the truth of God as appealing? How have you seen it hurt people or yourself? Why do you think pain is the inevitable result of rejecting a truth based on God alone?

SEASON 1

POWERED UP

WEEK 3: CHAPTER 3

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-3

MONDAY:

VERSES 4-5

TUESDAY:

VERSES 6-9

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 10-15

THURSDAY:

VERSES 16-17

FRIDAY:

VERSES 18-20

SATURDAY:

VERSES 21-23

BIG IDEA

WE GAIN MATURITY THROUGH UNITY.

The third chapter of 1 Corinthians opens with a harsh rebuke from Paul where he expresses frustration with how the Christians of Corinth continued to walk in worldly ways. He encourages them to put aside foolish pursuits and arguments that only benefited them in this world and instead pursue actions, thoughts, and attitudes that were kingdom minded.

Multiple times through this chapter, Paul points to their division as proof of their immaturity in their faith, calling them to the wisdom of God which produces maturity and unity. Using the analogy of a building, Paul explains that it is the foundation that matters, which is Jesus Christ, and that each person who serves is just one of many builders who help to build the kingdom of God. As such, no person is better than another. But instead, as we work together, bringing our best to the kingdom, we are able to build up the body of Christ, just as we are called to do.

FACTOIDS

Did you know that Corinth was highly valued for its production of high-quality bronze? It has even been suggested that Corinthian bronze was close to, if not more valuable than even silver or gold. As a wealthy trade port, this precious metal was among many other goods that were traded and understood in the region. Ships would harbor near Corinth and boats would be pulled across a narrow piece of land called the diolkos effectively transporting them from one port to another. As a center of trade and a producer of fine metals, the Corinthian people would have understood keenly the value of certain products in comparison to others. Paul capitalized on their understanding of trade to make a point in chapter three. He uses the analogies of gold, silver, and precious stones to symbolize acts of spiritual maturity and righteousness - acts that have eternal weight and store up for each person treasures in heaven. He uses the analogies of wood, hay, and straw to symbolize acts of spiritual infancy and worldly pursuits - of which the Corinthian church struggled with, and which had no kingdom value.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Psalm 133:1
- Ecclesiastes 4:9-12
- Ephesians 4:11-15
- 1 Peter 4:10
- Hebrews 12:1-2

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

If you picture righteous deeds and kingdom-focused actions as gold, silver, and precious stones, and unrighteous deeds and earthly-focused actions as wood, hay, and straw, what do you feel like your primary “building materials” are?

What are some practical things you can do this week to take steps toward unity with your brothers and sisters in Christ?

SEASON 1

POWERED UP

WEEK 4: CHAPTER 4

DAILY READING CHALLENGE:

SUNDAY:

VERSES 1-2

MONDAY:

VERSES 3-5

TUESDAY:

VERSES 6-9

WEDNESDAY:

VERSES 10-13

THURSDAY:

VERSES 14-16

FRIDAY:

VERSES 17-19

SATURDAY:

VERSES 20-21

BIG IDEA

THE KINGDOM IS NOT TALK, BUT POWER.

Paul continues his correction of the Corinthian church, drawing their attention to the fact that God has blessed them richly and yet they have become arrogant (v. 6). He points them to the humble life that God has called himself and Apollos to as examples of what it means to be rich in the things of God while being poor in the things of this world.

Paul's words here are not meant to shame the reader or to take pride in how much he and Apollos have sacrificed for the Gospel. Instead, he calls believers to "be imitators of me" and to value the things of God far more than the things of the world. Paul views the believers in Corinth as dear to himself as his own children and longs deeply for their ultimate good. And like any good parent knows, sometimes you have to give your children the harsh truth to help set them on the right path.

The Corinthian church had the truth, but they were struggling with living the life Christ had called them to. Their actions did not match up with their beliefs. Paul wrote to guide them and to discipline them out of love for them, but more importantly out of love for Christ.

FACTOIDS

A belief system that tainted life for the early church in Corinth (as well as the rest of the Roman Empire) was one of Epicureanism, to which the classic summarization of “Eat, drink, and be merry, for tomorrow we die” is attributed. Epicureans believed there was no after life and death was the final end. Since they believed that there was nothing to live for beyond death, they taught that each person should seek to squeeze as much pleasure out of this life as possible, while avoiding as much pain as possible.

Influenced by this self-centric way of thinking, mixed with the primary Roman value of dominance and superiority, the early church throughout the Roman empire struggled to embrace what it meant to live in a way that honored the Christ-centric and other-centric ideals of Christianity. With this in mind, we can understand why Paul spends so much time stressing the need for unity, self-sacrifice, and godly wisdom in the opening of his letter.

CONNECT THE PIECES:

- Matthew 6:19-21
- Matthew 6:33
- Luke 12:33-34
- 1 Peter 1:3-5
- 1 John 2:15-17

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN TO ME?

How do you see the ideals of the Epicurean mindset (seek pleasure while avoiding pain) still alive and active in our modern culture?
How does this make living a godly life difficult or challenging?

In what ways has the love of earthly riches robbed you of heavenly riches now or in the past? What are some practical steps that you can take to work toward a life that is rich in the things of God more than the things of this world?



ARBORHEIGHTS

community church