

# 1 Corinthians

**AUTHOR:** Paul

**TIME WRITTEN:** A.D. 56 from Ephesus

**POSITION IN THE BIBLE:**

- 46th Book in the Bible
- 7th book in the New Testament
- 2nd of 21 epistle books
- 3rd of Paul's 13 books
- 45 have preceded it. 20 to follow it.

**CHAPTERS:** 16

**VERSES:** 437

**WORDS:** 9,489

**KEY WORD:** Correction of Carnal Living

**TWO KEY PASSAGES:**

1. **1 Corinthians 6:19-20** - "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own?  
For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's."
2. **1 Corinthians 10:12-13** - "Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.  
No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."

**KEY CHAPTER:** 1 Corinthians 13

1. Called the "love chapter of the Bible."
2. 1 Corinthians 13 has won the hearts of people across the world as the best definition of "love" ever penned.
3. Standing in stark contrast to the idea that love is an emotion, that one can fall into or out of love, 1 Corinthians 13 clearly reveals that TRUE love is primarily an action.
4. This is why when "God so loved the world that He gave" John 3:16 We know what He gave.

**OBSERVATIONS ABOUT 1 CORINTHIANS**

1. Corinth, the most important city in Greece during Paul's day, was a bustling hub of:
  - a. Worldwide commerce.
  - b. Degraded culture.

- c. Idolatrous religion.
- 2. Paul founded the church there. Acts 18:1-17
- 3. Two of his letters (epistles) are addressed “to the church of God which is at Corinth.”
- 4. 1 Corinthians:
  - a. Reveals the problems, pressures and struggles of a church called out of a pagan society.
  - b. Herein Paul addresses a variety of problems in the life-style of the Corinthian congregation:
    - 1. Factions
    - 2. Lawsuits
    - 3. Immorality
    - 4. Questionable practices
    - 5. Abuses of the Lord’s Supper
  - c. In addition to words of discipline, Paul shares words of counsel in answer to questions raised by the Corinthians Christians.
- 5. The city of Corinth.
  - a. Corinth was a key city in ancient Greece until it was destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C.
  - b. Julius Caesar rebuilt it as a Roman colony in 46 B.C.; and it grew and prospered, becoming the capital of the province of Achaia.
  - c. Language:
    - 1. Its official language was Latin.
    - 2. The common language remained Greek.
  - d. Corinth was the metropolis of the Peloponnesus, since it was strategically located on a narrow isthmus between the Aegean Sea and the Adriatic Sea that connects the Peloponnesus with northern Greece.
  - e. The Corinth Canal.
    - 1. Because of its two seaports it became a commercial center and many small ships were rolled or dragged across the Corinthian isthmus to avoid the dangerous 200-mile voyage around southern Greece.
    - 2. Nero and others attempted to build a canal at the narrowest point (5 miles wide), but the work was not completed until 1893.
    - 3. Carved out of solid rock,
  - f. The city was filled with shrines and temples, but the most prominent was the Temple of Aphrodite on the top of a 1,800-foot promontory called the Acrocorinthus.
    - 1. Worshipers of the “goddess of love” made free use of the 1,000 Hieroduli (consecrated prostitutes).
    - 2. Sexual diseases were rampant.
    - 3. Locked room in the museum complex in Corinth. March 1998. Dinos Rousseus.

4. This cosmopolitan center thrived on commerce, entertainment, vice, and corruption; pleasure-seekers traveled there to spend money on a holiday from morality.
5. Corinth became so notorious for its evils that the term Korinthia-zo-mai (“to act like a Corinthian”) became a synonym for debauchery and prostitution.
- g. In Paul’s day the population of Corinth was approximately 7000,000, about two-thirds of whom were slaves.
- h. In spite of a number of obstacles, Paul was able to establish a congregation of the Lord’s church in Corinth on his second missionary journey. 3:6-10; 4:15; Acts 18:1-7
  1. Persecution in Macedonia drove him south to Athens., and from there he proceeded to Corinth.
  2. He made tents with Aquila and Priscilla.
  3. Reasoned with the Jews in the synagogue.
  4. Silas and Timothy joined him (evidently they brought a gift from Philippi; 2 Corinthians 11:8-9; Philippians 4:15).
  5. Upon receiving the gift, Paul began to devote full time to his ministry.
  6. Paul wrote 1 & 2 Thessalonians fro Corinth.
  7. Moved his ministry base from the synagogue to the house of Justus because of opposition, and converted Crispus, the leader of the synagogue.
  8. Paul taught the Word of God in Corinth for eighteen months in A.D. 51 and 52.
  9. After Paul’s departure, Apollos came from Ephesus to minister in the Corinthian congregation. 3:6; Acts 18:24-28
- i. When Paul was teaching and preaching in Ephesus during his third missionary journey, he was disturbed by reports from the household of Chloe concerning quarrels in the church at Corinth. **1 Corinthians 1:11** - “For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe’s household, that there are contentions among you.”
  1. The church sent a delegation of three men (16:17), who apparently brought a letter that requested Paul’s judgment on certain issues (7:1)
  2. Thus, Paul wrote 1 Corinthians in response to the problems and questions of the Corinthians.
  3. He had already written a previous letter to 1 Corinthians. **1 Corinthians 5:9** - “I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.”
  4. It may be that the men who came from Corinth took this letter back with them.
  5. Paul was planning to leave Ephesus (16:5-8), indicating that 1 Corinthians was written in A.D. 56.

6. The purpose behind writing 1 Corinthians.
  - a. Because of immorality and disunity, the Corinthians were destroying their Christian influence.
  - b. The book is designed to refute improper attitudes and conduct and to promote a spirit of unity among the brethren in their relationships and worship.

## SUMMARY OF 1 CORINTHIANS

### INTRODUCTION:

- A. Through the missionary efforts of Paul and others, **the church has been established in Corinth, but Paul finds it very difficult to keep Corinth our of the church.**
  1. The pagan life-style of Corinth exerts a profound influence upon the Christians in that corrupt city—problems of every kind plague them.
  2. In this disciplinary letter, Paul is forced to exercise his apostolic authority as he deals firmly with the problems of:
    - a. Divisiveness
    - b. Immorality
    - c. Lawsuits
    - d. Selfishness
    - e. Abuses of the Lord's Supper
    - f. Spiritual gifts
    - g. Denials of the resurrection
  3. The epistle is orderly in its approach to the problems that have come to Paul's attention.
  4. Paul also gives a series of perspectives on various questions and issues raised by the Corinthians in a letter.
  5. Paul's concern as their spiritual father (4:14-15) is tempered with love, and he wants to avoid visiting them "with a rod" (4:21)
- B. There are three major sections in the book:
  1. Answer to Chloe's Report of Divisions. (1-4)
  2. Answer to Report of Fornication. (5-6)
  3. Answer to Letter of Questions. (7-16)

### ANSWER TO CHLOE'S REPORT OF DIVISIONS. (1-4)

- A. Personality cults centering on Paul, Apollos, and Peter have led to divisions and false pride among the Corinthians (1)
  1. Chapter 1 - It is not their wisdom or cleverness that has brought them to Christ.
  2. Chapter 2 - The truth of the gospel is apprehended.

3. Chapter 3 - Factions that exist among the saints at Corinth are indications of their spiritual immaturity.
4. Chapter 4 - They should pride themselves in Christ, not in human leaders who are merely His servants.

### **ANSWER TO REPORT OF FORNICATION. (5-6)**

#### **A. Other problems are addressed.**

1. Chapter 5 - The next problem that Paul addresses is that of incest between a member of the church and his stepmother.
  - a. The Corinthians have exercised no church discipline in this matter, and Paul orders them to remove the offender from their fellowship until he repents.
2. Chapter 6:1-8 - Another source of poor example is the legal action of Christian against Christian in civil courts.
  - a. They must learn to arbitrate their differences within the Christian community.
3. Chapter 6:1-8 - Paul concludes this section with a warning against immorality in general.

### **ANSWER TO LETTER OF QUESTIONS. (7-16)**

#### **A. In these chapters the apostle Paul gives authoritative answers to thorny questions raised by the Corinthians.**

1. Chapter 7 - His first counsel concerns the issues of marriage, celibacy, divorce, and remarriage.
2. 8:1 - 11:1 - The next three chapters are related to the problem of meat offered to idols.
  - a. Paul illustrates from his own life the twin principles of Christian liberty and the law of love, and he concludes that Christians must sometimes limit their liberty for the sake of weaker brothers.
3. 11:2 - 14:40 - The apostle then turns to matters concerning public worship, including improper observance of the Lord's Supper and the use of spiritual gifts.
  - a. Gifts are to be exercised in love for the edification of the whole body.
4. The Corinthians also have problems with the resurrection, which Paul seeks to correct in the 15th chapter. Some call this the "resurrection chapter of the Bible."
  - a. His historical and theological defense of the Resurrection includes teaching on the nature of the resurrected body.
  - b. The Corinthians probably had been struggling over this issue because the idea of a resurrected body is disdainful in Greek thought.

5. The epistle closes with Paul's instruction for the collection he will make for the saints in Jerusalem. 16:1-4
6. The closing verses (16:5-24) contain a number of miscellaneous exhortations and greetings.