

# **An Open Door in Asia**

## **Year 4, Quarter 1**

**After previously being forbidden to preach in Asia, Paul now returns to this province for three years of fruitful labor. This quarter examines the history of this period both from the book of Acts (18:23 - 20:2) and from references in 1 & 2 Corinthians, written from Ephesus and Macedonia respectively. We will also note the condition of the Corinthian church from these epistles.**

### **Outline**

#### **Week 1: Ephesian Highlights**

- ◆ Commencement of Paul's Third Preaching Journey
- ◆ The Story of Apollos' Conversion
- ◆ The Fruitful Fields of Ephesus
- ◆ The Power of the Gospel
- ◆ The Ephesian Uprising

#### **Week 2: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ The Letter to the Corinthians
- ◆ The Problem of Sectarian Division (1 Cor 1:1-17)
- ◆ The Humility of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18-31)
- ◆ The "Weakness" of Paul's Preaching (1 Cor 2:1-5)
- ◆ Thinking God's Thoughts (1 Cor 2:6-16)

#### **Week 3: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Carnality: The Root of Sectarianism (1 Cor 3:1-4)
- ◆ The Proper Evaluation of Men (1 Cor 3:5-17)
- ◆ Receiving the Full Benefit (1 Cor 3:18-23)
- ◆ Avoiding Improper Evaluations (1 Cor 4:1-5)
- ◆ God: The Author of Distinction (1 Cor 4:6-21)

#### **Week 4: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ The Toleration of Incest (1 Cor 5:1-8)
- ◆ Clarification of Disfellowship (1 Cor 5:9-13)

- ◆ Lawsuits Among the Brethren (1 Cor 6:1-8)
- ◆ Exclusion from the Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-11)
- ◆ Proper View of the Body (1 Cor 6:12-20)

### **Week 5: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Celibacy vs. Marriage (1 Cor 7:1-9)
- ◆ The Permanency of Marriage (1 Cor 7:10-16)
- ◆ Remaining in Our Calling (1 Cor 7:17-24)
- ◆ The Distractions of Marriage (1 Cor 7:25-35)
- ◆ Virgins and Widows (1 Cor 7:36-40)

### **Week 6: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Knowledge and Conscience (1 Cor 8:1-8)
- ◆ The Danger of Unrestrained Liberty (1 Cor 8:9-13)
- ◆ Paul's Personal Example of Self-Denial (1 Cor 9:1-18)
- ◆ Servant of All (1 Cor 9:19-23)
- ◆ The Struggle for Self-Control (1 Cor 9:24-27)

### **Week 7: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Lessons from the Israelites (1 Cor 10:1-11)
- ◆ A Way of Escape (1 Cor 10:12-13)
- ◆ Flee from Idolatry (1 Cor 10:14-22)
- ◆ All Things Do Not Edify (1 Cor 10:23-29)
- ◆ All to the Glory of God (1 Cor 10:30-11:1)

### **Week 8: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Insubordination and the Covering (1 Cor 11:2-16)
- ◆ Corruption of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22)
- ◆ Honoring the Lord's Death (1 Cor 11:23-34)
- ◆ The Variety of Gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11)
- ◆ A Unified Body (1 Cor 12:12-31)

### **Week 9: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ A More Excellent Way (1 Cor 13:1-3)
- ◆ Love Is Kind (1 Cor 13:4)
- ◆ Love Thinks No Evil (1 Cor 13:5)
- ◆ All-Conquering Love (1 Cor 13:6-7)
- ◆ Love: Key to Maturity (1 Cor 13:8-13)

**Week 10: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Tongues and Prophecy (1 Cor 14:1-5)
- ◆ Meaningful Communication (1 Cor 14:6-19)
- ◆ The True Purpose of Tongues (1 Cor 14:20-25)
- ◆ Order and Decorum (1 Cor 14:26-35)
- ◆ No Exceptions (1 Cor 14:36-40)

**Week 11: 1 Corinthians**

- ◆ Resurrection: A Fundamental Truth (1 Cor 15:1-19)
- ◆ Resurrection: Prelude to the End (1 Cor 15:20-34)
- ◆ Resurrection: How Will It Happen? (1 Cor 15:35-49)
- ◆ Resurrection: Ultimate Victory (1 Cor 15:50-58)
- ◆ Concluding Plans and Exhortations (1 Cor 16)

**Week 12: 2 Corinthians**

- ◆ Overview
- ◆ Paul's Concern for the Corinthians
- ◆ Paul's Concern for the Disciplined Brother
- ◆ Walking by Faith
- ◆ Reconciliation Through Christ

**Week 13: 2 Corinthians**

- ◆ The Collection for Jerusalem
- ◆ Paul's Opponents in Corinth
- ◆ The Price of Apostleship
- ◆ Paul's Visions and His Thorn
- ◆ Closing Exhortations

## MEMORY VERSES: YEAR 4, QUARTER 1

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**Week 1:** When these things were accomplished, Paul purposed in the Spirit, when he had passed through Macedonia and Achaia, to go to Jerusalem, saying, "After I have been there, I must also see Rome."

☞ Acts 19:21

**Week 2:** Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.

☞ 1 Corinthians 2:12-13

**Week 3:** Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts; and then each one's praise will come from God.

☞ 1 Corinthians 4:5

**Week 4:** All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

☞ 1 Corinthians 6:12

**Week 5:** Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

☞ 1 Corinthians 7:3-4

**Week 6:** And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.

☞ 1 Corinthians 9:25

**Week 7:** 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.

☞ 1 Corinthians 10:13

**Week 8:** For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body - whether Jews or Greeks, whether slave or free - and have all been made to drink into one Spirit.

☞ 1 Corinthians 12:13

**Week 9:** Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil ...

☞ 1 Corinthians 13:4-5

**Week 10:** If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.

☞ 1 Corinthians 14:37

**Week 11:** But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

☞ 1 Corinthians 15:57-58

**Week 12:** Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward man is being renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.

☞ 2 Corinthians 4:16-17

**Week 13:** And He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.

☞ 2 Corinthians 12:9

**Day 1: Commencement of Paul's Third Preaching Journey**

Luke's history gives no details of Paul's last recorded visit to Antioch or the circumstances leading to his third journey (Ac 18:22-23). The general date for this journey is most likely in the range of AD 53/54-57/58. Paul begins his third tour in the same way as he began the second: with visits to the churches in Phrygia and Galatia for their edification (cf. Ac 16:4-6). Who accompanies Paul from the commencement of the journey is uncertain. Several companions will be mentioned during his stay in Ephesus, but it is impossible to tell when they may have joined him. Silas' last mention in Acts was 18:5. **[Note:** Be aware that most scholars place the writing of Galatians *after* this visit of Paul and during his upcoming stay at Ephesus. We have placed it earlier.]

1. T/F Paul believed that strengthening churches was as important as planting them.

**Day 2: The Story of Apollos' Conversion**

Before Luke tells of Paul's return to Ephesus, he interjects a brief story which had occurred during the interim (Ac 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, who had remained in Ephesus when Paul returned to Jerusalem, continued to meet in the synagogue and teach whomever they could (18:26). The mention of "brethren" in 18:27 hints of their success. One day a man by the name of Apollos "*began to speak boldly in the synagogue*" about Jesus, but his knowledge of the Lord was limited. This Christian couple then "*took him aside and explained to him the way of God more accurately.*" Thus begins the career of service of the eloquent orator and ally of Paul. Apollos learns of an opportunity to serve in Corinth and becomes a valuable asset to that church.

2. Describe Apollos' background and abilities. What character traits does he possess?
3. What fostered the Corinthians' confidence in Apollos?

**Day 3: The Fruitful Fields of Ephesus**

Upon his arrival in Ephesus, Paul finds a small group of disciples who, like Apollos, had not yet learned about Christianity in its fullness (Ac 19:1-7). His inquiries reveal their spiritual deficiencies, and upon further teaching they are "*baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.*" These undoubtedly join the others in fellowship and the church in Ephesus begins to take off. Paul spends the next three months teaching in the synagogue which, along with Aquila and Priscilla's association, indicates that the majority of the Jews in Ephesus were more tolerant than those encountered elsewhere. However, Paul eventually wears out his welcome among those who were resistant to the gospel and moves to a local school as a base for his teaching (Ac 19:8-10). This continues unabated for two years as not only Ephesus but the whole province of Asia is saturated with the gospel.

4. Make an observation about the extent of John the Baptist's influence and teaching.
5. What spiritual gifts were conferred upon the men after their conversion? How?

### **Day 4: The Power of the Gospel**

During the next two years the preaching of the gospel together with its miraculous credentials flourishes throughout Ephesus (Ac 19:11-20). These miracles of Paul are in direct contrast to the works of magic and exorcism indigenous to the region. Luke relates two anecdotes which illustrate the gospel's triumph: 1) Demons attack Jewish exorcists who vainly call upon Jesus and Paul in their incantations, and 2) Practitioners of magic publicly burn their books when convicted by true miraculous power. Note again the connection between apostolic miracles and teaching: *"Now God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul ... So the word of the Lord grew mightily and prevailed"* (19:11, 20).

6. What unique way of healing did God make available in Ephesus?
7. Who did the evil spirits know personally? What did they do to the sons of Sceva?
8. What was the value of the books which were burned? Estimate on the basis that one piece of silver equaled a day's wages.

### **Day 5: The Ephesian Uprising**

In the waning days of Paul's sojourn in Ephesus, the influence of the gospel reaches a breaking point among the craftsmen who make a living from idolatry (Ac 19:21-41). Demetrius, a silversmith, instigates an uprising by railing that *"not only is this trade of ours in danger of falling into disrepute, but also the temple of the great goddess Diana may be despised and her magnificence destroyed ..."*. His protest was legitimate, for over the course of time the Temple of Diana was plundered by Nero, Trajan and others. "The ruins furnished materials for the church building erected by Justinian ... The remains of the temple were burned by the Goths in 263 A.D. What Demetrius feared actually happened, because of the preaching of the gospel of Christ" (Gareth L. Reese, *Acts*, p. 690).

A mob mentality quickly spreads among the Ephesians until *"the whole city was filled with confusion, and rushed into the theater with one accord."* Paul wishes to address the multitudes, but cooler heads prevail realizing that boiling emotions would obscure the voice of reason. Eventually the city clerk is able to calm the unruly crowd and restore order before anyone is killed. Paul leaves Ephesus shortly after the ruckus.

9. Where had Paul sent his co-workers Timothy and Erastus?
10. Who were Gaius and Aristarchus? What happened to them during the riot?
11. Who prevented Paul from going to the theater?

**Day 1: The Letter to the Corinthians**

Paul writes this epistle four or five years after he had established the Corinthian congregation. While working in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:8-9, 19), Paul has heard troublesome reports about the Corinthians' well-being both "through the grapevine" (1 Cor 1:11) and by letters from them directly (1 Cor 7:1). Paul has also previously written an epistle to the Corinthians which has not been preserved (1 Cor 5:9). Paul writes 1 Corinthians in the express hope that the brethren can resolve their own problems: 2 Cor 1:23-2:9; 7:8-12. He does not wish to come to them with the rod of apostolic authority but will do so if necessary: 1 Cor 4:21; 2 Cor 10:2, 10-11; 12:20-21; 13:1-3, 10.

1. By the time Paul writes to the Corinthians, what exists throughout Asia?
2. The Corinthians' reaction to Paul's epistle will be a test of \_\_\_\_\_ (2 Cor 2:9).

**Day 2: The Problem of Sectarian Division (1 Cor 1:1-17)**

Chapters 1-4 of 1 Corinthians form a unit in which Paul attacks with a variety of arguments the sin of factionalism: "... *each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ'*" (1 Cor 1:12). While various Christians possess admirable characteristics worthy of honor and emulation, it is the tendency of the weak and carnally minded to devote allegiance to them to the point of division. Of all the problems to be addressed in this epistle, Paul begins with the issue that most obviously suggests that the Corinthians have lost sight of who their Lord and Master is. Thus, ten times in the first ten verses Paul calls their attention to Jesus. Paul pleads for unity in thought and action (1:10) and asks the penetrating question, "*Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you?*" On the other hand, Paul affirms, "... *you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me*" (4:15-16). These are consistent statements, for while Christians are urged to imitate faithful brethren, their singular loyalty to Christ forbids exclusive factions.

3. What importance were the Corinthians placing upon baptism (1 Cor 1:13-17)?

**Day 3: The Humility of the Cross (1 Cor 1:18-31)**

The root of divisiveness over men is pride, pride in being associated with the "in" person or group. But Paul explains that the nature of the gospel, and particularly its symbolic heart, the cross, was so conceived by God as to bar the arrogant and attract the humble. He first contrasts unbelieving Jews and Gentiles who reject the cross in favor of their own agendas: "*For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom*" (1:22). Further, Paul states what is true even in our own day: "... *not many wise according to the flesh,*



*not many mighty, not many noble, are called*" (1:26). Thus when men begin to emphasize worldly attributes and value men according to fleshly considerations, they have drifted from the central theme of the gospel. Salvation is so constructed "*that no flesh should glory in His presence*" (1:29).

4. What could the world not do through its own wisdom? What does this imply?
5. How is the gospel and the cross "foolish" and "weak" by worldly standards?

#### **Day 4: The "Weakness" of Paul's Preaching (1 Cor 2:1-5)**

In Paul's day, the ability to speak eloquently and persuasively was an art much admired by the populace. Orators were like movie stars today: popular, wealthy and influential. According to the standards of Greek rhetoric, Paul's presentation skills were deficient. He did not rely on crafty speech or the turn of a phrase to manipulate the audience but rather preached "*Jesus Christ and Him crucified,*" in Spirit and power (2:2, 5). This simple, direct presentation of truth which first won the souls of the Corinthians was now being abandoned in favor of worldly considerations.

6. Describe Paul's feelings as he came to Corinth. How did Jesus help him (Ac 18:9-10)?
7. What happens when the principle in 1 Cor 2:5 is reversed?

#### **Day 5: Thinking God's Thoughts (1 Cor 2:6-16)**

Paul next stresses that, whatever the world thinks of the gospel, it is in truth the very mind of God revealed to man. Human philosophers and kings reason on an entirely different level than God. Had mankind been attuned to God's ways, "*they would not have crucified the Lord of glory*" (2:8). Men are utterly incapable of discovering the character and will of God by investigation and reasoning (1:21; 2:9, 11), but thanks be to God that He "*has revealed them to us through His Spirit*" (2:10)! Paul affirms that his teaching, even the very words he speaks by inspiration, are the inward thoughts of God "*freely given to us*" (2:12). It is important to evaluate this passage in its context: Paul is not merely explaining the mechanics of inspiration. His purpose is to change the Corinthians' focus from the perceived value of Paul, Apollos and Peter back to the matchless power and wisdom of God. If "*we have the mind of Christ*" (2:16), which we do in the gospel, how silly of us to create warring factions in the name of men and follow them for their puny attributes. Though it is not Paul's intended point, this principle surely condemns the denominational fragmentation which now exists among Christianity.

8. Who is able to understand Paul's gospel according to 1 Cor 2:6?
9. In the context of 1 Cor 1-2, who do you think is the "natural man" of 2:14?
10. How do men today seek to attract people to Christ by earthly, carnal means?

**Day 1: Carnality: The Root of Sectarianism (1 Cor 3:1-4)**

The irony of pride is that while one congratulates himself on his attributes which elevate him above others, he is at the same time demonstrating childish immaturity. There is abundant evidence that many of the Corinthians were arrogant - about knowledge, money, spiritual gifts and their party affiliation. Paul confronts them: “... *are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?*” They had the mind of Christ through revelation (2:16), but they were not conforming themselves to His character and will.

1. What were the Corinthians unable to receive from Paul? Why?
2. What behavior is evidence of carnality? What does it mean to be carnal?

**Day 2: The Proper Evaluation of Men (1 Cor 3:5-17)**

Evangelists and other workers in the kingdom are not competitors but compatriots. The “great” apostle Paul, as we esteem him, humbly identifies himself and Apollos as ministers (3:5), fellow workers (3:9), servants and stewards (4:1). The overall project is God’s, and He “*gives the increase*” as men combine their labors in harmony. Paul relates the Corinthian congregation to a building, specifically the temple of God (3:9-10, 16-17). This would have been a striking contrast for these people who were well acquainted with Aphrodite’s temple atop the Acrocorinthus. What kind of temple are they? Paul warns the influential members in Corinth to take care how they build upon the foundation he had laid, for “*each one’s work will become manifest; for the Day will declare it ... and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is*” (3:13). Paul had laid the foundation of Christ, but some are raising pillars to the honor of men. Those who are converted to men instead of Christ will often be consumed in the flames of earthly crisis and disappointment. But if they come through this world unscathed, there yet remains another judgment of fire which will test their faith.

3. Describe the planters and waterers in 1 Cor 3:7-8. How does this apply in our day?
4. How will a man whose work is burned suffer loss and yet be saved at the same time?

**Day 3: Receiving the Full Benefit (1 Cor 3:18-23)**

The folly of identifying with one preacher or party is that it results in separation from other beneficial associations. “*All things are yours ...*”; i.e., the Christian has everything good at his disposal. Paul, Apollos and Peter are all servants of the Corinthian brethren. To ally with Paul *against* Peter is to deprive oneself of the benefits accrued by association with Peter. This is truly a sublime principle: every created thing, even all under the category of life and death, is at the Christian’s disposal to assist him in any way possible.

Ultimately, we belong to Christ who rules on our behalf, and Christ belongs to God. We are *God's family*. How foolish to divide it, foster discord, estrange ourselves from fellow brothers and sisters and forfeit the rich gifts provided by God through His servants.

5. Given the context, how were the Corinthians deceiving themselves (1 Cor 3:18)?

6. How is death “yours”?

#### **Day 4: Avoiding Improper Evaluations (1 Cor 4:1-5)**

The sectarian division practiced by the Corinthians is unacceptable for another reason: it involves judgments about the character and worth of individuals beyond the scope of human right or ability. *“It is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by a human court ...”* (4:3). Why? Because humans are incapable of making thorough, accurate judgments of relative value before the Lord. Some judged Peter to be more worthy of association than Paul; others judged Paul more worthy than Apollos, etc. But Paul knew that he was neither condemned nor justified by the evaluations of men. All of us need to learn this lesson, for there will always be unjust criticism and praise. Some commend things in us which they should not; others find fault where there is none. Some thought Paul hung the moon; others thought he should *be* hung. He would be schizophrenic if his self-image was based upon the assessments of his brethren or the world. We will all ultimately be scrutinized by the Lord Himself. If we are able to pass that test, it matters not what men think.

7. What does Paul say about self-judgment? How can our consciences deceive us?

8. What will the Lord be able to judge which is beyond the purview of man?

#### **Day 5: God: the Author of Distinction (1 Cor 4:6-21)**

Paul chides the Corinthians for being *“puffed up on behalf of one against the other”* (1 Cor 4:7). In so doing they have forgotten that everything they have had been received by the grace of God, and it is God who makes distinctions among His people which may result in blessing or hardship. For example, Paul cites the apostles: they were *“men condemned to death”*; *“a spectacle”*; *“the filth of the world”*; *“the offscouring of all things”*; etc. It was God's will that He be glorified by his servants who were so esteemed by unbelievers. And against this are the Corinthians who boast of being mighty and rich and full (4:7-8, 10)! Paul concludes this section with stern fatherly warning: they must shape up or he will come to them with the rod of correction.

9. When does our esteem for men become wrong?

10. What is the proper attitude toward one's blessings and advantages?

11. What is Timothy's mission in going to Corinth?

**Day 1: The Toleration of Incest (1 Cor 5:1-8)**

Paul turns from the sin of sectarianism among the Corinthians to the shocking presence of incest. What's worse, the Corinthians "*are puffed up, and have not rather mourned.*" The term "puffed up" (*phusioo*) means to inflate, originally as with bellows (see 1 Cor 4:6, 18-19; 5:2; 8:1; 13:4). The Corinthians were actually **proud** of their toleration of this scandalous affair. Perhaps they wished to demonstrate open-mindedness to their unbelieving neighbors, or maybe they thought themselves so "spiritual" that the activities of the flesh were of no consequence. Whatever the case, Paul says "*your glorying is not good*" and commands that public action be taken against this brother posthaste.

1. Harmonize 1 Cor 5:3 with 4:3-5.
2. Under what circumstance is the brother to be delivered to Satan? With what hope?

**Day 2: Clarification of Disfellowship (1 Cor 5:9-13)**

Paul had written in an earlier epistle "*not to keep company with sexually immoral people*" (1 Cor 5:6). But apparently the Corinthians were confused: they disassociated themselves from unbelievers but happily tolerated immoral brethren! Paul corrects their misconception: the church has no spiritual jurisdiction over unbelievers because they are outside spiritual fellowship. On the other hand, "*anyone named a brother*" is under the spiritual jurisdiction of the local church because he claims fellowship with them on a spiritual basis. The brother who remains in sin has severed himself from the Lord and is thereby unqualified for spiritual fellowship with the Lord's body. In an effort to impress upon him the consequences of his actions, the church is to exclude him from both spiritual fellowship and social intercourse.

3. Write all the phrases in this chapter describing disfellowship.
4. What indicates that withdrawal is not just for a few specific sins?

**Day 3: Lawsuits among the Brethren (1 Cor 6:1-8)**

Not only is it improper for saints to judge those outside (1 Cor 5:12-13a), unbelievers should not be judges of matters among Christians. Christians enjoy the highest standards of motive, behavior and fellowship which should provide a framework of fairness in the correction of problems. What a shame when God's people, unable to settle their own affairs, appeal to human courts - institutions fraught with atheism, injustice and pragmatism - to seek redress. In so doing, the Corinthians were undermining the influence of the gospel among their unbelieving fellow-citizens and fostering treachery, spite and vengeance among themselves. This was styled by Paul as "*utter failure*" (6:7).

5. How might legitimate disagreements between brethren be better handled?
6. Failing resolution, what should brethren be willing to endure (6:7)?

### **Day 4: Exclusion from the Kingdom (1 Cor 6:9-11)**

Paul drives his point home by reminding the sinful Corinthians (1 Cor 6:8) that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. He again warns them against being deceived (3:18; 6:9). They were reverting to the sinful ways that they had previously abandoned. If the Calvinistic doctrine of “once saved, always saved” is true, this warning from Paul is senseless. He has previously acknowledged them to be the temple of God (3:16-17), the church of God in Corinth (1:2a), sanctified and called to be saints into the fellowship of Christ (1:2b, 9). Now he tells them that if they continue in their evil doings they will be barred from the kingdom. It is completely erroneous to assert that, if lost, they were never saved to begin with. The Christian must maintain the high standards of righteousness to which he is called.

7. What must happen before a fornicator, thief or drunkard can enter the kingdom?

### **Day 5: Proper View of the Body (1 Cor 6:12-20)**

In this section Paul seems to be countering the idea among the Corinthians that sexual activity is simply a bodily function and of no consequence to the spirit. He stresses several important concepts: 1) The body is for the Lord (6:13). The entirety of our being, body and soul, are members of Christ’s body. Would Christ bodily join Himself to a harlot? How, then, can those in spiritual union with Him do so? 2) The body will be raised (6:14). While ingesting and processing food is an earthly, temporary function, and thus a matter of indifference (6:13), the body is destined for transformation into an incorruptible state and will thus house our spirits in the heavenly realm. It matters what we do with our body. 3) Sexual union is not merely a biological act but the merging of personality (6:16-18). It is not sport, recreation or a matter of moral indifference. Fornication is, in a unique sense, a sin against one’s own body. While other sins may harm the body, fornication violates the body’s very nature and purpose. Sexual union with another person, even in a casual encounter, fundamentally alters people. 4) The Christian’s main purpose is to glorify God both in body and soul, and this has been made possible by our redemption in Christ. Our body is **not** ours to do with as we please; we belong to Him who purchased us from sin. We are to give residence to the Holy Spirit in our bodies by our words and actions. Thus Paul gives dignity and respect to the body. We must treat it with great care, for there are eternal consequences at stake.

8. In what two ways can we misuse things which are lawful (1 Cor 6:12)?
9. What two things has Paul said are the temple of the Holy Spirit?
10. How many times does Paul say “do you not know” in ch 6? What is he stressing?

**Day 1: Celibacy vs. Marriage (1 Cor 7:1-9)**

Having addressed more urgent concerns, Paul now turns his attention to “*the things of which you wrote to me*” (1 Cor 7:1). These are questions which have arisen in the mind of the Corinthians since their conversion. Chapter 7 deals with issues of marriage. It is important to understand that much of what Paul says is tinted by “*the present distress*” (7:26), a factor of unknown nature that places particular hardships upon those who are married. Further, Paul gives advice and personal judgment (7:6, 25, 35). He reiterates what the Lord had addressed (7:10), and he elaborates on a circumstance not specifically mentioned by Jesus (7:12). This chapter is often abused; we should approach it with caution.

Paul begins with the issue of celibacy. Apparently some were teaching that celibacy was superior to marriage or that, given the rampant sensual environment of Corinth, it was best to abstain from sexual activity altogether. Paul does acknowledge that celibacy is desirable and advantageous (7:1, 7-8), but he is no idealist. Paul readily acknowledges that each person is created with varying degrees of sexual desire and that celibacy would inflame temptation within many (7:2, 9). God has provided for sexual needs to be satisfied in a lawful, loving and responsible way, and that is within the confines of marriage: “*let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.*” Within this relationship both husband and wife carry the obligation to fulfill each other’s sexual needs. Obviously, this is not the only purpose of marriage, but Paul in this passage is only concerned with this particular aspect.

1. In what sense do husbands and wives have authority over the other’s body?
2. Under what specific circumstances should normal sexual activity be suspended?

**Day 2: The Permanency of Marriage (1 Cor 7:10-16)**

There are two categories of married people under consideration: “the married” (7:10) and “the rest” (7:12). Since “the rest” involve a Christian/non-Christian union (7:11-12), it follows that “the married” (7:10-11) are both Christians. Paul reiterates the law spoken by the Lord: “*A wife is not to depart from her husband*” and “*a husband is not to divorce his wife.*” The phrase “*But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband*” is not **permissive** but parenthetical. It simply acknowledges what may have occurred among some and what should and should not be done in view of it. “Depart” and “divorce” are synonymous; a legal separation or divorce may have occurred but the wife still has a “husband.” She must not remarry, for in doing so she will commit adultery. Again, it is not Paul’s aim to deal with Jesus’ “exception” clause.

In the case of a Christian married to a non-Christian, the marriage is to remain intact if the unbeliever is content. This implies that some Christians were putting their marriages

on the line by uniting spiritually with the Lord. In such a case, Jesus demanded to be put first (Mt 10:34-37). Paul acknowledges two truths about such an arrangement: 1) A marriage between a Christian and an unbeliever, though unwise, is sanctioned by God; otherwise, the children would be illegitimate (7:14); and 2) The possibility exists that the unbeliever may be led to Christ by his/her Christian mate. However, the context of 7:16 seems to make this occurrence *unlikely*, though possible.

But what if the unbeliever is **not** content to remain married? What if they insist upon divorce against the wishes of the Christian? Paul simply says, “*a brother or sister is not under bondage in such cases*” (7:15). Some see this as an additional reason (to that of adultery) to remarry with impunity. However, Paul merely states that the Christian is not held accountable for fulfilling a role (as husband or wife) that has been made impossible to fulfill by the departure of a spouse. Is a Christian doomed because he/she cannot fulfill marital responsibilities to someone who has abandoned them? Paul answers, “No.” “*God has called us to peace,*” i.e., the Christian has no choice but to accept what has been forced upon them and go about their business of life and faith as best they can.

**Remarriage is not in view** in this passage but rather the implications of divorce regarding one’s duties as a husband or wife toward their departed mate.

3. If a couple disobediently divorces in the absence of adultery, what are their options?
4. How are the children of a Christian/non-Christian union considered?
5. If a woman became a Christian and her husband left her because she “found religion,” what would her marital options be?

### **Day 3: Remaining in Our Calling (1 Cor 7:17-24)**

Paul now elaborates upon the ability of Christianity to blend with the societal institutions and cultural framework into which it is introduced. Christianity doesn’t barge into societies and demand wholesale change. Rather, Christians change *inwardly* and function in their roles with a new set of values. Again, while all men are amenable to the law of Christ, submission to Him is voluntary. The church does not control non-Christian institutions because, as Paul stated in chapter 5, it lacks moral authority in that realm. So long as one’s situation is not inherently sinful, the Christian may remain in it and function as he did before: uncircumcised, slave, married, single - all are acceptable states in the sight of God. Some Christians are “super-righteous” and think that Christians must withdraw from all but the most necessary worldly activities. But such is not the way of God: we must be *in* the world without becoming *of* the world (comp. 1 Cor 5:10).

6. What shows Paul’s consistent pattern of teaching wherever he goes?
7. Does a slave’s liberty in Christ mean he is now free from his master? Explain.
8. Does this passage mean that if one is in an unlawful marriage at conversion they may remain in it? Discuss.

## **Day 4: The Distractions of Marriage (1 Cor 7:25-35)**

Paul begins with “*Now concerning ...*” as he did in 7:1. This is his standard introduction as he addresses things queried in the Corinthians’ letter (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). He here advises against marriage for the time being due to the “present distress” (7:27). But those who decide to marry, perhaps in view of the temptations of the flesh (7:9), have not sinned. “*Nevertheless,*” he warns, “*such will have trouble in the flesh*” (7:28). Paul’s spirit is admirable. He does not wish to be heavy handed or throw his apostolic weight around. While he reminds the Corinthians that as an apostle he is “*one whom the Lord in His mercy has made trustworthy*” (7:25b), he recognizes where revelation leaves off and opinion begins. He gives them latitude to disagree with his judgment. Paul realizes that marriage is a tremendously consuming relationship: “*He who is married cares about the things of the world - how he may please his wife ... she who is married cares about the things of the world - how she may please her husband*” (7:33, 34b). This is as God intended. But such intimate involvement with another makes one vulnerable to certain influences, persecution or materialism for instance. Paul desires for the Corinthians to remain singularly focused upon their spiritual responsibilities.

**9.** What is Paul most concerned with for the Corinthians’ sake (1 Cor 7:28, 32, 35)?

**10.** What are the unmarried better able to concentrate on?

**11.** Discuss 1 Cor 7:29-31. How do you evaluate these “as though ...” phrases?

## **Day 5: Virgins and Widows (1 Cor 7:36-40)**

Some Corinthians were especially concerned with the giving of their virgin daughters in marriage. The “present distress” made it a difficult choice: to withhold marriage past the daughter’s prime would potentially bring ostracism; to allow marriage would increase spiritual burdens. What to do? Paul gives his advice: marriage at the present time is not advised (7:26-27). However, if his advice is not heeded and one enters marriage, sin has not occurred (7:28, 36). Lastly, Paul gives his advice regarding the remarriage of a widow. He states the principle of marital liberty via the death of a spouse (7:39) and affirms that a widow is “*at liberty to be married to whom she wishes ...*”. Her marriage, however, must be “*in the Lord,*” that is, her motives must be godly, her commitment permanent and her partner marriageable. In other words, the remarriage of a widow is sanctioned by God so long as it meets all the proper criteria. Some hold that “in the Lord” means she (or he) must marry a Christian, but this is inconsistent with the principle already established in 7:14. Still others hold that marrying a Christian was necessary only in consideration of the “present distress” and no longer applies.

**12.** How long is a wife bound by law to her husband?

**13.** Why do you think Paul refers to his inspiration by the Holy Spirit in 1 Cor 7:40?



**Day 1: Knowledge and Conscience (1 Cor 8:1-8)**

Chapters 8-10 address one topic: How can the Corinthians be consistent in rejecting idolatry but continue to function in a society permeated by heathen religion? It seems that this issue produced two main factions: 1) those who felt that their knowledge allowed them to associate with idolatry to virtually any degree: “... *we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one*” (1 Cor 8:4); and 2) those who “*with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled*” (8:7). Paul lays this problem at the feet of the strong or knowledgeable accusing them of letting their knowledge “go to their head”: “*Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies*” (8:1). To make matters worse, the brethren have become contentious over an area of complete indifference to God (8:8). The strong could have sacrificed their liberty to eat certain kinds of food and still been pleasing to God.

1. What does the man who thinks he knows everything not know?
2. While knowledge is important, what is a better indicator of relationship with God?
3. State in your own words your view of the relationship between love and knowledge.

**Day 2: The Danger of Unrestrained Liberty (1 Cor 8:9-13)**

Having established that offering a sacrifice to an idol does not taint the meat per se, Paul now reins in the liberty of the strong. If a brother exercises the strength of his conviction in a matter of liberty, but in so doing encourages another to violate his conscience, the strong is culpable in promoting that sinful choice. This is a significant principle of Christianity in relation to one's behavior. *We are responsible to a large degree for our influence upon others*, especially when we show reckless disregard for the genuine though erroneous belief of a weaker fellow Christian.

4. What would you conclude from 1 Cor 8:11 concerning losing one's salvation?
5. Where did Jesus teach a similar principle to that of 1 Cor 8:12?

**Day 3: Paul's Personal Example of Self-Denial (1 Cor 9:1-18)**

This paragraph becomes more meaningful when connected with the context of foregoing liberty for the sake of the gospel. Paul affirms the right of being financially supported by labor in the gospel: “*Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel*” (1 Cor 9:14). However, Paul says he forfeited the liberty of reaping their material things that “*I may not abuse my authority in the gospel*” (9:11-12, 15, 18). Paul's situation is unique: he was directly called and commissioned by the Lord

to serve as His ambassador. While he could have refused, he could not do so and still be acceptable to the Lord. In order to prove to himself that his motives were pure, he did not take money from the church with which he presently worked, *“For if I do this willingly, I have a reward”* (9:17).

6. List the various justifications Paul gives for financially supporting a preacher.
7. T/F An apostle had the same rights as any other Christian, no more and no less.

#### **Day 4: Servant of All (1 Cor 9:19-23)**

Paul devoted himself completely to the Lord’s commission. His personal goal: *“I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some”* (1 Cor 9:22). He did not let his own personal scruples interfere, nor did he balk at the scruples of others. Where possible, without violating the law of Christ or empowering others to bind their views, Paul yielded. He blended without compromising. He accepted without judging. He tolerated without censure. Paul essentially asked, “What can I do, while still being loyal to Christ, to open the door of the gospel to a lost soul?” A similar zeal for the lost today might result in more souls for Christ.

8. In what sense was Paul “free from all men”?
9. Paul is always under law toward whom?

#### **Day 5: The Struggle for Self-Control (1 Cor 9:24-27)**

Possibly in reference to the biennial Isthmian Games held near Corinth, Paul turns to athletics - running and boxing - to stress the importance of self-discipline and denial. In his analogy Paul notes that the athlete *“is temperate in all things”* (9:25). That is, he not only denies himself things that are harmful but things that are his liberty to enjoy should they constitute a hindrance to his athletic success. *“Now they do it for a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown.”* How much more disciplined, careful and measured Christians should be in matters which have a bearing upon eternal life - ours and others’.

10. How should we run the race for eternal life?
11. What does Paul do in regard to his body? How were the Corinthians failing this?
12. What would result if Paul allowed the passions of his flesh to lead him into sin?

**Day 1: Lessons from the Israelites (1 Cor 10:1-11)**

Again, it is important to pull the contextual thread through this passage. Paul is working to resolve controversy over eating in connection with idolatry. After dealing first with the concept of properly governing liberty, Paul now turns to careless flirtation with idolatry. He begins with the example of Israel: “all” (five times in 10:1-4) had great blessings and advantages at the beginning *“but with **most** of them God was not well pleased”* (10:5). This was due to their attraction to idolatry and all that comes with it: frivolity (10:7), sexual immorality (10:8), making petulant demands of God (10:9) and complaining (10:10). Twice Paul indicates that such episodes have been preserved in writing for the instruction of Christians. The Corinthians need to heed the lessons.

1. Unto what have Christians come (1 Cor 10:11)?

**Day 2: A Way of Escape (1 Cor 10:12-13)**

Paul yet again refers to the self-confidence of the Corinthians: *“Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall”* (10:12). Oftentimes our assurance causes us to set caution aside and venture into places we do not belong and cannot handle. This is what the Corinthians were doing by frequenting idols’ temples. And perhaps they were reasoning that since they had been steeped in idolatry since childhood, surely God would not expect them to break off their associations completely. Thus Paul argues that all temptations are governed by God and we can never be “checkmated”; a way of escape is always provided. Human experience has shown that man **will** occasionally succumb to temptation though he does not **have to** in any given situation. We are not overpowered by sin; we merely give in to it out of weakness.

2. See Proverbs 16:18 in comparison with 1 Cor 10:12. How does pride blind us?

3. All temptations are \_\_\_\_\_ to man. How does this knowledge help us?

**Day 3: Flee from Idolatry (1 Cor 10:14-22)**

There are some ungodly associations in this world that cannot be avoided (1 Cor 5:10), but there are other things from which Christians must **flee**: fornication (6:18) and now idolatry (10:14). Paul argues for separation from idolatrous feasts by two comparisons: **if** the Israelites who ate sacrifices became partakers of the altar; i.e., they had fellowship with the One who had received the offering (10:18), and **if** Christians are in communion with the blood and body of Christ as well as each other when they eat of His memorial supper, **then** the Corinthians are fellowshiping demons when they eat knowingly and willingly of those things sacrificed to demons. The Corinthians could not merely cross their fingers in mental reservation and pretend the association didn’t exist.

4. Describe the unity which exists when Christians partake of one bread (1 Cor 10:17).
5. What were the Corinthians doing by participating in these activities (1 Cor 10:22)?

### **Day 4: All Things Do Not Edify (1 Cor 10:23-29)**

Paul draws a distinction, however, between heartily joining in an idolatrous feast and unwittingly buying meat in the market which had come from such a feast. It was correct to argue that one living in Corinth could not completely disassociate himself from all incidental contact with idols. Thus Paul advises that Christians buy their meat without asking questions about its origin, for he has already said that the idol doesn't alter the nature of the meat (1 Cor 10:19). Furthermore, if invited into the home of an idolater, Paul says "*go, eat whatever is set before you, asking no question for conscience' sake.*" No law has been violated in this case because it cannot be argued that the Christian knowingly ate food devoted to an idol. However, if one's host mentions the connection with idolatry, the Christian is to refrain from eating (10:28).

Paul's distinction advises against creating "false continuums"; that is, unreasonably connecting one practice with another. In their zeal to prohibit certain kinds of acceptable activities, some tend to connect an innocent practice with something wrong and claim they are the same - or the one will inevitably lead to the other. For example, some Christians would hotly object to a refrigerator in the church building to store grape juice as tantamount to "having a kitchen." Others oppose females distributing meeting fliers as a step toward women preachers. Someone else says that playing any kind of card game is gambling. But these same people would accept that blowing a pitch pipe doesn't pave the way for a piano, that women speaking in Bible class hasn't caused a stampede for the pulpit, that cooling the water in the fountains is different from installing a soft-drink machine, or that announcing a pot-luck from the pulpit is not laying the first brick for a fellowship hall. Paul counseled the Corinthians to make proper distinctions on relevant grounds: What is *lawful* (6:12; 10:23)? What is *loving* (8:1)? What *edifies* (8:1; 10:23)? What *fosters* the gospel (9:23)? Blanket prohibitions without cause do not always *preserve*; sometimes they *petrify*.

6. Whose well-being should be of first importance to us?
7. In what two different ways does Paul apply Psalm 24:1?

### **Day 5: All to the Glory of God (1 Cor 10:30 - 11:1)**

The overriding consideration in our choices is not what makes **us** happy but what gives glory to God. This governs our actions toward "*Jews ... Greeks or to the church of God*" in an effort not to give offense to the detriment of the gospel. Little good is accomplished when, in the exercise of our "rights," the gospel is hindered and we are evil spoken of.

8. A man who invites others to imitate him must himself be imitating whom?

**Day 1: Insubordination and the Covering (1 Cor 11:2-16)**

Chapters 11-14 concern problems which plague the Corinthians when they gather for study or worship. A variety of specific issues are addressed, but again the underlying theme is the arrogant competitiveness which is fracturing the congregation. It is important to see this in the present passage. It is easy to become distracted by the question of wearing the covering in modern times and fail to see the basic problem: an insubordinate attitude which caused the Corinthian women to cast aside their coverings (which symbolized subjection). This is why Paul reiterates the order and purpose of creation and its resulting authority structure (11:3, 7-12). This occasion of praying or prophesying does not appear to be the entire assembly, for women were to have no leading vocal role in such a gathering (1 Cor 14:34-35). In 11:4-5, no distinction is made between the prayers and prophecies of men and women, but in the whole assembly there is most definitely a distinction. One principle everyone can agree on: God has invested leadership authority in the male, and women who are discontent with that arrangement imperil their souls.

1. What factors make woman the glory of man?

**Day 2: Corruption of the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:17-22)**

The brief word of praise given perhaps diplomatically in 1 Cor 11:2 now gives way to "***I do not praise you ...***" (11:17, 22). The fact that he **now** mentions "*when you come together as a church*" lends weight to the above argument that the removal of the covering occurred in another setting. The wealthy Corinthians had transformed the memorial supper into a gluttonous gala which not only resulted in drunkenness but the humiliation of "*those who have nothing.*" Paul's first response emphasizes a distinction of realm: "*Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?*" There is always the tendency of fleshly-minded people to combine worldly concerns with the work or worship of the church.

2. What grows out of factions and controversies (1 Cor 11:19)?
3. What does one think of the church when he corrupts it with unlawful practices?

**Day 3: Honoring the Lord's Death (1 Cor 11:23-34)**

To further correct the Corinthians' wayward attitude toward the memorial meal, Paul turns to the solemn occasion of its institution by the Lord (11:23-26). The simplicity, significance and eternal duration of the memorial surely contrasted with the Corinthians' riotous cavorting which more nearly resembled the heathen temple worship they had abandoned (or *had* they?!). Perhaps their corruption of the Lord's supper is evidence that their social gatherings in the idols' temples had affected them more than they real-

ized. Paul next brings out the big stick: he who partakes of the memorial unworthily is “*guilty of the body and blood of the Lord*” and “*eats and drinks judgment to himself ...*” (11:27, 29). This is a serious matter. Many Corinthians are spiritually ailing or outright dead because of their inability to appreciate the true significance of Jesus’ death (11:30).

4. What is meant by “discerning the Lord’s body” (1 Cor 11:29)?
5. What do we avoid when we accept the Lord’s chastening?
6. Where should hungry people satisfy their appetite?

#### **Day 4: The Variety of Gifts (1 Cor 12:1-11)**

The Corinthians were even letting expressions of divine power among them become sources of division. They had placed relative degrees of value upon the assorted gifts available and prided themselves on exercising the most prestigious ones. Paul emphasizes that while there are a variety of gifts they are provided by the same Holy Spirit for the benefit of all. Furthermore, they did not *earn* the gifts (a contradiction of terms) but “*the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills*” (12:11).

7. What is one of the Corinthians’ problems (see 12:1; 10:1; 9:13, 24; 6:2-3, 9, 16, 19)?
8. What element of the Godhead is emphasized in this passage?

#### **Day 5: A Unified Body (1 Cor 12:12-31)**

Paul uses the physical body as an analogy to the spiritual body of Christ to emphasize the importance of unity and harmony. In 12:14-19, Paul wants the brother who has lesser talents than others to realize that the diversity of individual parts makes the whole what it is. Furthermore, “*God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased*” (12:18). What a comfort to know that, whatever my limited abilities, God has made me thus and is able to use my contribution! Paul then turns to those who judged themselves superior in 12:20-26. He wants them to realize that God works on the principle that weaker and less esteemed members of the body are to be given greater honor, as “*our unpresentable parts have greater modesty*” (12:23). The organic unity of the body creates sympathy between all the parts. A leathery elbow may not be a glorious part of the body, but one whack on the funny bone reminds us to take good care of it. Paul returns to the diversity of the body in 12:27-31 and reminds the Corinthians that, as in the physical body, all the various appointments of God in the spiritual body enable the whole to function efficiently. Arrogant pride over such differences is petty and senseless.

9. What role does the Spirit play in our being baptized into one body (1 Cor 12:13)?
10. What are the component parts of the universal church? Of what is it comprised?

**Day 1: A More Excellent Way (1 Cor 13:1-3)**

In his effort to restore balance to the exercise of spiritual gifts, yet without squelching the Corinthians' enthusiasm for them (1 Cor 12:31; 14:1), Paul inserts what is arguably the most beautiful, poetic passage he ever wrote, yea that has *ever* been penned. The contextual setting is not of marriage but of spiritual brotherhood. Paul is not waxing eloquent on some romantic ideal but rebuking the Corinthians for not behaving according to the standard of love. Love, he says, does not treat people the way they are treating each other. In 13:1-3, Paul indicates that love is a necessary component of godly character. Without it the greatest possible achievements leave our lives empty.

1. What spiritual gifts are mentioned in 1 Cor 13:1-2? What kind of works are in 13:3?

**Day 2: Love Is Kind (1 Cor 13:4)**

With the problems which Paul has already addressed and the ones to come in chapter 14, it is understandable that Paul would emphasize patience, kindness and self-disinterest. Those who thought themselves possessors of the greatest gifts were haughty, condescending and abrasive. They envied their "competitors" who had likewise been blessed by the Spirit. Paul counters this by saying that love is "long-tempered" and easily approachable, mellow and gentle. It seeks to put others at ease and craves the welfare of brethren. Preoccupation with self leads to easily hurt feelings, a sharp tongue, self-promotion and competitive jealousy.

2. How else were the Corinthians lacking long-temperedness toward each other?

**Day 3: Love Thinks No Evil (1 Cor 13:5)**

Some think that being a Christian gives them the right to say whatever they want however they want. But love "*does not behave rudely*." That is, it observes common standards of mannerly, decent behavior and speech. Thus, Christians must be careful when in stressful situations, for love "*is not provoked*." We must not let our emotions gain the upper hand and encourage unmeasured, thoughtless responses. Further, love "*thinks no evil*." Many dwell upon the wrongs they have suffered, whether real or imagined, and harbor resentment. They keep a running account of supposed slights, insults and injuries instead of approaching the offenders and seeking correction. This is self-absorbed cowardice. It fuels strife and discord and it sours one's disposition.

3. How were the Corinthians guilty of seeking their own?
4. What thoughts can help us from becoming so easily irritated with others?

## Day 4: All-Conquering Love (1 Cor 13:6-7)

Love is not a quality of weakness as some might suppose. True love, love which rejects iniquity and basks in the warm glow of truth, bears and endures all challenges to the soul, seeks the best and noblest in men and unfailingly hopes in God's promises and providence. The opposite corollary is that hatred and selfishness shrink from the light of truth, are weak and vacillating and mortgage the future for the pleasures and advantages of the moment. Love is durable, optimistic, uplifting, always searching to promote the way of God within self and others. It takes *strength* to live by such precepts.

5. How were the Corinthians rejoicing in iniquity?

6. Why do even Christians sometimes balk at truths presented to them?

## Day 5: Love: Key to Maturity (1 Cor 13:8-13)

Paul's last point on love concerns its enduring nature. The spiritual gifts over which the Corinthians fussed and fought are 1) temporary (13:8), and 2) the means to a greater end: maturing in the love that is the dominant characteristic of God (13:9-12). One can possess an infinite amount of love and zero spiritual gifts and be all God wants him to be. On the other hand, if one possesses every gift without a shred of love, he will be nothing. Spiritual gifts are not the end; the end is know God and ourselves "face to face" (13:12) through a mature understanding of Him. Spiritual gifts were but a temporary means of establishing truth which could nurture a heart unto the full bloom of faith, hope and love. The more the Corinthians matured the more they would act in love and properly prioritize the gifts they possessed. As it was, they were behaving like petulant children. Paul reminds them, "*When I became a man, I put away childish things*" (13:11). Paul had earlier rebuked their immaturity saying, "*I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal ...*" (1 Cor 3:2-3). This interpretation holds "that which is perfect" (13:10) to be the Corinthians themselves reaching a state of maturity.

The more accepted understanding of this passage identifies "that which is perfect" as the completed written revelation. The spiritual gifts would represent partial information which would eventually be compiled as the new testament. When that takes place, the "in part" gifts will then be done away. This explanation has some merit, but it also raises some significant questions about the adequacy of the gospel in its oral form. It insinuates that the Corinthians saw "*in a mirror, dimly*" because they didn't have enough information at their disposal and that their problems would have been solved by access to a completed copy of revelation. This, however, was not the case then and is not the case now. We have the whole Bible today and **still** have problems because some have not matured in love in respect to what the Scriptures teach. So it was with the Corinthians.

7. How does a child act (13:11)? What are the "childish things" put away at adulthood?



**Day 1: Tongues and Prophecy (1 Cor 14:1-5)**

Rivalry had turned the Corinthians' assemblies into chaos, and Paul will now directly address this problem with proper teaching and rules of order. Among the Corinthians, tongue-speaking was the glamorous gift which was exercised without interpretation unto the praise of the speaker: *"he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him ..."* (14:2). Paul, however, emphasizes that edification, not performance, is the purpose of public worship. He therefore places a premium upon prophecy: *"... he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification"* (14:5). Interestingly, "tongue-speaking" is still a symbol of religious flamboyance today.

1. Is anyone being edified when a tongue-speaker speaks without interpretation?
2. What grows out of inspired prophecy which all can understand?

**Day 2: Meaningful Communication (1 Cor 14:6-19)**

We must keep in mind that Biblical tongue-speaking involved someone miraculously speaking a language foreign to him. It required interpretation for the benefit of others unstudied in the language, the speaker included. But the Corinthians practiced this gift without interpretation; the speaker was merely showing off his gift. The result of this, Paul says, is that no one is edified and prayer cannot be endorsed with "Amen" because no one understood what was said. Note again Paul's main concern: *"let it be for the edification of the church"; "that I may teach others also"* (14:12, 19).

3. What did the playing of a flute and speaking in the assembly have in common?
4. Prayers and singing, whether inspired or not, should be of what quality?
5. To what degree was Paul able to speak in tongues?

**Day 3: The True Purpose of Tongues (1 Cor 14:20-25)**

*"Tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers ..."* (14:22). Tongues arrested the attention of the unbelievers on Pentecost; they were persuaded that something otherworldly was occurring. But it was the subsequent teaching that convicted them to glorify God and amend their ways. A multitude of tongue-speakers in the Corinthian assembly would persuade unbelievers that the Corinthians were crazy (14:23), much as does the frenzied pandemonium of modern day charismatics. For the third time (3:1-4; 13:9-12; 14:20) Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be mature in their understanding (the same word *teleios* is translated "mature" in 14:20 and "perfect" in 13:10).

6. How is the worship assembly described in 1 Cor 14:23?
7. How would the unbeliever in the assembly be judged by all?

#### **Day 4: Order and Decorum (1 Cor 14:26-35)**

Yet again Paul emphasizes, “*Let all things be done for edification*” (14:26). This includes not only the *content*, clear, understandable teaching, but the *context* as well: orderly speaking assignments with men taking the lead. Tongue-speakers are limited to two or three speaking one at a time with one interpreter (14:27). Prophets are likewise limited to two or three and the speaker is to give way to another who receives a revelation. Paul’s instructions concerning the women give rise to conflicting interpretations (14:34-35). Two important keys: 1) “Silent” (14:28, 30, 34) is used in reference to leadership speaking or “taking the platform,” not incidental or submissive speech (like correcting a child or asking the song number) or commanded speech (like singing or verbalizing a confession); 2) the contrast to “silent” is “submissive” (14:34). Paul in 14:35 invalidates the excuse some women were using to “take over” the assembly: barging into the proceedings under the cloak of clarification is unacceptable. Such concerns can be addressed in private and, if need be, publicly corrected later. The rule: “*it is shameful for women to speak in church.*” Like it or not, the leadership role in the family, the assembly and the oversight of the church is invested by God in males. This truth may serve as a test of women’s trust in and submission to the judgments of God.

8. What is subject to the prophets? What does this mean?
9. When does Biblical edification take place (see 14:19, 26, 31)?
10. Where is the proper sphere for a woman to question something which occurs in the assembly? What else does Paul say is properly done in the home (1 Cor 11:22, 34)?

#### **Day 5: No Exceptions (1 Cor 14:36-40)**

A common thought process leading to disobedience is the notion that one is an exception to the rule. Rationalization sets knowledge aside in favor of one’s own desires. The Corinthians evidently thought themselves special or privileged and thus justified in their aberrant behavior. This was yet another manifestation of their arrogance. Paul reminds them that the gospel didn’t originate with them; they were not the *arbiters* of divine truth but *recipients* (14:36). He then affirms that he is writing with the full force of apostolic authority (14:37). No one could deny his teaching and claim the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit would be in contradiction with Himself. We must be careful not to play “fast and loose” with God’s word, excusing ourselves when such is not warranted.

11. Paul is not writing to forbid what activity?
12. What is the governing principle of worship activities?

**Day 1: Resurrection: A Fundamental Truth (1 Cor 15:1-19)**

The last major issue addressed by Paul in the epistle is summarized in 15:12: “... *how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?*” They did not deny that Christ had been raised but they had come to question a general bodily resurrection. This was also a snag for the Thessalonians, possibly indicating the influence of local heathen philosophies upon believers in Macedonia and Achaia. Paul reviews the historical details as originally preached to the Corinthians (15:1-11) and then considers several implications of denial: 1) Christ is not risen (15:13, 16); 2) preaching is vain (15:14a); 3) faith is vain (15:14b, 17); 4) apostles false witnesses (15:15); and 5) the dead are lost (15:18). Men are often led into doctrinal error by not considering the far-reaching consequences of what they are being taught.

1. On what condition does the gospel save (1 Cor 15:2)?
2. Where does the Christian’s ultimate hope lie?

**Day 2: Resurrection: Prelude to the End (1 Cor 15:20-34)**

The resurrection of Christ was not an isolated event; one could not accept it and then reject the framework in which it occurred. Paul says that Jesus’ resurrection was the “firstfruits”; it insured that others would follow according to the promises of God. When Jesus returns “*all shall be made alive.*” Afterward, the kingdom will be delivered to God. God’s purpose will not be complete until then. On a more practical level, Paul argues self-sacrifice and godly living on the hope of resurrection: “*If ... I have fought with beasts at Ephesus, what advantage is it to me? If the dead do not rise, ‘Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die’*” (15:32).

3. What kind of death did Adam bring to all men, spiritual or physical?
4. What is the last enemy to be destroyed under Christ’s reign?
5. Had the Corinthians fallen into this error because they lacked knowledge (15:34)?

**Day 3: Resurrection: How Will It Happen? (1 Cor 15:35-49)**

“*But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?’*” (15:35). The resurrection conflicts with our logical understanding of the material world and the laws which govern it. By miraculous process the matter which originally composed our bodies will be transformed into a spiritual body. An analogous process is found in agriculture: the seed which decomposes in the ground sprouts forth as a fruit-bearing plant of quite different structure. So it is with the buried body.

6. List the differences between the sown and raised body (1 Cor 15:42-44).
7. Who was the man of dust? Who is the last Adam?

### **Day 4: The Resurrection: Ultimate Victory (1 Cor 15:50-58)**

Our present form of existence is suited to a material environment. A feature of that environment is decay: rust, rot, erosion, etc. But heaven is radically different; it is impossible to understand such a foreign dimension of existence. But Paul does say it is incorruptible. Therefore, we must be transformed to a state fitting for such a place. Such a grand transformation will not be gradual but immediate: *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye ...”* (15:52). At Jesus’ return, when all (good and bad) are raised unto their eternal destinies, *“then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: ‘Death is swallowed up in victory’”* (15:54). To attain the resurrection (Ph 3:7-11) must be our ultimate goal. All will be raised to *something*; how horrible to die only to be raised for eternal separation from God! *“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ”* (15:57).

8. How is the law the “strength of sin”?
9. What motivates our labor for the Lord to be of the highest degree?

### **Day 5: Concluding Plans and Exhortations (1 Cor 16)**

Paul brings order to the Judean collection by commanding the Galatians and now the Corinthians store up their contributions for when he comes (16:1-4). This he will do after first traveling through Macedonia (16:5-7), which represents a change of former plans. This change eventually gives rise to the charge against Paul of vacillation and cowardice (2 Cor 1:15-17, 23). Paul’s every word and move was watched by his opponents and twisted into something derogatory. Paul is concerned about Timothy’s welfare in coming among such hostile people; he pleads for equitable treatment for the young evangelist (16:10-11; comp. Ac 19:22). Greetings from the churches of Asia (16:19) and his plans to remain in Ephesus until Pentecost (16:8) indicate that Paul is in Ephesus as he writes. The *“great and effective door”* describes the fruitful field of Asia which led to his three-year stay. Paul closes the epistle with various warnings and exhortations.

10. What is to be the Corinthians’ attitude toward Timothy, the household of Stephanas and others who labor for the sake of the gospel? How might we do this today?
11. T/F Apollos always acted according to Paul’s judgment and advice.
12. What is the meaning of “church” in 1 Cor 16:19? What about 14:19, 34-35?
13. Discuss how a congregation so rife with problems, mistaken ideas and warring factions could be loved by Paul (16:24) and called “the church of God” (1:2).

**Day 1: Overview**

Paul's open door in Asia now closes as he departs the great city of Ephesus in the aftermath of the uprising against him (Ac 20:1-2). This disappointment is compounded by Paul's anxiety over the Corinthians' reaction to his first letter (2 Cor 2:4, 12-13; 7:5-7). This concern drives Paul into Macedonia in search of Titus and news from Corinth. It is from Macedonia after meeting Titus that Paul writes Second Corinthians. The epistle offers a unique glimpse into Paul's inner thoughts and emotions. He discusses the pressure of constant death threats (2 Cor 1:8-9; 4:7-10). He swells with righteous indignation against the false apostles who would lead the Corinthians astray (2 Cor 10:9-11; 11:1-4, 12-13; 12:20-21; 13:1-3, 10). Paul is no coward, but neither is he a stoic in the face of trouble. He is simply a human being doing an incredibly difficult job.

1. What characterized Paul's bold speech in 1 Corinthians (2 Cor 2:4)?
2. What is the basis of Paul's jealousy toward the Corinthians (2 Cor 11:2, 4)?

**Day 2: Paul's Concern for the Corinthians**

Paul could not anticipate the reaction of the Corinthians to his remedial epistle. Would it alienate his supporters, thus giving the anti-Pauline faction the leverage to wrest the congregation from Paul's influence? Inspiration did not provide Paul with an answer; he would have to learn their response firsthand from Titus. Paul had one thing in mind in writing 1 Corinthians: stirring their souls unto repentance and bringing their lives into harmony with the will of God. For Paul, this goal was worth the risk of estranging them. It takes courage - and love - to address a brother directly and pointedly about his sin. Cowardice often looks a lot like patience. Paul is relieved over the Corinthians' change (2 Cor 7:8-12).

3. Describe "godly sorrow." How might "sorrow of the world" produce death?
4. What did Paul want the Corinthians to "read between the lines" of his epistle (7:12)?

**Day 3: Paul's Concern for the Disciplined Brother**

The same Paul who wrote of the incestuous brother, "*I ... have already judged ... deliver such a one to Satan*" (1 Cor 5:3, 5) now says "*you ought rather to forgive and comfort him*" (2 Cor 2:7-11). This was not a personal issue but a matter of spiritual life and death. Sometimes our efforts to save people from their own folly requires bold rebuke and correction that can be interpreted as anger, dislike or inflexibility. But these responses are an inaccurate assessment of the situation. Sin is an insidious disease and is fatal if left untreated. Paul is now the penitent brother's cheerleader.

5. What can happen if a penitent brother is not comforted and reaffirmed in the faith?
6. What “device” does Paul specifically have in mind in 2 Cor 2:10-11?

## **Day 4: Walking by Faith**

Though Paul’s life is filled with tremendous stress, he is very confident in his outlook on the future and his work. Note Paul’s affirmations of strength and optimism: “*we ourselves are comforted by God*” (2 Cor 1:4); “*our consolation also abounds through Christ*” (1:5); “*thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ*” (2:14); “*our sufficiency is from God*” (3:5); “*since we have such hope, we use great boldness of speech*” (3:12); “*we do not lose heart*” (4:1, 16); “*we are always confident*” (5:6, 8); “*I am exceedingly joyful in all our tribulation*” (7:4). This outlook can be summarized by the declaration, “*For we walk by faith, not by sight*” (5:7). Paul’s unwavering trust in a living and active God leads him to see his physical body as expendable in the pursuit of spiritual maturity both within himself and those whom he serves as an apostle (2 Cor 4:16-18). He has great assurance of his participation in the resurrection to come (4:11-13; 5:1-5).

7. What happens to the inward man as the outward man gradually decays?
8. How can Paul consider his troubles “light affliction”?
9. If Paul had his “druthers,” where would he druther be (2 Cor 5:8)?

## **Day 5: Reconciliation Through Christ**

Paul styles himself and the other apostles “*ministers of the new covenant*,” “*ministers of God*” and “*ambassadors for Christ*” who have been entrusted with a “*ministry of reconciliation*” (2 Cor 3:6; 6:4; 5:20; 5:18). His main purpose in life is to prepare men for the judgment day to come: “*Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men ...*” (2 Cor 5:9-11). This moves Paul to preach about the Christ who “*died for all*” and who makes it possible for men to become “*a new creation*” (2 Cor 5:12-17). God had committed to the apostles “*the word of reconciliation*” (2 Cor 5:19); they by the revelation of heaven set the terms for sinners to be reconciled to God. Those terms are still valid today. Though two millennia removed from the earthly lives of these men, the words of the apostles still illuminate the pathway from the darkness of sin to the glorious light of divine fellowship.

10. How should live men by virtue of Christ’s sacrifice for them (2 Cor 5:15)?
11. What is the basis of reconciliation with God (2 Cor 5:19)?
12. Describe the “newness” of life when one is converted to Christ (2 Cor 5:17). What can happen to this newness over time?

**Day 1: The Collection for Jerusalem**

Paul's work in gathering alms for destitute brethren in Jerusalem is an important adjunct to his preaching. This project is mentioned in 1 Cor 16:1-4; 2 Cor 8-9 and Rom 15:22-28, 31. Paul is not merely "serving tables" but building a bridge of good will between Jewish and Gentile brethren (2 Cor 9:13), a crucial step in the maturity of the early church into "one body." Perhaps due to all the internal squabbles among them, the Corinthians' commitment to the project now lies dormant (2 Cor 8:6-7, 10-11). Titus hopes to rekindle their zest (8:16-17). Paul exhorts the Corinthians to remember the true nature of giving, assuring them that God will multiply their gifts to achieve whatever purpose He desires (2 Cor 9:6-10).

1. How does Paul stir the conscience of the Corinthians (2 Cor 8:1-5, 9; 9:1-5)?
2. How must Paul be careful by his participation in this project (2 Cor 8:18-21)?
3. What is the result of sowing sparingly? What thoughts encourage generosity?

**Day 2: Paul's Opponents in Corinth**

Paul gives a sketch of his detractors who are trying to wrestle the Corinthians from Paul's influence. They are merely "*peddling the word of God*" (2 Cor 2:17); they "*commend themselves*" by virtue of their comparisons among each other (10:12, 18); they are "*false apostles, deceitful workers*" who want to be regarded as the true apostles' equals (11:12-13). To achieve their ends they have accused Paul of many faults and weaknesses: fickleness (2 Cor 1:17-18), lack of eloquence (10:10; 11:6), hypocrisy (10:1, 9-11), insulting the Corinthians by not taking wages from them (11:7-11; 12:13), inferiority to the other apostles (11:5) and acting deceitfully (4:2; 12:16). These men were fighting a carnal battle by carnal means, something Paul refused to do (10:1-6). He will, however, reluctantly vindicate his apostolic work even while fearing that his "boasting" will be twisted by these unscrupulous men and used against him.

4. What is the ultimate aim of our spiritual warfare (2 Cor 10:5)?
5. What is true of some who seem to be "ministers of righteousness" (2 Cor 11:14-15)?

**Day 3: The Price of Apostleship**

Paul feels compelled to speak in his defense and neutralize the slanderous attack of his enemies. However his "boasting" is not as one might think - a list of churches established, powerful associates, miracles worked, converts baptized, etc. Rather, he concentrates on the suffering and hardship he has endured in his work (2 Cor 11:30). Paul was

the “genuine article”; he was divinely commissioned and did the work that had earned him respect among the early Christians. Paul did not enjoy a cushy desk job in a nice location but constantly faced the perils of a nomadic life (2 Cor 11:23-27). His commendation was earned by a multitude of material trials and disadvantages complemented by spiritual rewards (2 Cor 6:4-10). His detractors wanted the glory without the pain. Let them now stand up and state what they had suffered for the benefit of others. Note that many of the trials faced by Paul to this point are not mentioned in Luke’s history.

6. What was a daily stress to Paul (2 Cor 11:28)?

7. What weakness of the Corinthians has irritated Paul (2 Cor 11:4, 20)?

#### **Day 4: Paul’s Visions and His Thorn**

Paul caps his review of his credentials by the consummate vision granted him of heaven itself (2 Cor 12:1-6). What he saw was not for publication; he heard things “*not lawful for a man to utter*” (12:4). So great was his intimate contact with heaven that Paul received some kind of physical affliction to keep him humble (2 Cor 12:7-10). Paul is able to accept this malady with joyful resignation because his own weaknesses gave Christ’s power greater opportunity to shine. Paul’s attitude throughout this epistle is worthy of our reflection and emulation.

8. With whom did Paul’s thorn in the flesh originate?

9. How did Paul react to the thorn at first?

10. What did Paul receive from the Lord in times of weakness?

#### **Day 5: Closing Exhortations**

Paul utters the puzzling reality of many who serve the Lord: “*the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved*” (2 Cor 12:15). Nevertheless, Paul “*will very gladly spend and be spent for your souls.*” Paul will soon arrive in Corinth and he fears that he will find things in disarray (2 Cor 12:20-21). He will not, however, delay again his coming. He vows to exercise his apostolic authority in setting things in order (2 Cor 13:1-3, 10). Paul reminds the Corinthians that he is mighty in them (2 Cor 13:3); that is, his godly influence has been upon them from the start. You are, he says, “*our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men*” (2 Cor 3:2-3). They must retain their confidence in him and his teachings, for “*truly the signs of an apostle were accomplished among you ...*” (2 Cor 12:12). From divine revelation it is unclear how the Corinthians responded to Paul’s letters and visit as nothing more is directly stated of them.

11. If Paul does not find them as he wishes, what will the Corinthians find in Paul?

12. What would be proven by the Corinthians’ honest self-examination?