

# Long Story Short: 1 Corinthians



## Key Historical Background to the Letter:

- ◆ Corinth was a major Greek-Roman port city, and Paul lived there as a missionary for 1.5 yrs (Acts 18) in the early 50s A.D. Many people became followers of Jesus and when Paul left a community of Christians remained.
- ◆ Paul left and stayed in Ephesus for 3 yrs (Acts 20:31) and began to hear reports about the Corinthians: his co-worker Apollos has come there as a teacher (Acts 18:24-19:1), he also heard reports from some Corinthians about horrible divisions, moral failure, and hypocrisy among the Corinthians in the church.
- ◆ Paul wrote this letter to respond to each of those issues and help the Corinthians apply the Gospel to all areas of life. It reads like a collection of topical essays that are all united by the theme of the Gospel.

## Flow of Thought in 1 Corinthians

- 1:1-9:** Paul greets the Corinthians and affirms their faith in Christ and God's grace toward them
- 1:10-4:21:** Paul addresses the problem of division because of different Christian preachers
  - 1:10-17:** Paul describes the report he received about the problem
  - 1:18-2:16:** God's wisdom revealed by Christian teachers is different from the wisdom of Corinthian culture which causes division and pride.
  - 3:1-4:21:** The Gospel about Jesus is the foundation, and different teachers simply build on that one foundation. There is no excuse for division and pride in the church.
- 5:1-6:20:** Paul addresses the problem of sexual immorality and abuse in the church
  - 5:1-13:** Paul confronts a case of incest and immorality that is being ignored in the church
  - 6:1-11:** He condemns the division among the Corinthians and how they are taking each other to court in lawsuits
  - 6:12-20:** Our bodies are sacred and sex is a sacred gift; sexual immorality abuses and cheapens the beautiful reality of human sexuality.
- 7:1-11:1:** Paul addresses three issues the Corinthians have written to him about
  - 7:1-24:** Questions about marriage, divorce, engagement, and whether it's better for Christians to be single or get married
  - 7:25-40:** Questions about people who are engaged and about widows
  - 8:1-11:1:** Questions about eating meat sacrificed to idols
    - 8:1-13:** There is only one true God revealed in Jesus, meat sacrificed to idols is harmless. However, not all Christians believe this, so don't eat the meat around them.
    - 9:1-27:** Christians are often called to give up their freedom for the sake of others; it's part of constantly adapting and growing so that we don't get in the way of the Gospel.
    - 10:1-22:** Meat sacrificed to idols is harmless, but going to eat the meat in the temples of others gods is off limits, it opens you up to influences that are evil.
    - 10:23-11:1:** The principle is freedom for Christians, unless you will put yourself in a place of compromise or will mislead another Christian, in which case you should abstain.
- 11:2-14:40:** Paul addresses divisions in the church about the worship gathering
  - 11:2-16:** Cultural clothing styles and the protection of gender differences
  - 11:17-34:** Social snobbery and exclusion in the practice of the Lord's Supper
  - 12:1-14:40:** The practice of spiritual gifts in the worship gathering
    - 12:1-31:** The one Spirit has given all of us different gifts and abilities, all for building each other up to grown stronger in Christ
    - 13:1-13:** Love should be the highest priority when Christians gather, seeking the well-being of others above ones' self
    - 14:1-40:** Prophecy and speaking in tongues are legitimate, Spirit-empowered experiences in worship, but they should only be practiced in a way that builds others up in their faith
- 15:1-58:** Paul addresses questions about the Resurrection from the dead
  - 15:1-11:** Resurrection is at the core of the Gospel and was verified by eyewitnesses
  - 15:12-34:** Jesus' resurrection opens up the new creation for believers
  - 15:35-58:** The nature of our future resurrection bodies
- 16:1-12:** Paul's collection for the poor Jerusalem Christians and his travel plans
- 16:13-24:** Closing challenge and greetings