

JESUS IN ALL OF LIFE

Part 1 | Corinthians Study Guide



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CHRISTIAN IMMATURITY

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

The divisions within the Corinthian church were the source of many other problems. Unfortunately, it resulted in spiritual immaturity, strife and moral failure. Here, Paul addresses how different members of the body contribute to spiritual maturity and that ultimately, God brings the growth.

Big Idea: Spiritual maturity leads to godly living and unity, while spiritual immaturity leads to fleshly living and division.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- Does being “of the flesh” necessarily mean a person is not saved? Who are the people “of the flesh”?
- What are Paul’s definitions of spiritual milk and food? How does this describe the spiritual state of the Corinthian Church?
- Why is it wrong for the Corinthian Church to choose between Paul or Apollos?
- Why does Paul conclude that ultimately God is the grower of His Church? How does this fit as a solution to the Corinthian Church’s issue?

GOING DEEPER

Not Mature, But Rather Immature (Vs. 1)

Paul addresses his brothers and sisters in Christ not as *mature*, but *immature* spiritual believers. They are, in fact, believers but not acting as such.

Spiritual Milk vs. Food (Vs. 2) (*Hebrews 5:12; Hebrews 5:13; 1 Peter 2:2*)

1. What is the mark of someone who is spiritually mature aka “one who feeds on *food*?”

- One that can discern between good and evil.
- One that relies on God’s wisdom.
- One that seeks out the knowledge of God and the unity of believers. (*Ephesians 4:13 and 1 Corinthians 2*)
- One that lives out this practice of living “good” or godly consistently, aka “living out Christ likeness.” (*Ephesians 4:13*)

2. What is spiritual milk?

- The nutrition of *infants* —ones that are dependent upon the LORD.
- A desire to live in *holiness*.
- Do you need food or milk? Answer: *Yes!*
- Why? Because the milk is the basis of faith and the foundation for growth, while food brings a believer from first faith to firm faith. (*1 Peter 2:2*)

What Does ‘Being of the Flesh’ Mean? (Vs. 3)

1. Being “of the flesh” does not mean we are not saved —it means we are not acting as though we are saved.

2. What is the mark of fleshliness for the Corinthian Church?

- Jealousy
- Strife or contention —disagreeing on fundamentals within the Church.
- Division

The Why (Vs. 4–5)

- They are following the wisdom of church leaders and picking sides (Example: I follow Paul and I follow Apollos)
- Paul’s argument: Why are you choosing sides to agree with? Are they not people who *God* appointed to lead? Are they on different sides? *No!*

Maturity Require Team (Vs. 6–9): Evidence for Argument

- Paul Planted = He began the work of service for the Corinthian Church.
- Apollos Watered = He continued the work of service for the Corinthian Church.

- Who is ultimately at work? Paul or Apollos? Answer: **Neither!** God is at work as He grows His Church, but the planter and the waterer work together —more importantly, they are *hired by God*. (*1 Corinthians 3:8–9*)

Corinthians: If we (Paul and Apollos) are God’s workers, you (Corinthian Church) are God’s field and God’s building. However, you are also workers hired by God, and the work field.

SO WHAT?

Paul is pleading with the Corinthian Church to see that their childish ways of choosing sides causes division. This division does not allow for the fellowship of one another if they are on their particular side. The issue is not about having preferences, which is completely okay, but the line is drawn when preferences do not allow for fellowship with other believers who have different preferences!

- Can you identify some preferences or ideas that cause you to not want fellowship with another believer?
- How can we be spiritually mature on issues of disagreement or spiritual preferences in regard to music, preaching style, church leadership, etc.?
- Are there people at Grace Baptist Church with whom there has been jealousy, strife, or contention, which disallowed for fellowship and reconciliation?

Think of ways you can strive for unity and fellowship with other believers at Grace Baptist Church!

PERSONAL APPLICATION

This is a heavy topic, right brothers and sisters? If there is one thing we can seek God for during this season of constant disagreement with one another, it is more unity within the Church despite those things because we are all *one in Christ!*

1. Pray for the unity of Grace Baptist Church. If there are people in your life or others that have trouble fellowshiping with one another because of preferences or disagreements, let us pray for reconciliation, softening of hearts, and for God to be glorified in a unified Church.
2. Pray for God to continue growing His Church. God has called us to be workers so let us, as we strive for unity and love, extend that offer to the community around us for we know God is always at work!



PERVASIVE ARROGANCE

1 Corinthians 4:6-20

⁶I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. ⁷For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?

⁸Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! ⁹For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. ¹⁰We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute. ¹¹To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, ¹²and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; ¹³when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of the world, the refuse of all things.

¹⁴I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. ¹⁵For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. ¹⁶I urge you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. ¹⁹But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. ²⁰For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. ²¹What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness?

— 1 Corinthians 4:6-20

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Big Idea: Behind all sorts of issues and difficulties among believers is arrogance, which comes from worldly thinking. Christ-focused wisdom recognizes that all we have is given to be used to honor the Giver.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- Read through the passage slowly, noting all the ways Paul references the Corinthians' boasting and/or arrogance.
- What seems to be the basis of the Corinthians' inflated opinions of themselves?
- What is the point Paul is trying to make, by the way he contrasts himself and the other Apostles, with the Corinthians?
- How does Paul's relationship with the Corinthians give weight to his admonition in verse 16?

GOING DEEPER

In Chapter 4, Paul continues admonishing the Corinthians about their foolish boasting. In 1:30–31, he quotes Jeremiah, saying, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.” Later in 3:21, he tells the readers not to boast in men. Boasting basically means to praise, so when it is directed to anything other than the Lord or His work in the world, it is sinful.

That was the trap into which the Corinthians had fallen. In 4:7, Paul says the readers were arrogant because they had gone “beyond what is written.” In so doing, they became foolish, which led to their failing even to recognize that all they had was given to them by God. Instead, they began to see their gifts as personal achievements. The results were division, confusion, and sinfulness, which characterized the church in Corinth.

By contrast, Paul models the wisdom of Christ. While the Corinthians think they have already gained all they need and want, Paul describes his weakness and lack in terms that remind us of our Lord. So, when he urges them to imitate him (v. 16), he's really asking them to live for Christ just as he does. Because he loves them as their spiritual father, he wants much more for them than the foolish things of this world; he wants them to recognize the power of God's kingdom.

Pervasive Arrogance

SO WHAT?

In looking at the church in Corinth, we see a troubling mirror of our own tendencies. When we fail to use Christ-focused wisdom, we can, like the Corinthians, slip into arrogance, self-reliance, and foolishness, that leads to tolerance of sin and strife within the Church. Let's ask ourselves:

- Where does worldly thinking show up at Grace Baptist Church? How do you see it in your own life?
- Who are the models of Christ-focused wisdom in our church you can follow?
- How are you growing in your faith so that you can be one who wisely leads others to love the world and the things of the world less, and love Jesus and His people more?

The more we recognize all we have in Christ, by His grace, the more we can boast in Him and bring Him glory.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

- Thank God for all you have been given as a Christ-follower.
- Ask the Father to show you where you are relying on worldly wisdom.
- Pray for more wisdom to become one whose life and faith others could imitate.



LAWSUITS AMONG BELIEVERS

1 Corinthians 6:1-11

We live in a tremendously litigious society. So much thought, effort, and resource, are given to protect against liability and lawsuit, that the very thought of legal action shapes the landscape of our lives. From spilled coffee to botched medical procedures—our culture wants to be compensated. But, in 1 Corinthians 6, Paul warns believers against the very thought of dragging another believer into court. In these 11 verses, Paul outlines that Christians have a better identity, a better hope, and a better calling than whatever winning a court case could afford them.

Big Idea: To preserve unity, Christian witness, and Biblical priorities, Christians must not sue one another.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- In what ways have we seen the rise of litigation and lawsuit in our culture? How has that been a shaping force for our culture?
- How has the Church been impacted by this? How has the threat of liability affected our church? How has it affected your life?
- What is at risk when Christians sue one another? Why do you think Paul would prohibit this?

GOING DEEPER

In the opening lines, in 6:1, Paul's rhetorical question actually serves as the prohibition against Christians suing one another. "Does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints" implies the folly in this course of action. Paul identifies three enduring reasons why Christians should abstain from bringing lawsuits against one another.

1. Biblical wisdom is sufficient to bring resolution to conflict.

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:1–6.
- What shame is there in the admission that Christians cannot resolve conflict among themselves? What does this imply about the Gospel and the Scriptures? In what ways is looking outside the Church and the Bible for resolution a confirmation of an anemic understanding of it?
- Consider 1 Corinthians 2: What distinction is Paul making here between the wisdom of the world and the wisdom of God? How does this inform Paul's instruction here in Chapter 6?
- Think together: What principles could guide Christians towards resolution, regardless of the conflict?
- What alternatives might there be in the Church and the Christian community to legal action? In what ways are these alternatives better?

2. Christian witness is to be protected above personal property.

- Read 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 again.
- How is the testimony of Christ marred by Christian infighting?
- What testimony would this kind of thing present to the world about the Gospel and the Church?
- Talk this through: How should our perspective regarding personal property be shaped by the mission that Christ has entrusted to us? In what ways is our Christian culture good at that? In what ways are we failing?

3. Godly priorities cherish unity and love over individual rights

- Consider 1 Corinthians 6:7–8.
- To be defrauded sounds unjust and unfair—why is Paul presenting that as a better option than a lawsuit against a believer?

- Read 1 Corinthians 1:10–17, 1:26–30, 3:1–21, and 4:8–13
 - What is Paul saying here about division and unity in the Church?
 - How does Paul talk about the great treasure of Christ here?
 - How does Paul describe his own willingness to suffer for the benefit of others?
 - How do these ideas speak into a willingness to be defrauded, rather than sue another believer?

SO WHAT?

All too often, we want to know where the line is that God draws, so that we can find loopholes and ways around it. But here, Paul inverts that idea entirely. The abiding concern that Paul describes is guarding the testimony of Christ, the unity of the Church, and the better hope of the Gospel.

- Summarize Paul's teaching here: What is the lesson about Christians and lawsuits in these verses? What are your thoughts about what Paul says here?
- Beyond simply the issue of lawsuits, what other ways can we apply the principles Paul gives us?
- Do you trust the Church and the Christian community to bring resolution to conflict among believers? Why or why not? What does it say about us if we want to turn to the government to bring about a different end than we might find in the Church?
- What do these verses tell us about the importance of the Church's testimony to the outside world? How do we preserve that—honestly and sincerely, but also zealously?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pray that God would grant your group—and our church—an abiding unity, to rest in God's provision, and commitment to His Kingdom and Mission above all else.



GIVING AND TAKING OFFENSE

1 Corinthians 8:1-13

Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that “all of us possess knowledge.” This “knowledge” puffs up, but love builds up.² If anyone imagines that he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.³ But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.

⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.”⁵ For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

⁷However, not all possess this knowledge. But some, through former association with idols, eat food as really offered to an idol, and their conscience, being weak, is defiled.⁸ Food will not commend us to God. We are no worse off if we do not eat, and no better off if we do.⁹ But take care that this right of yours does not somehow become a stumbling block to the weak.¹⁰ For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will he not be encouraged, if his conscience is weak, to eat food offered to idols?¹¹ And so by your knowledge this weak person is destroyed, the brother for whom Christ died.¹² Thus, sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.¹³ Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

—1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Big Idea: Our Christian freedom, at times, can become a cause for stumbling for others. We must be vigilant to maintain the unity afforded to us by Christ, even if it means I refrain from my own freedom for the sake of loving my brothers and sisters in Christ.

OPENING QUESTIONS

1. What are some preferential areas* in our faith where we may not see eye to eye with other believers? (*A preferential area can be “how” one may apply certain principles found in God’s Word.)
2. When I am at odds with people in regards to these preferences, my primary tendency/focus is: (a. to understand the other person; b. to prove my position; c. walk away and not deal with the issue), and why?
3. What are some issues I believe are non-essential that people tend to have strong opinions about or divide over? (Issues where you were caught in the middle?)
4. Is it healthy for a church family to have differing opinions on non-essential issues?
5. When there are differing opinions/positions, do I seek to persuade or exercise deference graciously? What situations have I been in where I could have done better?

GOING DEEPER

1 Corinthians 8 is not a long chapter, but it is packed with truth that can help us build up the Body of Christ. Our building up of the Body of Christ is not merely through active participation in programs, but our active participation in loving one another through willing deference.

In 1 Corinthians 8, we find two major types of Christ-followers:

1. Strong by possessing knowledge
 - Having knowledge there are no idols, therefore nothing can make things “clean” or “unclean.” Therefore, they eat meat offered to idols.
2. Weak in conscience
 - While they may understand in concept; they have a difficult time overcoming their prior experiences with idols or traditions and their conscience is bothered. Therefore, they are reluctant to eat meat offered to idols and find themselves offended by those that eat such meat.

Here, the weaker brother’s conscience is defiled because he is still bothered by his former association with idols and is offended by the stronger brother who has no regard for his weak conscience.

This issue is not isolated here in 1 Corinthians, but we also see a similar situation in Romans 14 concerning food with similar categories.

1. Strong in faith
 - One who eats anything / One who sees all days alike.
2. Weak in faith
 - One who eats vegetables only / One who esteems one day better than another.

Here, both thought they were strong in their faith and both were despising and passing judgment on one another. When we seek to exercise our rightful privilege as a Christ-follower without having genuine concern for others, we fail not only in loving our brethren, but in treating them as less valuable than we are.

The instruction for both passages is the same; not causing another to stumble, but demonstrating love through willingly refraining of my freedom/rights.

1 Thessalonians 5:14 tells us we must “help the weak,” but with great exercise of patience. This means we wait on our “helping” of the weaker member of the Body by not pressing on them with knowledge, but by loving refrain and hopeful patience.

Another helpful passage to consider in application is found in Philippians 2. It is on considering others’ interests as more important than our own. This is exactly what Jesus modeled for us through His self-effacing love in coming to us as a man and dying as a suffering servant -- even though He was/is the King.

SO WHAT?

Often we, with all good intentions, seek to encourage and help those we deem as “weak” in faith by bringing more information in an effort to convince them, but fail to recognize that the convincing work is not ours, but the work of the Holy Spirit.

We can become more concerned about convincing than seeking to understand by simply listening (not listening to counter argue, but simply to understand).

At times our understanding of helping is to pull them up to where we are; rather than seeing true helpers are the ones that forsake their rights and stake him/herself next to the weak and walk together with support.

Our primary responsibility, as clearly set for us in Ephesians 4:1–6, is to maintain the unity, afforded to us by the costly price of Christ's death and resurrection, through bearing with one another in love.

In our day and age, we do not argue over food sacrificed to idols or particular days, but our disagreements are far more nuanced.

Ask yourself...

- What issues among the bretheren have resulted in division and tension in the Church today?
- Are you confident enough in your position to just listen to those that do not agree, because you deem them to be your brothers/sisters in Christ for whom Christ died?
- Are you willing to not hold onto your convictions so tightly and allow the Spirit of God to work and rework to cause Christ to be exalted in your life?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pray that:

- I would have a willing heart to love my brother/sister by forsaking my preferences gladly.
- I would have greater sensitivity to the Holy Spirit's beckoning on my own life, where I need to grow in my love for my brothers and sisters in Christ, to move beyond love of convenience to costly love of sacrifice.
- The Spirit of God would help me see how Christ sees and values me and transfer that very truth in my interactions and treatment of my brothers and sisters in Christ.



SPIRITUALLY GIFTED *1 Corinthians 12:1-6*

The Corinthian Church had an inordinate interest in spiritual gifts. Just like they had created divisions according to the party lines of Peter and Paul, they had also used spiritual gifts to make divisions in the Church. Paul wanted them to see the beauty and power in these gifts, but what he was ultimately after did not pertain to gifts at all. Paul was ultimately after their unity.

Big Idea: To preserve unity, Christians must see the beauty and power in the diversity of gifts Christ has supplied His Church.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- In what ways has God gifted you to serve His Church? What are some ways you have benefited from the giftedness of others?
- What are some of the ramifications of Christ supplying a diversity of gifts? What does this indicate about what God values among His people?
- Why is it dangerous to equate spiritual giftedness with spiritual fruit or maturity?

GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–6. Notice in the opening verses of Chapter 12, Paul begins by addressing their ignorance in spiritual matters, and even ties their ignorance back to their former ways in paganism. In the ancient pagan world, there was a god for just about every aspect of human existence, from harvesting

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crops to infertility. This pagan worldview was coupled with their Christian practice and outlook. They would proclaim, “Jesus is Lord,” but look to derive their power, strength, and energy from somewhere other than Christ.

1. Spiritual gifts are about Jesus pursuing His mission through the members of His Church.

- Read John 14:12; John 16:7
- Why was it necessary for Jesus to return to the Father? What would be fulfilled by Jesus doing this?
- When Jesus says “greater works,” He doesn’t mean in terms of dynamics of power, He means in extension of reach. The idea is that the collective effect of the Spirit is greater than if it was all bound up in Jesus. His plan is to involve each of us in His mission. How would you describe the mission of Jesus?
- Notice that the mission of God always involves people. God refuses to neglect involving us in the work. Therefore, the way God builds His Church is through the effort of other people. How has God used people in the Church to build you up and point you towards Himself?

2. Spiritual gifts are given for the common good of the Church.

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:7
- What are some ways Christians may be tempted to use their gifts selfishly?
- In what ways do people compete against one another in the Church? Why is this so harmful?
- Talk this through: According to verse 7, we see that everyone has spiritual giftedness and that no one has all of the spiritual gifts. We are not here to compete with one another, we are here to celebrate one another in Christ. What are some creative ways the Body can celebrate all that God has done to gift His Body?

3. Spiritual gifts provide rich diversity for the Church.

- Read 1 Corinthians 12:8–11
- Observations: This is one of six different lists of spiritual gifts found in the New Testament. None of the lists are the same -- there are some overlaps, but there are at least 22 different gifts noted, and no list includes all of them.

Spiritually Gifted

- What does this mean? There’s no exhaustive list. A spiritual gift is whatever the Spirit wants to do through the Church in pursuit of the mission of Jesus. Sometimes the gifts are permanent. Sometimes they are temporary. Sometimes the power of God comes upon you for a time or for a season, to do one thing; and then not again; sometimes it is a gift for life. Sometimes, in fact often, they are in rhythm with your natural abilities. Other times, more rarely, they are completely foreign to your natural gifts. One of the best ways to assess how God has gifted you is in the convergence of three things:

- Your ability
- Your affinity
- The need of the Body

- So, how do you think the Spirit has gifted you?

4. Spiritual gifts direct us toward unity and dependence.

- God teaches us to depend upon one another through the way He gifts us. There is no “I am complete in Christ and therefore don’t need the Church.” The fact is we are complete in Christ, but the way to experience the fullness of Christ is through His Body. In what ways have you discovered your need for the Body? We tend to only think of our close friends in church, but who else does God use in the Body to minister the fullness of Christ to you?

5. Spiritual gifts do not equal spiritual fruit.

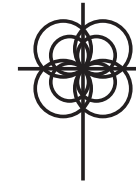
- Right after Chapter 12, and right before Chapter 14, Paul interrupts his teaching on spiritual giftedness with his great hymn on love – 1 Corinthians 13.
- Read 1 Corinthians 13 aloud.
- Why is Paul’s placement of this hymn significant?

SO WHAT?

There are many who are very effective on the outside, but on the inside, they are joyless, jealous, loveless, and discontent. That’s why Paul never confuses spiritual gifts and spiritual fruit. 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 are about spiritual gifts, 1 Corinthians 13 is about the greatest of the spiritual fruits which is love. Where does love come from? Not a spiritual gift, but from seeing the great gift of God, God’s Son torn apart for your sin. — through seeing that Jesus took all of His spiritual gifts and laid them down for us!

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pray that God would grant your group —and our church —with an abiding unity, an abiding love, and a deeper clarity of our need for one another.



LACKING LOVE

1 Corinthians 13

We read it at weddings. It's painted onto shiplap to hang over our fireplaces. It adorns a million coffee mugs. 1 Corinthians 13 is a well-known section of Scripture. But, is it well understood? And beyond mere understanding, is it well applied? Sandwiched among teachings on the necessity of unity in the Church and God's provision of different gifts to build up His Body —Paul minces no words in identifying the uselessness of tradition and service without love. If we take God at His Word here, we recognize the sobriety of what Paul describes in this section.

Big Idea: To lack love in our life and ministry eviscerates and undermines all that we would give ourselves to.

OPENING QUESTIONS

- We tend to think of Love as Truth's younger, weaker brother—why is that? Why have we idolized standing boldly for truth but demean the meekness and humility of true love?
- In church culture, we often affirm leaders, movements, and projects, that get things done, even when love is absent. Why? Why do we want to excuse those who do big things without being loving? Why do we want to excuse ourselves?
- If we genuinely believed that our lives, lived without Biblical love, were useless, what would change?

GOING DEEPER

Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul hammers home the application of the Gospel for the Christian and the Church. Here again, we cannot miss what he is telling us about how foundational love is to live in a way that reflects the Gospel and honors God.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–3

In these three verses, Paul identifies three ways that lovelessness disembowels the Christian. What are they?

- Without love, how is our speech impacted (vs. 1)? In what ways have you seen this to be true? How do we see Christ model speech that is loving *and* direct?
- Without love, how is our life trajectory compromised (vs. 2)? What does Paul mean when he says “without love, *I am* nothing”? What indictment would lovelessness make on our entire lives?
- Without love, how is our success compromised (vs. 3)? What does this tell us about the futility of action done without love?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4–8a

- What characteristics of love does Paul describe here? What groupings do you notice?
- Step back for a second and form a definition of love based on these characteristics.
- How is this kind of love counter-cultural?
- Read 1 John 4:7–21. What does John teach us about love here? Compare these two passages —how do we best see love exemplified in Christ?
- How does the love of Christ enable and sustain this kind of love in us, towards others? How does this kind of love evidence the greatness of Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:13

- What is the connection between faith, hope, and love?
- What does Paul mean in identifying love as the greatest of these?
- How does this summary verse underline the place of love in all that Paul has talked about?

SO WHAT?

Far from being a rhapsodic passage on the virtues of love—1 Corinthians 13 drives us back to remembering that the motivation and manner of our Christian life matters. We avoid being clanging cymbals and noisy gongs not just in what we do or say, but in how we love. We avoid both being and gaining nothing in our life, through how well we love.

- Summarize Paul’s teaching here: What is the lesson about the importance and reality of love for the Christian and for the Church?
- Spend a moment in silent, prayerful reflection. How does your life stack up against this chapter? In what ways are your commitments/patterns/choices confirmed? In what ways are they condemned?
- If we really believed Paul here—that without love we can say nothing of value, we are nothing of value, and we gain nothing of value—what would need to change in our lives? In your group? In our church?
- What do these verses tell us about the importance of the Church’s testimony to the outside world? How do we preserve that—honestly and sincerely, but also zealously?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pray that God would convict you of ways where your life has been loveless and ask for His mercy and wisdom to be characterized by His love, for His glory.



THEOLOGICAL DRIFT

1 Corinthians 15:1-11

In 1 Corinthians 15, Paul writes that if the Resurrection did not happen, everything else Christianity teaches is worthless. At its core, the Gospel is not primarily about a new moral code or a new life philosophy. At its core, the Gospel is about something God has done for us in making us a new creation. In Jesus' day the word "gospel" was not a religious word. It was an announcement... Jesus had risen, and those who follow Him, will one day too! This is what Paul wants us to "stand in" –the accomplishments of Christ – which causes us to be accepted by God. Other religions communicate, if you obey and act a certain way, you will be accepted. The Gospel is that God has accepted you on the basis of what Christ has done, and in response to this we obey.

Big Idea: To stand in that which is of "first importance," the resurrection power of the Gospel, which if not the central organizing principle of our faith, will cause us to drift into wrong belief.

OPENING QUESTIONS:

- What commonly replaces the Gospel as the center of the Christian faith in our culture? Where have you seen this thinking work itself out the most?
- The implications of the Resurrection are vast. What are some implications you can identify with right now?
- What are some everyday habits you can put into practice that will keep you focused on the main tenants of your faith in Christ?

GOING DEEPER

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–11. Firstly, notice in verse 3 what Paul describes as being of first importance. What Paul proceeds to describe serves as the principle platform of the Christian faith. Here, in Chapter 15, that platform is the Resurrection, for if the Resurrection did not occur — no element of theology or hope of salvation exists. Secondly, notice the way Paul describes the Resurrection. He gives us the details. Jesus' corpse was laid in a grave with no pulse and no breath where it stayed for three days. And then, He came back to life again, of His own accord. Paul brings forward three pieces of evidence for this claim.

1. *Fulfilled Prophecy* (vs. 3–4): According to the Scriptures, all that was accomplished through Christ was according to the prophetic scriptures. Over 300 Old Testament scriptures were fulfilled with great clarity, and we begin to see how every Old Testament story finds its resolution in Christ.

2. *The Empty Tomb* (vs. 4): The easiest way for Jesus' enemies to put this whole thing to rest would have been to produce a body. And, they easily could have accomplished that. Jesus' enemies controlled all of the property, the government, and all forms of communication. They certainly would have produced the body had there been one. In fact, they stationed an entire Roman garrison in front of the tomb after Jesus died to keep the disciples from stealing the body.

3. *Eyewitness Accounts* (vs. 5–8): Paul names a slew of people; many of whom he points out are still alive at the time of his writing. The early followers of Jesus did not have the motivation to lie and risk everything. They had no power, no prestige, or wealth, to stage a religious coup.

Some might say...

“The disciples were lying” — If the disciples were lying about the Resurrection, they got nothing out of it. Read 1 Peter 4:12–14 and 2 Corinthians 4:7–12. How did Peter and Paul describe the cost of following Christ?

“The disciples were mistaken” — If the disciples hallucinated and thought they saw Jesus alive, it would have had to be true for the 500 people who saw Him. Five hundred people do not hallucinate all at once.

“The disciples added these claims in later” — Paul wrote 1 Corinthians around 50 A.D. — this is one of the earliest Christian writings, and no scholar questions whether it came from Paul. A good number of the 500 witnesses were still around when Paul was writing this. It could not have been added later.

Something happened. Our message is that Christ intervened on our behalf.

SO WHAT?

Why is this of first importance? Three reasons:

1. Your sins can be forgiven. (15:3, 10)
2. Your present can be transformed. (15:10)
3. Your future is secure.

The Gospel is that Jesus absorbed the penalty for your sins by dying in your place. His resurrection means that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice as payment for your sins. The means by which we are saved are also how we mature spiritually. The resurrection of Jesus is the power of God demonstrated on our behalf, and it continues to be the power by which we follow Jesus and stand firm.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

Pray that God would keep us focused on the centrality of the death and resurrection of Jesus. Without His atoning sacrifice and resurrection, we are not justified before God, and if we are not justified before Him, there is no hope. Thank the Lord for His forgiveness and grace in your life!



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