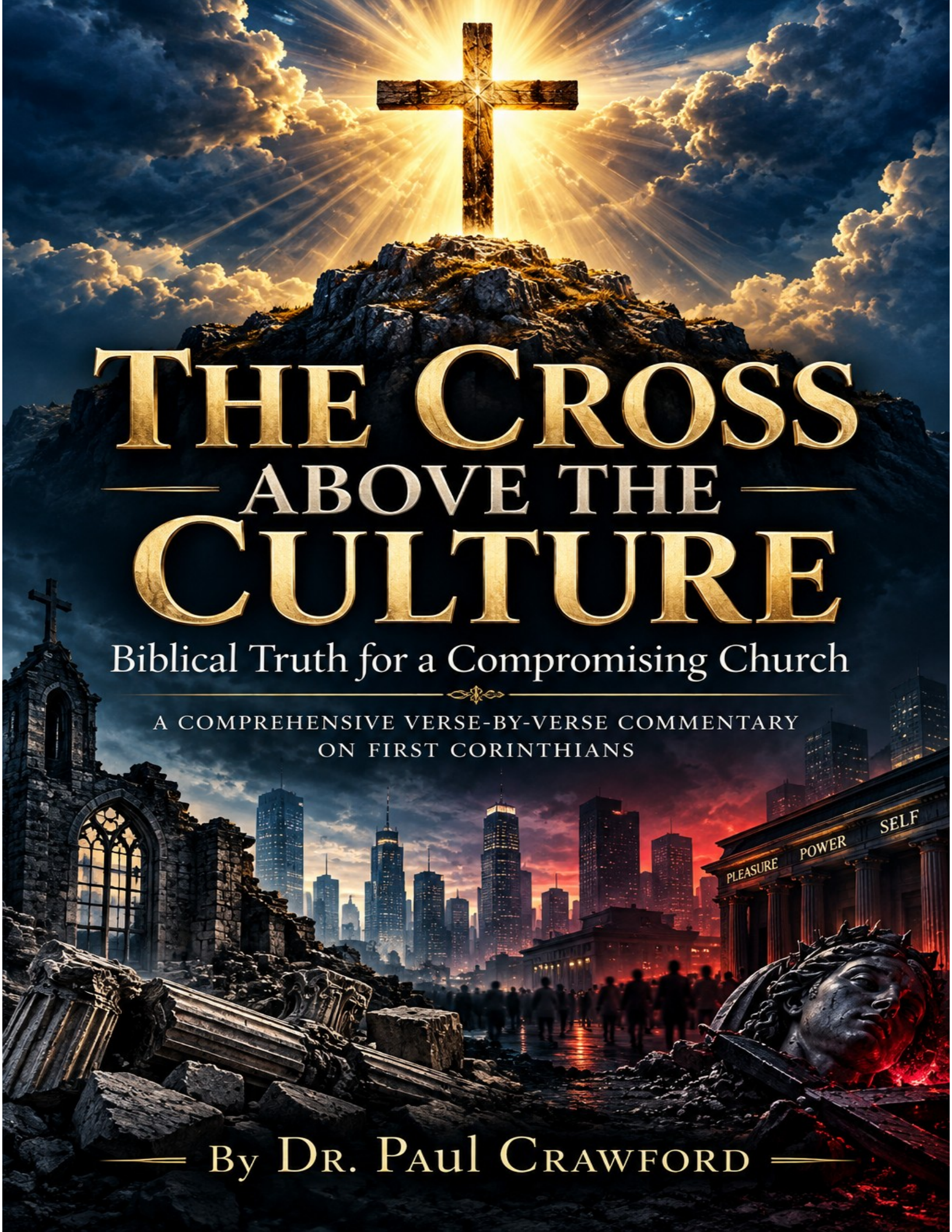

THE CROSS
ABOVE THE
CULTURE
Biblical Truth for a Compromising Church
A COMPREHENSIVE VERSE-BY-VERSE COMMENTARY
ON FIRST CORINTHIANS
PLEASURE
POWER
SELF
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PREFACE

When the Church Begins to Look Like the World

There is a dangerous moment in the life of a church when the distinction between the people of God and the world around them begins to disappear. It seldom happens overnight. Compromise rarely announces its arrival with a warning. It enters quietly, often disguised as progress, tolerance, relevance, or a sincere desire to reach a changing generation. Before long, the church that was called to transform the world begins allowing the world to transform the church.

The tragedy is not that the world has changed. The world has always been in rebellion against God. The tragedy is that many churches have forgotten they were never commanded to change with it.

The church was never established to entertain sinners, accommodate unrighteousness, or adjust eternal truth to satisfy cultural expectations. It was established by Jesus Christ, purchased with His precious blood, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and commissioned to proclaim the Gospel to a lost and dying world.

Yet throughout history, God's people have faced the persistent temptation to exchange biblical conviction for cultural acceptance.

That struggle is not new.

Nearly two thousand years ago, the Apostle Paul addressed a congregation that was facing many of the same spiritual problems confronting churches today. The city was Corinth, a prosperous, influential, and morally corrupt center of commerce, religion, philosophy, and entertainment. Its citizens celebrated worldly wisdom, personal pleasure, social prominence, and religious pluralism. It was a society in which almost anything could be tolerated except the exclusive claims of biblical truth.

Sound familiar?

The Corinthian church existed in the middle of that culture. These believers had heard the Gospel, experienced the transforming power of God's grace, and been called out of darkness into the marvelous light of Jesus Christ. Yet instead of consistently standing apart from the corrupt influences surrounding them, many began carrying the attitudes, ambitions, and practices of Corinth into the congregation.

Division replaced unity. Pride replaced humility. Immorality was tolerated rather than confronted. Christian liberty was misunderstood and abused. Spiritual gifts became occasions for competition instead of instruments of service. Worship became disorderly. Love was neglected. Even the fundamental doctrine of bodily resurrection was being questioned.

The church had received the truth, but its conduct frequently contradicted the truth it professed.

Paul did not respond by recommending that the congregation become more culturally acceptable. He did not encourage the church to soften its doctrine, redefine holiness, or remove the difficult demands of discipleship.

He directed their attention back to Jesus Christ.

He brought them back to the cross.

In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul declared:

> "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."
> — 1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV)

That single declaration expresses the burden behind this commentary.

The church will never rise above the corruption of its culture until it returns to the centrality of the cross.

Why I Wrote This Commentary

I have spent many years studying, teaching, preaching, and writing about the Word of God. Throughout those years, one conviction has grown increasingly stronger in my heart: the greatest need of the modern church is not another program, another marketing strategy, another entertainment platform, or another attempt to imitate the world. The greatest need of the church is a renewed commitment to the authority, sufficiency, and faithful exposition of Scripture.

We are living in an age when biblical truth is frequently treated as negotiable.

Doctrines that previous generations of Christians regarded as foundational are increasingly questioned. Moral boundaries clearly established in Scripture are often reinterpreted to accommodate prevailing cultural attitudes. The distinction between genuine spiritual maturity and emotional religious excitement has become blurred. In some congregations, numerical growth is celebrated while doctrinal faithfulness receives little attention.

There is a growing temptation to measure the success of a church by the size of its attendance, the beauty of its facilities, the quality of its entertainment, or the popularity of its leadership.

But God has never measured the faithfulness of His church by the standards of worldly success.

A congregation may possess impressive buildings, substantial financial resources, talented musicians, gifted communicators, and a powerful public reputation while remaining spiritually immature.

The Corinthian church is a sobering reminder of that reality.

Paul acknowledged that the believers at Corinth had been enriched in spiritual gifts and knowledge. Yet he also confronted their divisions, arrogance, immorality, selfishness, and doctrinal confusion.

They were gifted, but they were not consistently godly.

They were knowledgeable, but they were not always spiritually mature.

They possessed remarkable spiritual privileges, yet their conduct often failed to reflect their calling in Christ.

The same danger exists today.

This commentary was written out of a desire to call Christians back to the Scriptures and to remind the church that biblical faithfulness matters more than cultural popularity.

It is not my purpose to attack the church of Jesus Christ. I love the church because Christ loves the church. He gave Himself for it, and He continues His sanctifying work among His people.

My concern is not with the church that struggles while sincerely seeking obedience to Christ. My concern is with the attitude that excuses disobedience, celebrates compromise, and treats the clear teachings of Scripture as obstacles to cultural acceptance.

There is a difference between a church reaching sinners with the Gospel and a church adopting the sinful practices of the world.

There is a difference between demonstrating Christian compassion and abandoning biblical conviction.

There is a difference between making the message understandable and changing the message itself.

The Gospel must be communicated to every generation, but it must never be rewritten to please any generation.

The Cross Above the Culture

The title of this book, The Cross Above the Culture, was chosen deliberately.

The cross represents far more than a religious symbol. It points to the historical sacrifice of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who gave His life as the atoning sacrifice for sinners. It declares both the seriousness of human sin and the immeasurable riches of divine grace.

At Calvary, the holiness of God was not compromised. His justice was not ignored. His righteousness was not suspended. Through the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ, God demonstrated His righteousness while providing salvation for sinners.

The cross declares that humanity cannot save itself through philosophy, morality, religion, political achievement, or cultural advancement.

Salvation is found in Jesus Christ alone.

Paul explained this truth in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

> "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The message of the cross has never been naturally attractive to the pride of fallen humanity.

It confronts human self-sufficiency. It exposes sin. It destroys boasting. It reveals that even the greatest achievements of mankind cannot reconcile a sinner to a holy God.

The Corinthians lived in a society that admired eloquence, intellectual sophistication, social influence, and personal achievement. The message of a crucified Savior appeared foolish to those who measured truth by worldly standards.

Yet Paul refused to replace the cross with something more fashionable.

He understood that a powerless message cannot produce spiritual life, regardless of how enthusiastically the world receives it.

The cross must remain above the culture because God's truth is not subject to the approval of human society.

Culture changes.

Political systems change.

Social values change.

Popular opinions change.

Even the moral expectations of entire civilizations change.

But the character of God does not change, and His revealed truth is not made obsolete by the passing of time.

A church that measures truth by public opinion will eventually surrender whatever doctrines the culture finds offensive.

But a church grounded in Scripture possesses an unchanging foundation.

This does not mean that Christians should withdraw from society, despise unbelievers, or abandon their responsibility to love their neighbors. On the contrary, the Gospel sends believers into the world as witnesses of Christ's saving grace.

The church must engage the culture without becoming captive to it.

We must love sinners without celebrating sin.

We must proclaim grace without denying repentance.

We must defend truth without abandoning charity.

We must exercise Christian liberty without surrendering holiness.

And above all, we must remember that our ultimate allegiance belongs to Jesus Christ.

Why First Corinthians Matters Today

Of all the New Testament letters addressing problems within local congregations, First Corinthians provides one of the most comprehensive examinations of the relationship between Christian doctrine and Christian conduct.

Its sixteen chapters reveal that sound doctrine is not merely an intellectual exercise. Biblical truth must shape the way believers worship, speak, think, serve, love, and live.

Paul addresses questions that remain remarkably relevant.

What happens when personality conflicts divide a congregation?

How should the church respond when open immorality is tolerated among its members?

What is the proper relationship between Christian freedom and personal responsibility?

How should believers approach marriage, divorce, and singleness?

What principles should govern public worship?

What is the purpose of spiritual gifts?

Why is Christian love superior to religious performance?

What does Scripture teach about the bodily resurrection of believers?

How should Christians live in anticipation of eternity?

These are not merely ancient questions belonging to a distant congregation.

They are questions that confront churches, pastors, families, and individual believers today.

The theological issues addressed in First Corinthians are permanent because they arise from realities that have not changed: the holiness of God, the sinfulness of humanity, the authority of Scripture, the necessity of redemption, and the calling of believers to live in obedience to Christ.

The circumstances may differ, but the spiritual principles remain.

Modern Corinth may possess different buildings, technologies, philosophies, and forms of entertainment, but the underlying temptations are painfully familiar.

Pride is still pride.

Immorality is still immorality.

Division is still division.

Idolatry is still idolatry.

And the Gospel is still the Gospel.

The message of First Corinthians is therefore not confined to the first century. It is part of the inspired Word of God, given for the instruction, correction, and spiritual growth of His people in every generation.

The Importance of Verse-by-Verse Bible Study

One of the greatest dangers in biblical teaching is the temptation to approach Scripture with predetermined conclusions and then select isolated verses to support them.

Such an approach can easily distort the intended meaning of God's Word.

For that reason, this commentary follows a comprehensive verse-by-verse method of exposition.

My objective is to examine the biblical text carefully, respecting its historical setting, grammatical structure, literary context, theological significance, and relationship to the rest of Scripture.

Each passage will be considered in light of what the Apostle Paul intended to communicate to his original readers and how those inspired instructions apply to believers today.

Where appropriate, attention will be given to important Greek words, historical customs, first-century cultural practices, and relevant passages elsewhere in the Bible.

Particular care will be taken to distinguish between what the biblical text explicitly states, what may reasonably be inferred from it, and what remains a matter of theological discussion.

Some passages in First Corinthians have generated substantial disagreement among sincere Christians.

Questions concerning spiritual gifts, head coverings, marriage and divorce, church discipline, and the interpretation of certain resurrection passages require careful attention.

Where legitimate interpretive differences exist, I intend to examine the relevant scriptural evidence while presenting the interpretation I believe best reflects the meaning of the text.

The purpose of this commentary is not merely to provide information, but to encourage transformation through the truth of God's Word.

Bible study should produce more than intellectual satisfaction.

It should deepen our understanding of God, expose areas of disobedience, strengthen our faith, encourage genuine repentance, and equip us for faithful Christian service.

As James 1:22 reminds us:

> "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

A person may possess considerable biblical knowledge and still fail to obey the truths he understands.

The Corinthian believers demonstrated that spiritual knowledge without corresponding obedience can become another occasion for pride.

The ultimate objective of studying Scripture is not to become impressed with what we know, but to become increasingly conformed to the character of Jesus Christ.

A Word to Pastors and Bible Teachers

To every pastor, preacher, Sunday school teacher, and student of Scripture who opens this volume, I offer a sincere encouragement: never underestimate the power of faithfully teaching the Word of God.

There will always be pressure to make preaching more entertaining, more fashionable, more politically acceptable, or less offensive to those who reject biblical truth.

The temptation to avoid difficult passages is real.

So is the temptation to preach only what people already want to hear.

But the responsibility of a minister is not to manufacture a message that guarantees applause. It is to faithfully proclaim the message God has given.

Paul later instructed Timothy:

> "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine." — 2 Timothy 4:2 (KJV)

Preaching the whole counsel of God requires courage.

It requires humility.

It requires careful study, prayer, patience, and a willingness to address subjects that may be unpopular.

Yet biblical preaching must never become an excuse for cruelty, arrogance, or needless controversy.

Truth must be proclaimed with conviction, but it must also be communicated with the love and compassion appropriate to servants of Jesus Christ.

First Corinthians reminds us that even a church possessing significant spiritual problems remains an object of God's concern.

Paul did not abandon the Corinthians to their immaturity. He corrected them because he desired their restoration and growth.

Faithful spiritual leadership must demonstrate that same commitment.

Our responsibility is not simply to identify error, but to guide believers toward truth.

Not merely to condemn immaturity, but to encourage spiritual growth.

Not merely to expose compromise, but to proclaim the sufficiency of Jesus Christ.

The goal of biblical correction is not personal victory over others. It is faithfulness to God and the spiritual good of His people.

A Word to the Modern Church

If there is one warning I would impress upon every reader, it is this:

The church must never become so concerned with being accepted by the world that it forgets whom it represents.

We are ambassadors for Jesus Christ.

We are not authorized to negotiate away the teachings of our King.

The Gospel has been entrusted to the church, not invented by the church. Therefore, we have no authority to alter its essential message.

There will be moments when obedience to Scripture places Christians in opposition to prevailing cultural values.

There will be times when biblical truth is ridiculed, misunderstood, or rejected.

There may be seasons when churches that remain faithful to historic Christian doctrine experience declining popularity or increased criticism.

Faithfulness has never guaranteed cultural acceptance.

Jesus Himself warned His disciples that following Him would bring opposition.

Nevertheless, Christians must remember that the church does not exist to win the admiration of the world. It exists to glorify God, proclaim Jesus Christ, make disciples, and demonstrate the transforming power of the Gospel.

The question facing every congregation is not simply whether it is growing.

The deeper question is whether it is growing in obedience to Jesus Christ.

Are we teaching the Scriptures faithfully?

Are we confronting sin biblically?

Are we demonstrating genuine Christian love?

Are we raising disciples who understand sound doctrine?

Are we helping believers grow in holiness?

Are we proclaiming salvation through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ?

Are we preparing people for eternity?

These questions matter because the church will ultimately answer to Christ, not to the culture it seeks to reach.

My Prayer for This Book

As you begin this journey through First Corinthians, my prayer is that you will approach the Scriptures with a humble heart and a sincere desire to know the truth.

I do not claim that every conclusion presented in this commentary is beyond examination or that my understanding is free from human limitation.

Like every teacher of Scripture, I remain dependent upon the grace of God and accountable to the authority of His Word.

My desire is that this work will lead readers to examine the biblical text carefully, think deeply about its meaning, and submit their lives more fully to Jesus Christ.

I pray that pastors will find encouragement to preach the Word without compromise.

I pray that Bible teachers will gain a greater understanding of the theological and practical lessons contained in this remarkable letter.

I pray that church leaders will be reminded of their responsibility to shepherd God's people in truth and love.

I pray that struggling believers will discover renewed confidence in the sufficiency of God's grace.

I pray that Christians caught in patterns of compromise will recognize the seriousness of sin and the necessity of repentance.

And I pray that those who have never personally trusted Jesus Christ as Savior will come to understand the glorious message of redemption revealed through His death, burial, and resurrection.

Above all, I pray that this commentary will exalt Jesus Christ rather than the author who has written it.

The cross is not merely the starting point of the Christian life.

It stands at the center of everything we believe.

It reminds us of the depth of our sin, the greatness of God's love, the necessity of Christ's sacrifice, and the eternal hope secured through His resurrection.

Without the cross, Christianity becomes little more than religious philosophy.

Without the resurrection, our faith would be empty.

Without biblical truth, the church loses its foundation.

And without genuine love, even the most impressive expressions of religious devotion accomplish nothing of lasting spiritual value.

The Corinthians needed to understand these truths.

So do we.

A Final Thought Before We Begin

The Apostle Paul concluded his first letter to the Corinthians with an instruction that remains an appropriate challenge for every Christian generation:

> "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." — 1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (KJV)

These words unite vigilance, doctrinal faithfulness, courage, spiritual strength, and Christian love.

They remind us that standing firmly upon biblical truth does not require abandoning compassion, and demonstrating Christian love does not require surrendering conviction.

The church needs both.

We must be courageous without becoming arrogant.

We must be compassionate without becoming compromising.

We must be doctrinally sound without becoming spiritually cold.

We must engage the world without being conformed to it.

And we must continually direct our attention back to the One who purchased us with His blood.

The church does not need a new foundation.

It needs to return to the foundation already laid.

Paul wrote in 1 Corinthians 3:11:

> "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ."

That foundation remains secure.

The truth remains unchanged.

The Gospel remains powerful.

And Jesus Christ remains Lord.

As we open the pages of First Corinthians, may we have the courage to examine not only the failures of an ancient congregation, but also the spiritual condition of our own churches and hearts.

May we never be satisfied with the appearance of Christianity while neglecting its substance.

May we never trade eternal truth for temporary approval.

And may we never forget that the church's greatest message is not found in the wisdom of men, the achievements of society, or the shifting opinions of culture.

It is found in Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

The world may change its standards, but God has not changed His Word.

The culture may reject the cross, but the church must never abandon it.

And when the world demands compromise, may the people of God have the faith, courage, and love to stand upon the truth.

For the cross must always remain above the culture.

Dr. Paul Crawford Author, Bible Teacher, and Founder of Crawford Bible Commentary

Soli Deo Gloria — To God Alone Be the Glory

THE CROSS ABOVE THE CULTURE

Biblical Truth for a Compromising Church

A Comprehensive Verse-by-Verse Commentary on First Corinthians

By Dr. Paul Crawford

PROLOGUE

When the Church Begins to Look Like the World

The Dangerous Exchange of Biblical Conviction for Cultural Acceptance

There comes a moment in the history of every generation when the church must answer a question that cannot be avoided:

Will we stand upon the unchanging Word of God, or will we surrender to the changing demands of the world?

It is a question that has confronted believers for nearly two thousand years. It has been asked in times of persecution and prosperity, in seasons of revival and spiritual decline, and in societies that have both celebrated and condemned the Christian faith.

The setting changes. The circumstances change. The opposition changes.

But the question remains.

And the answer determines whether the church will faithfully represent Jesus Christ or gradually become a religious reflection of the culture surrounding it.

The greatest danger facing the church has not always come from persecution outside its walls. At times, the more destructive danger has arisen from compromise within them.

A church can survive opposition from the world. Indeed, history demonstrates that persecution has sometimes strengthened the faith of God's people. But when a congregation begins surrendering its convictions, neglecting sound doctrine, excusing immorality, and replacing the authority of Scripture with the opinions of men, it places its spiritual health in serious jeopardy.

The tragedy of compromise is that it seldom begins with an outright rejection of Jesus Christ.

It often begins with something much smaller.

A difficult passage of Scripture is avoided because it might offend someone.

A biblical command is reinterpreted because it conflicts with contemporary values.

A congregation becomes more concerned with attracting an audience than making disciples.

A pastor discovers that preaching what people want to hear produces less resistance than proclaiming what people need to hear.

Gradually, the distinction between the church and the world becomes less visible.

Eventually, a congregation may continue using the language of Christianity while increasingly adopting the philosophy, values, and priorities of the surrounding culture.

The building still stands.

The services continue.

The songs are sung.

The sermons are preached.

The religious activities remain.

But something essential has been diminished.

The church has begun looking more like the world it was called to reach than the Savior it was called to follow.

And when that happens, the answer is not found in another program, another personality, or another attempt to make Christianity acceptable to the world.

The answer is a return to Jesus Christ and the authority of His Word.

The answer is a return to the cross.

I. A CITY CALLED CORINTH

Imagine walking through the streets of Corinth during the first century.

The city is alive with activity.

Merchants negotiate prices in crowded marketplaces. Sailors arrive from distant ports carrying goods from across the Roman world. Wealthy citizens display their prosperity through impressive homes and elaborate public buildings. Philosophers debate the meaning of life, while religious ceremonies honor the many gods and goddesses worshiped throughout the empire.

Corinth is a city of opportunity.

It is also a city of temptation.

Located on the narrow isthmus connecting mainland Greece with the Peloponnese, Corinth occupies a strategically important position between eastern and western trade routes. Its harbors connect the city with the wider Mediterranean world, bringing commerce, travelers, wealth, and cultural influences from many different regions.

After its destruction by Roman forces in 146 B.C., Corinth was reestablished as a Roman colony under Julius Caesar in 44 B.C. By the time of the Apostle Paul, it had become an influential commercial and administrative center in the Roman province of Achaia.

Its economic prosperity attracted people from various backgrounds.

Romans, Greeks, Jews, freedmen, merchants, laborers, and travelers contributed to the city's diverse population.

But prosperity did not produce righteousness.

Corinth was surrounded by the religious confusion of paganism. Temples and shrines testified to the widespread worship of false gods. Public life reflected the values of Greco-Roman society, including competition for status, the pursuit of wealth, the celebration of human wisdom, and sexual standards often at odds with biblical morality.

The city possessed impressive accomplishments, yet it did not know the living God through the wisdom of its philosophers.

It offered many forms of religion, but those religions could not provide the redemption found in Jesus Christ.

In this environment, God established a church.

Not a church isolated from the difficulties of society.

Not a congregation composed entirely of the wealthy, the respectable, or the influential.

But a gathering of sinners who had heard the Gospel and experienced the transforming grace of God.

Some had come from backgrounds of idolatry.

Others had been trapped in sexual immorality.

Some had pursued wealth and personal pleasure.

Others had known poverty, slavery, and social rejection.

Yet through the preaching of Jesus Christ, they had been brought together into one spiritual body.

Paul would later remind them:

> "And such were some of you: but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God." — 1 Corinthians 6:11 (KJV)

Those words reveal one of the most beautiful truths in the entire letter.

The Corinthian believers had not always lived holy lives.

They had not earned salvation through moral achievement.

They had not rescued themselves from the corruption of their society.

They had been saved by the grace of God.

Their past had been marked by sin, but their identity was now found in Jesus Christ.

The problem was that some of the attitudes and behaviors associated with their former lives continued to influence their conduct.

They had been called out of Corinth spiritually, but Corinth had not been completely removed from their thinking and behavior.

And that struggle would threaten the peace, purity, and testimony of the church.

II. THE PREACHER WHO BROUGHT THE GOSPEL TO CORINTH

The Apostle Paul did not arrive in Corinth with the impressive reputation of a celebrated philosopher or the political authority of a Roman official.

He came as a servant of Jesus Christ.

According to Acts 18, Paul traveled to Corinth after ministering in Athens. There he encountered Aquila and Priscilla, Jewish believers who had recently come from Italy. Because they shared the same trade, Paul worked with them as a tentmaker.

He reasoned in the synagogue, seeking to persuade both Jews and Greeks concerning the truth of the Gospel.

Opposition soon developed.

Yet Paul continued proclaiming Jesus Christ.

When resistance intensified, he directed his ministry toward the Gentiles. Among those who believed was Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, along with his household. Many Corinthians also heard the Gospel, believed, and were baptized.

Then the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision:

> "Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee, and no man shall set on thee to hurt thee: for I have much people in this city." — Acts 18:9–10 (KJV)

What an extraordinary declaration.

In a city filled with idolatry, immorality, materialism, and religious confusion, God had a people whom He intended to call to Himself through the proclamation of the Gospel.

The corruption of Corinth did not place the city beyond the reach of divine grace.

Its spiritual darkness did not diminish the power of Jesus Christ.

Its philosophical sophistication did not make the preaching of the cross unnecessary.

Paul remained in Corinth for approximately eighteen months, teaching the Word of God among the people.

During that period, a congregation was established.

A church was born in the middle of a corrupt culture.

And the Lord who had called those believers out of darkness expected them to live in a manner worthy of their new calling.

But the story did not end with the founding of the congregation.

As the years passed, serious problems developed.

Reports eventually reached Paul concerning divisions, immorality, and disorder within the church. The Corinthians had also raised questions requiring apostolic instruction.

The congregation possessed genuine spiritual gifts and remarkable privileges, but it was struggling to live consistently with the Gospel it professed.

Paul therefore wrote a letter of correction, instruction, warning, and encouragement.

That letter became what we know as First Corinthians.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul's words would address far more than the immediate problems of a first-century congregation.

They would become part of the enduring Word of God, providing instruction for churches in every generation.

III. A CHURCH BLESSED WITH GIFTS BUT BURDENED WITH SIN

One of the most striking features of First Corinthians is the contrast between what the church possessed spiritually and how its members often behaved.

Paul began his letter by acknowledging the grace of God given to them through Jesus Christ.

He declared:

> "That in every thing ye are enriched by him, in all utterance, and in all knowledge." — 1 Corinthians 1:5 (KJV)

He also recognized that they were not lacking in spiritual gifts as they awaited the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Yet only a few verses later, Paul confronted the divisions that were tearing the congregation apart.

Some believers identified themselves with Paul.

Others preferred Apollos.

Still others aligned themselves with Cephas.

Their misplaced loyalties revealed that human personalities were being elevated in ways that threatened the unity of Christ's body.

Paul asked:

> "Is Christ divided? was Paul crucified for you? or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?" — 1 Corinthians 1:13 (KJV)

The questions demanded a return to the centrality of Jesus Christ.

No minister had died for their sins.

No preacher was the foundation of their salvation.

No religious leader deserved the allegiance that belonged to the crucified and risen Savior.

Yet division was only the beginning of Corinth's difficulties.

The congregation was also tolerating a serious case of sexual immorality. Rather than responding with godly sorrow and appropriate discipline, some were displaying arrogance.

Believers were bringing disputes against one another before unbelieving courts.

Questions concerning marriage, divorce, and sexual purity required careful instruction.

Some Christians were exercising their freedom without sufficient concern for the consciences of others.

Others were participating in practices connected with idolatry.

At the Lord's Supper, selfish behavior and social divisions were corrupting the very gathering intended to commemorate Christ's sacrifice.

Spiritual gifts were being exercised in ways that produced confusion rather than edification.

And perhaps most astonishing of all, some within the congregation were denying the resurrection of the dead.

Consider the contradiction.

Here was a church that professed faith in the crucified and risen Christ while struggling with division, moral compromise, selfishness, disorderly worship, and doctrinal confusion.

It had experienced the grace of God, yet it desperately needed correction.

It had received spiritual gifts, yet it needed to learn the supremacy of Christian love.

It possessed knowledge, yet it needed wisdom.

It had been called to holiness, yet it was allowing the values of Corinth to influence its spiritual life.

The church was not beyond correction.

But neither could its problems be ignored.

Paul loved these believers enough to confront them with the truth.

His letter demonstrates that genuine Christian love does not require silence in the presence of sin.

Sometimes love comforts.

Sometimes love encourages.

Sometimes love patiently instructs.

And sometimes love must rebuke.

The purpose of biblical correction is not the humiliation of God's people, but their repentance, restoration, and spiritual maturity.

Paul wanted the Corinthians to understand that belonging to Jesus Christ required more than a religious profession.

Their faith was to govern their lives.

The Gospel they believed was to shape the way they behaved.

And the Savior they worshiped was to remain supreme over every competing influence.

IV. THE MODERN CHURCH AND THE ANCIENT CORINTHIAN PROBLEM

Nearly twenty centuries separate the modern church from the congregation at Corinth.

Our world possesses technologies the Corinthians could never have imagined.

Information travels across continents in seconds. Messages reach millions of people through digital platforms. Religious services can be broadcast into homes around the world. Churches have access to educational resources, communication systems, and opportunities for ministry that previous generations did not possess.

Yet technological progress has not eliminated the sinful tendencies of the human heart.

In many ways, the spiritual problems confronting modern Christianity resemble the difficulties Paul addressed in Corinth.

Where the Corinthians struggled with loyalty to prominent teachers, some modern believers become more devoted to religious personalities than to biblical doctrine.

Where the Corinthians elevated worldly wisdom, some churches measure truth by cultural popularity or intellectual fashion.

Where the Corinthians tolerated sexual immorality, some congregations hesitate to affirm the biblical standards of holiness.

Where the Corinthians abused Christian liberty, some believers confuse freedom in Christ with freedom from obedience to Christ.

Where the Corinthians misused spiritual gifts, some contemporary religious movements place spiritual experiences above careful biblical examination.

Where the Corinthians neglected love, modern Christians can become so consumed with controversy and personal preferences that they forget the character of the Savior they represent.

And where some Corinthians questioned the resurrection, modern religious skepticism continues to challenge the supernatural foundations of the Christian faith.

Different century.

Different language.

Different customs.

But the same fallen human nature.

The same spiritual temptations.

And the same need for the transforming truth of God's Word.

This is why First Corinthians remains so relevant.

It is not simply a historical document describing the troubles of an ancient congregation.

It is inspired Scripture that confronts the church today.

Its teachings expose the dangers of pride, worldliness, immorality, spiritual selfishness, and doctrinal instability.

Its instructions remind us that the church belongs to Jesus Christ and must therefore operate according to His revealed will.

And its central message directs us repeatedly toward the crucified and risen Savior.

The church cannot correct spiritual compromise by becoming more compromising.

It cannot defeat worldly thinking by making worldly thinking its foundation.

It cannot produce holiness by minimizing sin.

It cannot create spiritual maturity through entertainment alone.

It cannot preserve biblical truth while treating Scripture as subordinate to cultural opinion.

The answer is not to retreat into bitterness or hostility toward the world.

The answer is to remain faithfully rooted in Christ while proclaiming His Gospel to the world.

Christians are called to be witnesses, not imitators.

They are called to be salt and light, not reflections of the surrounding darkness.

They are called to love their neighbors without abandoning obedience to God.

Jesus prayed concerning His disciples:

> "Sanctify them through thy truth: thy word is truth." — John 17:17 (KJV)

The church is sanctified by God's truth, not by conformity to worldly values.

When a congregation neglects that truth, it weakens the very foundation upon which its ministry must stand.

V. THE CROSS IS NOT SUBJECT TO A CULTURAL VOTE

Throughout history, humanity has attempted to determine truth by majority opinion, intellectual achievement, political power, and social acceptance.

But divine truth is not established by human consensus.

God does not require society's approval before His Word becomes authoritative.

The moral standards revealed in Scripture do not become obsolete simply because a generation finds them inconvenient.

The message of salvation does not change when the world decides it prefers another philosophy.

The cross stands above the culture because its meaning is rooted in the eternal purpose and character of God.

When Paul arrived in Corinth, he understood the temptation to rely upon human eloquence and intellectual sophistication.

Corinth existed within a broader Greek-speaking culture that highly valued persuasive speech, philosophical argument, and public reputation.

Yet Paul deliberately placed his confidence somewhere else.

He declared:

> "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power." — 1 Corinthians 2:4 (KJV)

His purpose was clear:

> "That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God." — 1 Corinthians 2:5 (KJV)

Paul was not condemning thoughtful reasoning or careful communication. His own letters demonstrate profound theological understanding and disciplined argument.

Rather, he refused to make human wisdom the source of the Gospel's authority or saving power.

The Gospel does not depend upon the cleverness of the preacher.

It does not derive its truth from the approval of philosophers.

It does not become powerful because the world considers it respectable.

Its power rests in God.

This distinction is essential for the modern church.

We should communicate biblical truth clearly.

We should study diligently.

We should answer sincere questions.

We should use appropriate methods to reach people with the Gospel.

But we must never confuse the means of communication with the message itself.

Methods may change.

Language may change.

Technology may change.

But the saving message concerning Jesus Christ must remain faithful to Scripture.

Paul summarized the Gospel in 1 Corinthians 15:3–4:

> "For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures; And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures."

This is the foundation.

Jesus Christ died for our sins.

He was buried.

He rose again the third day.

The death and resurrection of Christ are not optional elements of Christianity.

They stand at the center of the Christian message.

Remove the cross, and the message of redemption is destroyed.

Remove the resurrection, and the Christian hope collapses.

Replace biblical truth with cultural opinion, and the church loses the message it was commissioned to proclaim.

The world does not need a church that merely echoes its own ideas.

It needs a church that faithfully points to the Savior.

VI. THE DANGER OF A CROSSLESS CHRISTIANITY

One of the most troubling possibilities for any congregation is that it may retain the outward appearance of Christianity while allowing the central message of the cross to fade into the background.

A church may emphasize personal improvement without adequately addressing sin and redemption.

It may speak frequently about success while rarely speaking about repentance.

It may celebrate religious excitement without encouraging biblical discernment.

It may promise earthly prosperity while neglecting the cost of discipleship.

It may encourage people to admire Jesus without clearly explaining their need to trust Him as Savior and submit to Him as Lord.

Such a church may attract attention.

It may gather impressive crowds.

It may possess financial resources and public influence.

But popularity is not proof of faithfulness.

The Apostle Paul did not tell the Corinthians that their deepest need was a stronger social identity or a more impressive religious presentation.

He brought them back to the cross.

The cross reveals that sin is not a minor weakness to be overlooked.

It is rebellion against a holy God.

The cross reveals that salvation cannot be earned through human effort.

It must be received through the grace of God.

The cross exposes the pride that persuades sinners they can make themselves righteous.

It humbles the self-sufficient.

It confronts the rebellious.

It offers forgiveness to the repentant.

And it proclaims the saving work of Jesus Christ to everyone who believes.

This is why the message of the cross cannot be replaced with a religion built around human preferences.

Christianity is not fundamentally about making people comfortable with themselves.

It is about reconciling sinners to God through Jesus Christ and transforming their lives by His grace.

The Gospel does not merely reassure us.

It confronts us.

It exposes our need.

It announces God's provision.

And it calls us to respond in faith.

To preach the cross faithfully is to proclaim both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of divine mercy.

It is to declare that Christ died for sinners and that through Him forgiveness and eternal life are freely offered.

It is also to affirm that saving grace produces a changed relationship to sin.

As Paul would remind the Corinthians:

> "For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." — 1 Corinthians 6:20 (KJV)

Redemption establishes a new allegiance.

Those who belong to Jesus Christ are called to glorify Him with their lives.

VII. THE CHURCH MUST CHOOSE WHOM IT WILL PLEASE

Every congregation faces the temptation to place something above faithfulness to Christ.

For some, that temptation is money.

For others, it is public approval.

For others, it is institutional prestige, denominational influence, political acceptance, or the admiration of religious personalities.

None of these things can serve as the ultimate foundation of the church.

Jesus Christ alone occupies that position.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

> "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJV)

A congregation must therefore ask itself difficult questions.

Are our doctrines determined by Scripture or by public opinion?

Do our worship practices seek God's glory or merely human approval?

Are we more concerned about offending people than misrepresenting God's Word?

Do we lovingly confront sin, or do we excuse it because correction is uncomfortable?

Are we teaching believers to become spiritually mature, or merely encouraging them to remain religious consumers?

Do we evaluate ministry according to biblical faithfulness, or primarily according to attendance, financial resources, and public reputation?

These questions are not intended to encourage suspicion toward every church or to suggest that every change in ministry practice represents compromise.

The church must always distinguish between the unchanging commands of Scripture and matters of method, preference, and circumstance.

Not every tradition is a biblical requirement.

Not every new approach is a departure from truth.

And not every cultural difference is a moral issue.

But where Scripture speaks clearly, the church has a responsibility to listen and obey.

Where God has established a command, cultural pressure does not provide permission to disregard it.

Where Christ has revealed His will, personal preference must remain subordinate.

And where the Gospel establishes an essential truth, the church must proclaim it without embarrassment.

The objective is not to preserve human tradition at all costs.

It is to remain faithful to Jesus Christ.

The church does not need to manufacture unnecessary conflict with the world.

But neither may it purchase peace with the world at the expense of obedience to God.

True Christian faithfulness requires both conviction and love.

Paul would later write in the same letter:

> "Let all your things be done with charity." — 1 Corinthians 16:14 (KJV)

Love is not the enemy of truth.

Truth is not the enemy of love.

In the Christian life, both must operate together.

A church that speaks truth without love misrepresents the character of Christ.

A church that claims love while deliberately abandoning truth also misrepresents Him.

The answer is not to choose one against the other.

It is to follow Jesus Christ, who perfectly embodies grace and truth.

VIII. THE MESSAGE WE MUST HEAR AGAIN

First Corinthians is not a comfortable letter.

It challenges pride.

It exposes hypocrisy.

It confronts immorality.

It corrects selfishness.

It demands order in worship.

It places limitations upon the careless exercise of Christian freedom.

It calls believers to sacrificial love.

And it insists upon the absolute necessity of Christ's resurrection.

Yet beneath its warnings and corrections lies a message of remarkable hope.

The Corinthians were not beyond the reach of God's grace.

Their failures were serious, but Paul did not conclude that spiritual growth was impossible.

He wrote to correct them because the truth of God could still confront their errors, shape their thinking, and direct their lives.

The same hope belongs to the church today.

A congregation that has neglected sound doctrine can return to the faithful teaching of Scripture.

A church divided by selfish ambition can pursue reconciliation and unity in Christ.

Believers who have compromised with sin can repent and seek restoration.

Worship that has become disorderly can be brought under biblical instruction.

Christians who have become spiritually immature can grow through the ministry of the Word and the work of the Holy Spirit.

And a congregation that has drifted toward the values of the world can renew its commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The solution is not found in nostalgia for a supposedly perfect period of church history.

Every generation of Christians has faced spiritual dangers.

No congregation has been without weaknesses.

Even the churches established during the apostolic age required instruction, correction, and encouragement.

The goal is not to reproduce a romanticized past.

The goal is to submit ourselves to the timeless truth of Scripture.

The same Word that corrected Corinth continues to instruct the church today.

The same Savior who redeemed those believers remains mighty to save.

And the same Holy Spirit who worked among the first-century Christians continues His sanctifying work in the people of God.

The church may face unfamiliar challenges, but it does not face them without divine instruction.

God has spoken.

His Word is sufficient to teach us what we must believe and how we must live.

The question is whether we are willing to listen.

IX. BEFORE WE OPEN THE LETTER

As we prepare to examine First Corinthians verse by verse, we should do so with humility.

It is easy to read about the failures of an ancient congregation and assume that we would never have behaved as those believers did.

It is easy to condemn their pride while remaining blind to our own.

It is easy to criticize their divisions while contributing to unnecessary conflict within our churches.

It is easy to rebuke their immorality while tolerating private sins.

It is easy to question their misuse of spiritual gifts while allowing personal ambition to influence our service.

And it is easy to marvel at their doctrinal confusion while neglecting serious study of the Scriptures ourselves.

The purpose of this commentary is not simply to expose the weaknesses of Corinth.

It is to allow the inspired Word of God to examine us.

Before asking what was wrong with the Corinthian church, we must be willing to ask what God may be correcting in our own lives.

Before criticizing the compromises of others, we must examine our personal obedience.

Before demanding reform in the church, we must submit our own hearts to the authority of Christ.

The Word of God was not given merely to satisfy curiosity about ancient history.

It was given to instruct, correct, and equip the people of God.

As Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3:16–17:

> "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works."

Therefore, let us approach this letter not as detached observers, but as believers who need its instruction.

Let us examine its doctrines carefully.

Let us consider its warnings seriously.

Let us receive its encouragement gratefully.

And let us seek the grace of God to obey what we learn.

For the greatest tragedy would not be discovering how far the Corinthians had wandered.

It would be recognizing the same dangers in ourselves and refusing to repent.

X. THE CROSS STILL STANDS

The city of ancient Corinth has changed.

The Roman Empire has fallen.

The philosophers who once celebrated human wisdom have passed into history.

The political authorities who governed the ancient world are gone.

The temples dedicated to false gods no longer exercise the influence they once possessed.

Generations have risen and disappeared.

Nations have prospered and declined.

Civilizations have built monuments to their greatness, only to watch those monuments crumble beneath the weight of time.

Yet the message Paul preached remains.

Jesus Christ was crucified.

He was buried.

He rose again.

And through Him, sinners may receive forgiveness, reconciliation with God, and everlasting life.

The cross still declares the seriousness of sin.

The cross still reveals the love of God.

The cross still humbles human pride.

The cross still confronts worldly wisdom.

And the Gospel of the crucified and risen Savior remains the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes.

The church must never forget this.

We may live in a generation that celebrates moral relativism, questions biblical authority, and treats religious conviction as a private preference.

We may encounter increasing pressure to redefine Christianity according to the expectations of society.

We may be tempted to remain silent where Scripture calls us to speak, or to compromise where Christ calls us to stand.

But the truth of God does not change because the world changes.

The Gospel does not lose its power because people reject it.

And the church does not gain spiritual strength by surrendering its convictions.

Our calling is not to make the cross acceptable to every generation.

Our calling is to proclaim the cross faithfully to every generation.

There will always be those who regard its message as foolishness.

There will always be those who resent its exposure of human sin.

There will always be those who prefer a Christianity without repentance, holiness, or submission to the authority of Christ.

But there will also be sinners who hear the Gospel, believe upon Jesus Christ, and discover that the message the world despises is the very message through which God grants salvation.

That is why we must continue.

That is why we must remain faithful.

That is why the church must never surrender the truth entrusted to it.

Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 1:23–24:

> "But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness; But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God."

These words establish the foundation upon which this entire commentary rests.

The world may boast in its achievements.

Humanity may celebrate its philosophies.

Society may redefine its standards.

Religious institutions may rise and fall.

But Jesus Christ remains the only Savior of sinners.

And His cross remains the central message of the church.

We must never become so concerned with making Christianity fit the culture that we forget Christianity was given to transform lives through the power of the Gospel.

The church is not called to blend into the darkness.

It is called to bear witness to the Light.

It is not called to celebrate the bondage of sin.

It is called to proclaim freedom through Jesus Christ.

It is not called to build its foundation upon the shifting sands of public opinion.

It is called to stand upon the eternal Word of God.

And it is not called to lower the cross beneath the expectations of society.

It is called to lift high the message of Christ crucified and risen.

As we begin our study of First Corinthians, may we remember that the greatest need of the modern church is the same as the greatest need of ancient Corinth.

Not more worldly wisdom.

Not greater social prestige.

Not a more fashionable religion.

But a deeper knowledge of Jesus Christ, a stronger commitment to His Word, and a life that demonstrates the transforming power of His grace.

The cross still stands.

The Gospel is still sufficient.

The Word of God is still true.

And Jesus Christ is still Lord.

Let the culture change. Let the world debate. Let human opinions rise and fall. But let the church remain faithful to the One who redeemed it.

For when everything else has passed away, the truth of God will remain.

And the cross must always stand above the culture.

THE SCRIPTURE THAT DEFINES THIS BOOK

1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV)

> "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

THE CHALLENGE BEFORE US

Will we allow the culture to determine what we believe, or will we allow the Word of God to determine how we live?

The answer begins with a willingness to return to Scripture.

The journey begins in First Corinthians.

And the foundation of that journey is Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Dr. Paul Crawford
The Cross Above the Culture: Biblical Truth for a Compromising Church

Soli Deo Gloria — To God Alone Be the Glory

CRAWFORD BIBLE COMMENTARY

BIBLE STUDY

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 — Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 opens one of the most practical letters in the New Testament.
Paul is writing to a church he planted with his own hands.
And that church is in trouble.
Corinth was a wealthy, busy, proud city in southern Greece.
It sat on a narrow strip of land between two seas, and ships, money, and ideas flowed through it from every direction.
It was a Roman colony and the capital of the province of Achaia.
It was famous for trade, for the Isthmian Games, for its temples, and for its immorality.
Paul came to Corinth on his second missionary journey and stayed a year and a half, teaching the word of God.
A church was born.
Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free people, the rich and the poor all came to faith in Jesus Christ.
But a few years later, while Paul was in Ephesus, troubling news reached him.
The believers in Corinth were quarreling.
They were dividing into groups around their favorite leaders.
They were impressed by clever speech and human wisdom.
They were proud of their gifts.
And they were slowly bringing the values of their city into the church of God.
Paul does not begin by scolding them.
He begins by reminding them who they are in Christ and what God has already given them.
Then he goes straight to the heart of the problem:
Is Christ divided?
From there, Paul lifts their eyes to the cross.
The message of a crucified Savior looks like foolishness to the world.
But it is the power of God and the wisdom of God.
And God has deliberately chosen the weak, the lowly, and the overlooked, so that no one can boast in His presence.
The chapter moves through four movements:

- Greeting and Thanksgiving (verses 1–9).
- A Call to Unity (verses 10–17).
- Christ Crucified: God's Power and Wisdom (verses 18–25).
- God Chooses the Lowly (verses 26–31).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 1 is:
The church is united, not around human leaders or human wisdom, but around Christ crucified, who is the power and wisdom of God, so that all boasting belongs to the Lord alone.

I. CALLED BY THE WILL OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:1 — “Called to Be an Apostle”

“Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,”
Paul begins the way ancient letters began, with the name of the writer.
But he immediately tells us where his authority comes from.
He did not appoint himself.
He was **“called.”**
And he was called **“by the will of God.”**

The word **apostle** means **“one who is sent.”**
An apostle was a messenger sent with the authority of the one who sent him.
This matters because some in Corinth were questioning Paul.
Before he corrects them, he reminds them that he speaks as a man sent by Jesus Christ.
Paul also mentions **Sosthenes our brother.**
A man named Sosthenes was the ruler of the synagogue in Corinth when Paul was there, and he was beaten in front of the Roman governor.
This may be the same man, now a believer and a brother in Christ.
If so, a former leader of the opposition had become a partner in the gospel.

Cross References

Romans 1:1

> Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called by God to be an apostle and set apart to share God's good news.

1 Corinthians 9:1

> Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Aren't you yourselves the result of my work for the Lord?

Galatians 1:1

> Paul, an apostle—not sent by people or appointed by any man, but sent by Jesus Christ and by God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.

Spiritual Principle

God's call, not human approval, is the foundation of ministry.
Paul did not need the applause of Corinth to know who he was.
He knew who had sent him.

Key Truth

Every believer is called by the will of God.
Not every believer is an apostle, but every believer is sent.

II. THE CHURCH OF GOD IN CORINTH

1 Corinthians 1:2 — “Sanctified in Christ Jesus”

“To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours:”
Notice whose church this is.
It is not Paul's church.
It is not Apollos' church.
It is not the church of Corinth.
It is **“the church of God in Corinth.”**
The church belongs to God, even when it lives in a very ungodly city.
Paul calls them **“sanctified in Christ Jesus.”**
To be sanctified means to be **set apart** for God.
This is not first a description of how they were behaving.

It is a description of what God had done for them in Christ.
They were also **“called to be his holy people.”**
God's people are holy by position, and they are called to become holy in practice.
Then Paul widens the circle.
The Corinthians are joined with **“all everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
They are not the whole church.
They are one part of a worldwide family.
And Jesus is **“their Lord and ours.”**
No group owns Him.

Cross References

Romans 1:7

> I am writing to all of you in Rome whom God loves and has called to be His holy people. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Joel 2:32

> Whoever calls out to the LORD by name will be rescued.

Romans 10:13

> Everyone who calls out to the Lord will be saved.

Spiritual Principle

God calls His people holy before they act holy, so that they can grow into what He has made them.
The Corinthians had many problems.
But Paul starts with their identity, not their failures.

Application

If you belong to Christ, you are set apart for God.
Live out what God has already declared about you.

III. GRACE AND PEACE

1 Corinthians 1:3 — The Gift and the Result

“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
This was Paul's usual greeting.
But it is far more than a polite hello.
Grace is God's undeserved favor.
Peace is the wholeness and rest that comes when we are made right with God.
The order is important.
Grace always comes first.
Peace is the fruit of grace.
Notice also the source:
“From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Paul places the Father and the Son side by side as the one source of grace and peace.
This is a quiet but powerful testimony to the full deity of Jesus Christ.

Cross References

Romans 1:7
May you have grace and peace from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ.
Galatians 1:3
May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.
Ephesians 1:2
I pray that God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ will give you grace and peace.

Spiritual Principle

There is no true peace without grace.
A divided church needs peace.
But peace with one another starts with receiving grace from God.

IV. PAUL GIVES THANKS

1 Corinthians 1:4 — “I Always Thank My God for You”

“I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus.”
This is remarkable.
Paul is about to write some of the strongest correction found anywhere in his letters.
Yet he begins by thanking God for these people.
Notice what he thanks God for.
Not their maturity.
Not their behavior.
He thanks God for **“his grace given you in Christ Jesus.”**
Paul could see God's work in them even when it was mixed with a great deal of sin and immaturity.

Cross References

Philippians 1:3
Every time I think of you, I thank my God.
Romans 1:8
First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because people all over the world are talking about your faith.
Colossians 1:3
Whenever we pray for you, we always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Thankfulness prepares the heart to give correction in love.
It is hard to correct people we have stopped thanking God for.

Application

Think of a believer who frustrates you.
Before you speak to them, thank God for the grace He has given them.

V. ENRICHED IN EVERY WAY

1 Corinthians 1:5 — Speech and Knowledge

“For in him you have been enriched in every way—with all kinds of speech and with all knowledge—”
The Corinthians were not poor in spiritual gifts.
They were rich.
Paul names two gifts in particular:
Speech and knowledge.
These were the very things the Corinthians loved most.
And these were the very things they would later misuse.
Their speaking gifts would become a source of pride and confusion.
Their knowledge would make them puffed up instead of loving.
But Paul first reminds them where these riches came from:
“In him.”
Every gift they had was received from Christ.
None of it was their own achievement.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 8:7
> You are rich in everything—in faith, in speaking, in knowledge, in eager devotion, and in your love for us. Now make sure you are also rich in this gift of giving.

Colossians 1:9
> Since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We keep asking God to fill you with the knowledge of His will, with all the wisdom and understanding the Spirit gives.

1 Corinthians 12:8
> To one person the Spirit gives a message of wisdom. To another person the same Spirit gives a message of knowledge.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts are gifts, not trophies.
What God gives is meant to be used for His glory and for the good of others.

VI. THE TESTIMONY CONFIRMED

1 Corinthians 1:6 — God Backed Up the Message

“God thus confirming our testimony about Christ among you.”
The gifts in Corinth were proof of something.
They showed that the message Paul preached about Christ was true.
When Paul came to Corinth, he told them about Jesus.
They believed.
And God confirmed that message by changing their lives and giving them spiritual gifts.
The church itself was evidence that the gospel works.

Cross References

2 Timothy 1:8
So don't be ashamed to tell others about our Lord, and don't be ashamed of me, His prisoner. Instead, join me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.

Mark 16:20
The disciples went out and preached everywhere. The Lord worked with them and backed up the message with the signs that came with it.

Hebrews 2:4
God also confirmed it with signs, wonders, many kinds of miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that He handed out as He chose.

Spiritual Principle

A changed life is one of the strongest proofs that the gospel is true.

Key Truth

God does not leave His message without a witness.
He confirms His word by what He does in the people who believe it.

VII. WAITING FOR CHRIST TO BE REVEALED

1 Corinthians 1:7 — No Gift Lacking

“Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed.”
The Corinthians had everything they needed for the life of the church.
They lacked no spiritual gift.
But Paul attaches a reminder to that statement.
They were still **waiting.**
The gifts were not the finish line.
The Corinthians seemed to think they had already arrived spiritually.
Paul reminds them that the best is still ahead:
The revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ.
The gifts are tools for the waiting season.
They are not a replacement for the return of Christ.

Cross References

Romans 8:19
All of creation is waiting with eager longing for God to reveal His children.

Titus 2:13
We wait for the blessed hope—the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ.

1 Peter 1:7
These trials prove that your faith is real. Your faith is worth far more than gold, which perishes even though fire tests it. Real faith will bring praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Spiritual Principle

Believers live between the gifts of today and the glory of tomorrow.

Application

Use what God has given you.
But keep your eyes on the day Jesus returns.

VIII. KEPT FIRM TO THE END

1 Corinthians 1:8 — Blameless on That Day

“He will also keep you firm to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Here is wonderful assurance for a struggling church.
Their future did not depend on their own strength.
It depended on God.
“He will also keep you firm.”
God does not save His people and then leave them to hold on by themselves.
He holds them.
And the goal is that they will be **“blameless”** on **“the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Blameless does not mean they never sinned.
It means no charge will stand against them, because Christ has paid for their sin.

Cross References

Philippians 1:6
> I am sure of this: God, who began a good work in you, will keep working on it until the day Christ Jesus returns.

1 Thessalonians 5:23
> May the God of peace Himself make you completely holy. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Jude 1:24
> Now to the One who is able to keep you from falling and to bring you before His glorious presence without fault and with great joy—

Spiritual Principle

The God who began your salvation is the God who will finish it.
Your security rests on His faithfulness, not on your performance.

IX. GOD IS FAITHFUL

1 Corinthians 1:9 — Called into Fellowship

“God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”
This verse is the anchor for everything Paul has said so far.
“God is faithful.”
Why can the Corinthians be sure they will be kept firm to the end?

Because God is faithful.
He has called them, and He will not abandon what He started.
Notice what they were called into:
“Fellowship with his Son.”
The word **fellowship** means sharing life together.
Christians are not just forgiven.
They are brought into a living relationship with Jesus Christ.
And if every believer shares fellowship with the same Christ, then believers share fellowship with one another.
That truth prepares the way for Paul's call to unity in the very next verse.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:24
The One who calls you is faithful, and He will do it.
1 John 1:3
We tell you what we have seen and heard so that you can share life together with us. And our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ.
Deuteronomy 7:9
So know that the LORD your God is God. He is the faithful God who keeps His covenant and shows His loyal love for a thousand generations to those who love Him and obey His commands.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness is the believer's security.
People will fail us.
Churches will disappoint us.
We will disappoint ourselves.
But God is faithful.

Key Truth

Fellowship with Christ is the root.
Fellowship with His people is the fruit.

X. A CALL TO UNITY

1 Corinthians 1:10 — “That There Be No Divisions Among You”

“I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another in what you say and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought.”
Now Paul turns to the first problem in Corinth.
He makes his appeal **“in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
This is the tenth time in ten verses that Paul has mentioned the name of Christ.
He is filling their minds with Jesus before he addresses their divisions.
He calls them **“brothers and sisters.”**
He is speaking to family, not to enemies.
The word translated **“divisions”** was used for a tear in a piece of cloth.
The church in Corinth was being ripped apart.

The phrase **“perfectly united”** was used for mending nets or setting a broken bone.
Paul wants the torn places repaired.
He is not asking them to agree on every small opinion.
He is calling them to share one mind and one purpose centered on Christ.

Cross References

Philippians 2:2
> Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose.

Romans 12:16
> Live in harmony with one another. Don't be proud, but be willing to spend time with ordinary people. Don't think you are wiser than you really are.

John 17:21
> I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Spiritual Principle

The unity of the church is a witness to the world.
Jesus prayed for His people to be one so that the world would believe.
A divided church weakens that witness.

Application

Unity is not something we create from nothing.
It is something we protect, repair, and guard.

XI. A REPORT FROM CHLOE'S HOUSEHOLD

1 Corinthians 1:11 — “There Are Quarrels Among You”

“For it has been reported to me by Chloe's household that there are quarrels among you.”
Paul names his source.
He does not deal in rumors or anonymous complaints.
Chloe's household probably refers to members of her family or servants who had traveled to Ephesus.
They brought word that the church was full of **quarrels.**
The word means arguments, strife, and contention.
Paul handles this honestly and openly.
He does not pretend the problem is not there.
And he does not let it grow in silence.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 11:18
> First of all, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and I partly believe it.

Galatians 5:20

The works of the flesh include worshiping idols, witchcraft, hatred, fighting, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, arguments, and splitting into groups.

2 Corinthians 12:20

I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you the way I want you to be. I fear there may be fighting, jealousy, angry tempers, selfish ambition, gossip, slander, pride, and disorder.

Spiritual Principle

Problems in the church must be faced honestly, not hidden or whispered about.

Application

If you bring a concern, bring it openly and in love.
If you receive a concern, deal with it honestly and humbly.

XII. FOLLOWING MEN INSTEAD OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 1:12 — Paul, Apollos, Cephas, and Christ

“What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.””
Now Paul describes the divisions.
The church had broken into fan clubs.
“I follow Paul.” Some were loyal to the man who founded the church.
“I follow Apollos.” Apollos was a gifted speaker from Alexandria who taught in Corinth after Paul left. Some were drawn to his eloquence.
“I follow Cephas.” Cephas is the Aramaic name for Peter. Some may have preferred a leader connected to the original twelve and to the Jewish believers.
“I follow Christ.” This sounds the most spiritual of all.
But it may have been the proudest group, using the name of Christ to look down on everyone else.
Notice that Paul does not take the side of his own group.
He rebukes those who were using his name as much as anyone.
The leaders were not competing with one another.
The people were.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:4

When one of you says, “I follow Paul,” and another says, “I follow Apollos,” aren't you acting like people of the world?

1 Corinthians 3:22

Whether it is Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or the present or the future—all of it belongs to you.

Acts 18:24

Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, who was born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a gifted speaker and knew the Scriptures very well.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants are gifts to the church, not banners to divide it.
We can appreciate a teacher without turning him into a party leader.

Spiritual Warning

Even the name of Christ can be used as a weapon of pride.
Claiming Jesus while despising His people is not true loyalty to Him.

XIII. IS CHRIST DIVIDED?

1 Corinthians 1:13 — Three Piercing Questions

“Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
Paul answers the divisions with three questions.
Each one expects the answer **“No!”**
“Is Christ divided?”
Can the body of Christ be cut into pieces and handed out to different groups?
Of course not.
“Was Paul crucified for you?”
Paul uses his own name, not Apollos' or Peter's.
He refuses to let anyone build a following around him.
Only one person died for their sins.
“Were you baptized in the name of Paul?”
Baptism marked them as belonging to Christ.
Their identity was in Him, not in the man who preached to them.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:5
> There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.

1 Corinthians 12:13
> We were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether we are Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.

Galatians 3:27
> All of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The church belongs to the One who was crucified for it.

Key Truth

No preacher, pastor, or teacher died for you.
Jesus did.
That is why He alone deserves your loyalty.

XIV. CRISPUS AND GAIUS

1 Corinthians 1:14 — “I Thank God That I Did Not Baptize Any of You”

“I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius,”
Paul is not saying baptism is unimportant.
Jesus commanded it.
Paul is thankful that he personally baptized only a few people in Corinth, so that no one could use that as a reason to form a group around him.
Crispus was the leader of the Jewish synagogue in Corinth.
He believed in the Lord with his whole household.
Gaius was a believer who opened his home to Paul and to the whole church.
These were well-known converts.
Yet even they belonged to Christ, not to Paul.

Cross References

Acts 18:8
> Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, along with his whole household. Many of the Corinthians who heard Paul also believed and were baptized.

Romans 16:23
> Gaius, who is host to me and to the whole church here, sends you his greetings.

3 John 1:1
> From the elder, to my dear friend Gaius, whom I truly love.

Spiritual Principle

A faithful servant points people past himself to Christ.

XV. NOT BAPTIZED IN PAUL'S NAME

1 Corinthians 1:15 — Guarding the Glory of Christ

“so no one can say that you were baptized in my name.”
Here Paul explains his reason.
He did not want anyone to say, **“Paul baptized me, so I belong to Paul.”**
Baptism is always into the name of the Lord.
Jesus commanded baptism in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
The one who performs the baptism is only a servant.
The One whose name is spoken over the believer is the Lord.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:12
> One of you says, “I follow Paul.” Another says, “I follow Apollos.” Another says, “I follow Cephas.” And another says, “I follow Christ.”

Matthew 28:19
So go and make disciples of people from every nation. Baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
Acts 19:5
When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Ministry must never become about the minister.

Application

Ask yourself: Do I point people to myself, or to Jesus?

XVI. THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS

1 Corinthians 1:16 — An Honest Memory

“(Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I do not remember if I baptized anyone else.)”
This is a very human moment in Scripture.
Paul remembers another family he baptized.
Then he admits he does not remember if there were others.
This shows how little importance Paul placed on keeping count.
He was not building a list of his own followers.
Stephanas and his household were among the very first believers in the region of Achaia.
They gave themselves to serving God's people.
Stephanas was even with Paul when this letter was written.
God's Spirit inspired Paul's words, yet the letter also carries the real voice and memory of the man who wrote it.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 16:15
You know that the household of Stephanas were the first believers in Achaia, and they have given themselves to serving God's people.
Acts 16:15
After she and her household were baptized, she urged us, “If you believe I am faithful to the Lord, come and stay at my house.” And she convinced us.
Acts 16:33
At that very hour of the night, the jailer took them and washed their wounds. Then right away he and his whole family were baptized.

Spiritual Principle

God remembers every person, even when His servants do not.
Paul forgot who he had baptized.
God has never forgotten a single one of His children.

XVII. SENT TO PREACH THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 1:17 — Not with Wisdom and Eloquence

“For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”
Paul states his main assignment.
Christ sent him **“to preach the gospel.”**
Others could baptize.
Paul's special calling was to proclaim the message.
Then Paul tells them how he preached:
“Not with wisdom and eloquence.”
The Greeks admired speakers who could dazzle a crowd with polished speech and clever arguments.
Paul refused to win people that way.
Why?
“Lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.”
If people were won by Paul's speaking skill, their faith would rest on Paul.
If the message itself was dressed up to look impressive, the cross would be hidden behind the performance.
The power is in the cross, not in the presentation.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 2:1
> When I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with fancy words or impressive wisdom as I told you God's message.

2 Corinthians 10:10
> Some people say, “His letters are strong and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speaking is nothing special.”

Colossians 2:8
> Be careful that no one captures you with empty philosophy and clever lies that come from human tradition and the basic ideas of this world rather than from Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel does not need human cleverness to make it powerful.
The cross carries its own power.
Our job is to present it clearly and faithfully.

Key Truth

When the messenger becomes the center, the message loses its force.

XVIII. THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

1 Corinthians 1:18 — Foolishness or Power

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.”

This verse is the turning point of the chapter.
Paul now explains why the cross cannot be dressed up in human wisdom.
The same message produces two completely different reactions.
To some it is **“foolishness.”**
To others it is **“the power of God.”**
The difference is not in the message.
The difference is in the hearers.
Notice the two groups:
“Those who are perishing.”
“Us who are being saved.”
Both are described as being in process.
One group is on the road to ruin.
The other is on the road to full and final salvation.
And the cross is the dividing line between them.
Paul does not say the cross is **wise.**
He says it is **power.**
The gospel is not just good advice.
It is God's power that rescues, changes, and saves.

Cross References

Romans 1:16
> I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.

2 Corinthians 2:15
> To God, we are the sweet smell of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing.

1 Corinthians 2:14
> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.

Spiritual Principle

The cross divides humanity into two groups: the perishing and the saved.
There is no neutral response to the cross.

Key Truth

What the world laughs at is the very thing God uses to save.

XIX. GOD DESTROYS THE WISDOM OF THE WISE

1 Corinthians 1:19 — “For It Is Written”

“For it is written: “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate.””
Paul supports his point from the Old Testament.

He quotes Isaiah 29:14.
In Isaiah's day, the leaders of Judah thought they were very wise.
They made clever political plans and looked to Egypt for help instead of trusting the LORD.
God said He would bring their wisdom to nothing.
Paul says the same thing happens at the cross.
God has overturned human wisdom by saving the world in a way no human mind would have planned.
Notice that God is the One acting:
“I will destroy.”
“I will frustrate.”
Human wisdom does not simply fail on its own.
God sets it aside.

Cross References

Isaiah 29:14

> So once again I will do amazing things with these people, wonder after wonder. The wisdom of their wise men will disappear, and the understanding of their clever people will vanish.

Isaiah 33:18

> You will think back on the terror and ask, “Where is the official? Where is the one who collected the money? Where is the one who counted the towers?”

Jeremiah 8:9

> The wise will be put to shame. They will be shocked and trapped. They have rejected the word of the LORD, so what kind of wisdom do they really have?

Spiritual Principle

Any wisdom that rejects God's word will finally be put to shame.

XX. WHERE IS THE WISE PERSON?

1 Corinthians 1:20 — The Wisdom of the World Made Foolish

“Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?”
Paul now calls out three kinds of experts.
The wise person may refer to the learned thinker of any culture.
The teacher of the law was the Jewish scribe, the expert in Scripture and tradition.
The philosopher of this age was the Greek debater, the one who loved to argue ideas.
Paul asks:
Where are they?
Not one of them came up with the plan of salvation.
Not one of them could save himself.
Not one of them could explain how God would save the world through a crucified Messiah.
The phrase **“of this age”** is important.
The wisdom of this age belongs to a world that is passing away.

Cross References

Isaiah 19:12
Where are your wise men now? Let them tell you, if they know, what the LORD of Armies has planned against Egypt.
Isaiah 44:25
I am the One who exposes false prophets and makes fools of fortune-tellers. I overturn the wisdom of the wise and turn their knowledge into nonsense.
Romans 1:22
They claimed to be wise, but they became fools.

Spiritual Principle

The smartest people in the world cannot reason their way to salvation.

Application

Education is a good gift.
But it is a poor savior.
Do not let the wisdom of this age become the judge of God's word.

XXI. GOD WAS PLEASED TO SAVE

1 Corinthians 1:21 — Through the Foolishness of Preaching

“For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.”
This verse explains God's plan.
The world tried to find God through its own wisdom.
It failed.
And Paul says this failure was itself part of **“the wisdom of God.”**
God arranged things so that no one could climb up to Him by their own intelligence.
Instead, God was pleased to save people through a message:
“The foolishness of what was preached.”
Paul is not saying preaching is foolish.
He is saying the content of the message, a crucified Savior, looks foolish to the world.
And notice who is saved:
“Those who believe.”
Not those who figure it out.
Not those who earn it.
Those who believe.

Cross References

Matthew 11:25
At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and educated and have shown them to little children.”
Romans 1:21
Even though they knew about God, they did not honor Him as God or thank Him. Instead, their thinking became worthless, and their foolish hearts became dark.

Romans 10:14

> But how can people call on Someone they have not believed in? How can they believe in Someone they have never heard about? And how can they hear unless someone tells them?

Spiritual Principle

God saves through faith, not through intelligence.
The door of salvation is low enough for a child and too low for the proud.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God chose a way of salvation that humbles every human heart equally.

XXII. SIGNS AND WISDOM

1 Corinthians 1:22 — What the World Demands

“Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,”
Paul describes the two great groups in his world.
Jews demand signs.
Many wanted a powerful display from heaven to prove the Messiah had come.
They wanted a Messiah who would defeat their enemies and restore the kingdom.
Greeks look for wisdom.
The Greek world loved philosophy and debate.
They wanted ideas that were clever, polished, and impressive.
Both groups wanted God to meet them on their terms.
One wanted proof by power.
The other wanted proof by reason.

Cross References

Matthew 12:38

> Then some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Him, “Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.”

John 4:48

> Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will never believe.”

Acts 17:21

> All the people of Athens and the foreigners living there spent their time doing nothing but talking about or listening to the newest ideas.

Spiritual Principle

God does not bow to human demands; He calls people to bow to His way.

Application

What do you demand from God before you will trust Him?
A sign? An answer that satisfies every question?
God has already given the greatest sign and the deepest wisdom in Christ.

XXIII. CHRIST CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 1:23 — A Stumbling Block and Foolishness

“but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles,”
Here is the heart of Paul's preaching.
“Christ crucified.”
Not Christ the great teacher only.
Not Christ the miracle worker only.
Christ crucified.
To the **Jews** this was a **stumbling block.**
The Greek word is the source of our word **“scandal.”**
The Law said that anyone hung on a tree was under God's curse.
How could the Messiah die the death of a cursed criminal?
To the **Gentiles** it was **foolishness.**
Crucifixion was the most shameful death in the Roman world.
It was used for slaves, rebels, and the lowest criminals.
To worship a crucified man as God seemed ridiculous.
Yet Paul would not change the message.

Cross References

Galatians 5:11
> Brothers and sisters, if I were still preaching that people must be circumcised, why am I still being persecuted? If that were true, the offense of the cross would be gone.

Isaiah 8:14
> He will be a holy place of safety. But for both kingdoms of Israel He will be a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall. For the people of Jerusalem He will be a trap and a snare.

1 Peter 2:8
> And, “He is a stone that makes people stumble and a rock that makes them fall.” They stumble because they refuse to obey God's word, and this is what was set for them.

Spiritual Principle

The cross will always offend human pride, and faithful preaching will not remove that offense.

Key Truth

The church does not need a more acceptable message.
It needs the same message preached with greater faithfulness.

XXIV. THE POWER AND WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:24 — To Those Whom God Has Called

“but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.”
Now Paul shows the other side.

To **“those whom God has called,”** everything changes.
The same Jews who wanted signs find in Christ **the power of God.**
The same Greeks who wanted wisdom find in Christ **the wisdom of God.**
What they were searching for in the wrong places, they find in the crucified Savior.
Notice also that the called come from **both Jews and Greeks.**
The cross breaks down the walls between peoples.
What divided the world unites the church.

Cross References

Colossians 2:3
In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
1 Corinthians 1:30
It is because of God that you are in Christ Jesus. Christ has become wisdom from God for us—our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.
Romans 1:16
I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.

Spiritual Principle

Everything the human heart is looking for is found in Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The world asks for signs.
The world asks for wisdom.
God answers both with a Person—Jesus Christ crucified.

XXV. THE FOOLISHNESS OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1:25 — Wiser and Stronger

“For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.”
Paul uses holy irony.
God is never truly foolish or weak.
But even the things that look like foolishness and weakness in God's plan are far greater than the best of human wisdom and strength.
The cross looked like defeat.
Jesus hung naked, beaten, and dying.
His enemies mocked Him.
His friends ran away.
It looked like the weakest moment in history.
But at that moment, God was defeating sin, death, and the devil.
The **weakest** moment was the **strongest** victory.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 13:4
It is true that He was crucified in weakness, but He lives by God's power. We also are weak in Him, but by God's power we will live with Him in order to serve you.
Isaiah 55:8
“My thoughts are not like your thoughts, and your ways are not like My ways,” says the LORD.
2 Corinthians 12:9
But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

Spiritual Principle

God's greatest victories often look like defeat at first.

Application

Do not judge God's work by how it looks today.
The cross looked like the end.
The empty tomb proved it was the beginning.

XXVI. THINK OF WHAT YOU WERE

1 Corinthians 1:26 — Not Many Wise, Powerful, or Noble

“Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards; not many were influential; not many were of noble birth.”
Now Paul turns from the message to the people.
He tells the Corinthians to look around the room.
Who did God call?
Not many wise by human standards.
Not many influential in power and position.
Not many of noble birth from the important families.
Notice Paul says **“not many,”** not **“not any.”**
There were some people of standing in the church, like Crispus and Gaius.
But most were ordinary people.
Many were laborers.
Some were slaves.
The Corinthians were tempted to be proud.
Paul reminds them where they came from.

Cross References

James 2:5
Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?
John 7:48
Have any of the leaders or the Pharisees believed in Him?
Matthew 11:25
At that time Jesus said, “I praise You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because You have hidden these things from the wise and educated and have shown them to little children.”

Spiritual Principle

God's grace is not drawn to human status.
He does not choose people because they are impressive.
He makes people new because He is gracious.

Application

Remember what you were when God found you.
It is the best cure for spiritual pride.

XXVII. GOD CHOSE THE FOOLISH AND THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 1:27 — To Shame the Wise and the Strong

“But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong.”
Three times in verses 27 and 28 Paul repeats the words:
“God chose.”
This was not an accident.
God did not settle for weak people because He could not find strong ones.
He chose them on purpose.
Why?
To shame the wise.
To shame the strong.
When God uses the weak to do His work, no one can say human strength did it.
The Old Testament is full of this pattern.
God shrank Gideon's army so Israel could not brag.
God sent a shepherd boy with a sling against a giant.
God keeps doing it.

Cross References

James 2:5
> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Judges 7:2
> The LORD said to Gideon, “You have too many people with you for Me to hand Midian over to them. Otherwise Israel might brag against Me and say, 'We saved ourselves by our own strength.'”

1 Samuel 17:45
> David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with a sword, a spear, and a javelin. But I come against you in the name of the LORD of Armies, the God of Israel's armies, whom you have insulted.”

Spiritual Principle

God delights to work through the weak so that the glory is clearly His.

Key Truth

Your weakness does not disqualify you from God's service.
It may be the very thing He uses to show His power.

XXVIII. THE THINGS THAT ARE NOT

1 Corinthians 1:28 — The Lowly and the Despised

“God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are,”
Paul goes even further.
God chose **the lowly things.**
Those the world considers low-born and unimportant.
God chose **the despised things.**
Those the world looks down on and rejects.
God chose **the things that are not.**
Those the world treats as if they do not even exist.
And through them, God sets aside **“the things that are”**—the people and powers the world counts as important.
This is how God has always worked.
He creates something out of nothing.
He gives life to the dead.
He lifts up the humble and brings down the proud.

Cross References

1 Samuel 2:8
He lifts the poor from the dust and raises the needy from the garbage pile. He seats them with princes and gives them a place of honor.
Luke 1:52
He has brought down rulers from their thrones and has lifted up the humble.
Romans 4:17
He is the God who gives life to the dead and calls into being things that did not exist.

Spiritual Principle

God turns the world's ranking system upside down.

Application

Look around your church for the people the world overlooks.
God does not overlook them.
Neither should we.

XXIX. NO ONE MAY BOAST

1 Corinthians 1:29 — The Purpose of God's Choosing

“so that no one may boast before him.”

Here is the reason for everything Paul has said in verses 26 through 28.
God chose the weak, the lowly, and the despised for one purpose:
So that no one may boast before Him.
The Corinthians were boasting.
They boasted in their leaders.
They boasted in their gifts.
They boasted in their knowledge.
Paul says salvation leaves no room for any of it.
No one will stand before God and say, **“I earned this.”**

Cross References

Ephesians 2:9
It is not the result of anything you have done, so no one can brag about it.
Romans 3:27
So where is bragging? It is shut out. By what kind of law? A law of works? No, by the law of faith.
Jeremiah 9:23
This is what the LORD says: “Don't let wise people brag about their wisdom, or strong people brag about their strength, or rich people brag about their riches.”

Spiritual Principle

Grace and pride cannot live comfortably in the same heart.

Key Truth

Boasting is the opposite of grace.
Where grace is truly understood, boasting disappears.

XXX. CHRIST OUR WISDOM

1 Corinthians 1:30 — Righteousness, Holiness, and Redemption

“It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.”
Paul now shows where every believer's life comes from.
“It is because of him.”
Not because of you.
It is God who placed you **“in Christ Jesus.”**
And Christ has become for us **“wisdom from God.”**
The Corinthians were chasing wisdom.
Paul tells them that true wisdom is not an idea.
It is a Person.
Then Paul explains what that wisdom includes:
Righteousness.
In Christ we are declared right with God. His righteousness is counted as ours.
Holiness.
In Christ we are set apart for God and are being made like Him.
Redemption.

In Christ we are bought back and set free from slavery to sin, with full freedom still to come on the last day.
Everything we need for salvation—past, present, and future—is found in Jesus.

Cross References

Jeremiah 23:6
> In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will live in safety. This is the name He will be called: The LORD Is Our Righteousness.

2 Corinthians 5:21
> God made Christ, who never sinned, to be sin for us, so that in Him we could become the righteousness of God.

Romans 3:24
> They are made right with God freely by His grace, through the redemption that comes by Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Christ is not only the giver of salvation; He is our salvation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We do not add Christ to our wisdom.
We do not add Christ to our goodness.
Christ Himself is our wisdom, our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption.

XXXI. BOAST IN THE LORD

1 Corinthians 1:31 — “Let the One Who Boasts Boast in the Lord”

“Therefore, as it is written: “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.””
Paul ends the chapter with a summary from Jeremiah 9:24.
God does not take away boasting completely.
He redirects it.
There is one proper object of boasting:
The Lord.
Jeremiah said not to boast in wisdom, strength, or riches.
Instead, boast that you know and understand the LORD.
This is the answer to the divisions in Corinth.
If everyone boasts in the Lord, no one boasts in Paul, Apollos, or Cephas.
If everyone boasts in the Lord, no one boasts in his own gifts.
The cross removes our pride and gives us a better glory.

Cross References

Jeremiah 9:24
> But whoever brags should brag about this: that he understands and knows Me—that I am the LORD, who shows faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth. These are the things I delight in, says the LORD.

2 Corinthians 10:17
Whoever wants to brag should brag about what the Lord has done.
Galatians 6:14
But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the cross the world has been crucified to me, and I have been crucified to the world.

Spiritual Principle

The only safe place to put our boasting is in the Lord.

Key Truth

The chapter begins with grace from the Lord.
It ends with glory to the Lord.

XXXII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 1

1. Christ Unites the Church

The believers in Corinth were saying, **“I follow Paul,” “I follow Apollos,”** and **“I follow Cephas.”** Paul answered, **“Is Christ divided?”**

Principle:

Divisions and factions weaken the witness of believers; unity must be rooted in Christ, not in human leaders.

2. The Cross Is the Center

Paul refused to preach with clever words and impressive speech.
He preached **“Christ crucified.”**

Principle:

The gospel is not about eloquence or human wisdom but about the saving power of Christ crucified.

3. God Overturns Worldly Values

God chose the foolish, the weak, the lowly, and the despised.

Principle:

God chooses the lowly, the weak, and the overlooked to display His glory and confound the proud.

4. Boasting Belongs to God Alone

All wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption are found in Christ.

Principle:

Salvation leaves no room for human pride; the only right boast is in the Lord.

5. Identity Comes Before Correction

Before Paul corrected the Corinthians, he reminded them that they were sanctified, called, enriched, and kept by God.

Principle:

Believers change best when they remember who God has already made them.

6. God Is Faithful to Finish His Work

God will keep His people firm to the end.

Principle:

Our security rests on God's faithfulness, not on our own strength.

7. The Message Divides the Hearers

The cross is foolishness to those who are perishing and power to those who are being saved.

Principle:

There is no neutral ground at the cross.

XXXIII. THE CITY OF CORINTH

To understand 1 Corinthians, it helps to understand Corinth.

A City of Trade

Corinth controlled the land route between northern and southern Greece and the shortcut between two seas.
Merchants, sailors, and travelers filled its streets.

A City of Pride

Corinth had been rebuilt as a Roman colony about a century before Paul arrived.
Many people there had risen from humble beginnings and were eager for status, honor, and recognition.

A City of Speakers

Traveling teachers and public speakers were admired in Corinth.
People judged them by how well they spoke, not by whether what they said was true.

A City of Idols and Immorality

Temples to many gods stood in the city.
Corinth had such a reputation for sexual immorality that its name became a byword for loose living.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The problems in the Corinthian church were the values of the city leaking into the church.
These believers had come out of Corinth.
Now Corinth needed to come out of them.
The church must be shaped by the cross, not by the culture around it.

XXXIV. THE FOUR GROUPS IN CORINTH

Paul names four groups in verse 12.

The Paul Group

Loyal to the man who first brought them the gospel and planted the church.

The Apollos Group

Drawn to a gifted, eloquent teacher who knew the Scriptures well.

The Cephas Group

Attached to Peter, perhaps because of his connection to Jesus' original disciples and to the Jewish believers.

The Christ Group

Claiming to follow Christ alone, perhaps in a way that looked down on everyone else.

Key Truth

Paul, Apollos, and Peter were not rivals.
They were fellow workers serving the same Lord.
Later in the letter Paul says:
“I planted, Apollos watered, but God has been making it grow.” (1 Corinthians 3:6)

Spiritual Principle

We can honor God's servants without dividing God's people.

XXXV. THE WISDOM OF THE WORLD AND THE WISDOM OF GOD

1 Corinthians 1 sets two kinds of wisdom side by side.

The Wisdom of the World

- Begins with human reason.
- Judges God by human standards.
- Values eloquence, status, and power.
- Sees the cross as foolishness.
- Leads to pride and boasting.

- Is passing away with this age.

The Wisdom of God

- Begins with God's revelation.
- Is received by faith.
- Values humility, weakness, and grace.
- Sees the cross as the power of God.
- Leads to boasting in the Lord.
- Is found in a Person, Jesus Christ.

Key Truth

The world's wisdom asks, “How can I rise to God?” God's wisdom answers, “God came down to you in Christ crucified.”

XXXVI. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 1 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

1 Corinthians 1 presents Jesus as:

The Lord

He is **“our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours.”** He belongs to the whole church, and the whole church belongs to Him.

The Son of God

Believers are called into fellowship with **“his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.”**

The Source of Grace and Peace

Grace and peace come from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ together.

The Coming One

Believers eagerly wait for Him to be revealed.

The Crucified Savior

“We preach Christ crucified.”

The Power of God

In Him God's saving power is at work.

The Wisdom of God

In Him God's plan of salvation is fully revealed.

Our Righteousness, Holiness, and Redemption

Everything we need before God is found in Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The crucified Christ is not a weak point in the Christian faith; He is its power, its wisdom, and its glory.

XXXVII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul begin by saying he was “called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God”?
Some in Corinth were questioning Paul and his authority.
Paul reminds them that he did not appoint himself.
God called him and Christ sent him.
That is why his words carry authority.

Question 2

What does it mean to be “sanctified in Christ Jesus”?
To be sanctified means to be set apart for God.
Every believer is set apart the moment they are joined to Christ.
Then God works to make their daily lives match what He has declared them to be.

Question 3

Why does Paul thank God for a church with so many problems?
Paul could see God's grace at work in them.
He thanked God for what God had given them, not for what they had achieved.
Thankfulness also prepared the way for loving correction.

Question 4

What gives believers confidence that they will be blameless on the day of Christ?
God Himself will keep them firm to the end.
Paul says plainly, **“God is faithful.”**
Our confidence rests in His character, not in our strength.

Question 5

What was causing the divisions in Corinth?
The believers were lining up behind favorite leaders.
Some followed Paul, some Apollos, some Cephas, and some claimed Christ in a proud way.
Underneath it all was pride and a love for human wisdom and status.

Question 6

How do Paul's three questions in verse 13 answer the divisions?
Christ cannot be divided.
Only Christ was crucified for them.
They were baptized in Christ's name, not Paul's.
Since they all belong to the same Lord, they must not split into rival groups.

Question 7

Is Paul saying baptism does not matter?
No.
Jesus commanded baptism, and Paul did baptize some believers.
Paul is saying his main calling was to preach the gospel.
He was glad he had baptized only a few so that no one could claim to belong to him.

Question 8

Why did Paul refuse to preach with “wisdom and eloquence”?
He did not want people's faith to rest on his speaking ability.
He did not want to bury the cross under a performance.
The power of the gospel is in the message of the cross itself.

Question 9

Why was the cross a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles?
Many Jews expected a powerful, conquering Messiah, and the Law said anyone hung on a tree was cursed.
Many Gentiles saw crucifixion as the most shameful death possible.
To both, a crucified Savior made no sense.

Question 10

In what sense is the “foolishness of God” wiser than human wisdom?
God is never truly foolish.
But the cross, which looked foolish and weak, accomplished what no human wisdom or strength ever could.
Through it God defeated sin and death and saved those who believe.

Question 11

Why did God choose the weak and lowly?
So that no one could boast before Him.
When God works through the weak, it is clear that the power and the glory belong to Him.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 1 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 1 should cause believers to live:

- Secure in their identity in Christ.
- Thankful for God's grace in other believers.

- Committed to unity in the church.
- Loyal to Christ above every human leader.
- Unashamed of the message of the cross.
- Humble about their gifts and background.
- Boasting only in the Lord.

XXXVIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 1 asks several important questions.

Do I Know Who I Am in Christ?

God has called me, set me apart, and enriched me in Him.

Am I Thankful for Other Believers?

Paul thanked God even for a troubled church.
Do I thank God for the grace I see in others?

Am I Contributing to Unity or Division?

Do my words heal the torn places in the church, or tear them wider?

Have I Made a Human Leader My Banner?

I may appreciate a pastor, teacher, or writer.
But do I follow him more than I follow Christ?

Am I Ashamed of the Cross?

Do I try to make the gospel more acceptable by leaving out the cross?

Am I Impressed by the Wrong Things?

Do I judge people by their education, money, or speaking ability?

Do I Remember What I Was When God Called Me?

Grace found me when I had nothing to offer.

Where Is My Boasting?

Do I boast in my gifts, my knowledge, or my achievements?
Or do I boast in the Lord?

XXXIX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Cross Ends Every Contest”

The Corinthians were in a contest.
Whose leader was best?
Whose gift was greatest?
Whose wisdom was highest?
Whose background was most impressive?
Paul brought them all to the foot of the cross.
There, every contest ends.
At the cross, the wise and the simple are equally helpless.
At the cross, the strong and the weak are equally in need.
At the cross, the noble and the slave are equally saved by grace.
No one climbs higher than anyone else at the foot of the cross.
And no one has anything to boast about except the One who hangs on it.
This creates a powerful principle.
The cross does not just save us from sin.
It also saves us from the endless need to prove ourselves.

Principle:

When Christ is everything, we no longer need to be something.

XL. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 1 was written to a gifted church.
They had knowledge.
They had speech.
They had every spiritual gift.
But they were divided.
They were proud.
And they were measuring the things of God by the standards of their city.
Paul did not answer them with a new program.
He did not answer them with a better speaker.
He did not answer them with a stronger leader.
He answered them with the cross.
The cross that looks foolish to the world.
The cross that offends human pride.
The cross where the Son of God died in weakness.
The cross that is the power of God for everyone who believes.
1 Corinthians 1 therefore reminds us:
Never be ashamed of the message that saved you.
Never forget what you were when God called you.
Never let a human name replace the name of Christ.
Never let your gifts become your glory.

The church does not stand on the wisdom of men.
It stands on:
A crucified Savior.
A faithful God.
A free grace.
And a shared Lord.
The same message still saves:
Tell people that Christ was crucified for them.
Tell people that God's power is greater than human strength.
Tell people that God's wisdom is greater than human wisdom.
Tell people that God chooses the lowly.
Tell people that God is faithful.
And until He is revealed:
Stand together in Christ.
Preach the cross.
Walk in humility.
Boast in the Lord.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for calling us by Your grace.
Thank You that You have set us apart in Christ Jesus and made us Your holy people.
Thank You for grace and peace that come from You and from our Lord Jesus Christ.
Thank You for every gift You have given to Your church.
Thank You that You will keep us firm to the end.
Thank You that You are faithful, and that You have called us into fellowship with Your Son.
Forgive us for the times we have divided what You have made one.
Forgive us for following people more than we follow Christ.
Forgive us for being impressed by the wisdom of this world.
Forgive us for boasting in our gifts, our knowledge, and our achievements.
Heal the torn places in Your church.
Make us united in mind and thought.
Help us never to be ashamed of the cross.
Give us courage to preach Christ crucified, even when the world calls it foolishness.
When we feel weak, remind us that Your power works best in weakness.
When we feel overlooked, remind us that You chose the lowly.
When we are tempted to be proud, remind us of what we were when You called us.
Thank You that Christ has become for us wisdom from God—our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.
Keep our eyes fixed on the day our Lord Jesus Christ will be revealed.
And until that day, may we boast in nothing but You.
“Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” — 1 Corinthians 1:18

Central Truth

Christ crucified, who looks like foolishness and weakness to the world, is the power and wisdom of God, so the church must be united in Him and must boast in the Lord alone.

1 Corinthians 1 in One Sentence

Paul calls a gifted but divided church to stop following human leaders and human wisdom and to stand together on Christ crucified, the power and wisdom of God, who chose the lowly so that all boasting would belong to the Lord.

1 Corinthians Chapter 2 — The Spirit Reveals the Wisdom of God

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 2 continues the thought Paul began in Chapter 1.
In Chapter 1, Paul showed that the message of the cross looks foolish to the world but is the power and wisdom of God.
Now he explains two more things.
First, how he preached that message when he came to Corinth.
Second, how anyone can ever understand it.
Paul had come to Corinth from Athens, the most famous center of philosophy in the ancient world.
Corinth loved polished speakers and impressive arguments.
But Paul did not try to compete with them.
He came in weakness.
He came with fear and trembling.
And he made one decision:
To know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
Why?
So that their faith would rest on God's power, not on human wisdom.
Then Paul surprises his readers.
He says the gospel **is** wisdom.
But it is not the wisdom of this age.
It is God's hidden wisdom, planned before time began.
The rulers of this world did not understand it.
If they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
How then does anyone come to understand it?
Not by human intelligence.

Not by eye, ear, or imagination.
God reveals it by His Spirit.
The Spirit knows the deep things of God.
The Spirit gives believers understanding.
The Spirit teaches the words that explain spiritual truth.
And so, Paul says, believers have something the world can never produce on its own:
The mind of Christ.
The chapter moves through three movements:

- Preaching Christ Crucified, Not Human Wisdom (verses 1–5).
- God's Hidden Wisdom (verses 6–9).
- The Spirit Reveals All Things (verses 10–16).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 2 is:
True faith rests on God's power, not human wisdom, because the wisdom of God in Christ crucified can only be known as the Holy Spirit reveals it to those who belong to Him.

I. NOT WITH ELOQUENCE

1 Corinthians 2:1 — “When I Came to You”

“And when I came to you, brothers and sisters, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.”
Paul takes the Corinthians back to the beginning.
He reminds them of the day he first arrived in their city.
He did not arrive as a celebrity speaker.
He did not come with **eloquence**, the polished speaking style that impressed Greek audiences.
He did not come with **human wisdom**, the clever arguments of the philosophers.
Instead, he came to proclaim **“the testimony about God.”**
A testimony is a witness.
A witness does not invent the message.
A witness tells what is true.
Paul saw himself as a witness to what God had done in Jesus Christ.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:17
> Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the good news—and not with clever speech, so that the cross of Christ would not lose its power.

2 Corinthians 10:10
> Some people say, “His letters are strong and forceful, but in person he is weak, and his speaking is nothing special.”

Colossians 2:4
> I am telling you this so that no one will fool you with arguments that only sound convincing.

Spiritual Principle

God's messenger is a witness, not a performer.
The goal is not to impress people.
The goal is to tell them the truth about God.

Application

You do not need to be a gifted speaker to share the gospel.
You only need to be a faithful witness.

II. JESUS CHRIST AND HIM CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 2:2 — Paul's Great Resolve

“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.”
This is one of the most important statements Paul ever made about his ministry.
He **resolved**.
It was a deliberate decision.
Paul was a highly educated man.
He knew the Scriptures deeply.
He could quote Greek poets.
He could debate with philosophers.
But when he came to Corinth, he made up his mind that one subject would fill his preaching:
Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
This does not mean Paul never taught anything else.
It means that everything he taught flowed from the cross and led back to the cross.
The cross was not one topic among many.
It was the center of everything.

Cross References

Galatians 6:14
> But I will never brag about anything except the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the cross the world has been crucified to me, and I have been crucified to the world.

Philippians 3:8
> More than that, I now count everything as loss compared to the far greater value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have lost everything, and I think of it all as garbage, so that I may gain Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:23
> But we preach Christ crucified. This message offends the Jews and sounds foolish to the Gentiles.

Spiritual Principle

The cross is not the beginning of the Christian message that we move past; it is the center we never leave.

Key Truth

A church can drift from the cross while still talking about many good things.
Faithful ministry keeps Christ crucified at the center.

III. IN WEAKNESS AND FEAR

1 Corinthians 2:3 — “With Great Fear and Trembling”

“I came to you in weakness, with great fear and trembling.”
This is an honest confession.
The great apostle Paul was afraid.
He came to Corinth **“in weakness.”**
He had just been beaten and jailed in Philippi.
He had been driven out of Thessalonica and Berea.
He had seen only a small response in Athens.
Now he walked into one of the proudest and most immoral cities in the empire.
He came **“with great fear and trembling.”**
God knew how Paul felt.
In a vision one night, the Lord told him not to be afraid and to keep on speaking, because the Lord was with him and had many people in that city.
Paul's weakness did not stop the work.
It made room for God's strength.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 10:1
> I, Paul, appeal to you by the gentleness and kindness of Christ—I who am said to be timid when I am face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away.

Acts 18:9
> One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Don't be afraid. Keep on speaking, and don't stay silent.”

2 Corinthians 12:9
> But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

Spiritual Principle

Fear does not disqualify a servant of God; it drives him to depend on God.

Application

Do not wait until you feel strong to obey God.
Many of God's greatest works began with a servant who was trembling.

IV. A DEMONSTRATION OF THE SPIRIT'S POWER

1 Corinthians 2:4 — Not Persuasive Words

“My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power,”
Paul describes both his **message** and his **preaching**.

The content and the delivery.
Neither depended on **“wise and persuasive words.”**
Paul did not use clever tricks of speech to manipulate his hearers.
Instead, his preaching came with **“a demonstration of the Spirit's power.”**
The word **demonstration** means proof.
The proof that Paul's message was true was not his skill.
It was what the Holy Spirit did.
Hearts were changed.
Idol worshipers turned to God.
Immoral people were made clean.
A church was born in the middle of Corinth.
Only the Spirit of God could do that.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 1:5
> Our good news came to you not only in words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep confidence. You know how we lived among you for your benefit.

1 Corinthians 4:20
> The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

2 Corinthians 4:7
> We have this treasure in clay jars to show that this amazing power comes from God and not from us.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit, not human skill, makes preaching effective.

Key Truth

Persuasive words can move people for a moment.
The Spirit of God can change people forever.

V. FAITH RESTING ON GOD'S POWER

1 Corinthians 2:5 — The Reason Behind Paul's Method

“so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.”
Here is why Paul preached the way he did.
He was thinking about the foundation of their faith.
If Paul had won them with clever arguments, their faith would rest on Paul.
A better speaker could come along and win them away.
A smarter argument could knock their faith down.
But faith that rests on **God's power** cannot be moved by the next impressive voice.
Paul wanted their faith built on a foundation that would last.
This speaks directly to the problem in Corinth.
They were dividing over preachers.
Paul reminds them that their faith was never supposed to rest on any preacher at all.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 4:7
We have this treasure in clay jars to show that this amazing power comes from God and not from us.
Romans 1:16
I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.
Ephesians 3:20
Now to Him who is able to do far more than anything we ask or imagine, by His power that is at work in us—

Spiritual Principle

Faith is only as strong as what it rests on.

Application

Ask yourself: Does my faith rest on a person, a feeling, or an argument?
Or does it rest on the power of God?

VI. WISDOM AMONG THE MATURE

1 Corinthians 2:6 — Not the Wisdom of This Age

“Yet we do speak a wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.”
Paul does not want anyone to think the gospel is simple-minded.
He says, **“We do speak a wisdom.”**
The gospel is deep.
It is the wisest message ever spoken.
But it is spoken **“among the mature.”**
The word **mature** means complete or grown up.
Here it describes believers who have received the Spirit and are growing in Christ.
This wisdom is **“not the wisdom of this age.”**
It does not come from the philosophers, the politicians, or the powerful.
And Paul says the rulers of this age are **“coming to nothing.”**
Their power is temporary.
Their wisdom is fading.
Every human empire passes away.
God's wisdom remains.

Cross References

Philippians 3:15
All of us who are mature should think this way. And if you see some things differently, God will make that clear to you as well.
Hebrews 5:14
But solid food is for the mature, who by constant practice have trained themselves to tell the difference between good and evil.

1 Corinthians 3:1

Brothers and sisters, I could not speak to you as spiritual people. I had to speak to you as people still living by worldly ways—as babies in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel is simple enough for a child to believe and deep enough to fill a lifetime of study.

Spiritual Warning

The Corinthians thought they were mature.
In the next chapter Paul tells them they were still acting like babies.
True maturity is shown by humility and love, not by pride in knowledge.

VII. GOD'S HIDDEN WISDOM

1 Corinthians 2:7 — A Mystery Destined for Our Glory

“No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.”
Paul now describes this wisdom.
It is **“God's wisdom.”**
It is **“a mystery.”**
In the Bible, a mystery is not a puzzle that clever people solve.
It is a truth that was once hidden and can only be known when God reveals it.
This wisdom was planned **“before time began.”**
The cross was not a last-minute rescue plan.
God planned it before the world was made.
And notice the goal:
“For our glory.”
God planned salvation so that sinners would one day share in His glory.
The cross that looked like shame was designed to lead us to glory.

Cross References

Ephesians 3:9

and to make clear to everyone how God's secret plan works—the plan that God, who created all things, kept hidden for ages.

Colossians 1:26

This is the secret that was hidden for ages and generations, but now it has been made known to His holy people.

Romans 16:25

Now to God, who is able to make you strong by my good news and the preaching about Jesus Christ, which reveals the secret that was kept hidden for long ages—

Spiritual Principle

Salvation was God's plan before it was our need.

Key Truth

Before you were born, before the world was made, God planned to bring His people to glory through Christ.

VIII. THE LORD OF GLORY CRUCIFIED

1 Corinthians 2:8 — The Rulers Did Not Understand

“None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.”
The rulers of this age had power.
They had position.
They had education.
But they did not understand God's wisdom.
The religious leaders in Jerusalem rejected Jesus.
Herod mocked Him.
Pilate, the Roman governor, handed Him over to be crucified.
They thought they were getting rid of a troublemaker.
They did not realize they were crucifying **“the Lord of glory.”**
This is one of the highest titles in Scripture.
Glory belongs to God alone.
Paul calls the crucified Jesus the Lord of glory.
The man on the cross was God in human flesh.
And the very act the rulers used to destroy Him became the means God used to save the world.

Cross References

Acts 3:17
> Now, brothers, I know that you acted without understanding, and so did your leaders.

Luke 23:34
> Jesus said, “Father, forgive them, because they do not know what they are doing.”

James 2:1
> My brothers and sisters, you believe in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, so do not treat some people better than others.

Spiritual Principle

Worldly power cannot recognize heavenly glory without God's help.

Key Truth

The rulers thought the cross was their victory.
It was God's.

IX. WHAT NO EYE HAS SEEN

1 Corinthians 2:9 — Prepared for Those Who Love Him

“However, as it is written: “What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived— the things God has prepared for those who love him.””
Paul draws on the words of Isaiah.
Notice the three ways people try to gain knowledge:
The eye—what we see.
The ear—what we hear.
The mind—what we can imagine.
None of these could discover God's plan.
Observation could not find it.
Tradition could not pass it on.
Imagination could not invent it.
This verse is often quoted at funerals to describe heaven.
And it certainly includes the glory to come.
But in context, Paul is speaking about the gospel itself.
God's plan of salvation through a crucified Messiah was beyond anything humans could have dreamed up.
And it was prepared **“for those who love him.”**

Cross References

Isaiah 64:4
> From ancient times no one has heard, no ear has listened, and no eye has seen any God besides You, who acts for those who wait for Him.

Isaiah 65:17
> Look, I am creating new heavens and a new earth. The old things will not be remembered or come to mind.

Matthew 13:17
> I tell you the truth, many prophets and godly people longed to see what you are seeing, but they did not see it. They longed to hear what you are hearing, but they did not hear it.

Spiritual Principle

God's plans for His people are greater than anything they could ever imagine.

Application

When life is hard, remember that God has prepared things for those who love Him that the human mind cannot even picture.

X. REVEALED BY THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 2:10 — The Deep Things of God

“But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.”

Here is the great turning point.
No eye saw it.
No ear heard it.
No mind imagined it.
“But God has revealed them to us by his Spirit.”
What humans could never discover, God has made known.
And He did it through the Holy Spirit.
Paul says the Spirit **“searches all things.”**
This does not mean the Spirit is looking for information He lacks.
It means the Spirit knows everything completely, even **“the deep things of God.”**
Only someone who is fully God could know the depths of God.
This verse is a strong testimony to the deity of the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 8:27
> And God, who searches our hearts, knows what the Spirit is thinking, because the Spirit prays for God's people in line with God's will.

John 16:13
> When the Spirit of truth comes, He will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on His own. He will tell you what He hears, and He will show you what is still to come.

Daniel 2:22
> He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light lives with Him.

Spiritual Principle

We do not find God by searching upward; God makes Himself known by revealing Himself to us.

Key Truth

Christianity is not humanity's search for God.
It is God's revelation of Himself.

XI. ONLY THE SPIRIT KNOWS THE MIND OF GOD

1 Corinthians 2:11 — An Illustration from the Human Heart

“For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.”
Paul gives a simple illustration.
No one can fully know what you are thinking unless you tell them.
Others can guess.
They can watch your face.
But only your own spirit truly knows your thoughts.
In the same way, only the Spirit of God truly knows the thoughts of God.
Human beings cannot read God's mind.
If we are going to know God's thoughts, God must tell us.
And He does, through His Spirit.

Cross References

Proverbs 20:27
A person's spirit is the LORD's lamp, shining light into the deepest parts of who they are.
Romans 11:34
Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been His adviser?
Jeremiah 17:10
I, the LORD, search the heart and test the mind. I give each person what their actions deserve.

Spiritual Principle

Knowing God depends on God making Himself known.

Application

Come to the Bible humbly.
Ask the Spirit who knows God's thoughts to help you understand them.

XII. THE SPIRIT WHO IS FROM GOD

1 Corinthians 2:12 — Understanding What God Has Given

“What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.”
Paul contrasts two spirits.
The spirit of the world is the attitude and way of thinking of a world that does not know God.
It values pride, status, cleverness, and self.
The Spirit who is from God is the Holy Spirit Himself.
Every believer has received Him.
And Paul tells us why:
“So that we may understand what God has freely given us.”
God does not only give us salvation.
He gives us His Spirit so that we can understand and enjoy what we have been given.
Notice the word **“freely.”**
Everything God gives is a gift of grace.

Cross References

Romans 8:15
The Spirit you received does not make you slaves who live in fear again. Instead, you received the Spirit who makes you God's children. By Him we cry out, “Abba, Father.”
1 John 4:6
We belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to us, but whoever does not belong to God does not listen to us. This is how we can tell the Spirit of truth from the spirit of lies.
John 14:17
He is the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept Him, because it does not see Him or know Him. But you know Him, because He lives with you and will be in you.

Spiritual Principle

The Spirit is given not only to save us but to help us understand the riches of our salvation.

Key Truth

Many believers are richer in Christ than they realize.
The Spirit opens our eyes to see what we already have.

XIII. WORDS TAUGHT BY THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 2:13 — Spiritual Truth in Spirit-Taught Words

“This is what we speak, not in words taught by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.”
Paul now speaks about the words of the apostles.
Their message did not come from human wisdom.
It came in **“words taught by the Spirit.”**
The Spirit did not only give the apostles ideas.
He guided the very words they used.
This is why Christians believe the Bible is the inspired word of God.
God used real human writers with their own personalities and styles.
But the Spirit guided what they wrote, so that the result is God's word.
The phrase **“explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words”** means that spiritual truth is matched with spiritual words.
God's truth is best explained in God's way.

Cross References

2 Peter 1:21
> No prophecy ever came from human will. Instead, people spoke from God as the Holy Spirit carried them along.

John 14:26
> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you everything and remind you of everything I have told you.

1 Thessalonians 2:13
> We also keep thanking God that when you received God's word from us, you accepted it not as human ideas but as what it really is—the word of God, which is at work in you who believe.

Spiritual Principle

The Bible is not human wisdom about God; it is God's word given through human writers by His Spirit.

Application

Treat Scripture as the voice of God.
Read it, trust it, and obey it.

XIV. THE PERSON WITHOUT THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 2:14 — Spiritual Things Seem Foolish

“The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.”
Now Paul explains why many people reject the gospel.
He describes **“the person without the Spirit.”**
This is the natural person, someone who lives only by human nature and has not been made new by God.
Paul says three things about this person.
He **does not accept** the things of God's Spirit.
He **considers them foolishness.**
He **cannot understand them.**
The problem is not a lack of intelligence.
Many brilliant people reject the gospel.
The problem is spiritual.
Spiritual truth is **“discerned only through the Spirit.”**
A person cannot see colors in a dark room, no matter how good his eyes are.
He needs light.
The Spirit is that light.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:18
The message of the cross seems foolish to those who are being lost, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.
Romans 8:7
The mind controlled by the sinful nature is hostile to God. It does not obey God's law, and it cannot.
Jude 1:19
These are the people who cause divisions. They follow their natural instincts and do not have the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

No one can argue a person into the kingdom of God without the work of the Spirit.

Application

Keep sharing the gospel clearly.
But also pray for the Spirit to open blind eyes.
Only He can do it.

XV. THE PERSON WITH THE SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 2:15 — Discerning All Things

“The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments.”
Now Paul describes the opposite person.
The person with the Spirit is the believer who has been made new by God.
This person **“makes judgments about all things.”**
The word means to examine, weigh, and discern.
The Spirit gives believers the ability to see life, the world, and themselves from God's point of view.
This does not mean believers know everything.
It means they have a new way of seeing.
And this person **“is not subject to merely human judgments.”**
The world cannot properly evaluate a spiritual person, because the world does not have the Spirit.
The Corinthians were judging Paul by worldly standards.
Paul is telling them that worldly standards are the wrong measuring stick.

Cross References

1 John 2:20
> But you have been anointed by the Holy One, and all of you know the truth.

1 Corinthians 6:3
> Don't you know that we will judge angels? How much more the ordinary matters of this life!

Philippians 1:9
> And this is my prayer: that your love will grow more and more in knowledge and deep understanding.

Spiritual Principle

The Spirit gives believers a new way of seeing everything.

Spiritual Warning

This verse does not give believers the right to be proud or to ignore correction.
A spiritual person is humble and teachable.
Spiritual discernment is a gift to serve others, not a license to look down on them.

XVI. THE MIND OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 2:16 — “But We Have the Mind of Christ”

“For, “Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?” But we have the mind of Christ.”
Paul closes the chapter with a question from Isaiah 40:13.
“Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?”
The answer is: No one.
No human being can give God advice.
No one can teach God anything.

Then Paul makes an astonishing statement:
“But we have the mind of Christ.”
Believers cannot instruct God.
But God has given them the mind of His Son.
Through the Spirit, believers can think Christ's thoughts after Him.
They can see what He values.
They can love what He loves.
Notice also what Paul has done.
The question in Isaiah speaks of **the LORD.**
Paul answers with **Christ.**
Once again, Jesus is placed in the position of God.
The mind of Christ is the mind of the Lord.

Cross References

Isaiah 40:13
Who has understood the Spirit of the LORD, or taught Him as His adviser?
Romans 11:34
Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been His adviser?
Philippians 2:5
Have the same attitude among yourselves that Christ Jesus had.

Spiritual Principle

The believer's greatest wisdom is to think like Christ.

Key Truth

The mind of Christ was humble.
It led Him to the cross.
To have the mind of Christ is to live with the humility of the cross.

XVII. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 2

1. Faith Rests in God's Power, Not Human Wisdom

Paul did not preach with persuasive words but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

Principle:

True preaching is Spirit-filled, not built on persuasive speech, so that faith rests on God alone.

2. The Cross Is the Center

Paul resolved to know nothing among them except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Principle:

Everything in the Christian life flows from the cross and leads back to it.

3. God Uses Weak Servants

Paul came in weakness, fear, and trembling.

Principle:

God's power is seen most clearly when His servants depend on Him.

4. God's Wisdom Is Hidden from the World

The rulers of this age did not understand it, and so they crucified the Lord of glory.

Principle:

Spiritual truth cannot be discovered by intellect alone; it must be revealed by God.

5. The Spirit Reveals the Deep Things of God

What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, God has revealed by His Spirit.

Principle:

We know God because God makes Himself known.

6. The Spirit Grants Discernment

The person without the Spirit sees spiritual things as foolishness, but the person with the Spirit discerns all things.

Principle:

Only those who have the Spirit of God can understand the deep things of God.

7. We Share in the Mind of Christ

No one can instruct the Lord, but believers have the mind of Christ.

Principle:

Believers are given the ability to see life through Christ's wisdom and to walk in truth and spiritual understanding.

XVIII. FROM ATHENS TO CORINTH

To understand verses 1–5, it helps to remember where Paul had just been.

Athens

Before coming to Corinth, Paul was in Athens.
He spoke in the marketplace and before the council of the Areopagus.
He reasoned with Epicurean and Stoic philosophers.
Some mocked him.
A few believed.

Corinth

Paul then traveled to Corinth.
He stayed with Aquila and Priscilla and worked with them making tents.
He preached in the synagogue every Sabbath.
When opposition grew, he moved next door to the house of Titius Justus.
The Lord encouraged him in a vision, and Paul stayed a year and a half.

Paul's Decision

In Corinth, Paul resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
He did not abandon careful thinking.
But he refused to let clever speech take the place of the cross.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not need our polish; He needs our faithfulness.

XIX. TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 2 describes two kinds of people.

The Person Without the Spirit

- Lives only by natural human understanding.
- Does not accept the things of God's Spirit.
- Thinks spiritual truth is foolishness.
- Cannot understand the things of God.
- Needs the Spirit to open his eyes.

The Person With the Spirit

- Has received the Spirit who is from God.
- Understands what God has freely given.
- Discerns all things from God's point of view.
- Is not measured by merely human judgments.
- Has the mind of Christ.

Key Truth

The difference between these two people is not intelligence, education, or background.
The difference is the presence of the Holy Spirit.

Looking Ahead

In Chapter 3, Paul will describe a third kind of person: a believer who has the Spirit but is still living in worldly ways.
The Corinthians were in that group.

XX. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 2 TEACHES ABOUT THE HOLY SPIRIT

The Spirit Gives Power

Paul's preaching came with a demonstration of the Spirit's power.

The Spirit Reveals

God has revealed His hidden wisdom by His Spirit.

The Spirit Is Fully God

He searches all things, even the deep things of God.
Only God can fully know God.

The Spirit Knows God's Thoughts

No one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

The Spirit Is Given to Believers

We have received the Spirit who is from God.

The Spirit Teaches

The apostles spoke in words taught by the Spirit.

The Spirit Gives Discernment

Spiritual things are discerned only through the Spirit.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Without the Holy Spirit, the gospel would remain a closed book; with the Spirit, it becomes living truth.

XXI. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 2 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Christ Crucified

He is the center of the message Paul preached.

The Lord of Glory

The One the rulers crucified is the Lord to whom all glory belongs.

The Wisdom of God

He is the hidden wisdom God planned before time began.

The Lord Whose Mind No One Can Instruct

Paul applies the words of Isaiah about the LORD to Christ.

The One Whose Mind Believers Share

By the Spirit, believers have the mind of Christ.

Key Truth

The crucified Jesus is the Lord of glory, and to know Him is to know the wisdom of God.

XXII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul refuse to come with eloquence or human wisdom?
Corinth admired skilled speakers and clever arguments.
Paul did not want people to be won by his speaking ability.
He wanted them to be won by the truth about God.

Question 2

What does Paul mean when he says he resolved to know nothing except Jesus Christ and Him crucified?
He made a deliberate decision to keep the cross at the center of all his preaching.
He did not stop teaching other truths.
But every truth he taught was connected to Christ crucified.

Question 3

Why was Paul afraid when he came to Corinth?
He had faced beatings, prison, and opposition in the cities before Corinth.
Corinth was a proud and immoral city.
The Lord encouraged him in a vision not to be afraid, because He was with him.

Question 4

Why did Paul want the Corinthians' faith to rest on God's power instead of human wisdom?
Faith built on human wisdom can be knocked down by a better argument.
Faith built on God's power stands firm.

Question 5

If the gospel looks like foolishness, why does Paul say he speaks wisdom?

The gospel is the deepest wisdom there is.
But it is God's wisdom, not the wisdom of this age.
It is understood by those who have the Spirit.

Question 6

What is a “mystery” in the Bible?
A mystery is a truth that was once hidden and could only be known when God revealed it.
It is not a puzzle for clever people to solve.

Question 7

Who were the “rulers of this age” who crucified the Lord of glory?
They included the religious leaders in Jerusalem, Herod, and Pilate, the Roman governor.
Many Bible students also see spiritual powers of darkness standing behind them.
None of them understood God's plan.

Question 8

What does verse 9 mean when it says no eye has seen and no ear has heard?
God's plan of salvation could not be discovered by observation, tradition, or imagination.
It includes the future glory God has prepared.
But first of all it describes the gospel, which no human could have invented.

Question 9

How does verse 10 show that the Holy Spirit is God?
The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God.
Only someone who is fully God could know God completely.

Question 10

Why do intelligent people sometimes reject the gospel?
The problem is not their intelligence.
The problem is spiritual blindness.
Spiritual truth is discerned only through the Spirit.

Question 11

What does it mean that the spiritual person “makes judgments about all things”?
The Spirit helps believers see life, people, and the world from God's point of view.
It does not make them proud or above correction.
It gives them discernment to serve God and others.

Question 12

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ?
Through the Spirit, believers can think as Christ thinks.
They value what He values and love what He loves.
Having the mind of Christ means living with His humility, obedience, and love.

XXIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 2 asks several important questions.

Is the Cross at the Center of My Faith?

Or have I moved on to other things?

What Does My Faith Rest On?

A preacher? A feeling? An argument?
Or the power of God?

Am I Letting Fear Stop Me?

Paul trembled, but he still obeyed.

Do I Depend on the Holy Spirit?

When I read the Bible, do I ask the Spirit to teach me?

Am I Measuring Things by the World's Standards?

Do I judge people and ministries by how impressive they look?

Do I Pray for Those Who Do Not Understand?

Only the Spirit can open blind eyes.

Am I Thinking with the Mind of Christ?

Is my thinking shaped by Christ's humility and love?

XXIV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“What God Reveals, No One Could Discover”

Human beings have always searched for answers.
We have studied the stars.
We have built schools of philosophy.
We have written libraries full of books.
But no telescope ever found the cross.
No philosopher ever reasoned his way to a crucified Savior.
No human imagination ever pictured God becoming man and dying for sinners.
The greatest truth in the universe could not be discovered.
It had to be revealed.
And God revealed it by His Spirit.
This creates a powerful principle.

We never stand over God's word as its judge.
We sit under it as learners.
We do not find God by climbing up.
God finds us by coming down.

Principle:

The most important things we know about God, we know only because God chose to tell us.

XXV. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 2 was written to people who loved wisdom.
They admired great speakers.
They prized knowledge.
They thought of themselves as spiritual.
But they were measuring the things of God with the ruler of the world.
Paul reminded them how the gospel first came to them.
Not through a polished speaker.
Through a trembling man with a simple message.
Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
And the result was not human applause.
It was the power of God.
1 Corinthians 2 therefore reminds us:
Never be ashamed of a simple message.
Never confuse being impressive with being powerful.
Never trust human wisdom more than God's word.
Never try to understand God's truth without God's Spirit.
The church does not need a cleverer message.
It needs:
The cross at the center.
The Spirit's power.
God's revealed word.
And the mind of Christ.
The same message still saves:
Tell people about Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
Tell people that God's wisdom is greater than the world's.
Tell people that God has prepared things beyond imagination for those who love Him.
Tell people that the Spirit opens blind eyes.
And as you go:
Depend on the Spirit.
Rest on God's power.
Keep the cross at the center.
Think with the mind of Christ.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the message of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
Thank You that our faith does not rest on human wisdom, but on Your power.

Thank You that You use weak and trembling servants to do Your work.
Thank You for Your hidden wisdom, planned before time began for our glory.
Thank You that the Lord of glory was crucified for us.
Thank You for the things You have prepared for those who love You—things no eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined.
Thank You for giving us Your Holy Spirit.
Thank You that He knows the deep things of God and has made them known to us.
Forgive us when we trust clever words more than Your word.
Forgive us when we measure Your work by the world's standards.
Forgive us when fear keeps us silent.
Keep the cross at the center of our lives.
Teach us by Your Spirit as we read Your word.
Give us discernment to see all things from Your point of view.
Open the eyes of those who do not yet understand the gospel.
Help us to speak the truth with courage, even when we tremble.
Shape our thinking until we truly have the mind of Christ.
May our faith rest on You alone.
“But we have the mind of Christ.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.” — 1 Corinthians 2:2

Central Truth

True faith rests on God's power, not human wisdom, because the hidden wisdom of God in Christ crucified can only be known as the Holy Spirit reveals it to those who belong to Him.

1 Corinthians 2 in One Sentence

Paul reminds the Corinthians that he preached only Christ crucified in weakness and in the Spirit's power, because God's hidden wisdom cannot be discovered by the world but is revealed by the Spirit, who gives believers the mind of Christ.

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 — Christ the Only Foundation

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 brings Paul's teaching on wisdom and division down to earth.
In Chapter 2, Paul described two kinds of people.
The person without the Spirit, who sees the things of God as foolishness.
And the person with the Spirit, who has the mind of Christ.
Now Paul describes a third kind of person.
A believer who has the Spirit but is still living like the world.
That was the Corinthians.
They had received God's Spirit.
But they were acting like infants.
They were jealous.
They were quarreling.
They were lining up behind Paul and Apollos like rival teams.
Paul answers with a series of pictures.
The church is **a field**, and God's servants are farmhands planting and watering.
The church is **a building**, and Jesus Christ is the only foundation.
The church is **a temple**, and God's Spirit lives within it.
Every picture says the same thing:
The church belongs to God.
Not to Paul.
Not to Apollos.
Not to any human leader.
God gives the growth.
God laid the foundation.
God will test the work.
God dwells in His people.
And so Paul ends the chapter with a stunning reversal.
The Corinthians were saying, **“I belong to Paul,”** or, **“I belong to Apollos.”**
Paul says, **“No. Paul and Apollos belong to you.”**
In fact, everything belongs to you.
And you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God.
The chapter moves through six movements:

- Spiritual Immaturity (verses 1–4).
- God Gives the Increase (verses 5–9).
- Christ the Foundation (verses 10–15).
- God's Temple (verses 16–17).
- True Wisdom Belongs to God (verses 18–20).
- Belonging to Christ (verses 21–23).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 3 is:
Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the church, God alone gives the growth, and His people belong to Him, so there is no room for pride in human leaders.

I. MERE INFANTS IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 3:1 — Not Spiritual, but Worldly

“And I, brothers and sisters, could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are worldly—mere infants in Christ.”
Paul speaks tenderly.
He still calls them **“brothers and sisters.”**
They are truly in the family of God.
They are **“in Christ.”**
But they are **“mere infants.”**
The Corinthians thought they were spiritual giants.
They were proud of their knowledge, their speech, and their gifts.
Paul tells them the truth.
They were acting like babies.
Paul uses the word **worldly**.
It describes people who are shaped by their human nature and by the values of the world around them.
The Corinthians had the Spirit.
But they were not living by the Spirit.
There is nothing wrong with being a baby.
Every believer begins that way.
The problem is staying a baby when you should have grown up.

Cross References

Hebrews 5:13
> Anyone who lives on milk is still a baby and does not yet understand the teaching about what is right.

1 Peter 2:2
> Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of God's word, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Ephesians 4:14
> Then we will no longer be like children, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown around by every new teaching, by people's tricks and clever schemes to deceive.

Spiritual Principle

Having the Spirit and living by the Spirit are not always the same thing.
A believer can belong to Christ and still behave in worldly ways.

Key Truth

Spiritual maturity is not measured by how much you know.
It is measured by how much you look like Christ.

II. MILK, NOT SOLID FOOD

1 Corinthians 3:2 — “You Are Still Not Ready”

“I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready.”
Paul uses a picture every parent understands.
A newborn cannot eat a steak.
It needs milk.
When Paul first came to Corinth, he fed them **milk**, the basic truths of the gospel.
That was right.
They were new believers.
But then Paul adds a painful sentence:
“Indeed, you are still not ready.”
Several years had passed.
They should have been eating solid food.
But they were still on milk.
Their growth had stalled.
This does not mean the gospel is only for beginners.
The cross is both milk and meat.
The problem was not the message.
The problem was their spiritual appetite and their worldly behavior.

Cross References

Hebrews 5:12
> By this time you should be teachers. Instead, you need someone to teach you the basic truths of God's word all over again. You need milk, not solid food.

1 Peter 2:2
> Like newborn babies, crave the pure milk of God's word, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation.

Hebrews 5:14
> But solid food is for the mature, who by constant practice have trained themselves to tell the difference between good and evil.

Spiritual Principle

Time in the faith does not automatically produce maturity in the faith.

Application

Ask yourself: Am I growing?
Am I more like Christ this year than I was last year?

III. JEALOUSY AND QUARRELING

1 Corinthians 3:3 — The Evidence of Worldliness

“For you are still worldly. Since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere humans?”

Now Paul gives the proof.
How did he know they were still worldly?
Jealousy and quarreling.
Jealousy is resentment over what someone else has.
Quarreling is the fighting that grows from it.
The Corinthians did not lack gifts.
They lacked love.
Paul asks:
“Are you not acting like mere humans?”
In other words, they were acting like people who did not know God at all.
Believers are new creations.
They are supposed to live differently.
But in Corinth, the church looked just like the city.

Cross References

Galatians 5:20
> The works of the flesh include worshiping idols, witchcraft, hatred, fighting, jealousy, outbursts of anger, selfish ambition, arguments, and splitting into groups.

James 3:16
> Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there will be disorder and every kind of evil.

Romans 13:13
> Let us live decently, as people who live in the daylight—not in wild parties and drunkenness, not in sexual sin and shameless living, not in fighting and jealousy.

Spiritual Principle

The clearest sign of spiritual immaturity is not a lack of knowledge but a lack of love.

Spiritual Warning

Jealousy and quarreling are not small faults; they are marks of the flesh.

IV. “I FOLLOW PAUL”

1 Corinthians 3:4 — Worldly Loyalties

“For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being worldly?”
Paul returns to the problem he named in Chapter 1.
The church was divided into fan clubs.
“I follow Paul.”
“I follow Apollos.”
This was exactly how the world behaved.
In Corinth, people attached themselves to famous teachers and speakers.
They boasted about whose teacher was better.
The Corinthians had brought that habit into the church.
Notice that Paul names himself first.
He is not defending his own fans.
He is rebuking them.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:12
One of you says, “I follow Paul.” Another says, “I follow Apollos.” Another says, “I follow Cephas.” And another says, “I follow Christ.”
1 Corinthians 3:21
So stop bragging about human leaders. Everything belongs to you.
Titus 3:9
But stay away from foolish arguments, debates about family histories, quarrels, and fights about the law, because they are useless and worthless.

Spiritual Principle

Making heroes out of human leaders is a sign of worldly thinking, not spiritual maturity.

Application

It is good to be grateful for those who taught you.
It is wrong to use them to compete with other believers.

V. ONLY SERVANTS

1 Corinthians 3:5 — What Is Apollos? What Is Paul?

“What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants through whom you came to believe —as the Lord assigned to each his task.”
Notice how Paul asks the question.
Not **“Who** is Apollos?” but **“What** is Apollos?”
He is not asking about their names or reputations.
He is asking about their role.
And the answer is simple:
“Only servants.”
The word Paul uses describes a servant who waits on tables.
It is a humble word.
Paul and Apollos were not the source of the Corinthians' faith.
They were the means **“through whom”** the Corinthians believed.
And each one did the task **“the Lord assigned.”**
The Lord was the One giving assignments.
Paul and Apollos were simply obeying.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 4:1
So people should think of us as servants of Christ and as those trusted with the secret truths of God.
2 Corinthians 3:6
He has made us able to serve a new covenant—not one of written rules but of the Spirit. The written law brings death, but the Spirit gives life.
Acts 18:27
When Apollos wanted to go to Achaia, the believers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples there to welcome him. When he arrived, he was a great help to those who had believed by God's grace.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants are instruments, not idols.

Key Truth

Every task in God's kingdom is assigned by the Lord.
No one should boast about the job God gave them.

VI. PLANTING AND WATERING

1 Corinthians 3:6 — “But God Made It Grow”

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.”
Paul now uses a farming picture.
Paul planted.
He was the first to bring the gospel to Corinth and start the church.
Apollos watered.
He came later and helped the believers grow through his teaching.
Both jobs were needed.
But neither one could make a single seed sprout.
“But God made it grow.”
In the original language, the planting and watering are described as completed actions.
The growing is described as something God kept on doing.
Paul and Apollos did their work and moved on.
God kept giving life.

Cross References

Isaiah 55:10
> The rain and snow come down from the sky and do not go back without watering the earth. They make it sprout and grow, giving seed to the farmer and bread to eat.

John 4:37
> So the saying is true: “One person plants, and another person harvests.”

Acts 18:24
> Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, who was born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a gifted speaker and knew the Scriptures very well.

Spiritual Principle

We can plant and water, but only God can give life.

Application

Do your part faithfully.
Then trust God with the results.

VII. ONLY GOD

1 Corinthians 3:7 — The One Who Makes Things Grow

“So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow.”
Paul draws the conclusion.
Compared to God, the planter and the waterer are **“nothing.”**
This does not mean their work has no value.
Paul will speak of their reward in the next verse.
It means they are not the source of the growth.
All the credit belongs to God.
So why were the Corinthians boasting about Paul and Apollos?
That was like praising the watering can instead of the One who sends the rain.

Cross References

Zechariah 4:6
Not by strength, and not by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of Armies.
John 15:5
I am the vine; you are the branches. If you stay joined to Me and I to you, you will bear much fruit. Apart from Me you can do nothing.
Psalm 127:1
Unless the LORD builds the house, the builders work for nothing. Unless the LORD guards the city, the guards stay awake for nothing.

Spiritual Principle

All true spiritual growth is the work of God.

Key Truth

The church does not grow because of great leaders.
It grows because of a great God.

VIII. ONE PURPOSE, EACH REWARDED

1 Corinthians 3:8 — Rewarded According to Labor

“The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor.”
Paul and Apollos were not rivals.
They had **“one purpose.”**
They were working on the same field for the same Master.
The Corinthians were setting them against each other.
But the workers themselves were united.
Then Paul adds an encouraging truth.
Each one **“will be rewarded according to their own labor.”**
Notice it says **labor**, not success.

God rewards faithfulness, not results.
The one who plants and never sees the harvest will not be forgotten.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 15:58
So, my dear brothers and sisters, stand firm. Don't let anything move you. Always give yourselves fully to the Lord's work, because you know that your work for the Lord is never wasted.
Revelation 22:12
Look, I am coming soon! I am bringing My reward with Me, and I will repay each person for what they have done.
Matthew 16:27
The Son of Man is going to come in His Father's glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person for what they have done.

Spiritual Principle

God rewards faithful labor, not visible success.

Application

If you serve where no one notices, keep going.
God notices, and He will reward you.

IX. GOD'S FIELD, GOD'S BUILDING

1 Corinthians 3:9 — Co-Workers in God's Service

“For we are co-workers in God's service; you are God's field, God's building.”
Look at how often Paul uses the word **God** in this verse.
God's service.
God's field.
God's building.
Everything belongs to God.
Paul and Apollos are **“co-workers in God's service.”**
They work together, and they work for God.
The church is **“God's field.”**
It is not Paul's field or Apollos' field.
The church is also **“God's building.”**
This second picture prepares the way for the next section, where Paul talks about foundations and builders.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 6:1
As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace and then let it go to waste.
Ephesians 2:20
You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

1 Peter 2:5
You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices that please God through Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The church belongs to God, and every worker serves under Him.

Key Truth

No pastor owns the church.
No member owns the church.
The church is God's.

X. A WISE BUILDER

1 Corinthians 3:10 — “Each One Should Build with Care”

“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care.”
Paul now moves from farming to construction.
He calls himself a **“wise builder.”**
The word is where we get our word **architect**.
He was the master builder who laid the foundation of the church in Corinth.
But notice how he begins:
“By the grace God has given me.”
Paul does not take credit.
Even his skill as a builder was a gift of grace.
Then he says, **“someone else is building on it.”**
Others would teach and lead the church after Paul.
And Paul gives a warning to all of them:
“Each one should build with care.”
It matters how you build.
It matters what you teach.
It matters what you add to God's building.

Cross References

Romans 15:20
My goal has always been to preach the good news where Christ was not yet known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.
Matthew 7:24
So everyone who hears My words and does them is like a wise man who built his house on rock.
Luke 6:48
He is like a man building a house who dug down deep and laid the foundation on rock. When the flood came and the river crashed against that house, it could not shake it, because it was built well.

Spiritual Principle

Everyone who serves in God's church is accountable for how they build.

Application

Every teacher, leader, parent, and believer is building something.
Build with care.

XI. THE ONLY FOUNDATION

1 Corinthians 3:11 — Jesus Christ

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”
This is the heart of the chapter.
There is only one foundation for the church.
Jesus Christ.
Not a preacher.
Not a philosophy.
Not a tradition.
Not a personality.
Paul says no one **“can”** lay another.
Anything else is not a foundation at all.
And notice the phrase **“already laid.”**
The foundation is finished.
No one needs to add to it.
No one is allowed to replace it.
Our job is not to lay a new foundation.
Our job is to build faithfully on the one God has laid.

Cross References

Isaiah 28:16
> So this is what the Lord GOD says: “Look, I am laying a stone in Zion, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone for a solid foundation. Whoever trusts in it will never panic.”

1 Peter 2:6
> For Scripture says: “Look, I am laying a chosen and precious cornerstone in Zion, and whoever trusts in Him will never be put to shame.”

Ephesians 2:20
> You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

Spiritual Principle

Anything not built on Christ will not stand.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A church may change its methods, but it must never change its foundation.

XII. BUILDING MATERIALS

1 Corinthians 3:12 — Gold, Silver, Costly Stones, Wood, Hay, or Straw

“If anyone builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw,”
Paul now speaks about the materials builders use.
He lists two groups.
Gold, silver, and costly stones.
These are valuable, lasting, and able to survive fire.
Wood, hay, and straw.
These are cheap, temporary, and easy to burn.
Paul is speaking first about the work of teachers and leaders in the church.
What are they building into people's lives?
Truth that lasts?
Or ideas that look impressive but will not survive?
But the principle applies to every believer.
Every life is building something on Christ.
The question is not only **whether** we build.
It is **what** we build with.

Cross References

Isaiah 54:11
> You poor, storm-tossed city, with no one to comfort you, I will rebuild you with beautiful stones and lay your foundations with sapphires.

Malachi 3:3
> He will sit like someone refining and purifying silver. He will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver, so that they will bring offerings to the LORD in the right way.

2 Timothy 2:20
> In a large house there are not only dishes made of gold and silver, but also ones made of wood and clay. Some are for special use, and some are for ordinary use.

Spiritual Principle

What we build on Christ matters for eternity.

Key Truth

Wood, hay, and straw are easier to find and quicker to build with.
Gold and silver cost more.
Lasting work usually costs something.

XIII. TESTED BY FIRE

1 Corinthians 3:13 — The Day Will Bring It to Light

“their work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each person's work.”
Paul speaks of **“the Day.”**
This is the day when Christ returns and every believer's work is judged.
On that day, nothing will be hidden.
Each person's work **“will be shown for what it is.”**
Notice the word **quality**.
The fire tests what kind of work it was, not how much there was.
A huge pile of straw burns up in a moment.
A small piece of gold comes out shining.
God is not impressed by size.
He tests what is real.

Cross References

Malachi 4:1

> “Look, the day is coming, burning like a furnace. All the proud and everyone who does evil will be like straw. That coming day will set them on fire,” says the LORD of Armies. “It will leave them neither root nor branch.”

2 Peter 3:10

> But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be exposed.

1 Peter 1:7

> These trials prove that your faith is real. Your faith is worth far more than gold, which perishes even though fire tests it. Real faith will bring praise, glory, and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed.

Spiritual Principle

God will judge the quality of our work, not just the quantity.

Application

Ask yourself: Will what I am building survive the fire?

XIV. A REWARD FOR WHAT LASTS

1 Corinthians 3:14 — The Builder Will Receive a Reward

“If what has been built survives, the builder will receive a reward.”
Here is good news.
Work that is built with gold, silver, and costly stones will survive.
And the builder **“will receive a reward.”**
Salvation is a free gift.
We cannot earn it.
But rewards are given for faithful service.

The Bible does not tell us everything about these rewards.
But it does tell us that God sees, remembers, and honors faithful work done for Him.

Cross References

Matthew 25:21
His master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things, so I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's joy.”
2 John 1:8
Watch yourselves, so that you do not lose what we have worked for, but receive your full reward.

Revelation 22:12
Look, I am coming soon! I am bringing My reward with Me, and I will repay each person for what they have done.

Spiritual Principle

Salvation is by grace, but faithful service will be rewarded.

Key Truth

The greatest reward is to hear the Master say, **“Well done.”**

XV. SAVED, BUT AS THROUGH FIRE

1 Corinthians 3:15 — Suffering Loss

“If it is burned up, the builder will suffer loss but yet will be saved—even though only as one escaping through the flames.”
Here is a sobering truth.
Some believers will see their work burned up.
They built on Christ, but they built with wood, hay, and straw.
They **“will suffer loss.”**
They will lose the reward they could have had.
But notice:
“Yet will be saved.”
Their salvation is secure, because it rests on Christ, not on their work.
This verse is not about paying for sins after death.
Christ paid for sin fully on the cross.
It is about the testing of a believer's work.
Paul's picture is of a man escaping from a burning house.
He gets out alive, but everything he built is gone.

Cross References

Jude 1:23
Save others by snatching them out of the fire. Show mercy to others, but be careful, hating even the clothing stained by sinful living.
1 Peter 4:18
And, “If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will happen to the ungodly and the sinner?”

Zechariah 3:2
The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Isn't this man a burning stick pulled out of the fire?”

Spiritual Principle

It is possible to be saved and still waste a life.

Spiritual Warning

Do not be satisfied with only getting into heaven.
Live a life that leaves something lasting for God's glory.

XVI. GOD'S TEMPLE

1 Corinthians 3:16 — The Spirit Dwells in Your Midst

“Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?”
Paul now uses a third picture.
The church is **God's temple.**
Corinth was full of temples to false gods.
The Jews had the temple in Jerusalem.
But Paul says the true temple of God in Corinth was not a building of stone.
It was the people of God.
In this verse, the word **“you”** is plural.
Paul is speaking about the church as a whole.
God's Spirit lives among His gathered people.
This makes the church holy.
And it makes the divisions in Corinth very serious.
They were tearing apart the very place where God lives.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 6:19
Don't you know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and whom you received from God? You do not belong to yourselves.

2 Corinthians 6:16
What agreement can God's temple have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live with them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”
Ephesians 2:22
In Him you also are being built together to become a home where God lives by His Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

God's people together are the dwelling place of God.

Key Truth

When believers gather, they are not just an audience.

They are a temple.

XVII. GOD'S TEMPLE IS SACRED

1 Corinthians 3:17 — A Solemn Warning

“If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy that person; for God's temple is sacred, and you together are that temple.”
This is one of the strongest warnings in the letter.
To **destroy** God's temple means to ruin the church.
People can do this through division, false teaching, pride, and sin.
God takes this very seriously.
“God will destroy that person.”
Paul uses the same word twice.
The one who destroys will be destroyed.
Why?
“For God's temple is sacred.”
The church is holy because God lives in it.
To attack the church is to attack the place where God dwells.
This warning should make every believer careful about how they treat the church.

Cross References

Jeremiah 7:14

> So what I did to Shiloh I will now do to this house that bears My name, the temple you trust in, the place I gave to you and your ancestors.

Ezekiel 5:11

> “So as surely as I live,” declares the Lord GOD, “because you have made My holy place unclean with all your disgusting idols and practices, I Myself will cut you off. I will not look on you with pity or spare you.”

Revelation 11:18

> The nations were angry, but now Your anger has come. The time has come to judge the dead, to reward Your servants the prophets, Your holy people, and those who respect Your name, both small and great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth.

Spiritual Warning

God defends His church.
No one can harm what God calls holy without answering to God.

Application

Guard the unity of your church.
Your words can build up God's temple or tear it down.

XVIII. DO NOT DECEIVE YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 3:18 — Become a “Fool” to Become Wise

“Do not deceive yourselves. If any of you think you are wise by the standards of this age, you should become “fools” so that you may become wise.”
Paul returns to the subject of wisdom.
He begins with a warning:
“Do not deceive yourselves.”
The greatest danger is not being fooled by others.
It is fooling yourself.
Some in Corinth thought they were wise **“by the standards of this age.”**
Paul tells them the way forward is to become **“fools.”**
He means they must be willing to look foolish to the world by humbly accepting the message of the cross.
Only then will they become truly wise.
The door to God's wisdom is humility.

Cross References

Galatians 6:3
If anyone thinks he is something when he is really nothing, he is fooling himself.
Proverbs 3:7
Don't think of yourself as wise. Respect the LORD and turn away from evil.
1 Corinthians 1:20
Where is the wise person? Where is the expert in the law? Where is the great debater of this age? Hasn't God shown that the wisdom of this world is foolish?

Spiritual Principle

Humility is the beginning of true wisdom.

Application

Be willing to look foolish to the world in order to be faithful to God.

XIX. FOOLISHNESS IN GOD'S SIGHT

1 Corinthians 3:19 — “He Catches the Wise in Their Craftiness”

“For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness.””
In Chapter 1, Paul said the cross looks foolish to the world.
Now he turns it around.
The world's wisdom looks foolish to God.
Paul quotes from the book of Job.
The crafty think they are clever.
But God catches them in their own schemes.
Like a hunter whose trap catches himself.

Human cleverness cannot outsmart God.

Cross References

Job 5:13
He catches the wise in their own clever plans, and the schemes of the crafty are quickly ruined.
James 3:15
That kind of wisdom does not come down from heaven. It is earthly, unspiritual, and comes from the devil.
Romans 1:22
They claimed to be wise, but they became fools.

Spiritual Principle

No one can outsmart God.

Key Truth

What the world calls wise, God may call foolish.
What the world calls foolish, God may call wise.

XX. THE THOUGHTS OF THE WISE ARE FUTILE

1 Corinthians 3:20 — The Lord Knows

“And again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.””
Paul adds a second Scripture, this time from Psalm 94.
“The Lord knows.”
God sees every thought.
He knows every plan.
And He calls the thoughts of the worldly wise **“futile.”**
The word means empty, useless, like a breath that vanishes.
The Corinthians were impressed by human wisdom.
God was not.

Cross References

Psalm 94:11
The LORD knows people's thoughts. He knows they are only a breath.
Psalm 144:4
A human being is like a breath. His days are like a passing shadow.
Isaiah 40:17
All the nations are like nothing before Him. He thinks of them as less than nothing, as empty and worthless.

Spiritual Principle

Human wisdom without God is a breath that quickly disappears.

Application

Do not build your life on ideas that will vanish.
Build it on the word of God, which lasts forever.

XXI. NO MORE BOASTING

1 Corinthians 3:21 — “All Things Are Yours”

“So then, no more boasting about human leaders! All things are yours,”
Paul draws his conclusion.
“No more boasting about human leaders!”
The Corinthians were boasting in Paul or Apollos.
Paul says stop.
Then he gives the reason, and it is wonderful.
“All things are yours.”
The Corinthians were making themselves small.
Each one was claiming one leader.
Paul says, **“Why settle for one? God has given you everything.”**
When you belong to Christ, you do not need to boast in any human being.
You are already rich beyond measure.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:31
> So, as Scripture says, “Whoever brags should brag about the Lord.”

Jeremiah 9:24
> But whoever brags should brag about this: that he understands and knows Me—that I am the LORD, who shows faithful love, justice, and righteousness on the earth. These are the things I delight in, says the LORD.

Romans 8:32
> God did not hold back His own Son but gave Him up for all of us. So won't He also, along with Him, freely give us everything?

Spiritual Principle

Boasting in people makes us poor; belonging to Christ makes us rich.

XXII. ALL ARE YOURS

1 Corinthians 3:22 — Paul, Apollos, Cephas, the World, Life, and Death

“whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours,”
Paul now lists what belongs to the believer.
Paul, Apollos, and Cephas.
The Corinthians said, **“I belong to Paul.”**

Paul says, **“No, Paul belongs to you.”**
God's servants are gifts to the whole church.
The world.
Believers will one day inherit it with Christ.
Life and death.
Life is for serving Christ.
Death is the doorway into His presence.
The present and the future.
Today and tomorrow are both in God's hands for the good of His people.
Nothing can ultimately be against those who belong to God.

Cross References

Romans 8:38
> I am completely sure that neither death nor life, neither angels nor rulers, neither things now nor things to come, nor any powers—

Romans 14:8
> If we live, we live for the Lord. If we die, we die for the Lord. So whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord.

Philippians 1:21
> For me, living means living for Christ, and dying means gaining even more.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, everything—even death—serves the good of God's people.

Key Truth

The believer does not belong to the world.
The world, in a sense, belongs to the believer.

XXIII. YOU ARE OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 3:23 — Christ Is of God

“and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”
Paul ends the chapter with the most important truth of all.
All things are yours.
But you are not your own.
“You are of Christ.”
You belong to Him.
Not to Paul.
Not to Apollos.
Not to yourself.
And then:
“Christ is of God.”
This does not mean Christ is less than God.
Paul has already called Him the Lord of glory.
It means that in His work as Savior, the Son came from the Father and lives to glorify the Father.
Everything flows to the glory of God.

The chain is complete:
All things belong to you.
You belong to Christ.
Christ belongs to God.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 11:3
> But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, the man is the head of the woman, and God is the head of Christ.

1 Corinthians 15:28
> When everything has been placed under Christ, then the Son Himself will also place Himself under God, who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all.

Galatians 3:29
> If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring and heirs of what God promised.

Spiritual Principle

Our greatest identity is not who we follow but whose we are.

Key Truth

The Corinthians said, **“I belong to Paul.”**
Paul answers, **“You belong to Christ.”**
That is the end of every division.

XXIV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 3

1. Spiritual Maturity Matters

The Corinthians had the Spirit, but they were still acting like infants.

Principle:

Jealousy and divisions are marks of immaturity; true growth comes by living in the Spirit.

2. God Gives the Increase

Paul planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow.

Principle:

Human leaders are servants, but only God produces lasting growth.

3. Christ Is the One Foundation

No one can lay any other foundation than Jesus Christ.

Principle:

Everything built apart from Christ will not stand the test of eternity.

4. We Are God's Temple

God's Spirit dwells among His people.

Principle:

Believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit, and God takes His temple seriously.

5. True Wisdom Is God's Wisdom

The wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight.

Principle:

The wisdom of this world will fail, but the wisdom of God endures forever.

6. We Belong to Christ

All things are ours, but we are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

Principle:

All things are ours in Him, but ultimately we are His possession, and He belongs to God.

XXV. THREE PICTURES OF THE CHURCH

In 1 Corinthians 3, Paul uses three pictures to describe the church.

The Church Is God's Field

Workers plant and water.
God gives the growth.
Lesson: **No worker can take credit for the harvest.**

The Church Is God's Building

Christ is the only foundation.
Builders must choose their materials carefully.
Lesson: **Every builder will be tested.**

The Church Is God's Temple

God's Spirit dwells among His people.
The temple is holy.
Lesson: **Whoever harms the church answers to God.**

Key Truth

Each picture shows that the church belongs to God.
The church is God's field to grow, God's building to stand, and God's temple to dwell in.

XXVI. THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE

Chapters 2 and 3 describe three kinds of people.

The Person Without the Spirit

Does not accept the things of God.
Sees them as foolishness.
Needs to be born again.

The Person Who Lives by the Spirit

Has the Spirit and walks in the Spirit.
Discerns spiritual things.
Grows toward maturity.

The Worldly Believer

Has the Spirit but lives like the world.
Is marked by jealousy and quarreling.
Remains an infant in Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every believer has the Spirit, but every believer must choose to walk by the Spirit.

XXVII. THE TESTING OF OUR WORK

Verses 10–15 teach important truths about the coming Day.

Who Is Tested?

Those who have built on the foundation of Christ.

What Is Tested?

Not our salvation, which rests on Christ.
Our work—what we have built on Him.

How Is It Tested?

By fire, which reveals the quality of each person's work.

What Are the Results?

- Work that survives receives a reward.
- Work that burns brings loss.
- The builder who belongs to Christ is still saved.

Key Truth

We are saved by grace through faith, but we will give an account for how we have built.

XXVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 3 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

The Foundation

He is the only foundation that has been laid.

The Owner of His People

“You are of Christ.” Believers belong to Him.

The Coming Judge

The Day of His return will reveal the quality of every work.

The Son Who Glorifies the Father

“Christ is of God.” His work as Savior leads to the glory of the Father.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christ is the beginning of the church as its foundation and the goal of the church as its Lord.

XXIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul call the Corinthians “infants in Christ”?
They were truly believers, but they had not grown up.
Their jealousy and quarreling showed that they were still acting in worldly ways.

Question 2

What is the difference between milk and solid food?
Milk is the basic teaching of the gospel for new believers.
Solid food is deeper teaching for those who are growing.
The Corinthians should have been ready for solid food, but they were not.

Question 3

How did Paul know the Corinthians were still worldly?
There was jealousy and quarreling among them.
They were acting like people who did not know God.

Question 4

What does Paul mean when he calls himself and Apollos “only servants”?

They were not the source of the Corinthians' faith.
They were simply the instruments God used.
Each did the task the Lord gave him.

Question 5

What does “I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow” teach us?
Different servants have different jobs.
All of them are needed.
But only God can give life and growth.

Question 6

Does God reward success or faithfulness?
Paul says each will be rewarded according to his own labor.
God rewards faithful work, even when the results are not seen.

Question 7

Why is Jesus Christ the only foundation?
He alone saves.
The church was built on Him and cannot be built on anything else.
Any other foundation will fail.

Question 8

What do the building materials represent?
Gold, silver, and costly stones represent work that is true, faithful, and lasting.
Wood, hay, and straw represent work that is shallow, worldly, or temporary.

Question 9

If a believer's work is burned up, does he lose his salvation?
No.
Paul says he will suffer loss, but he will still be saved.
His salvation rests on Christ, not on his work.
What he loses is the reward.

Question 10

What does it mean that the church is God's temple?
God's Spirit lives among His gathered people.
That makes the church holy.
Those who harm the church will answer to God.

Question 11

Why must a person become a “fool” to become wise?
He must humbly accept the message of the cross, even though the world calls it foolish.
Pride blocks true wisdom.
Humility opens the door to it.

Question 12

What does “all things are yours” mean?
Believers do not need to boast in one human leader.
In Christ, God has given them every servant, every gift, and every blessing.
Even life, death, the present, and the future serve their good.
And above all, they belong to Christ.

XXX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 3 asks several important questions.

Am I Growing Up in Christ?

Or am I still living on milk?

Is There Jealousy or Quarreling in My Heart?

These are signs of worldliness, not spirituality.

Am I Following a Person or Following Christ?

Leaders are servants, not masters.

Am I Doing My Part and Trusting God for the Growth?

I can plant and water.
Only God can make it grow.

What Am I Building With?

Will my work survive the fire?

How Do I Treat God's Temple?

Do my words build up the church or tear it down?

Do I Think I Am Wise?

Am I humble enough to learn from God?

Do I Remember Whose I Am?

I belong to Christ.

XXXI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Build on the Rock, Build to Last”

Every person is building something.
A family.
A career.
A ministry.
A reputation.
A life.
Some build quickly with whatever is easy.
Some build slowly with what is costly.
From the outside, both buildings may look impressive for a while.
But a day is coming when fire will test every work.
Then the difference will be clear.
What was built on Christ with truth, faithfulness, and love will shine.
What was built for show, for pride, or for self will be gone.
This creates a powerful principle.
It is not enough to be on the right foundation.
We must also build the right way.

Principle:

Build your life on Christ, and build with what will last forever.

XXXII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 3 was written to a church that had stopped growing.
They had the Spirit.
They had gifts.
They had great teachers.
But they were still infants.
They were jealous.
They were quarreling.
They were boasting in men.
Paul did not answer them by choosing a side.
He pointed them to God.
God gives the growth.
God laid the foundation.
God will test the work.
God lives in His temple.
God owns His people.
1 Corinthians 3 therefore reminds us:
Never stop growing.
Never make heroes of God's servants.
Never build on any foundation but Christ.

Never treat God's church lightly.
Never forget that you belong to Him.
The church does not stand on great leaders.
It stands on:
One foundation.
One Spirit.
One God who gives the growth.
And one Lord to whom we all belong.
The same truth still unites:
Tell people that Christ is the only foundation.
Tell people that God gives the growth.
Tell people that the church is God's holy temple.
Tell people that everything is theirs in Christ.
And until the Day comes:
Grow up in Christ.
Serve faithfully.
Build with care.
Boast only in the Lord.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for calling us Your field, Your building, and Your temple.
Thank You for the servants You have sent to plant and water in our lives.
Thank You that You alone give the growth.
Thank You that Jesus Christ is the one sure foundation, already laid.
Thank You that Your Spirit dwells among Your people.
Thank You that all things are ours in Christ, and that we belong to Him.
Forgive us for the times we have stayed spiritual infants when we should have grown.
Forgive us for jealousy and quarreling.
Forgive us for boasting in people instead of boasting in You.
Forgive us for building with wood, hay, and straw.
Help us grow up in Christ.
Give us an appetite for Your word.
Help us serve faithfully, whether we plant or water.
Teach us to build with care, using what will last forever.
Make us humble, so that we may become truly wise.
Help us treat Your church as holy, because You live among us.
Guard our words, so that we build up Your temple and never tear it down.
Prepare us for the Day when every work will be tested.
And may we hear our Master say, “Well done.”
“You are of Christ, and Christ is of God.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.” — 1 Corinthians 3:11

Central Truth

Jesus Christ is the only foundation of the church, God alone gives the growth, and His people are His holy temple who belong to Christ, so there is no room for pride in human leaders.

1 Corinthians 3 in One Sentence

Paul tells a jealous and divided church to grow up, to see its leaders as servants of the God who gives the growth, to build carefully on Christ the only foundation, to honor the church as God's holy temple, and to remember that all things are theirs because they belong to Christ.

1 Corinthians Chapter 4 — Faithfulness in God's Household

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 4 brings Paul's long answer about divisions to a close.
For three chapters, Paul has been dealing with a church that was proud of its leaders, proud of its wisdom, and proud of itself.
In Chapter 3, he told them that leaders are only servants and that God gives the growth.
Now he explains how the church should think about those servants.
They are **servants of Christ.**
They are **stewards** in God's household.
And the one thing required of a steward is faithfulness.
This means the Corinthians were not qualified to judge Paul.
Neither was any human court.
Not even Paul himself.
Only the Lord can judge, and He will do it when He comes.
Then Paul does something unexpected.
He uses sharp irony.
The Corinthians acted as if they were already kings.
They felt rich, wise, strong, and honored.
Meanwhile, the apostles were hungry, poorly dressed, beaten, homeless, and treated like the garbage of the world.
Paul is not complaining.
He is showing them what true Christian leadership looks like.
It looks like the cross.
Finally, Paul's tone changes.
He speaks as a father to his children.
He urges them to imitate him.
He sends Timothy to remind them of his way of life.
And he warns the proud that he is coming.
Will he come with a rod of discipline?

Or with love and a gentle spirit?
That choice was up to them.
The chapter moves through five movements:

- Ministers and Stewards (verses 1–5).
- Pride and Humility (verses 6–8).
- Apostles as Spectacles (verses 9–13).
- A Father's Warning (verses 14–17).
- The Kingdom in Power (verses 18–21).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 4 is:
God's servants are stewards who must prove faithful to Him, and since everything we have is received from God, the true mark of His people is not pride but humble, suffering faithfulness.

I. SERVANTS OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 4:1 — “Stewards of the Mysteries of God”

“So then, people ought to regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God.”
Paul tells the church how to think of its leaders.
Not as celebrities.
Not as party heads.
But as **“servants of Christ.”**
The word Paul uses here was used for an assistant who worked under someone else's orders.
The servant did not set the plan.
He carried it out.
Paul also calls them **“stewards.”**
A steward was a household manager.
He was often a slave himself.
But the master trusted him with the household's resources.
He managed what belonged to someone else.
What were the apostles trusted with?
“The mysteries of God.”
This is the gospel, the hidden wisdom of God that has now been revealed in Christ.
The apostles did not own the message.
They were trusted to manage it faithfully.

Cross References

Titus 1:7
An overseer manages God's household, so he must be blameless. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered, not a heavy drinker, not violent, and not greedy for money.

1 Peter 4:10
Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

1 Corinthians 3:5
What, after all, is Apollos? What is Paul? We are only servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord gave each of us our work.

Spiritual Principle

Christian leaders are managers of God's truth, not owners of it.

Key Truth

Every believer is a steward of something God has entrusted to them.
Our gifts, our time, our money, and the gospel itself belong to God.

II. REQUIRED TO BE FAITHFUL

1 Corinthians 4:2 — The One Requirement

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”
What does a master want most from a steward?
Not cleverness.
Not popularity.
Not impressive speech.
Faithfulness.
The Corinthians were judging leaders by how well they spoke and how wise they seemed.
God judges them by whether they were faithful.
Did they manage what He gave them the way He wanted?
Did they deliver the message without changing it?
Did they serve His people well?
This is a great relief to ordinary believers.
God does not require you to be famous.
He does not require you to be gifted above others.
He requires you to be faithful.

Cross References

Luke 12:42

> The Lord answered, “Who then is the faithful and wise manager whom the master puts in charge of his household servants, to give them their food at the right time?”

Luke 16:10

> Whoever can be trusted with very little can also be trusted with much. Whoever is dishonest with very little will also be dishonest with much.

Matthew 25:21

> His master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You were faithful with a few things, so I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's joy.”

Spiritual Principle

God measures His servants by faithfulness, not by fame.

Application

Be faithful in the small things God has given you.
Faithfulness in little is the path to faithfulness in much.

III. NOT JUDGED BY HUMAN COURTS

1 Corinthians 4:3 — “It Matters Very Little”

“But to me it matters very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I do not even judge myself.”
The Corinthians were sitting in judgment on Paul.
Some liked him.
Some preferred Apollos.
Some thought Paul was not impressive enough.
Paul says their opinion **“matters very little.”**
He is not being proud.
He is not saying he does not care about them.
He is saying their verdict is not the final verdict.
Neither is the verdict of **“any human court.”**
Then Paul goes further:
“I do not even judge myself.”
Paul did not trust his own self-evaluation to be the final word either.
People can be too hard on themselves.
People can be too easy on themselves.
Only one Judge sees perfectly.

Cross References

Romans 14:4
> Who are you to judge someone else's servant? Whether he stands or falls is up to his own master. And he will stand, because the Lord is able to make him stand.

1 Samuel 16:7
> But the LORD said to Samuel, “Don't look at his appearance or how tall he is, because I have rejected him. The LORD does not see as people see. People look at the outside, but the LORD looks at the heart.”

2 Corinthians 10:18
> It is not the person who praises himself who is approved, but the person the Lord praises.

Spiritual Principle

The servant of Christ lives for an audience of One.

Application

Do not be crushed by people's criticism.
Do not be puffed up by people's praise.
Live for the Lord's approval.

IV. THE LORD IS MY JUDGE

1 Corinthians 4:4 — A Clear Conscience Is Not Enough

“My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.”

Paul was not aware of any unfaithfulness in his ministry.
“My conscience is clear.”
But he knew that a clear conscience does not prove innocence.
The conscience can be mistaken.
We may have blind spots we cannot see.
So Paul does not rest in his own feelings about himself.
“It is the Lord who judges me.”
This is both humbling and freeing.
Humbling, because the Lord sees what we miss.
Freeing, because the One who judges us is also the One who died for us.

Cross References

Psalm 143:2
Do not bring Your servant into court, because no one alive is righteous before You.
Job 9:2
Yes, I know this is true. But how can a person be right before God?
Romans 8:34
Who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is the One who died—more than that, who was raised to life—and He is at the right hand of God, praying for us.

Spiritual Principle

Our own conscience is a helpful witness, but it is not the final judge.

Key Truth

We are not judged by how we feel about ourselves.
We are judged by the Lord, who knows everything.

V. WAIT UNTIL THE LORD COMES

1 Corinthians 4:5 — Judge Nothing Before the Appointed Time

“Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait until the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time each will receive their praise from God.”
Paul draws the conclusion.
“Judge nothing before the appointed time.”
This does not mean believers should never tell right from wrong.
In the very next chapter, Paul will tell the church to judge sin in its midst.
Here he is speaking about judging the hidden worth of another servant's ministry and heart.
That judgment belongs to the Lord, and it will happen **“when the Lord comes.”**
On that day He will do two things.
He will **“bring to light what is hidden in darkness.”**
He will **“expose the motives of the heart.”**
Every secret action and every hidden motive will be seen.
And then Paul ends with a beautiful promise:
“Each will receive their praise from God.”
Paul expects that faithful servants will be praised by God Himself.

Cross References

Romans 2:16
This will happen on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, just as my good news says.
Romans 14:10
So why do you judge your brother or sister? Or why do you look down on them? We will all stand before God's judgment seat.
Daniel 2:22
He reveals deep and hidden things. He knows what is in the darkness, and light lives with Him.

Spiritual Principle

God alone can judge the motives of the heart.

Key Truth

The praise that matters most is not the praise of people.
It is the praise that comes from God.

VI. NOT BEYOND WHAT IS WRITTEN

1 Corinthians 4:6 — Puffed Up Over Leaders

“Brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn not to go beyond what is written. Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.”
Paul explains why he has been using himself and Apollos as examples.
It was **“for your benefit.”**
He wanted the Corinthians to learn a lesson.
“Not to go beyond what is written.”
This most likely means: Do not go beyond what Scripture teaches.
Paul had been quoting the Old Testament again and again to show that God humbles the proud.
The Corinthians were going beyond Scripture by building up human leaders.
The result was that they were **“puffed up.”**
This word pictures something swollen with air.
It looks big, but it is empty inside.
Paul will use this word several times in the letter.
It was one of the Corinthians' greatest problems.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:21
So stop bragging about human leaders. Everything belongs to you.
1 Corinthians 8:1
Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.
Deuteronomy 4:2
Do not add to what I command you, and do not take anything away from it. Keep the commands of the LORD your God that I am giving you.

Spiritual Principle

Staying within Scripture keeps us humble.

Spiritual Warning

Pride puffs us up, but it leaves us empty.

VII. WHAT DO YOU HAVE THAT YOU DID NOT RECEIVE?

1 Corinthians 4:7 — Three Questions That Destroy Pride

“For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?”
This verse is one of the most powerful cures for pride in the Bible.
Paul asks three questions.
“Who makes you different from anyone else?”
If you have gifts or knowledge others do not have, who gave them to you?
“What do you have that you did not receive?”
The answer is: Nothing.
Life, breath, talent, intelligence, opportunity, salvation, spiritual gifts.
Everything was received.
“Why do you boast as though you did not?”
Boasting about a gift is like a child bragging about a present someone else bought.
If it was given, it cannot be a reason for pride.
It can only be a reason for thanks.

Cross References

James 1:17
> Every good and perfect gift comes from above. It comes down from the Father who made the lights in the sky. He does not change like shifting shadows.

John 3:27
> John answered, “A person can receive only what is given to him from heaven.”

1 Chronicles 29:14
> But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give so generously? Everything comes from You, and we have only given You what came from Your hand.

Spiritual Principle

Everything we have is a gift, so everything we have should lead to gratitude, not pride.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Grace received leaves no room for pride.

VIII. ALREADY KINGS?

1 Corinthians 4:8 — Paul's Sharp Irony

“Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us! How I wish that you really had begun to reign so that we also might reign with you.”
Now Paul uses strong irony.
The Corinthians were acting as if they had already arrived.
“Already you have all you want!”
“Already you have become rich!”
“You have begun to reign!”
They acted as if the kingdom of God had fully come and they were already sitting on thrones.
And they were doing it **“without us”**—without the apostles who had brought them the gospel.
Then Paul's tone turns sad.
“How I wish that you really had begun to reign.”
If the kingdom had truly come in its fullness, the apostles would be reigning too.
But they were not.
They were suffering.
The Corinthians had forgotten that the Christian life in this age includes the cross before the crown.

Cross References

Revelation 3:17
> You say, “I am rich. I have become wealthy and need nothing.” But you do not realize that you are miserable, pitiful, poor, blind, and naked.

Luke 6:25
> How terrible for you who are full now, because you will be hungry. How terrible for you who laugh now, because you will mourn and weep.

Hosea 13:6
> When I fed them, they were satisfied. When they were satisfied, they became proud. Then they forgot Me.

Spiritual Principle

The crown comes after the cross, not before it.

Spiritual Warning

Spiritual pride often feels like spiritual success.
The Corinthians felt full, rich, and royal.
In reality, they were in danger.

IX. A SPECTACLE TO THE WORLD

1 Corinthians 4:9 — At the End of the Procession

“For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like those condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole world, to angels as well as to human beings.”
Paul paints a picture his readers would have known well.
When a Roman general won a great victory, he led a parade through the city.
At the very end of the procession came the captives.
Many of them were condemned to die, sometimes in the arena as entertainment for the crowds.
Paul says that is how God has displayed the apostles.
Not at the front of the parade.
At the back, among those condemned to die.
They had become **“a spectacle.”**
The word is the one from which we get our word **theater.**
The whole world was watching.
Even the angels were watching.
The Corinthians wanted to be admired.
The apostles were treated like the lowest of the low.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 4:9
> We are hunted down, but God never abandons us. We are knocked down, but we are not destroyed.

Hebrews 10:33
> Sometimes you were publicly mocked and mistreated, and at other times you stood beside others who were treated that way.

Romans 8:36
> As Scripture says: “For Your sake we face death all day long. We are treated like sheep led to be slaughtered.”

Spiritual Principle

Following Christ often means being on the losing side in the eyes of the world.

Key Truth

Heaven watches how God's people suffer.
Faithfulness in suffering is a testimony to angels as well as people.

X. FOOLS FOR CHRIST

1 Corinthians 4:10 — Three Sharp Contrasts

“We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored!”
Paul sets the apostles beside the Corinthians.
Fools and wise.

Weak and strong.
Dishonored and honored.
Every contrast is a gentle rebuke.
The apostles were living out the message of the cross.
The Corinthians were living by the values of Corinth.
Remember what Paul said in Chapter 1.
God chose the foolish and the weak to shame the wise and the strong.
The apostles were willing to be counted foolish and weak for Christ.
The Corinthians wanted to be counted wise and strong in the eyes of the world.
Paul is asking: Which group looks more like Jesus?

Cross References

2 Corinthians 13:9
We are glad when we are weak and you are strong. And we pray that you will become complete.
1 Corinthians 1:27
But God chose the things the world thinks are foolish to shame the wise. God chose the things the world thinks are weak to shame the strong.
2 Corinthians 6:8
We serve through honor and dishonor, through bad reports and good reports. We are called liars, yet we tell the truth.

Spiritual Principle

It is better to be a fool for Christ than wise in the eyes of the world.

Application

Are you willing to look foolish for Jesus?

XI. HUNGRY, THIRSTY, AND HOMELESS

1 Corinthians 4:11 — “To This Very Hour”

“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless.”
Paul now describes the life of an apostle in plain terms.
Hungry and thirsty.
In rags.
Brutally treated.
Homeless.
Notice the words **“to this very hour.”**
This was not a past season.
It was still happening as Paul wrote the letter.
Paul was not describing a failed ministry.
He was describing a faithful one.
He was following a Master who Himself had no place to lay His head.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:27
I have worked hard and often gone without sleep. I have been hungry and thirsty and often without food. I have been cold and without enough clothing.
Romans 8:35
Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, hardship, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death?
Matthew 8:20
Jesus answered, “Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay His head.”

Spiritual Principle

Hardship is not proof that God has abandoned His servant.

Key Truth

Comfort is not the measure of faithfulness.
Many of God's most faithful servants have suffered the most.

XII. WORKING, BLESSING, ENDURING

1 Corinthians 4:12 — The Way of Christ

“We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it.”
Paul continues the description.
“We work hard with our own hands.”
In Corinth, Paul worked as a tentmaker alongside Aquila and Priscilla.
Greek culture often looked down on manual labor.
Respected teachers expected to be supported.
But Paul worked with his hands so that he would not be a burden and so that no one could say he preached for money.
Then Paul describes how the apostles responded to mistreatment.
“When we are cursed, we bless.”
“When we are persecuted, we endure it.”
This is exactly what Jesus taught.
Love your enemies.
Bless those who curse you.
Paul was not just preaching the Sermon on the Mount.
He was living it.

Cross References

Acts 18:3
Because Paul was a tentmaker just as they were, he stayed and worked with them.
1 Thessalonians 2:9
Brothers and sisters, you remember our hard work and effort. We worked night and day so that we would not be a burden to any of you while we preached God's good news to you.

Romans 12:14
Bless those who persecute you. Bless them and do not curse them.

Spiritual Principle

The way we respond to mistreatment shows whether we have truly learned from Christ.

Application

The next time someone curses you, answer with a blessing.
That is the way of the cross.

XIII. THE GARBAGE OF THE WORLD

1 Corinthians 4:13 — “Right Up to This Moment”

“When we are slandered, we answer kindly. We have become the scum of the earth, the garbage of the world—right up to this moment.”
“When we are slandered, we answer kindly.”
The apostles did not fight back with insults.
They answered with gentle words.
Then Paul uses two of the strongest words he could find.
“The scum of the earth.”
“The garbage of the world.”
These words described the dirt scraped off a dirty pot or the filth wiped away and thrown out.
That is how the world treated the apostles.
The Corinthians wanted honor.
The apostles were treated like trash.
And Paul says this was still true **“right up to this moment.”**

Cross References

Lamentations 3:45
You have made us like trash and garbage among the nations.
Matthew 5:11
You are blessed when people insult you, persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil things about you because of Me.
1 Peter 2:23
When people insulted Him, He did not insult them back. When He suffered, He did not threaten. Instead, He trusted Himself to God, who judges fairly.

Spiritual Principle

The world's opinion of God's servants is not God's opinion of them.
The world called the apostles garbage.
God called them His treasured servants.

Key Truth

Jesus was also treated as worthless.
Those who follow Him should not be surprised when they are treated the same way.

XIV. NOT TO SHAME BUT TO WARN

1 Corinthians 4:14 — “My Dear Children”

“I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children.”
Paul's tone changes completely.
After the sharp irony, he speaks with tenderness.
He did not write to **shame** them.
He wrote to **warn** them.
Shame pushes people down.
Warning lifts them up and turns them around.
And notice what he calls them:
“My dear children.”
Paul loved the Corinthians.
Even his hardest words came from a father's heart.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 2:11
You know that we treated each of you the way a father treats his own children.
Hebrews 12:6
The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He corrects everyone He accepts as His child.
Colossians 1:28
We tell others about Christ, warning and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we can present everyone mature in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Loving correction aims to restore, not to humiliate.

Application

When you must correct someone, ask yourself:
Am I trying to shame this person, or to help this person?

XV. MANY GUARDIANS, ONE FATHER

1 Corinthians 4:15 — “I Became Your Father Through the Gospel”

“Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”
Paul explains his special relationship with the Corinthians.
In a wealthy Roman household, a child might have a **guardian.**
This was usually a trusted slave who took the child to school, watched over him, and corrected him.
A child could have many guardians over the years.
But he had only one father.
The Corinthians had many teachers.
Apollos and others had helped them.

But Paul was the one who first brought them the gospel.
“In Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel.”
He was their spiritual father.
Notice that it was **“in Christ Jesus”** and **“through the gospel.”**
Paul did not give them new life by his own power.
God did it through the message Paul preached.

Cross References

Galatians 4:19
> My dear children, I am again going through the pain of childbirth for you until Christ is formed in you.

Philemon 1:10
> I am appealing to you for my son Onesimus, who became my son in the faith while I was in chains.

1 Timothy 1:2
> To Timothy, my true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Teachers instruct, but spiritual fathers and mothers love, sacrifice, and stay committed.

Application

Who has been a spiritual father or mother to you?
To whom could you be a spiritual father or mother?

XVI. IMITATE ME

1 Corinthians 4:16 — A Father's Example

“Therefore I urge you to imitate me.”
Children learn by watching their parents.
So Paul urges his spiritual children:
“Imitate me.”
This is not pride.
Paul has just described what his life looked like.
Hunger.
Hard work.
Blessing those who cursed him.
Answering slander with kindness.
Being treated like garbage for Christ.
He is calling them to follow him in the way of the cross.
Later in the letter, Paul will add the key phrase:
“Follow my example, just as I follow the example of Christ.”
Paul is a safe example only because he is following Jesus.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 11:1
> Follow my example, just as I follow the example of Christ.

Philippians 3:17
Brothers and sisters, join together in following my example. Pay attention to those who live the way we showed you.
2 Thessalonians 3:9
We did this not because we don't have the right to receive support, but to give you an example to follow.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian life is learned by example as well as by teaching.

Application

Could you honestly say to a younger believer, “Follow my example”?

XVII. TIMOTHY, MY BELOVED SON

1 Corinthians 4:17 — A Faithful Reminder

“For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.”
Paul could not come right away.
So he sent **Timothy.**
Timothy was from Lystra.
Paul had met him on his second missionary journey.
He became Paul's closest coworker.
Paul describes him in three ways.
“My son.” Timothy was Paul's spiritual son.
“Whom I love.” Paul's affection for him was deep.
“Faithful in the Lord.” Timothy was the kind of steward God requires.
Timothy's job was to **“remind”** them of Paul's way of life in Christ.
Paul's life and Paul's teaching matched.
And his teaching was the same **“everywhere in every church.”**
Paul did not have one message for Corinth and another for somewhere else.

Cross References

2 Timothy 1:2
To Timothy, my dear son: Grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord.
Philippians 2:22
But you know how Timothy has proven himself. Like a son working with his father, he has served with me in spreading the good news.
Acts 16:1
Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra. A disciple named Timothy lived there. His mother was a Jewish believer, but his father was Greek.

Spiritual Principle

A faithful life and faithful teaching must go together.

Key Truth

Paul's example was worth imitating because it matched his message.

XVIII. SOME HAVE BECOME ARROGANT

1 Corinthians 4:18 — As If Paul Were Not Coming

“Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you.”
Paul now speaks to a specific group.
Some in Corinth had become **arrogant.**
The word is the same one Paul used in verse 6—**puffed up.**
They thought Paul was not coming back.
Maybe they thought he was afraid to face them.
Maybe they thought sending Timothy meant Paul was staying away.
With Paul gone, they felt free to act as the leaders of the church and to look down on his teaching.
Pride often grows when people think no one will hold them accountable.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 5:2
> And you are proud! Shouldn't you have been filled with grief instead, and removed from your group the man who did this?

2 Corinthians 12:20
> I am afraid that when I come, I may not find you the way I want you to be. I fear there may be fighting, jealousy, angry tempers, selfish ambition, gossip, slander, pride, and disorder.

2 Corinthians 13:2
> I already warned you when I was with you the second time, and I warn you again now that I am away: When I come again, I will not spare those who sinned before or any of the others.

Spiritual Principle

Pride grows where people think they will never have to give an account.

Spiritual Warning

The Lord's servant may be delayed.
The Lord Himself is coming.
Live as if He could arrive today.

XIX. IF THE LORD IS WILLING

1 Corinthians 4:19 — Talk or Power?

“But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have.”
Paul answers the proud.
“I will come to you very soon.”
But notice his humility:
“If the Lord is willing.”

Paul made plans, but he submitted them to God.
And when he came, he would test the arrogant.
Not by their words.
The Corinthians were good at talking.
But by their **power**—the real spiritual power of God at work in their lives.
Big talk is easy.
Real spiritual power is shown in changed lives, love, holiness, and faithfulness.

Cross References

James 4:15
Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wants, we will live and do this or that.”
Acts 18:21
But as he left, he promised, “I will come back to you if God wants me to.” Then he sailed from Ephesus.
Acts 19:21
After all this happened, Paul decided, led by the Spirit, to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and then go to Jerusalem. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must also visit Rome.”

Spiritual Principle

Make your plans, but hold them in submission to God's will.

Key Truth

God is not impressed by what we say.
He looks for what His power is doing in us.

XX. THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS POWER

1 Corinthians 4:20 — Not a Matter of Talk

“For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.”
Here is one of the great sentences of the chapter.
The Corinthians loved words.
Speeches, debates, clever arguments, and spiritual talk.
But Paul says the kingdom of God does not consist in talk.
It consists in **power.**
This is the power of the Holy Spirit.
The power that saves sinners.
The power that changes lives.
The power that produces love, humility, and holiness.
A church can be full of talk and empty of power.

Cross References

Romans 14:17
For the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. It is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 1:5

Our good news came to you not only in words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit, and with deep confidence. You know how we lived among you for your benefit.

Mark 9:1

And He said to them, “I tell you the truth, some of the people standing here will not die before they see God's kingdom come with power.”

Spiritual Principle

The true test of faith is not what we say but what God's power produces in us.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Words describe the kingdom; power displays it.

XXI. A ROD OR A GENTLE SPIRIT?

1 Corinthians 4:21 — The Choice Is Yours

“What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a rod of discipline, or shall I come in love and with a gentle spirit?”
Paul ends the chapter with a question.
He is coming.
That is settled.
But how will he come?
With a rod of discipline?
A father who loves his children will correct them when they need it.
Or in love and with a gentle spirit?
This is clearly what Paul wanted.
Notice that both options come from love.
Discipline is also love.
But Paul preferred gentleness.
The difference would depend on how the Corinthians responded to his letter.
If they repented, he could come gently.
If they stayed proud, he would come with correction.

Cross References

Proverbs 13:24

Whoever refuses to discipline his son hates him, but the one who loves him is careful to correct him.

2 Corinthians 10:1

I, Paul, appeal to you by the gentleness and kindness of Christ—I who am said to be timid when I am face to face with you, but bold toward you when I am away.

Galatians 6:1

Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should gently help that person back on the right path. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.

Spiritual Principle

Correction flows from love, and the response of the heart decides whether it comes gently or firmly.

Application

God also deals with His children this way.
A humble heart that responds to His word spares itself much harder correction.

XXII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 4

1. Faithfulness Is Required

Stewards must prove faithful.

Principle:

A steward's value is not measured by human opinion but by God's judgment.

2. Boasting Is Empty

“What do you have that you did not receive?”

Principle:

Everything we have is received from God; pride has no place in the kingdom.

3. True Apostleship Suffers

The apostles were hungry, homeless, mistreated, and treated like garbage.

Principle:

Faithful service to Christ often brings hardship and humiliation in this world.

4. Spiritual Fatherhood Matters

Paul became their father through the gospel and urged them to imitate him.

Principle:

God uses spiritual fathers and mothers to bring believers to life and to model the way of Christ.

5. The Kingdom Is Power, Not Just Words

The kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Principle:

Empty talk is worthless unless it is backed by the transforming power of God.

6. Correction Flows from Love

Paul would come with a rod or with gentleness.

Principle:

Loving leaders prefer gentleness but will discipline when needed to protect Christ's church.

XXIII. STEWARDS IN THE ANCIENT HOUSEHOLD

Paul's picture of a steward would have been familiar to the Corinthians.

Who Was a Steward?

A household manager, often a slave, placed in charge of the master's property.

What Did He Do?

He managed the household's money, supplies, and servants.
He made sure everyone received what they needed at the right time.

What Did He Own?

Nothing.
Everything he managed belonged to his master.

What Was Required of Him?

Faithfulness.
The master needed to be able to trust him completely.

Who Judged Him?

Only the master.
Not the other servants.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every believer is a steward in God's household: we own nothing, we manage everything for Him, and we will answer to Him alone.

XXIV. THE CORINTHIANS AND THE APOSTLES

In verses 8–13, Paul sets two pictures side by side.

How the Corinthians Saw Themselves

- Full and satisfied.

- Rich.
- Already reigning like kings.
- Wise in Christ.
- Strong.
- Honored.

How the Apostles Actually Lived

- Hungry and thirsty.
- In rags.
- Brutally treated.
- Homeless.
- Working with their hands.
- Cursed, persecuted, and slandered.
- Treated like the garbage of the world.

Key Truth

The Corinthians were living as if the crown had already come.
The apostles were living under the cross.
In this age, the path of Christ runs through the cross before it reaches the crown.

XXV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 4 TEACHES ABOUT JUDGMENT

Human Judgment Is Limited

Other people cannot see the heart.

Self-Judgment Is Limited

Even a clear conscience does not prove innocence.

The Lord Is the Judge

“It is the Lord who judges me.”

Judgment Waits for His Coming

“Judge nothing before the appointed time.”

Nothing Will Be Hidden

He will bring hidden things to light and expose the motives of the heart.

Faithful Servants Will Be Praised

“Each will receive their praise from God.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Because the Lord will judge, we can stop living for human approval and start living for His.

XXVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What is a steward, and why does Paul use that word?
A steward was a household manager trusted with what belonged to his master.
Paul uses the word to show that leaders do not own the gospel or the church.
They manage God's things for Him.

Question 2

What is the one thing required of a steward?
Faithfulness.
God does not require His servants to be impressive.
He requires them to be trustworthy.

Question 3

Why did Paul say it mattered very little if the Corinthians judged him?
Their judgment was not the final judgment.
Only the Lord's judgment counts.
Paul was not proud; he was simply living for God's approval.

Question 4

Why isn't a clear conscience enough to prove innocence?
Our conscience can be mistaken.
We may have sins and blind spots we cannot see.
Only the Lord sees perfectly.

Question 5

Does verse 5 mean Christians should never judge anything?
No.
In the next chapter, Paul tells the church to deal with open sin.
Verse 5 means we must not pass final judgment on other servants' hidden motives and the worth of their ministry.
That belongs to the Lord when He comes.

Question 6

What does “not go beyond what is written” mean?
It most likely means not to go beyond what Scripture teaches.
The Corinthians were going beyond Scripture by exalting human leaders and becoming proud.

Question 7

How does verse 7 destroy pride?
It reminds us that everything we have was received from God.
If it was a gift, we cannot boast as if we earned it.

Question 8

Why does Paul use irony in verse 8?
The Corinthians acted as if they were already kings.
Paul's irony exposes how foolish their pride was.
The apostles were still suffering, and the kingdom had not yet fully come.

Question 9

What picture does Paul use in verse 9?
A Roman victory parade, where captives condemned to die marched at the very end.
The apostles were treated like those captives, a spectacle to the world and to angels.

Question 10

How did the apostles respond to mistreatment?
When cursed, they blessed.
When persecuted, they endured.
When slandered, they answered kindly.
They followed the example and teaching of Jesus.

Question 11

What is the difference between a guardian and a father?
A guardian supervised and corrected a child for a time.
A father gave life and had a lasting, loving bond.
Many taught the Corinthians, but Paul brought them to life through the gospel.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 4 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 4 should cause believers to live:

- As faithful stewards of what God has given them.
- For God's approval rather than human praise.
- Thankful instead of proud.
- Willing to suffer for Christ.
- Blessing those who mistreat them.
- Following godly examples and becoming one for others.
- Showing God's power, not just talking about it.
- Humble and teachable when corrected.

XXVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 4 asks several important questions.

Am I a Faithful Steward?

What has God entrusted to me, and am I managing it for Him?

Whose Approval Am I Living For?

People's applause, or the Lord's?

Do I Judge Other Believers' Hearts?

Am I leaving that to the Lord?

What Do I Have That I Did Not Receive?

Is my heart full of pride or full of thanks?

Am I Willing to Look Foolish for Christ?

Or do I want the world's honor?

How Do I Respond When I Am Mistreated?

With cursing or with blessing?

Who Is Following My Example?

Is my life worth imitating?

Is My Faith Mostly Talk?

Or is God's power changing my life?

How Do I Respond to Correction?

With pride, or with a humble heart?

XXVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Steward Answers Only to the Master”

A steward lives under many eyes.
The other servants watch him.
People outside the house talk about him.
He even judges himself.
But none of those voices decides his future.
Only the master does.
This is how every believer should live.
People will praise us.
People will criticize us.

We will sometimes think too highly of ourselves.
We will sometimes think too little of ourselves.
But one day the Master will come.
He will bring hidden things to light.
He will see our motives.
And He will give His own verdict.
This creates a powerful principle.
We are free from living for people's approval.
And we are bound to live for His.

Principle:

Live faithfully today for the only verdict that will matter forever.

XXIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 4 was written to a church that thought it had arrived.
They felt rich.
They felt wise.
They felt strong.
They felt like kings.
And they sat as judges over the servants God had sent them.
Paul answered them with three pictures.
A steward, who must be faithful and answers only to his master.
A captive at the end of a parade, who is treated as nothing by the world.
A father, who loves his children enough to warn them.
1 Corinthians 4 therefore reminds us:
Never forget that you are a steward, not an owner.
Never forget that everything you have was received.
Never forget that the crown comes after the cross.
Never mistake talk for power.
The church does not need more people who think they have arrived.
It needs:
Faithful stewards.
Humble hearts.
Servants willing to suffer.
And lives that show the power of God.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that God requires faithfulness.
Tell people that everything is a gift.
Tell people that following Christ may cost them the world's honor.
Tell people that the Lord will judge, and He will reward His faithful servants.
And until He comes:
Be faithful.
Be thankful.
Bless those who curse you.
Live by the power of God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for trusting us as stewards in Your household.
Thank You for the gospel, the great mystery You have revealed in Christ.
Thank You that You do not ask us to be famous, but to be faithful.
Thank You that You alone are our Judge, and that the One who judges us is the One who died for us.
Thank You that one day You will bring every hidden thing to light, and that Your faithful servants will receive praise from You.
Forgive us for living for the approval of people.
Forgive us for judging the hearts of others.
Forgive us for boasting about gifts we only received from You.
Forgive us for wanting the crown without the cross.
Make us faithful in little things and in great things.
Fill our hearts with thanks instead of pride.
Give us courage to be fools for Christ.
When we are cursed, help us bless.
When we are persecuted, help us endure.
When we are slandered, help us answer kindly.
Thank You for the spiritual fathers and mothers You have given us.
Make our lives examples worth following.
Let our faith be more than talk; let it show Your power.
When You correct us, give us humble hearts that respond quickly.
And on the day You come, may we be found faithful.
“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.” — 1 Corinthians 4:2

Central Truth

God's servants are stewards who must prove faithful to Him, and since everything we have is received from God, the true mark of His people is not pride but humble, suffering faithfulness lived in His power.

1 Corinthians 4 in One Sentence

Paul reminds a proud church that its leaders are stewards judged only by the Lord, that every gift is received from God, that true servants of Christ walk the way of the cross, and that as their spiritual father he is coming to see whether their faith is mere talk or the real power of God.

1 Corinthians Chapter 5 — Discipline in the Church

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 5 marks a turning point in Paul's letter.
For four chapters, Paul has dealt with pride and division in the church.
Now he turns to a specific sin.
And it is shocking.
A man in the church was living in a sexual relationship with his father's wife.
This was a sin so serious that even the pagan world around Corinth condemned it.
But the church was not grieving.
It was boasting.
Perhaps they were proud of how tolerant and open-minded they were.
Perhaps they thought their freedom in Christ meant that what a person did with his body did not matter.
Either way, they did nothing.
Paul does not hesitate.
He calls the church to act.
The man must be removed from the fellowship.
Not to destroy him.
But so that he might be saved.
Then Paul explains why this matters so much.
Sin in the church is like **leaven**, the yeast that spreads through a whole batch of dough.
If it is left alone, it affects everyone.
And Paul reminds them of the Passover.
Israel removed all leaven from their homes before the feast.
Christians must do the same, because **Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.**
Finally, Paul clears up a misunderstanding.
He is not telling believers to separate from sinners in the world.
Jesus Himself ate with sinners.
He is telling them not to keep close fellowship with someone who claims to be a believer while openly and persistently living in sin.
God will judge those outside.
The church is responsible for those inside.
The chapter moves through three movements:

- A Grave Sin in the Church (verses 1–5).
- Purging Out the Old Leaven (verses 6–8).
- Separation from the Unrepentant (verses 9–13).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 5 is:
Because Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed to make us a holy people, the church must not tolerate open, unrepentant sin among its members, but must lovingly discipline for the sake of the sinner's salvation and the purity of the whole church.

I. A SIN NOT EVEN TOLERATED AMONG THE GENTILES

1 Corinthians 5:1 — “A Man Has His Father's Wife”

“It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind not even tolerated among the Gentiles: a man has his father's wife!”
Paul begins with the news that reached him.
“It is actually reported.”
This was not a private rumor.
It was widely known.
The sin was **sexual immorality.**
The Greek word is broad and covers every kind of sexual sin outside of marriage.
And this case was especially serious.
“A man has his father's wife.”
Paul does not say **“his mother.”**
So this was most likely his stepmother.
The word **“has”** shows that this was not a single act.
It was an ongoing relationship.
God's law had clearly forbidden it.
Even Roman law and Gentile culture condemned it.
Corinth was famous for immorality, yet even Corinth found this shameful.
And it was happening in the church.
Notice also that Paul addresses only the man.
He says nothing to the woman.
This suggests that she was not a member of the church, and the church had no responsibility to judge her.

Cross References

Leviticus 18:8
Do not have sexual relations with your father's wife. That would dishonor your father.
Deuteronomy 22:30
A man must not marry his father's wife. He must not dishonor his father's marriage bed.
Deuteronomy 27:20
“Cursed is anyone who sleeps with his father's wife, because he dishonors his father's marriage bed.” Then all the people will say, “Amen!”

Spiritual Principle

God's standards for sexual purity do not change with the culture.

Spiritual Warning

When the church's behavior falls below the standards of the world, its witness is badly damaged.

II. ARROGANT INSTEAD OF MOURNING

1 Corinthians 5:2 — “Should You Not Rather Have Mourned?”

“And you are arrogant! Should you not rather have mourned, so that the one who has done this deed might be removed from among you?”
Paul is even more troubled by the church's response than by the sin itself.
“You are arrogant!”
It is the same word Paul used in Chapter 4: **puffed up.**
The church was proud.
Maybe they were proud of their tolerance.
Maybe they were proud of their spiritual gifts and ignored the sin altogether.
Either way, pride had blinded them.
What should they have done?
“Mourned.”
The word is used for grieving over the dead.
Sin in the church should break the hearts of God's people.
And true mourning would have led to action.
The man should have been **“removed from among you.”**
Pride ignores sin.
Godly sorrow deals with it.

Cross References

James 4:9
> Be sorrowful, mourn, and weep. Turn your laughter into mourning and your joy into sadness.

Ezra 9:3
> When I heard this, I tore my clothes and my robe, pulled hair from my head and beard, and sat down in shock.

2 Corinthians 12:21
> I am afraid that when I come again, my God will humble me in front of you. I may have to grieve over many who sinned earlier and have not turned away from the impurity, sexual sin, and shameless living they took part in.

Spiritual Principle

The right response to sin in the church is grief, not pride.

Key Truth

A church that boasts while sin goes unchecked has lost its sense of God's holiness.

III. PRESENT IN SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 5:3 — Judgment Already Pronounced

“For I, though absent in body but present in spirit, have already pronounced judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present.”
Paul was far away in Ephesus.

But distance did not stop him from acting.
He says he is **“present in spirit.”**
He stood with the church in his heart and in his apostolic authority.
And he had **“already pronounced judgment.”**
The facts were clear.
The sin was public.
The man was not repenting.
Paul did not need more time to decide.
The Corinthians had done nothing.
Paul had already made the judgment they should have made.

Cross References

Colossians 2:5
> Even though I am far away from you in body, I am with you in spirit. I am glad to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

1 Corinthians 4:19
> But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord wants me to. Then I will find out not only what these proud people are saying, but what power they really have.

1 Corinthians 4:21
> Which do you want? Should I come to you with a rod of discipline, or with love and a gentle spirit?

Spiritual Principle

When sin is open and unrepentant, faithful leaders must not delay in addressing it.

Key Truth

Paul's judgment was not personal anger.
It was a faithful application of God's word.

IV. ASSEMBLED IN THE NAME OF THE LORD JESUS

1 Corinthians 5:4 — The Church Gathered with Christ's Power

“When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ,”
Paul now tells the church how to act.
This was not to be done privately by one leader.
It was to be done **“when you are assembled.”**
The whole church was to gather.
And they were to gather **“in the name of our Lord Jesus.”**
This means they were acting under His authority and according to His will.
Paul would be with them **“in spirit.”**
And most importantly, they would act **“with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**
Church discipline is not a human club removing a member.
It is Christ's church acting with Christ's authority.

Cross References

Matthew 18:20
For where two or three gather together in My name, I am there with them.
Matthew 18:18
I tell you the truth, whatever you forbid on earth will be forbidden in heaven, and whatever you allow on earth will be allowed in heaven.
John 20:23
If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven.

Spiritual Principle

Church discipline must be done by the church, in the name of Jesus, and under His authority.

Key Truth

Jesus promised to be present when His people gather in His name.
That includes the hard moments of discipline.

V. HANDED OVER TO SATAN

1 Corinthians 5:5 — So That His Spirit May Be Saved

“hand this man over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus.”
This is one of the most serious statements in the New Testament.
“Hand this man over to Satan.”
The church is the place where God's people live under His protection and care.
Outside the church is the world, where Satan holds sway.
To hand someone over to Satan means to put him out of the fellowship of the church and back into the world.
“For the destruction of the flesh.”
Bible students understand this in different ways.
Some believe it means the destruction of his sinful nature and desires.
Others believe it may include physical suffering that God would use to bring him to his senses.
Either way, the purpose is clear.
“So that his spirit may be saved on the day of the Lord Jesus.”
The goal of discipline is not punishment for its own sake.
It is not revenge.
It is not to get rid of a troublemaker.
The goal is **salvation.**
Paul hoped that losing the fellowship of the church would wake this man up and bring him to repentance.

Cross References

1 Timothy 1:20
Among them are Hymenaeus and Alexander. I have handed them over to Satan so that they will learn not to speak against God.
2 Corinthians 2:6
The punishment most of you gave this man is enough for him.

1 Peter 4:6
That is why the good news was preached even to those who are now dead. Though they were judged in the body by human standards, they might live in the spirit by God's standards.

Spiritual Principle

The aim of church discipline is always restoration, never destruction of the person.

Key Truth

Church discipline is a severe mercy.
It is the church saying, **“We love you too much to let you continue in this sin.”**

VI. A LITTLE LEAVEN

1 Corinthians 5:6 — Your Boasting Is Not Good

“Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?”
Paul returns to the church's pride.
“Your boasting is not good.”
Then he uses a picture from the kitchen.
Leaven is yeast, or a bit of old fermented dough saved from a previous batch.
A small piece of it is mixed into a new lump of dough.
Over time, it spreads through the whole lump.
Paul's point is simple.
Sin spreads.
If the church tolerates open sin in one member, it will not stay with one member.
It will affect the attitudes, standards, and behavior of the whole church.
Others will think, **“If he can do that, why can't I?”**

Cross References

Galatians 5:9
A little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough.
Matthew 16:6
Jesus said to them, “Watch out! Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees.”
Luke 12:1
Jesus began speaking first to His disciples: “Be on guard against the yeast of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy.”

Spiritual Principle

Tolerated sin never stays small.

Application

This is true in a church.
It is also true in a heart.
Deal with sin while it is small.

VII. CHRIST OUR PASSOVER LAMB

1 Corinthians 5:7 — Get Rid of the Old Leaven

“Get rid of the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.”
Paul now connects his picture to the Passover.
Before Passover, every Jewish family searched their home and removed every trace of leaven.
Then they ate unleavened bread for seven days.
This reminded them of how God brought them out of Egypt in haste.
Paul says:
“Get rid of the old leaven.”
Remove the sin from your midst.
“That you may be a new lump.”
Become in practice what you are in Christ.
“Since you truly are unleavened.”
In Christ, they had already been made clean.
Now they needed to live like it.
And here is the reason:
“For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.”
At the first Passover, a lamb was killed and its blood was placed on the doorposts.
When God saw the blood, judgment passed over that house.
Jesus is the true Passover Lamb.
His blood was shed so that judgment would pass over us.
The order matters.
Israel killed the lamb, and then removed the leaven.
Christ has already been sacrificed.
So now we remove the sin.

Cross References

Exodus 12:15
> For seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day, remove all yeast from your houses. Anyone who eats bread made with yeast from the first day through the seventh must be cut off from Israel.

Exodus 13:7
> Eat bread made without yeast during those seven days. No bread with yeast and no yeast at all should be seen anywhere within your borders.

John 1:29
> The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look! The Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

Spiritual Principle

We do not remove sin in order to be saved; we remove sin because we have been saved.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The blood of the Lamb calls for a life without the leaven.

VIII. KEEP THE FEAST

1 Corinthians 5:8 — Sincerity and Truth

“Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with the old leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”
Paul continues the Passover picture.
“Let us keep the feast.”
The Christian life is a continual celebration of what Christ has done.
But it must be celebrated in the right way.
Not with the old leaven.
Paul names two kinds of leaven:
Malice—a heart that wants to harm.
Wickedness—evil in action.
But with unleavened bread.
Paul names two kinds of unleavened bread:
Sincerity—a pure heart without hidden motives.
Truth—a life that matches God's word.
The Christian life is not a gloomy fast.
It is a feast.
But it is a holy feast.

Cross References

Exodus 12:8
> That same night they must eat the meat roasted over the fire, with bread made without yeast and with bitter herbs.

Deuteronomy 16:3
> Do not eat bread made with yeast with it. For seven days eat bread without yeast, the bread of hardship, because you left Egypt in a hurry. Do this so that all your life you will remember the day you left Egypt.

2 Corinthians 1:12
> This is what we are proud of: our conscience tells us that we have lived in the world, and especially with you, with the holiness and sincerity that come from God. We did not depend on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.

Spiritual Principle

The whole Christian life is a feast of celebration in Christ, kept in sincerity and truth.

Application

Is there any old leaven of malice or wickedness in your heart?
Ask God to remove it, and keep the feast with joy.

IX. A PREVIOUS LETTER

1 Corinthians 5:9 — Not to Associate with the Sexually Immoral

“I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—”
Paul mentions a letter he wrote to the Corinthians before this one.
That letter has not been preserved.
In it, Paul had told them **“not to associate with sexually immoral people.”**
The word **associate** means to mix closely together.
It describes close fellowship and friendship.
Apparently, the Corinthians had misunderstood what Paul meant.
Some may have thought he was telling them to withdraw from society entirely.
Others may have used that confusion as an excuse to do nothing at all.
So Paul now explains himself clearly.

Cross References

2 Thessalonians 3:14
If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person. Do not associate with him, so that he will feel ashamed.
Ephesians 5:11
Have nothing to do with the worthless deeds of darkness. Instead, expose them.
Proverbs 1:15
My son, do not go along with them. Keep your feet away from their path.

Spiritual Principle

The company we keep shapes the life we live.

Key Truth

God's word must be read carefully.
Misunderstanding it can lead either to harshness or to excuses.

X. NOT THE PEOPLE OF THIS WORLD

1 Corinthians 5:10 — You Would Need to Leave the World

“not at all meaning the immoral people of this world, or the greedy, or swindlers, or idolaters; in that case you would need to leave the world.”
Paul makes something very clear.
He was **not** telling believers to separate from unbelievers.
He names four kinds of people in the world:

- The sexually immoral.
- The greedy.
- Swindlers, who cheat others to get money.
- Idolaters.

If Christians tried to avoid all such people, they **“would need to leave the world.”**
And that is not God's plan.

Jesus did not pray for His followers to be taken out of the world.
He sent them into it.
Christians are called to live among unbelievers, work beside them, love them, and share the gospel with them.
Jesus Himself was called a friend of sinners.

Cross References

John 17:15
I am not asking You to take them out of the world, but to protect them from the evil one.
1 John 5:19
We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.
Romans 12:2
Do not copy the ways of this world, but let God change you by giving you a new mind. Then you will be able to understand what God wants—what is good, pleasing, and perfect.

Spiritual Principle

Christians are called to be in the world but not of the world.

Application

Do not hide from unbelievers.
Love them, befriend them, and point them to Christ.

XI. ANYONE WHO BEARS THE NAME OF BROTHER

1 Corinthians 5:11 — With Such a Person Do Not Even Eat

“But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of “brother” if he is guilty of sexual immorality, or greed, or idolatry, or abuse, or drunkenness, or swindling. With such a person do not even eat.”
Now Paul says exactly what he meant.
The separation is not from unbelievers.
It is from **“anyone who bears the name of brother”**—someone who claims to be a Christian—while living in open sin.
Paul lists six sins:

- Sexual immorality.
- Greed.
- Idolatry.
- Abuse—attacking others with insulting, hurtful words.
- Drunkenness.
- Swindling.

These are not believers who are struggling, confessing, and fighting against sin.
These are people who continue in sin without repentance while still claiming the name of Christ.
Paul says, **“With such a person do not even eat.”**
In that culture, sharing a meal was a sign of acceptance and close fellowship.
The church was to make clear that this person's way of life could not be accepted as Christian.

The purpose was to wake the person up and lead him back to repentance.

Cross References

2 Thessalonians 3:6
> Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we command you to stay away from any believer who lives a lazy life and does not follow the teaching you received from us.

Matthew 18:17
> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would an unbeliever or a tax collector.

Romans 16:17
> I urge you, brothers and sisters, watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that go against the teaching you have learned. Stay away from them.

Spiritual Principle

A profession of faith must be matched by a life of repentance.

Spiritual Warning

This verse must not be used to cut off every believer who sins.
All believers sin.
Discipline is for those who refuse to repent of open, ongoing sin.

XII. THOSE INSIDE THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 5:12 — Judging Insiders, Not Outsiders

“For what business is it of mine to judge outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge?”
Paul explains the principle behind his instruction.
The church has no responsibility to discipline **outsiders.**
People who are not believers have not promised to live under Christ's rule.
They need the gospel, not church discipline.
But the church does have responsibility for **those inside.**
Members of the church have professed faith in Christ.
They are part of the family.
And the family is responsible to care for one another, including correcting one another.
Many Christians have this backward.
They are quick to condemn the world.
And slow to deal with sin in the church.

Cross References

Matthew 18:17
> If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. If he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would an unbeliever or a tax collector.

1 Peter 4:17
> For it is time for judgment to begin with God's household. And if it begins with us, what will happen to those who do not obey the good news of God?

Romans 2:1

> So you have no excuse, whoever you are, when you judge someone else. When you judge another person, you condemn yourself, because you do the same things.

Spiritual Principle

The church's first responsibility for holiness is within its own walls.

Application

Before you criticize the sins of the world, examine your own heart and your own church.

XIII. REMOVE THE WICKED PERSON

1 Corinthians 5:13 — God Will Judge Those Outside

“God will judge those outside. “Remove the wicked person from among you.””
Paul closes the chapter with two statements.
“God will judge those outside.”
Unbelievers are not beyond God's justice.
But their judgment belongs to Him.
The church can leave that in God's hands.
“Remove the wicked person from among you.”
This is a quotation that appears again and again in Deuteronomy.
Whenever serious sin threatened Israel, God commanded His people to remove the evil from their midst.
Paul applies that command to the church.
Under the Old Covenant, this often meant the death penalty.
Under the New Covenant, it means removal from the fellowship of the church.
The goal is no longer death.
The goal is repentance and life.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 17:7

> The witnesses must be the first to act in putting that person to death, and then all the people. You must remove the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 22:21

> They must bring her to the door of her father's house, and the men of her town must stone her to death. She has done a shameful thing in Israel. You must remove the evil from among you.

Deuteronomy 24:7

> If someone is caught kidnapping a fellow Israelite and treating him as a slave or selling him, the kidnapper must die. You must remove the evil from among you.

Spiritual Principle

God has always called His people to be holy, and He holds them responsible for the purity of their community.

Key Truth

Israel removed evil by death.

The church removes it by discipline, hoping for repentance.
That difference is the grace of the gospel.

XIV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 5

1. Sin Must Not Be Tolerated in the Church

The Corinthians were arrogant instead of mourning over open sin.

Principle:

A church that boasts while sin goes unchecked has lost sight of God's holiness.

2. Church Discipline Is Necessary

Paul called for the man to be removed from the fellowship.

Principle:

Discipline is not for cruelty but for the salvation of the sinner's soul.

3. Sin Spreads Like Leaven

A little leaven leavens the whole lump.

Principle:

One person's unchecked rebellion can corrupt the whole church if it is not dealt with.

4. Christ Is Our Passover

Israel removed leaven before Passover.

Principle:

Because Jesus was sacrificed for us, we are to live in sincerity and truth.

5. Separate from Professing Believers Who Persist in Sin

Paul distinguished between unbelievers in the world and unrepentant “brothers.”

Principle:

We must engage the world with the gospel, but we must discipline those in the church who refuse to repent.

6. Judgment Begins in the House of God

The church judges those inside; God judges those outside.

Principle:

The church is responsible for holiness among its own members.

XV. LEAVEN AND THE PASSOVER

Paul's readers would have understood the picture of leaven and Passover.

The First Passover

In Egypt, each Israelite family killed a lamb and put its blood on the doorposts.
When the LORD saw the blood, judgment passed over that house.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread

For seven days after Passover, Israel ate bread made without leaven.
Every bit of leaven had to be removed from their homes.

What Leaven Pictures

Leaven spreads quietly until it fills the whole lump.
In Scripture, it often pictures the spreading power of sin and false teaching.

The Fulfillment in Christ

Jesus is the true Passover Lamb.
He was crucified at Passover time.
His blood turns away God's judgment from all who trust in Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Passover came first, then the removal of leaven; Christ died for us first, and then we put away sin.

XVI. THE PURPOSES OF CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Church discipline is often misunderstood.
1 Corinthians 5 shows that it has loving and holy purposes.

To Restore the Sinner

“So that his spirit may be saved.”
The goal is repentance and return.

To Protect the Church

“A little leaven leavens the whole lump.”
Sin left alone spreads to others.

To Honor Christ

The church gathers **“in the name of our Lord Jesus.”**
It must not allow His name to be attached to open, unrepentant sin.

To Guard the Church's Witness

The sin in Corinth was **“not even tolerated among the Gentiles.”**
The world was watching.

Key Truth

Church discipline is love for the sinner, love for the church, and love for the name of Christ.

XVII. THE STEPS OF CORRECTION

Jesus gave His church a careful process for dealing with sin in Matthew 18.
Paul's instruction in 1 Corinthians 5 is the final step of that process.

Step 1: Go Privately

If a brother sins, go to him alone.
If he listens, you have won him back.

Step 2: Take One or Two Others

If he will not listen, take one or two others with you as witnesses.

Step 3: Tell the Church

If he still will not listen, tell the church.

Step 4: Remove from Fellowship

If he refuses to listen even to the church, he is to be treated as an outsider.

Then: Restore with Love

When the person repents, the church must forgive, comfort, and welcome him back.
Many Bible students believe Paul writes about this kind of restoration in 2 Corinthians 2.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Discipline begins privately, moves slowly, acts firmly, and always keeps the door open for repentance.

XVIII. INSIDE AND OUTSIDE

1 Corinthians 5 draws a clear line between two groups.

Those Outside the Church

- Have not professed faith in Christ.
- Are not under church discipline.
- Need the gospel.
- Should be loved, befriended, and reached.
- Will be judged by God.

Those Inside the Church

- Have professed faith in Christ.
- Are part of God's family.
- Are responsible to one another.
- Must be corrected when they persist in open sin.
- Are to be restored when they repent.

Key Truth

The church is to be a light to those outside and a holy family to those inside.

XIX. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 5 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Is Lord of the Church

The church gathers **“in the name of our Lord Jesus.”**

Jesus Gives the Church Authority

Discipline is carried out **“with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ.”**

Jesus Is Coming Again

Paul looks toward **“the day of the Lord Jesus.”**

Jesus Is Our Passover Lamb

“Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Lamb who was sacrificed for the church is the Lord who rules the church.

XX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was the sin in 1 Corinthians 5?
A man in the church was living in an ongoing sexual relationship with his father's wife, most likely his stepmother.
God's law forbade it, and even the pagan world condemned it.

Question 2

What upset Paul even more than the sin itself?

The church's response.
They were arrogant instead of grieving.
They had done nothing to deal with it.

Question 3

Why does Paul say nothing about the woman?
She was most likely not a member of the church.
Paul says the church is responsible to judge those inside, not those outside.

Question 4

Who was supposed to carry out the discipline?
The whole church, gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus and with His power.
It was not to be done secretly by one person.

Question 5

What does it mean to “hand this man over to Satan”?
It means to remove him from the fellowship and protection of the church and put him back into the world, where Satan holds sway.
The goal was to bring him to repentance.

Question 6

What is the purpose of church discipline?
To restore the sinner.
To protect the church.
To honor the name of Christ.
To guard the church's witness to the world.

Question 7

What does leaven represent in this chapter?
Leaven represents sin, which spreads through the whole church if it is not dealt with.

Question 8

Why does Paul mention the Passover?
Before Passover, Israel removed all leaven from their homes.
Christ is our Passover Lamb who has been sacrificed.
Because He died for us, we must remove sin from our lives and our church.

Question 9

Does Paul tell Christians to avoid unbelievers?
No.
He says that would mean leaving the world.
Christians are called to live among unbelievers and share the gospel with them.

Question 10

Who are Christians told not to associate with?
Anyone who claims to be a believer but continues in open sin without repentance.
Paul lists sexual immorality, greed, idolatry, abuse, drunkenness, and swindling.

Question 11

Does this mean we should cut off every Christian who sins?
No.
Every believer sins.
Discipline is for those who refuse to repent of open, ongoing sin after being lovingly confronted.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 5 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 5 should cause believers to live:

- Grieving over sin instead of excusing it.
- Taking holiness seriously.
- Dealing with sin while it is small.
- Remembering that Christ our Passover was sacrificed for them.
- Living in sincerity and truth.
- Loving and reaching unbelievers.
- Lovingly holding one another accountable.
- Ready to forgive and restore those who repent.

XXI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 5 asks several important questions.

Do I Grieve Over Sin?

Or have I grown comfortable with it?

Is There Any Leaven in My Life?

Is there a sin I have tolerated that is slowly spreading?

Am I Living in Light of the Cross?

Christ our Passover was sacrificed for me.
Does my life show it?

Am I Keeping the Feast with Sincerity and Truth?

Or with malice and hidden motives?

Am I Reaching People Outside the Church?

Or have I separated myself from the people Jesus came to save?

Am I Willing to Speak the Truth in Love?

If a brother or sister is wandering, will I go to them?

Am I Ready to Receive Correction?

If someone comes to me about my sin, will I listen?

Am I Ready to Forgive?

When someone repents, will I welcome them back?

XXII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Holy Love Does Not Look Away”

Some people think love means never correcting anyone.
They say, **“Who am I to judge?”**
They look away when a brother or sister is destroying their life.
The Corinthians thought they were being loving and open-minded.
In reality, they were being proud and careless.
True love does not look away.
A loving parent does not ignore a child who is running into traffic.
A loving doctor does not ignore a growing infection.
A loving church does not ignore a member who is walking away from God.
But holy love also never becomes cruel.
It grieves.
It confronts gently.
It hopes for repentance.
It keeps the door open.
And it runs to welcome the sinner home.
This creates a powerful principle.
Love without holiness becomes permission.
Holiness without love becomes harshness.
God calls His church to both.

Principle:

The church must love the sinner too much to leave him in his sin.

XXIII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 5 was written to a church that was proud of itself while sin grew in its midst.
They had gifts.
They had knowledge.
They had great teachers.
But they had lost their sense of God's holiness.

And they had lost their sense of grief over sin.
Paul called them back to the cross.
Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.
The Lamb has died.
The blood has been shed.
Judgment has passed over us.
So we must put away the leaven.
1 Corinthians 5 therefore reminds us:
Never boast while sin is unchecked.
Never treat sin as small.
Never forget the price of our redemption.
Never use grace as an excuse.
Never turn discipline into cruelty.
The church does not need to be harsh.
It does not need to be careless.
It needs:
Grief over sin.
Courage to act.
Love that seeks restoration.
And joy in the Lamb who was sacrificed.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away sin.
Tell people that His blood turns away God's judgment.
Tell people that those He saves He also makes holy.
Tell people that the door of repentance is always open.
And as you keep the feast:
Put away the old leaven.
Walk in sincerity and truth.
Love the world with the gospel.
Love the church with holiness.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for sending Jesus Christ, our Passover Lamb, who was sacrificed for us.
Thank You that because of His blood, Your judgment has passed over us.
Thank You that You have made us a new lump, clean in Christ.
Thank You for loving us too much to leave us in our sin.
Forgive us for the times we have been proud instead of grieving over sin.
Forgive us for excusing what You call evil.
Forgive us for allowing small sins to grow in our hearts.
Forgive us for being quick to judge the world and slow to examine ourselves.
Search our hearts and remove the old leaven of malice and wickedness.
Help us keep the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.
Give Your church courage to deal with sin faithfully.
Give Your church gentleness to do it with love.
Give Your church wisdom to follow the way of Jesus.
For those who have wandered from You, bring them to repentance.

And when they return, help us welcome them with open arms.
Help us love the people of this world and share the gospel with them.
Keep us holy as we wait for the day of the Lord Jesus.
“For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Get rid of the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us.” — 1 Corinthians 5:7

Central Truth

Because Christ our Passover Lamb was sacrificed to make us a holy people, the church must not tolerate open, unrepentant sin among its members, but must lovingly discipline for the sake of the sinner's salvation and the purity of the whole church.

1 Corinthians 5 in One Sentence

Paul rebukes a proud church for tolerating shocking sin, commands them to remove the unrepentant man so that he might be saved, warns that a little leaven spreads through the whole lump, and calls them to live in sincerity and truth because Christ our Passover Lamb has been sacrificed for us.

1 Corinthians Chapter 6 — Glorify God in Your Body

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 6 continues Paul's call for the church to live as God's holy people.
In Chapter 5, Paul dealt with a man living in sexual sin while the church did nothing.
Now he turns to two more problems.
The first was in the courtroom.
Believers were suing one another in the public courts of Corinth.
They were taking their quarrels in front of unbelieving judges.
The whole city could see Christians fighting with Christians.
Paul is shocked.
The saints will one day judge the world and even angels.
Could they not settle small matters among themselves?
Better to be wronged than to dishonor Christ in front of the world.
The second problem was in the bedroom.
Some in Corinth had taken the gospel of grace and twisted it.
They had slogans:
“All things are lawful for me.”

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.”
They reasoned that the body did not matter.
If eating is just a natural appetite, then so is sex.
So some were going to prostitutes and calling it freedom.
Paul answers with some of the most important teaching in the Bible about the human body.
The body is not meant for sexual immorality.
The body is meant for the Lord.
God will raise it from the dead.
It is joined to Christ.
It is a temple of the Holy Spirit.
And it was bought with a price.
In the middle of the chapter stands one of the most hopeful verses in Scripture.
After listing the sins that keep people out of God's kingdom, Paul says:
“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified.”
No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.
The chapter moves through four movements:

- Lawsuits Among Believers (verses 1–6).
- Wronging Your Own Brethren (verses 7–8).
- The Warning Against Unrighteousness (verses 9–11).
- Glorifying God With the Body (verses 12–20).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 6 is:
Believers have been washed, sanctified, and justified through Christ, and because they were bought with a price, they belong to God and must glorify Him in how they treat one another and in how they use their bodies.

I. HOW DARE YOU?

1 Corinthians 6:1 — Before the Unrighteous

“How dare any of you, when you have a dispute with another, take it before the unrighteous and not before the saints?”
Paul opens with a strong question.
“How dare any of you?”
He is not asking politely.
He is shocked.
Some believers had disputes with other believers.
Most likely these were disagreements about money, property, or business.
Instead of settling them within the church, they were taking them to the public courts.
In Corinth, the courts were run by unbelievers.
Wealthy and powerful people often had the advantage.
Lawsuits were also a public show, where people tried to shame their opponents.
Paul calls the judges **“the unrighteous.”**
He does not mean they were all corrupt.
He means they did not know God and were not part of His people.
The church is called **“the saints.”**
God's holy people should be able to settle their own disagreements.

Cross References

Matthew 5:40
If someone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat too.
Proverbs 25:9
Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not tell another person's secret.
Matthew 18:15
If your brother or sister sins against you, go and point out the wrong, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them back.

Spiritual Principle

Disputes between believers should be handled within the family of God, not paraded before the world.

Application

If you have a conflict with another believer, go to them first.
Seek peace before you seek a verdict.

II. THE SAINTS WILL JUDGE THE WORLD

1 Corinthians 6:2 — Competent for Trivial Cases

“Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you not competent to judge trivial cases?”
Paul asks a question he will ask six times in this chapter:
“Do you not know?”
The Corinthians were proud of their knowledge.
But they were forgetting basic truths.
Here is the first:
“The saints will judge the world.”
When Christ returns, His people will share in His reign.
They will take part in His righteous judgment of the world.
If God has given believers such a great future role, then surely they can handle the **“trivial cases”** of this life.
Compared to judging the world, a dispute over money or property is very small.

Cross References

Daniel 7:22
until the Ancient of Days came and judged in favor of the holy people of the Most High. Then the time came for the holy people to receive the kingdom.
Revelation 20:4
Then I saw thrones, and those who sat on them were given authority to judge. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.
Matthew 19:28
Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, when the world is made new and the Son of Man sits on His glorious throne, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”

Spiritual Principle

Remembering our future helps us handle the present wisely.

Key Truth

Believers are destined to reign with Christ.
That should change how we handle our disagreements today.

III. WE WILL JUDGE ANGELS

1 Corinthians 6:3 — How Much More the Matters of This Life

“Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the matters of this life!”
Paul goes even further.
“We will judge angels.”
This most likely refers to the fallen angels who rebelled against God.
At the final judgment, believers will share in Christ's judgment over them.
It is an astonishing thought.
Redeemed sinners will one day take part in judging spiritual beings.
If that is our future, then **“how much more the matters of this life!”**
Everyday disputes about money and property should not be beyond our ability.

Cross References

2 Peter 2:4
> God did not spare the angels who sinned. He threw them into hell and put them in chains of darkness to be held for judgment.

Jude 1:6
> And the angels who did not stay within their proper authority but left their own home—God has kept them in eternal chains in darkness for the judgment of the great day.

Revelation 20:10
> And the devil, who deceived them, was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet were. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Spiritual Principle

God has given His people a high calling, and they should live up to it.

Application

When a disagreement feels huge, remember what God has prepared for you.
It may help you see how small the matter really is.

IV. JUDGES OF NO ACCOUNT

1 Corinthians 6:4 — Who Are You Appointing?

“If you have disputes about such matters, do you appoint as judges those who are of no account in the church?”
This verse can be understood in two ways.

Some see it as a reference to the pagan judges.
They had no standing in the church.
So why would believers place their disputes in their hands?
Others see it as sharp irony.
Paul may be saying, **“Even the least respected members of the church would be better judges than outsiders.”**
Either way, Paul's point is the same.
The church should not hand its family matters over to those who do not know God.
God has given His people wisdom through His Spirit and His word.

Cross References

James 2:6

> But you have treated the poor with dishonor. Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?

Deuteronomy 1:16

> At that time I gave your judges this command: “Listen to the cases between your fellow Israelites and judge fairly, whether the case is between two Israelites or between an Israelite and a foreigner living among you.”

Exodus 18:21

> But choose capable men from all the people—men who respect God, who are trustworthy, and who hate dishonest gain. Put them in charge of groups of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.

Spiritual Principle

God's people should look to godly wisdom to settle their disputes.

Key Truth

God has always provided wise people among His people to help settle disagreements.

V. IS THERE NO ONE WISE ENOUGH?

1 Corinthians 6:5 — “I Say This to Your Shame”

“I say this to your shame. Is there really no one among you wise enough to judge between his brothers?”
In Chapter 4, Paul said he was not writing to shame them.
But here he does say:
“I say this to your shame.”
Their behavior was truly shameful.
And he asks a cutting question.
“Is there really no one among you wise enough?”
Remember how proud the Corinthians were of their wisdom.
They boasted about their knowledge.
They admired clever speakers.
Yet when a real problem came up, they could not find one wise person in the whole church to help two brothers make peace.
Their wisdom was all talk.

Cross References

James 3:13
Who among you is wise and understanding? Let him show it by his good life, by actions done in the humility that comes from wisdom.
1 Kings 3:9
So give Your servant an understanding heart to govern Your people and to know the difference between good and evil. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?
Proverbs 20:3
It is honorable for a person to stay out of a fight, but every fool is quick to quarrel.

Spiritual Principle

True wisdom is shown in making peace, not in winning arguments.

Application

Ask God to make you the kind of believer who can help others settle their differences.

VI. BROTHER AGAINST BROTHER

1 Corinthians 6:6 — In Front of Unbelievers

“But instead, one brother takes another to court—and this in front of unbelievers!”
Paul states the problem plainly.
“One brother takes another to court.”
Members of the same spiritual family were suing each other.
“And this in front of unbelievers!”
This made it even worse.
The church was supposed to show the world a new kind of community.
A family where love, forgiveness, and peace ruled.
Instead, the world saw Christians fighting like everyone else.
The gospel was being dishonored in public.

Cross References

Matthew 5:25
Settle matters quickly with the person who is taking you to court. Do it while you are still on the way, or he may hand you over to the judge, the judge may hand you over to the officer, and you may be thrown into prison.
Proverbs 25:9
Argue your case with your neighbor himself, and do not tell another person's secret.
Luke 12:58
As you are going with your opponent to the judge, try hard to settle with him on the way. Otherwise he may drag you before the judge, the judge may hand you over to the officer, and the officer may throw you into prison.

Spiritual Principle

The way believers treat one another is a testimony to the watching world.

Key Truth

Jesus said the world would know His disciples by their love for one another.

VII. ALREADY DEFEATED

1 Corinthians 6:7 — Why Not Rather Be Wronged?

“The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have already been defeated. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated?”
Paul says something surprising.
Even if a believer won the lawsuit, he had **“already been defeated.”**
Why?
Because the real loss was not money.
It was love.
It was the unity of the church.
It was the testimony of Christ before the world.
Then Paul asks two challenging questions.
“Why not rather be wronged?”
“Why not rather be cheated?”
This is the way of Jesus.
He was wronged, and He did not fight back.
Paul is saying it is better to lose something in this world than to lose your witness for Christ.
This does not mean Christians can never seek justice.
Paul himself appealed to Roman law to protect his rights.
But between believers, the goal should be peace, not victory.

Cross References

Matthew 5:39

> But I tell you, do not take revenge on someone who wrongs you. If someone slaps you on the right cheek, turn the other cheek to him as well.

Romans 12:19

> Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to God, because Scripture says, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord.

1 Peter 2:23

> When people insulted Him, He did not insult them back. When He suffered, He did not threaten. Instead, He trusted Himself to God, who judges fairly.

Spiritual Principle

It is better to be wronged than to win at the cost of Christ's honor.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

You can win the case and lose the brother; it is better to lose the case and keep the brother.

VIII. YOU DO WRONG YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 6:8 — Cheating Your Own Family

“Instead, you yourselves do wrong and cheat—and you do this to your own brothers and sisters!”
Paul turns the tables.
The Corinthians were not just victims.
Some of them were the ones doing the wrong.
They were cheating.
And they were cheating **“your own brothers and sisters!”**
Instead of being willing to suffer wrong, they were causing it.
Instead of protecting their spiritual family, they were taking advantage of it.
The problem was not just the courts.
The problem was their hearts.

Cross References

James 5:4
> Look! The wages you held back from the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of Armies.

Leviticus 19:13
> Do not cheat or rob your neighbor. Do not hold back a hired worker's pay overnight.

1 Thessalonians 4:6
> No one should wrong or take advantage of a brother or sister in this matter, because the Lord punishes all such sins, as we already told you and warned you.

Spiritual Principle

Believers must never take advantage of one another.

Application

Is there anyone in your church family you have treated unfairly?
Make it right.

IX. DO NOT BE DECEIVED

1 Corinthians 6:9 — The Unrighteous Will Not Inherit the Kingdom

“Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,”
Paul now gives a solemn warning.
“The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.”
He has just said the Corinthians were doing wrong.
Now he reminds them where a life of wrongdoing leads.
Then he adds:
“Do not be deceived.”

Some in Corinth were deceiving themselves.
They thought they could claim Christ and keep living in sin.
Paul begins a list of sins that mark the unrighteous.
The sexually immoral—those who practice sexual sin of any kind outside of marriage.
Idolaters—those who worship anything other than the true God.
Adulterers—those who are unfaithful to their marriage vows.
Men who practice homosexuality—the words Paul uses here describe men taking part in sexual relations with other men.
The key word in this list is **practice.**
Paul is describing people whose lives are marked by these sins and who continue in them without repentance.
He is not saying that every believer who is tempted or who has fallen is beyond hope.
The very next verses show that God's grace reaches people from every one of these backgrounds.

Cross References

Galatians 5:19
> The works of the flesh are plain to see: sexual sin, impurity, and shameless living,

Ephesians 5:5
> You can be sure of this: no sexually immoral, impure, or greedy person—a greedy person is really an idol worshiper—has any share in the kingdom of Christ and of God.

Revelation 22:15
> Outside the city are the dogs, those who practice witchcraft, the sexually immoral, murderers, idol worshipers, and everyone who loves and practices lies.

Spiritual Principle

A life that continues in sin without repentance is not a life that belongs to God's kingdom.

Spiritual Warning

Do not deceive yourself into thinking you can claim Christ while refusing to turn from sin.

X. NOR THIEVES, NOR THE GREEDY

1 Corinthians 6:10 — The List Continues

“nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.”
Paul finishes the list.
Thieves—those who take what belongs to others.
The greedy—those who always want more and grab for themselves.
Drunkards—those whose lives are controlled by alcohol.
Revilers—those who attack others with insulting and abusive words.
Swindlers—those who cheat people out of what is theirs.
Notice how broad this list is.
It includes sexual sins.
But it also includes greed, drunkenness, harsh words, and cheating.
Many people who would never commit one sin on the list are guilty of another.
No one can look at this list and feel superior.

Notice also that **the greedy** and **swindlers** connect directly to the lawsuits Paul just addressed.
The Corinthians who were cheating their brothers needed to hear this warning too.

Cross References

Galatians 5:21
envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
Isaiah 5:11
How terrible for those who get up early in the morning to chase after strong drink, and who stay up late at night until wine sets them on fire!
Proverbs 23:21
Drunkards and gluttons will become poor, and too much sleep will dress them in rags.

Spiritual Principle

Every kind of sin, not only one kind, separates people from God.

Key Truth

This list is not for pointing fingers at others.
It is a mirror for every one of us.

XI. BUT YOU WERE WASHED

1 Corinthians 6:11 — “And That Is What Some of You Were”

“And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
This is one of the most hopeful verses in the Bible.
“And that is what some of you were.”
The church in Corinth was full of people who had once lived the very lives Paul just described.
Former idol worshipers.
Former adulterers.
Former thieves and drunkards.
People who had lived in every kind of sexual sin.
But notice the word **“were.”**
That was their past.
It was no longer their identity.
Then come three great words of grace:
“You were washed.” God cleansed them from the filth of their sin.
“You were sanctified.” God set them apart as His own holy people.
“You were justified.” God declared them righteous in His sight because of Christ.
And all of it happened **“in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”**
Their change was not self-improvement.
It was the work of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

Cross References

Titus 3:5
He saved us, not because of the good things we had done, but because of His mercy. He saved us by the washing of new birth and by the new life the Holy Spirit gives.
Acts 22:16
And now, why wait? Get up, be baptized, and wash away your sins by calling on His name.
Ephesians 5:26
to make the church holy, cleansing her by washing her with water through the word.

Spiritual Principle

No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your past may describe what you were, but in Christ it does not define who you are.

Application

If you belong to Christ, do not go back to what you were.
Live as one who has been washed.

XII. ALL THINGS ARE LAWFUL?

1 Corinthians 6:12 — Not Mastered by Anything

“All things are lawful for me”—but not all things are beneficial. “All things are lawful for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything.
Paul now turns to a slogan the Corinthians were using.
“All things are lawful for me.”
Paul may have said something like this himself when teaching about freedom in Christ.
But the Corinthians had twisted it into an excuse for sin.
They were saying, **“I am free. I can do anything I want.”**
Paul answers the slogan twice.
First:
“But not all things are beneficial.”
Just because something is allowed does not mean it is good for you.
Second:
“But I will not be mastered by anything.”
There is a play on words in the original language.
“All things are within my power, but I will not be brought under the power of anything.”
The freedom the Corinthians boasted about was leading them into slavery.
A person who does whatever he wants soon finds he cannot stop.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 10:23
“Everything is allowed,” but not everything is good for us. “Everything is allowed,” but not everything builds others up.
John 8:34
Jesus answered, “I tell you the truth, everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”

Titus 3:3

At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, and led astray. We were slaves to all kinds of desires and pleasures. We lived in evil and envy, hated by others and hating one another.

Spiritual Principle

True freedom is not doing whatever you want; it is being free from the power of sin.

Application

Ask two questions about any choice:
Is it helpful?
Could it control me?

XIII. FOOD FOR THE STOMACH

1 Corinthians 6:13 — The Body Is for the Lord

“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body.
Paul quotes another Corinthian slogan.
“Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food.”
The Corinthians were using this to argue that physical appetites do not matter spiritually.
When you are hungry, you eat.
And some were saying, **“When you have sexual desire, you satisfy it.”**
Paul agrees that food and the stomach are temporary.
“God will destroy both one and the other.”
But he refuses to make the jump to sex.
“The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord.”
The body is not just a bundle of appetites.
It was made for God.
And then a beautiful phrase:
“And the Lord for the body.”
The Lord cares about our bodies.
He made them.
He redeemed them.
He will raise them.

Cross References

Colossians 2:22

These rules are about things that are all meant to be used up and gone. They are based only on human commands and teachings.

Romans 14:17

For the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. It is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

1 Thessalonians 4:3

It is God's will that you be holy: stay away from sexual sin.

Spiritual Principle

The body matters to God, and what we do with it matters to God.

Key Truth

Sex is not just an appetite like hunger.
It involves the whole person, and God designed it for marriage.

XIV. GOD WILL RAISE US UP

1 Corinthians 6:14 — The Future of the Body

“And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by His power.”
Here is the reason the body matters so much.
It has a future.
“God raised the Lord.”
Jesus rose from the dead in a real body.
“And will also raise us up.”
One day, God will raise the bodies of His people too.
The Corinthians thought the body was temporary and unimportant.
Paul says the body is going to be raised.
What God plans to raise, we must not treat as worthless.
Paul will explain the resurrection of the body in great detail in Chapter 15.

Cross References

Romans 8:11
> If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then the One who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

2 Corinthians 4:14
> We know that the One who raised the Lord Jesus will also raise us with Jesus and bring us with you into His presence.

Romans 6:5
> If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

Spiritual Principle

The body is not a throwaway shell; it is destined for resurrection.

Application

Treat your body as something God values enough to raise from the dead.

XV. MEMBERS OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 6:15 — “Never!”

“Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never!”

Paul asks another **“Do you not know?”** question.
“Your bodies are members of Christ.”
Believers are joined to Christ.
Not just their souls.
Their bodies too.
Their hands, their feet, their eyes, their whole selves belong to Him.
Prostitution was common in Corinth.
Some believers were apparently visiting prostitutes and thinking it did not matter.
Paul pictures what they were doing.
Taking a part of Christ's body and joining it to a prostitute.
And he answers with the strongest word he could use:
“Never!”
It is unthinkable.

Cross References

Romans 12:5
> In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.

Ephesians 5:30
> because we are parts of His body.

1 Corinthians 12:27
> Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it.

Spiritual Principle

Because our bodies belong to Christ, sexual sin drags Christ's members into impurity.

Key Truth

Wherever your body goes, you take a member of Christ with you.

XVI. ONE BODY, ONE FLESH

1 Corinthians 6:16 — “The Two Will Become One Flesh”

“Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute becomes one body with her? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.””
Paul explains why sexual sin is so serious.
Sex is not a meaningless physical act.
It creates a deep union between two people.
Paul quotes Genesis 2:24.
“The two will become one flesh.”
God spoke these words about marriage.
In marriage, sex expresses and deepens a lifelong covenant union.
But even outside marriage, sex still joins two people in a real way.
That is why a man who unites with a prostitute **“becomes one body with her.”**
He is joining himself to someone in a way God meant only for marriage.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24
That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.
Matthew 19:5
and said, “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”
Ephesians 5:31
“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.”

Spiritual Principle

God designed sexual union to belong only within the covenant of marriage.

Key Truth

There is no such thing as casual sex in God's eyes.
It always joins people together.

XVII. ONE SPIRIT WITH THE LORD

1 Corinthians 6:17 — A Deeper Union

“But whoever is united with the Lord is one spirit with Him.”
Paul now contrasts two kinds of union.
Union with a prostitute makes a person **one body** with her.
Union with the Lord makes a person **one spirit** with Him.
This is the deepest union possible.
Through the Holy Spirit, the believer is joined to Christ in a way that nothing else can match.
Christ's life flows into the believer.
And because of this union, the believer cannot join himself to sin without bringing that sin into his relationship with the Lord.

Cross References

John 17:21
I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.
Romans 8:9
But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.
Ephesians 4:4
There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

Spiritual Principle

The believer's union with Christ is deeper than any human relationship.

Key Truth

You are joined to the Lord.

Let that union shape every other relationship in your life.

XVIII. FLEE FROM SEXUAL IMMORALITY

1 Corinthians 6:18 — A Sin Against Your Own Body

“Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but whoever sins sexually sins against their own body.”
Paul gives a direct command.
“Flee.”
He does not say, **“Debate it.”**
He does not say, **“See how close you can get.”**
He says, **“Run.”**
Joseph is the great example.
When Potiphar's wife grabbed him, he did not stay and argue.
He ran out of the house.
Then Paul explains why sexual sin is unique.
Other sins affect the body from the outside.
But sexual sin is a sin **“against their own body.”**
It involves the whole person in a deep way.
It damages the very body that belongs to the Lord and is joined to Him.

Cross References

Genesis 39:12
> She grabbed him by his cloak and said, “Sleep with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house.

2 Timothy 2:22
> Run away from the evil desires of youth. Chase after righteousness, faith, love, and peace, together with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.

1 Thessalonians 4:3
> It is God's will that you be holy: stay away from sexual sin.

Spiritual Principle

Some temptations are not meant to be fought but fled.

Application

Know where you are weak.
Set up guards before temptation comes.
And when it comes, run.

XIX. A TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 6:19 — “You Are Not Your Own”

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own,”

Paul asks his final **“Do you not know?”** question.
In Chapter 3, Paul said the church together is God's temple.
Now he applies the same truth to each believer.
“Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit.”
Corinth was full of temples to false gods.
Some of them were connected with sexual immorality.
But the believer's body is a temple of the living God.
The Holy Spirit lives there.
He was **“received from God.”**
And this leads to a life-changing truth:
“You are not your own.”
The Corinthians said, **“All things are lawful for me.”**
Paul says, **“You don't even belong to yourself.”**
Your body is God's house.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:16
Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives among you?
John 2:21
But the temple He was talking about was His body.
2 Corinthians 6:16
What agreement can God's temple have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live with them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Spiritual Principle

The believer's body is a holy place where God Himself dwells.

Key Truth

You do not carry your body around as your own property.
You carry it as God's temple.

XX. BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

1 Corinthians 6:20 — Glorify God with Your Body

“for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”
Why are we not our own?
“For you were bought with a price.”
Corinth had a busy slave market.
Everyone understood what it meant to be bought.
A slave who was purchased belonged to his new master.
Believers were once slaves to sin.
But Jesus paid the price to set them free.
And the price was His own blood.
Now they belong to Him.

So Paul gives the great conclusion of the chapter:
“Therefore, glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”
The body is not to be used for sin.
It is to be used for God's glory.
Our eyes, hands, feet, words, and desires all belong to the One who bought us.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 7:23
> You were bought at a price. Do not become slaves of people.

1 Peter 1:18
> For you know that you were rescued from the empty way of life handed down from your ancestors. And you were not rescued with things that perish, like silver or gold—

Revelation 5:9
> And they sang a new song: “You are worthy to take the scroll and open its seals, because You were killed, and with Your blood You bought people for God from every tribe, language, people, and nation.”

Spiritual Principle

The price Christ paid for us gives Him the right to all of us.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

What the blood of Christ has purchased must be used for the glory of God.

XXI. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 6

1. Believers Must Not Take Disputes Before Unbelievers

Brother was taking brother to court in front of the world.

Principle:

The church should settle matters in wisdom and unity rather than airing grievances before the world.

2. The Church Is Called to Holiness

The unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Principle:

Those who persist in unrepentant sin will not inherit God's kingdom.

3. Transformation in Christ

“And that is what some of you were.”

Principle:

Through Christ, believers once bound in sin have been washed, sanctified, and justified.

4. Freedom with Responsibility

“All things are lawful for me”—but not all things are beneficial.

Principle:

True freedom means refusing to be enslaved by sin.

5. The Body Belongs to Christ

Our bodies are members of Christ.

Principle:

Because believers are joined to Christ, their bodies must not be joined to sin but kept pure for the Lord.

6. The Body Is God's Temple

The Holy Spirit lives in every believer.

Principle:

Believers are living temples for God's glory.

7. Bought with a Price

Jesus paid for us with His own blood.

Principle:

Christ's sacrifice calls us to glorify God in both body and spirit.

XXII. SIX “DO YOU NOT KNOW?” QUESTIONS

The Corinthians were proud of their knowledge.
But Paul asks them six times, **“Do you not know?”**

1. The Saints Will Judge the World (verse 2)

So believers can settle small disputes among themselves.

2. We Will Judge Angels (verse 3)

So the matters of this life are not too hard for us.

3. The Unrighteous Will Not Inherit the Kingdom (verse 9)

So we must not live in sin.

4. Our Bodies Are Members of Christ (verse 15)

So we must not join them to sin.

5. Sexual Union Makes Two One Body (verse 16)

So sex outside marriage is never casual.

6. Our Bodies Are Temples of the Holy Spirit (verse 19)

So we are not our own.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The problem was not that the Corinthians lacked knowledge, but that they were not living by what they knew.

XXIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 6 TEACHES ABOUT THE BODY

The Corinthians thought the body did not matter.
Paul teaches the opposite.

The Body Is for the Lord

It was made for God, not for sin.

The Lord Is for the Body

God cares about our bodies.

The Body Will Be Raised

God raised Jesus and will raise us too.

The Body Is Joined to Christ

Our bodies are members of Christ.

The Body Is a Temple

The Holy Spirit lives in the believer.

The Body Was Bought

Christ paid for it with His blood.

The Body Is to Glorify God

Everything we do with our bodies should honor Him.

Key Truth

Christianity does not despise the body; it dedicates the body to God.

XXIV. WASHED, SANCTIFIED, JUSTIFIED

Verse 11 gives three great pictures of salvation.

Washed

Sin makes us dirty before God.
Christ cleanses us completely.
The stain of sin is removed.

Sanctified

Sin made us common and unclean.
God sets us apart as His own.
We now belong to God.

Justified

Sin made us guilty before God.
God declares us righteous because of Christ.
We stand right with God.

The Work of the Trinity

“In the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.”
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all work together in our salvation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God does not merely improve sinners; He washes them, claims them, and declares them righteous.

XXV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 6 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

The Lord Jesus Christ

Believers are washed, sanctified, and justified in His name.

The Risen Lord

“God raised the Lord.”

The One to Whom Believers Are Joined

Our bodies are members of Christ, and we are one spirit with Him.

The Redeemer Who Paid the Price

“You were bought with a price.”

The Coming King

His people will reign with Him and share in His judgment of the world.

Key Truth

The Christ who bought us with His blood now joins us to Himself and will one day raise us up.

XXVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why was Paul upset that believers were going to court?
They were taking disputes with other believers before unbelieving judges.
This dishonored Christ in front of the world.
The church should have settled these matters within the family of God.

Question 2

What does it mean that the saints will judge the world and angels?
When Christ returns, His people will share in His reign and in His judgment.
If believers have such a high future role, they can handle small disputes now.

Question 3

Does this chapter mean Christians can never go to court?
Paul is speaking about disputes between believers that should be settled within the church.
He himself used Roman law to protect his rights.
But among believers, the goal should be peace, not winning.

Question 4

Why does Paul say it is better to be wronged?
Winning a lawsuit against a brother is still a loss.
It damages love, unity, and the church's witness.
Following Jesus sometimes means accepting wrong rather than fighting back.

Question 5

Who will not inherit the kingdom of God?
Those who live in sin without repentance.
Paul lists sexual sins, idolatry, theft, greed, drunkenness, abusive speech, and cheating.
The list is broad enough that no one can feel superior to anyone else.

Question 6

What hope does verse 11 give?
Many in the Corinthian church had once lived in these very sins.
But they were washed, sanctified, and justified through Christ and the Spirit.
No one is beyond the reach of God's grace.

Question 7

What was wrong with saying “All things are lawful for me”?
The Corinthians used it as an excuse for sin.
Paul answered that not everything is helpful, and that freedom used for sin leads to slavery.

Question 8

Why isn't sex just a physical appetite like hunger?
God designed sex to unite two people as one flesh within marriage.
It involves the whole person, not just the body.

Question 9

Why does Paul tell believers to “flee” sexual immorality?
Some temptations are too dangerous to stand and fight.
Like Joseph, the wise response is to run.

Question 10

How is sexual sin a sin against one's own body?
It involves the whole person in a deep union.
It damages the very body that belongs to Christ and is a temple of the Spirit.

Question 11

What does it mean that the body is a temple of the Holy Spirit?
God Himself lives in the believer through His Spirit.
That makes the body a holy place that must be honored.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 6 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 6 should cause believers to live:

- Settling conflicts with other believers peacefully.
- Willing to be wronged rather than dishonor Christ.
- Never taking advantage of others.
- Remembering what they were and what Christ has made them.
- Using freedom wisely, not as an excuse for sin.
- Fleeing sexual temptation.
- Honoring their bodies as temples of the Holy Spirit.
- Glorifying God in body and spirit.

XXVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 6 asks several important questions.

Is There a Conflict I Need to Settle?

Have I gone to my brother or sister to seek peace?

Would I Rather Win or Keep My Witness?

Am I willing to be wronged for the sake of Christ?

Have I Taken Advantage of Anyone?

Is there something I need to make right?

Am I Deceiving Myself About Any Sin?

Am I claiming Christ while holding on to sin?

Do I Remember What God Has Done for Me?

I was washed, sanctified, and justified.

Is Anything Mastering Me?

Is there a habit or desire that controls me?

Am I Running from Temptation?

Or am I staying close to it?

How Am I Treating God's Temple?

What I watch, what I do, and where I go all involve the temple of the Holy Spirit.

Am I Glorifying God with My Body?

Do I live as one who was bought with a price?

XXVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Bought, Not Borrowed”

The world says, **“My body, my choice.”**
The Corinthians said, **“All things are lawful for me.”**
Both say the same thing:

“I belong to myself.”
But the gospel says something different.
You were bought.
Not with silver or gold.
With the precious blood of Christ.
He did not borrow you for a while.
He purchased you completely.
Your body is His.
Your spirit is His.
Your future is His.
This could sound like a loss.
But it is the greatest gain.
The One who owns you is the One who loves you most.
The One who claims your body is the One who will raise it from the dead.
The One who calls you to purity is the One who washed you clean.
This creates a powerful principle.
Freedom is not found in owning yourself.
It is found in belonging to the right Master.

Principle:

You are not your own; you were bought with a price, and that is the best news you could ever hear.

XXIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 6 was written to a church that had misunderstood freedom.
They thought freedom meant suing their brothers.
They thought freedom meant cheating to get ahead.
They thought freedom meant doing whatever their bodies wanted.
But Paul showed them that true freedom looks very different.
It looks like being willing to be wronged.
It looks like settling disputes in love.
It looks like running from sin.
It looks like honoring God with every part of life.
And Paul reminded them of the grace that changed them.
They had been washed.
They had been sanctified.
They had been justified.
They had been bought with a price.
1 Corinthians 6 therefore reminds us:
Never let a dispute dishonor Christ before the world.
Never deceive yourself about sin.
Never forget what God has saved you from.
Never use freedom as an excuse to sin.
Never treat your body as if it belongs to you.
The church does not need to follow the world's view of freedom.
It needs:
Believers who make peace.

Believers who remember grace.
Believers who flee sin.
And believers who glorify God in body and spirit.
The same gospel still saves:
Tell people that no sin is too great for God's grace.
Tell people that Jesus can wash them clean.
Tell people that God will raise their bodies.
Tell people that they were bought with a price.
And until He comes:
Make peace.
Flee sin.
Honor God's temple.
Glorify God in your body.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You that You have washed us, sanctified us, and justified us in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by Your Spirit.
Thank You that our past does not have the final word.
Thank You that no sin is too great for Your grace.
Thank You that our bodies are members of Christ.
Thank You that Your Holy Spirit lives in us and makes us Your temple.
Thank You that You raised Jesus from the dead and will raise us too.
Thank You that we were bought with the precious blood of Your Son.
Forgive us when we fight with our brothers and sisters.
Forgive us when we would rather win than show love.
Forgive us when we take advantage of others.
Forgive us when we use our freedom as an excuse to sin.
Forgive us when we treat our bodies as if they belonged to us.
Make us peacemakers in Your church.
Give us wisdom to settle disagreements in a way that honors You.
Give us strength to run from temptation, as Joseph did.
Keep us pure in body and in spirit.
Help us remember every day that we are not our own.
And may everything we do with our bodies bring glory to You.
“Therefore, glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which are God's.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. Therefore, glorify God with your body and in your spirit, which are God's.” — 1 Corinthians 6:19–20

Central Truth

Believers have been washed, sanctified, and justified through Christ, and because they were bought with a price, they belong to God and must glorify Him in how they treat one another and in how they use their bodies.

1 Corinthians 6 in One Sentence

Paul rebukes believers for suing one another before unbelievers, warns that the unrighteous will not inherit God's kingdom while reminding them that they were washed, sanctified, and justified, and calls them to flee sexual sin because their bodies belong to the Lord, are temples of the Holy Spirit, and were bought with a price.

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 — Marriage, Singleness, and Devotion to the Lord

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 begins a new section of Paul's letter.
Up to this point, Paul has been responding to reports he heard about the church.
Now he turns to questions the Corinthians had written to him.
“Now concerning the matters you wrote about.”
The first question was about marriage.
The church in Corinth was pulled in two opposite directions.
In Chapter 6, we saw that some believers thought the body did not matter, so sexual sin was no big deal.
But others went to the opposite extreme.
They thought the body was so unspiritual that married couples should stop having relations, and single people should never marry.
Paul answers with balance and wisdom.
Marriage is good.
It is God's gift and a safeguard against sexual sin.
Husbands and wives belong to each other and must care for each other's needs.
Singleness is also good.
It is a gift that frees a person to serve the Lord with undivided devotion.
Paul also deals with hard questions.
Can a believer divorce?
What if a believer is married to an unbeliever?
Should a slave seek freedom?
Should engaged couples go ahead and marry?
Can a widow remarry?
Through it all, Paul keeps returning to one great principle:
Live faithfully for the Lord in the situation where God has called you.
And he reminds them that this world in its present form is passing away.

Marriage, singleness, joy, sorrow, buying, and selling are all temporary.
What lasts is devotion to the Lord.
The chapter moves through ten movements:

- Principles of Marriage (verses 1–5).
- The Gift of Singleness and Marriage (verses 6–9).
- Instruction to Married Believers (verses 10–11).
- Believers Married to Unbelievers (verses 12–16).
- Live as You Are Called (verses 17–24).
- Concerning Virgins and the Unmarried (verses 25–28).
- Living with Eternity in View (verses 29–31).
- Focused Devotion to the Lord (verses 32–35).
- Advice on Marriage and Virginity (verses 36–38).
- Widows and Remarriage (verses 39–40).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 7 is:
Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and whatever our situation, we are called to live faithfully where God has placed us, with undivided devotion to the Lord, because this world is passing away.

I. IT IS GOOD NOT TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:1 — “Now Concerning the Matters You Wrote About”

“Now concerning the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry.”
Paul begins answering the Corinthians' letter.
The phrase **“now concerning”** will appear several times in this letter as Paul moves from one question to the next.
The first topic is marriage.
“It is good for a man not to marry.”
Many Bible students believe Paul is quoting a saying from the Corinthians' own letter.
Some in the church were teaching that it was more spiritual to avoid marriage and sexual relations altogether.
Paul agrees that there is something good about singleness.
He himself was single.
But as the next verses show, he does not agree that marriage is less spiritual.
God made marriage, and He called it good.
Paul will correct the extreme while honoring what is true.

Cross References

Matthew 19:12

> Some are unable to marry because they were born that way. Some were made that way by others. And some have chosen not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this should accept it.

Genesis 2:18

> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

1 Timothy 4:3
They forbid people to marry and tell them not to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness is good, and marriage is good; neither is more spiritual than the other.

Spiritual Warning

Any teaching that treats marriage as unspiritual goes against God's design.

II. EACH MAN HIS OWN WIFE

1 Corinthians 7:2 — Marriage as a Safeguard

“But because of sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.”
Paul now gives the balance.
“Because of sexual immorality.”
Corinth was a city full of sexual temptation.
Pretending that sexual desire does not exist would not make it go away.
God's good plan for sexual desire is marriage.
Notice the words **“his own”** and **“her own.”**
Marriage is between one man and one woman.
It is exclusive.
Paul is not saying that the only reason to marry is to avoid sin.
Elsewhere the Bible speaks of marriage as companionship, partnership, and a picture of Christ and the church.
But in answer to the Corinthians' question, Paul stresses that marriage is God's protection against immorality.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24
That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.
Hebrews 13:4
Everyone should honor marriage, and the marriage bed should be kept pure, because God will judge those who commit sexual sin and adultery.
Proverbs 5:18
May your fountain be blessed. Find joy in the wife you married when you were young.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is God's good and holy setting for sexual love.

Key Truth

God does not deny human desire.
He gives it a safe and holy home.

III. MARITAL RIGHTS

1 Corinthians 7:3 — A Mutual Responsibility

“The husband should give to his wife her marital rights, and likewise the wife to her husband.”
Some in Corinth were saying that married couples should stop having relations in order to be more spiritual.
Paul says no.
Husbands and wives owe each other the gift of physical intimacy.
Notice how balanced this is.
The husband to his wife.
Likewise the wife to her husband.
In the ancient world, wives were often treated as property.
Paul's teaching was revolutionary.
He says the wife's needs matter just as much as the husband's.
This is not about demanding.
It is about giving.

Cross References

Exodus 21:10
> If he marries another woman, he must not take away the first one's food, clothing, or marriage rights.

Ephesians 5:25
> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

1 Peter 3:7
> In the same way, husbands, live with your wives with understanding. Treat them with honor as the more delicate partner and as those who share with you the gift of life. Then nothing will stand in the way of your prayers.

Spiritual Principle

In marriage, love focuses on giving to the other, not on taking for oneself.

Application

Husbands and wives should ask, **“How can I care for my spouse?”**
Not, **“What can I get from my spouse?”**

IV. BELONGING TO EACH OTHER

1 Corinthians 7:4 — Authority Shared in Love

“The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.”
Paul explains why husbands and wives owe each other intimacy.
In marriage, they belong to each other.
The wife's body belongs to her husband.
And just as truly, the husband's body belongs to his wife.

This was a startling statement in Paul's world.
Many people would have agreed with the first half.
Few would have said the second half.
Paul places husband and wife on equal footing here.
This verse must be read with the rest of Scripture.
It never gives anyone permission to force, pressure, or mistreat a spouse.
Husbands are commanded to love their wives as Christ loved the church.
Belonging to each other means giving yourself freely in love.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24
> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Ephesians 5:21
> Submit to one another out of respect for Christ.

Malachi 2:14
> You ask, “Why?” It is because the LORD has been a witness between you and the wife you married when you were young. You have been unfaithful to her, even though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

Spiritual Principle

In marriage, two people give themselves completely to each other.

Key Truth

Marriage is not two people living side by side.
It is two people who have become one.

V. DO NOT DEPRIVE ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 7:5 — Except for Prayer, and Only for a Time

“Do not deprive one another, except by agreement for a limited time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.”
Paul gives a clear command.
“Do not deprive one another.”
He allows one exception, with three conditions.
By agreement. Both must agree. One spouse may not decide alone.
For a limited time. It must not go on and on.
So that you may devote yourselves to prayer. It must have a spiritual purpose.
Then they must **“come together again.”**
Why?
“So that Satan may not tempt you.”
Satan looks for openings.
Long periods of separation within marriage can become an opening for temptation.
Paul is realistic about human weakness.

Cross References

Joel 2:16
Gather the people. Make the assembly holy. Bring together the elders, the children, and even the nursing babies. Let the groom leave his room and the bride her chamber.
1 Thessalonians 3:5
That is why, when I could stand it no longer, I sent to find out about your faith. I was afraid the tempter had tempted you in some way and our work had been wasted.
Exodus 19:15
Then he said to the people, “Be ready by the third day. Do not have sexual relations with a woman.”

Spiritual Principle

A healthy marriage protects both spouses from temptation.

Application

Guard your marriage.
Do not give the enemy an open door.

VI. A CONCESSION, NOT A COMMAND

1 Corinthians 7:6 — Paul's Careful Words

“I say this as a concession, not as a command.”
What does **“this”** refer to?
Most likely, Paul means the permission to set aside time apart for prayer in verse 5.
He allows it.
But he does not command it.
Paul is careful not to turn a permission into a rule.
The Corinthians were tempted to make spiritual rules that God had not made.
Paul refuses to do that.
Some things God commands.
Some things God permits.
Wise believers know the difference.

Cross References

Romans 14:5
One person thinks one day is more sacred than another. Another person thinks every day is the same. Each one should be fully convinced in his own mind.
2 Corinthians 8:8
I am not giving you a command. I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of others.
Philemon 1:14
But I did not want to do anything without your consent, so that any good you do would not be forced but would come from your own free will.

Spiritual Principle

We must not turn what God permits into something God requires.

Key Truth

God's word gives commands and freedoms.
Both must be respected.

VII. EACH HAS HIS OWN GIFT

1 Corinthians 7:7 — The Gift of Singleness and the Gift of Marriage

“I wish that all were as I am. But each has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.”
Paul shares his personal wish.
“I wish that all were as I am.”
Paul was single.
And he found that singleness allowed him to serve the Lord freely.
But he immediately adds:
“Each has his own gift from God.”
Singleness is a gift.
Marriage is also a gift.
God gives different gifts to different people.
Neither one is a lesser gift.
The single person should not envy the married.
The married person should not look down on the single.
Each should use the gift God has given for His glory.

Cross References

Matthew 19:11
Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given.”
Romans 12:6
We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.
1 Peter 4:10
Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness and marriage are both gifts from God to be used for His glory.

Application

Whatever your situation right now, ask God how you can serve Him in it.

VIII. TO THE UNMARRIED AND THE WIDOWS

1 Corinthians 7:8 — Good to Remain as Paul Is

“To the unmarried and the widows I say: it is good for them to remain unmarried, as I am.”
Paul now speaks to two groups.
The unmarried—this may include those who were never married or those whose marriages had ended.
The widows—women whose husbands had died.
Paul says it is **“good”** for them to remain unmarried.
Notice he says **good**, not **required.**
Paul gives his reasons later in the chapter.
An unmarried person has more freedom to focus on the Lord's work.
And times were difficult.
Paul's own life was an example.
He was free to travel, suffer, and serve without the responsibilities of a family.

Cross References

Matthew 19:12
> Some are unable to marry because they were born that way. Some were made that way by others. And some have chosen not to marry for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. Whoever can accept this should accept it.

1 Timothy 5:14
> So I want younger widows to marry, have children, manage their homes, and give the enemy no opportunity to speak badly of us.

1 Corinthians 7:40
> But in my opinion she is happier if she stays as she is. And I think I also have the Spirit of God.

Spiritual Principle

Singleness can be a season of great freedom to serve the Lord.

Key Truth

Being unmarried is not being incomplete.
In Christ, every believer is complete.

IX. BETTER TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:9 — Than to Burn with Passion

“But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.”
Paul is realistic.
Not everyone has the gift of singleness.
If a person struggles to control sexual desire, they **“should marry.”**
There is no shame in this.

“It is better to marry than to burn with passion.”
To **burn with passion** means to be consumed by constant sexual desire.
Living that way puts a person in danger of falling into sin.
God's answer is not to ignore the desire.
It is to fulfill it in the right way—in marriage.

Cross References

1 Timothy 5:14
> So I want younger widows to marry, have children, manage their homes, and give the enemy no opportunity to speak badly of us.

Proverbs 5:19
> She is a loving deer, a graceful doe. Let her love satisfy you at all times. Always be delighted by her love.

Genesis 2:18
> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Spiritual Principle

God gives marriage as a good and honorable answer to the desire for intimacy.

Application

If you long to be married, that desire is not wrong.
Pray, wait on God, and keep yourself pure.

X. A COMMAND FROM THE LORD

1 Corinthians 7:10 — A Wife Must Not Separate

“To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband.”
Paul now speaks to married believers.
And he makes a point of saying where this command comes from:
“Not I, but the Lord.”
Jesus Himself taught about this during His earthly ministry.
Jesus said, **“What God has joined together, let no one separate.”**
So Paul repeats the Lord's teaching.
“A wife must not separate from her husband.”
Some in Corinth may have thought that leaving a marriage would make them more spiritual.
Paul says no.
Marriage is meant to be lifelong.
God's design is for husband and wife to stay together.

Cross References

Matthew 19:6
> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Mark 10:9
Therefore what God has joined together, no one should separate.
Malachi 2:16
"I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel. "I hate it when a man covers himself with violence. So guard your heart and do not be unfaithful."

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is a lifelong covenant made before God.

Key Truth

God joins a husband and wife together.
That is why their marriage must be treated as sacred.

XI. REMAIN UNMARRIED OR BE RECONCILED

1 Corinthians 7:11 — The Door to Reconciliation

"But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife."
Paul knows that separation sometimes happens.
If it does, the wife has two options.
Remain unmarried.
Or be reconciled to her husband.
Paul leaves the door open for reconciliation.
The goal is always restoration of the marriage if possible.
Then Paul gives the same command to husbands:
"A husband must not divorce his wife."
In Jewish culture, it was often easy for men to divorce their wives.
Paul holds husbands and wives to the same standard.
Jesus did give one exception for sexual unfaithfulness, as Matthew records.
Paul does not repeat it here, but he does not deny it.
His point is that believers must not treat divorce as a casual option.

Cross References

Mark 10:11
He told them, "Whoever divorces his wife and marries another woman commits adultery against her."
Matthew 5:32
But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual unfaithfulness, causes her to commit adultery. And anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.
Malachi 2:16
"I hate divorce," says the LORD, the God of Israel. "I hate it when a man covers himself with violence. So guard your heart and do not be unfaithful."

Spiritual Principle

When a marriage is broken, the first hope should be reconciliation.

Application

If your marriage is struggling, seek help early.
Pray, get godly counsel, and work toward healing.

XII. A BELIEVER WITH AN UNBELIEVING WIFE

1 Corinthians 7:12 — “I, Not the Lord”

“To the rest I say (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer, and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.”
Paul now addresses a new situation.
“To the rest.”
These were couples where one spouse had become a believer and the other had not.
Paul says, **“I, not the Lord.”**
He does not mean his words are less true.
He means Jesus did not speak directly to this situation during His earthly ministry.
So Paul speaks as an apostle guided by the Spirit.
Some believers in Corinth may have worried that being married to an unbeliever was sinful.
They may have remembered how Israel was told to separate from foreign wives in the days of Ezra.
Paul says:
If the unbelieving wife is willing to stay, the believing husband must not divorce her.
Becoming a Christian is not a reason to leave a marriage.

Cross References

Ezra 10:2
> Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, from the family of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But even so, there is still hope for Israel.”

Nehemiah 13:23
> In those days I also saw Jewish men who had married women from Ashdod, Ammon, and Moab.

2 Corinthians 6:14
> Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

Coming to faith is not a reason to leave a marriage.

Key Truth

God can use a faithful believer to bring light into a home.

XIII. A BELIEVER WITH AN UNBELIEVING HUSBAND

1 Corinthians 7:13 — She Must Not Divorce Him

“And if any woman has a husband who is not a believer, and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him.”
Paul gives the same instruction to believing wives.
If her unbelieving husband is willing to stay, she must not divorce him.
In the ancient world, this would have been especially hard.
A wife was usually expected to follow her husband's religion.
A wife who became a Christian while her husband did not was taking a bold step of faith.
Paul tells her to stay, to live faithfully, and to trust God with her husband's heart.

Cross References

Ezra 10:2
> Then Shecaniah son of Jehiel, from the family of Elam, said to Ezra, “We have been unfaithful to our God by marrying foreign women from the peoples around us. But even so, there is still hope for Israel.”

1 Peter 3:1
> In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,

2 Corinthians 6:14
> Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

A faithful life can be a powerful witness inside a home.

Application

If you are married to an unbeliever, keep loving, keep praying, and keep living for Christ.

XIV. SANCTIFIED THROUGH THE BELIEVER

1 Corinthians 7:14 — Your Children Are Holy

“For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy.”
Paul explains why the believer should stay.
Some feared that being married to an unbeliever would make them unclean.
Paul says the opposite is true.
The believer's holiness has an influence on the home.

“The unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife.”
This does not mean he is saved because his wife is a believer.
Each person must trust Christ for himself.
It means the unbelieving spouse is placed in a special position of blessing.
He lives under the influence of God's grace through his believing wife.
The same is true of the children.
“As it is, they are holy.”
Children in a home with a believing parent are set apart in a special way.
They grow up near God's word, God's people, and God's grace.

Cross References

Malachi 2:15

> Didn't the LORD make them one? In body and spirit they belong to Him. And why one? Because He was looking for godly children. So guard your heart, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

Genesis 17:7

> I will keep My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you for all generations. It will be a covenant that lasts forever: I will be your God and the God of your descendants after you.

Romans 11:16

> If the first part of the dough offered to God is holy, then the whole batch is holy. If the root is holy, so are the branches.

Spiritual Principle

One faithful believer can bring God's blessing into an entire household.

Key Truth

The holiness of the believer is stronger than the uncleanness of the unbeliever.

XV. IF THE UNBELIEVER DEPARTS

1 Corinthians 7:15 — Called to Live in Peace

“But if the unbeliever departs, let them do so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such cases. God has called us to live in peace.”
Paul now addresses a harder situation.
What if the unbeliever does not want to stay?
“Let them do so.”
The believer should not try to force the unbelieving spouse to remain.
“The brother or the sister is not bound in such cases.”
The believer is no longer tied to the marriage.
Bible students understand this in different ways.
Many believe it means the believer is free to remarry.
Others believe it means the believer is free from the obligation to keep the marriage together, but should remain single.
Either way, the believer is not to blame for the departure.
“God has called us to live in peace.”

The believer should not live in constant conflict, fighting to hold on to someone who has chosen to leave.

Cross References

Romans 12:18
If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.
Matthew 10:14
If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town.
Romans 14:19
So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.

Spiritual Principle

God calls His people to peace, even in painful circumstances they cannot control.

Key Truth

You are responsible for your own faithfulness.
You are not responsible for another person's choice to leave.

XVI. HOW DO YOU KNOW?

1 Corinthians 7:16 — The Hope of Salvation

“For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?”
This verse can be read in two ways.
Some read it as a word of **hope.**
Stay in the marriage, because you never know—your spouse might come to faith through you.
Others read it as a word of **release.**
Do not hold on to a departing spouse just because you hope to save them, because you cannot be sure that will happen.
Both readings contain truth.
God does use believing spouses to lead their partners to Christ.
But salvation is God's work, not ours.
We are called to be faithful witnesses and to leave the results to Him.

Cross References

1 Peter 3:1
In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,
James 5:20
remember this: Whoever turns a sinner back from the wrong path will save that person from death and cover a great number of sins.
1 Timothy 4:16
Pay close attention to your life and your teaching. Keep doing these things, because if you do, you will save both yourself and those who listen to you.

Spiritual Principle

We are called to be faithful witnesses, but only God can save.

Application

Keep praying for the unbelievers you love.
Leave the results in God's hands.

XVII. LIVE THE LIFE THE LORD ASSIGNED

1 Corinthians 7:17 — The Rule in All the Churches

“Nevertheless, each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches.”
Paul now steps back and gives a general principle.
“Each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him.”
When God calls a person to faith, He calls them where they are.
Married or single.
Jew or Gentile.
Slave or free.
Becoming a Christian does not mean you must immediately change your whole situation.
It means you now live in that situation for the Lord.
Paul says this was **“the rule I lay down in all the churches.”**
This was not special advice for Corinth.
It was Paul's teaching everywhere.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:5
> What, after all, is Apollos? What is Paul? We are only servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord gave each of us our work.

Ephesians 4:1
> So I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.

Romans 12:3
> Because of the grace given to me, I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you should. Instead, think about yourself with clear judgment, according to the measure of faith God has given you.

Spiritual Principle

God calls us to serve Him faithfully right where we are.

Key Truth

You do not need a different life to follow Christ.
You need Christ in the life you have.

XVIII. CIRCUMCISED OR UNCIRCUMCISED

1 Corinthians 7:18 — Stay as You Were Called

“Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised.”
Paul gives his first example.
Circumcision was the sign of being Jewish.
Some Jewish believers living among Greeks were embarrassed by it.
In that time, some even tried to hide or reverse the mark.
Paul says, **“Don't.”**
Some Gentile believers were being told they had to be circumcised to be truly saved.
Paul says, **“Don't.”**
A Jew does not need to stop being Jewish to follow Christ.
A Gentile does not need to become Jewish to follow Christ.
God accepts both through faith in Jesus.

Cross References

Galatians 5:6
> For in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. What matters is faith working through love.

Acts 15:1
> Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the believers: “Unless you are circumcised as Moses taught, you cannot be saved.”

Galatians 6:15
> Being circumcised or not circumcised means nothing. What matters is being a new creation.

Spiritual Principle

Our standing with God does not depend on our background, but on our faith in Christ.

XIX. KEEPING GOD'S COMMANDS

1 Corinthians 7:19 — What Really Counts

“Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts.”
This is a surprising statement from a Jewish man.
Circumcision was commanded in the Law of Moses.
Yet Paul says, **“Circumcision is nothing.”**
He means it is nothing for salvation.
It does not make a person right with God.
And neither does being uncircumcised.
“Keeping God's commands is what counts.”
What matters is a life of obedience that flows from faith and love.

Outward marks do not change the heart.
A changed heart shows itself in obedience.

Cross References

Galatians 5:6
For in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. What matters is faith working through love.
Galatians 6:15
Being circumcised or not circumcised means nothing. What matters is being a new creation.
John 14:15
If you love Me, you will obey My commands.

Spiritual Principle

God cares more about obedience from the heart than about outward religious marks.

Application

Do not rest on religious labels or rituals.
Show your faith by loving obedience.

XX. REMAIN IN YOUR SITUATION

1 Corinthians 7:20 — Called Where You Were

“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”
Paul repeats the principle.
“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”
This does not mean Christians can never change jobs, move, marry, or improve their lives.
Paul himself will say in the next verse that a slave should take freedom if he can.
The point is this:
Your situation is not a barrier to serving God.
You do not need to escape your circumstances to be a faithful Christian.
God called you there, and you can glorify Him there.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:1
So I, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.
Philippians 4:11
I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.
1 Timothy 6:6
But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Spiritual Principle

Contentment in Christ frees us from thinking we must change our circumstances to be faithful.

Key Truth

The place God called you is a place where you can serve Him.

XXI. WERE YOU A SLAVE?

1 Corinthians 7:21 — Do Not Let It Trouble You

“Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so.”
Paul's second example is slavery.
Slavery was common in the Roman world.
Many members of the church in Corinth were slaves.
Slavery in that time took many forms and was not based on race.
Some slaves were laborers.
Others were teachers, doctors, and household managers.
Some could earn their freedom.
But it was still a system of ownership over human beings.
Paul says to the believing slave:
“Do not let it trouble you.”
Your position in society does not change your position in Christ.
You are fully accepted by God.
Then he adds:
“If you can gain your freedom, do so.”
Freedom is better.
Paul does not praise slavery.
The gospel planted seeds that would eventually work against it—treating every person as equal before God and as a brother or sister in Christ.

Cross References

Ephesians 6:5
> Slaves, obey your earthly masters with respect and fear, with a sincere heart, as you would obey Christ.

Philemon 1:16
> no longer as a slave, but more than a slave—as a dear brother. He is very dear to me, and even dearer to you, both as a man and as a brother in the Lord.

Colossians 3:22
> Slaves, obey your earthly masters in everything. Do it not only when they are watching, to win their approval, but with a sincere heart, out of respect for the Lord.

Spiritual Principle

Your worth before God does not depend on your status in the world.

Key Truth

The gospel gave dignity to people the world treated as property.

XXII. THE LORD'S FREEDMAN AND CHRIST'S SLAVE

1 Corinthians 7:22 — A Great Reversal

“For the one who was a slave when called to faith in the Lord is the Lord's freedman; similarly, the one who was free when called is Christ's slave.”
Paul turns the world's categories upside down.
The slave who comes to Christ is **“the Lord's freedman.”**
He has been set free from sin, guilt, and death.
In the deepest way, he is free.
The free person who comes to Christ is **“Christ's slave.”**
He now belongs completely to Jesus.
He is under a new Master.
In Christ, the slave and the free person stand on the same level.
Both are free.
Both belong to Christ.

Cross References

John 8:36
So if the Son sets you free, you will be truly free.
Galatians 5:1
Christ has set us free so that we can live in freedom. So stand firm, and do not let yourselves be held again under slavery.
Romans 6:22
But now you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God. What you get from this is a holy life, and the result is eternal life.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, every believer is both truly free and fully owned by the Lord.

Key Truth

The greatest freedom is to belong to Jesus.

XXIII. BOUGHT WITH A PRICE

1 Corinthians 7:23 — Do Not Become Slaves of Men

“You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.”
Paul repeats the words he used in Chapter 6.
“You were bought with a price.”
Jesus paid for every believer with His own blood.
So every believer belongs to Him.
“Do not become slaves of men.”
This may include not selling yourself into slavery, which some people did to pay debts.

But it also has a deeper meaning.
Do not let people control your heart, your conscience, or your life.
Do not live for human approval.
Do not become enslaved to human opinions or human rules.
You belong to Christ.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 6:20
for you were bought with a price. So honor God with your body.
1 Peter 1:18
For you know that you were rescued from the empty way of life handed down from your ancestors. And you were not rescued with things that perish, like silver or gold—
Galatians 5:1
Christ has set us free so that we can live in freedom. So stand firm, and do not let yourselves be held again under slavery.

Spiritual Principle

Those who belong to Christ must not be ruled by people.

Application

Whose approval controls you?
Remember who paid for you.

XXIV. REMAIN WITH GOD

1 Corinthians 7:24 — Wherever You Were Called

“Brothers and sisters, each one should remain with God in the condition they were in when called.”
Paul repeats the principle a third time.
But this time he adds two important words:
“With God.”
The point is not just to stay where you are.
It is to stay where you are **with God.**
His presence makes any situation a place of purpose.
A slave with God is richer than a king without Him.
A single person with God is never alone.
A married person with God has a holy calling in the home.

Cross References

Philippians 4:11
I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.
1 Timothy 6:8
If we have food and clothing, we will be satisfied with that.
1 Timothy 6:6
But godliness with contentment is great gain.

Spiritual Principle

God's presence turns any situation into a place of calling.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Where you are matters less than who you are with.

XXV. CONCERNING VIRGINS

1 Corinthians 7:25 — A Trustworthy Judgment

“Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.”
Paul turns to another question from the Corinthians' letter.
“Now about virgins.”
This refers to unmarried young people, especially those who were engaged or thinking about marriage.
Paul says, **“I have no command from the Lord.”**
Jesus had not given direct teaching about this.
So Paul gives **“a judgment”**—his wise counsel.
And he gives it **“as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.”**
Paul's trustworthiness was not his own achievement.
It came from God's mercy.
Paul remembered that he had once persecuted the church.
Only mercy had made him a faithful servant.

Cross References

1 Timothy 1:13
> even though I once spoke against God, persecuted His people, and treated them with violence. But God showed me mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief.

1 Corinthians 4:2
> Now it is required that those who are trusted with something must prove faithful.

2 Corinthians 8:8
> I am not giving you a command. I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of others.

Spiritual Principle

Wise counsel from a faithful servant of God is worth listening to.

Key Truth

Paul's trustworthiness came from mercy, not merit.

XXVI. THE PRESENT CRISIS

1 Corinthians 7:26 — Good to Remain as You Are

“Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is.”
Paul gives his reason for advising people to stay as they are.

“The present crisis.”
Bible students are not sure exactly what Paul meant.
Some believe there was a particular hardship in Corinth at the time, such as famine or persecution.
Others believe Paul is speaking about the pressures that come with living in the last days before Christ returns.
Either way, Paul believed times were hard.
In difficult times, adding the responsibilities of marriage and family could make life even harder.
So he advises people to remain as they are.
This is wisdom for a particular time, not a rule for all times.

Cross References

Luke 21:23
> How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant or nursing! There will be great distress in the land and anger against this people.

Matthew 24:19
> How terrible it will be in those days for women who are pregnant or nursing!

1 Peter 4:7
> The end of all things is near. So be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

Spiritual Principle

Wise decisions take into account the times we are living in.

Application

Before making big life decisions, ask God for wisdom about the season you are in.

XXVII. PLEDGED OR FREE

1 Corinthians 7:27 — Do Not Seek a Change

“Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released. Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.”
Paul applies his principle to two kinds of people.
“Are you pledged to a woman? Do not seek to be released.”
If you have made a commitment, keep it.
“Are you free from such a commitment? Do not look for a wife.”
If you are free, there is no need to rush into a commitment, especially in a time of crisis.
Paul's counsel is the same as before.
Stay where you are.
Keep your promises.
Do not make major changes out of restlessness.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 24:1
> Suppose a man marries a woman, and later she no longer pleases him because he has found something shameful about her. He writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her, and sends her away from his house.

Matthew 19:6

So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

Romans 7:2

For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law that bound her to him.

Spiritual Principle

Faithfulness to commitments is a mark of a godly life.

Key Truth

God values promises kept.

XXVIII. MARRIAGE IS NOT SIN

1 Corinthians 7:28 — But There Will Be Troubles

“But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this.”
Paul makes something very clear.
“If you do marry, you have not sinned.”
Paul does not want anyone to think that marriage is wrong.
It is good.
It is honorable.
It is God's design.
But Paul is also honest.
“Those who marry will face many troubles in this life.”
Marriage brings joy.
It also brings challenges, responsibilities, and burdens.
In a time of crisis, those burdens can be heavy.
Paul says, **“I want to spare you this.”**
His advice comes from care, not from rules.

Cross References

Hebrews 13:4

Everyone should honor marriage, and the marriage bed should be kept pure, because God will judge those who commit sexual sin and adultery.

Genesis 2:24

That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

John 16:33

I have told you these things so that you may have peace in Me. In this world you will have trouble. But take courage! I have overcome the world.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage is good, but it is not free of hardship.

Application

Enter marriage with joy and with open eyes.
Count the cost and trust God for strength.

XXIX. THE TIME IS SHORT

1 Corinthians 7:29 — Living as If Not

“What I mean, brothers and sisters, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they do not;”
Paul now gives the big picture behind his advice.
“The time is short.”
The word Paul uses pictures time that has been compressed or shortened.
Since Christ came, the world has entered its final age.
His return could come at any time.
This changes how believers should live.
“Those who have wives should live as if they do not.”
Paul does not mean husbands should ignore their wives.
He has already told them to care for their spouses.
He means that marriage must not become the center of a person's life.
Even the best earthly relationships are temporary.
Christ must come first.

Cross References

Romans 13:11
> Do this because you know what time it is. It is time to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.

1 Peter 4:7
> The end of all things is near. So be clear-minded and self-controlled so that you can pray.

James 4:14
> You don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears.

Spiritual Principle

Even good things must not take the place that belongs to Christ.

Key Truth

Marriage is for this life.
Christ is forever.

XXX. AS IF THEY DID NOT

1 Corinthians 7:30 — Mourning, Rejoicing, Buying

“those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep;”

Paul continues the list.
Those who mourn, as if they did not.
Sorrow is real, but it is not final.
Believers grieve with hope.
Those who are happy, as if they were not.
Joy in this world is good, but it is not the deepest joy.
It must not hold our hearts too tightly.
Those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep.
Everything we own is temporary.
We are managers, not permanent owners.
Paul is not telling believers to stop feeling or stop living.
He is telling them to hold earthly things loosely.

Cross References

Philippians 4:11
> I am not saying this because I am in need. I have learned to be content in whatever situation I am in.

James 4:14
> You don't even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then disappears.

Psalm 39:6
> People walk around like shadows. They rush about, but it means nothing. They pile up riches but do not know who will get them.

Spiritual Principle

Hold the things of this world with an open hand.

Application

Enjoy God's good gifts.
But do not let them own you.

XXXI. THIS WORLD IS PASSING AWAY

1 Corinthians 7:31 — Not Engrossed in It

“those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away.”
Paul finishes the thought.
“Those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them.”
Believers must use the things of this world.
We need food, homes, jobs, and money.
But we must not be **engrossed**—completely absorbed—in them.
Then Paul gives the reason:
“For this world in its present form is passing away.”
The word for **“present form”** was used for the scenes in a play.
The scenery of this world is changing.
The curtain will soon fall.

Everything we see is temporary.
Only what is done for God will last.

Cross References

1 John 2:17
The world and its desires are passing away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever.
2 Peter 3:10
But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar, the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done on it will be exposed.
Matthew 6:19
Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth, where moths and rust destroy them and where thieves break in and steal.

Spiritual Principle

Live with eternity in view, because this world is passing away.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Use the world, but do not let the world use you.

XXXII. FREE FROM CONCERN

1 Corinthians 7:32 — The Unmarried Man and the Lord's Affairs

“I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs— how he can please the Lord.”
Paul now explains another reason for his advice.
“I would like you to be free from concern.”
Paul wants believers to be free from distracting worries.
Then he describes the unmarried man.
“An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord.”
A single person often has more time and freedom to focus on serving God.
He can give his energy to ministry, prayer, and the needs of others.
This is the great advantage of singleness.

Cross References

Luke 10:41
The Lord answered her, “Martha, Martha, you are worried and upset about many things.”
Philippians 4:6
Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.
Matthew 6:25
That is why I tell you not to worry about your life—what you will eat or drink—or about your body —what you will wear. Isn't life more than food, and the body more than clothing?

Spiritual Principle

Singleness can give special freedom to focus on pleasing the Lord.

Application

If you are single, use this season to serve God wholeheartedly.

XXXIII. THE MARRIED MAN

1 Corinthians 7:33 — Concerned to Please His Wife

“But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—”
Paul now describes the married man.
He is **“concerned about the affairs of this world.”**
This is not a criticism.
A married man should care about providing for his family.
He should care about pleasing his wife.
God expects him to do so.
But it means his time and attention are shared.
He cannot give himself to ministry in the same way a single man can.
Paul is simply describing reality.

Cross References

Luke 14:20
Another said, “I just got married, so I can't come.”
Ephesians 5:28
In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they love their own bodies. A man who loves his wife loves himself.
1 Timothy 5:8
Anyone who does not take care of his relatives, especially his own family, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Spiritual Principle

Caring for one's family is a God-given responsibility.

Key Truth

A married believer serves the Lord by loving and caring for his family.

XXXIV. DIVIDED INTERESTS

1 Corinthians 7:34 — Devoted in Body and Spirit

“and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband.”
Paul continues.
“His interests are divided.”
The married man must balance his devotion to the Lord with his responsibilities at home.
Then Paul applies the same truth to women.
The unmarried woman is free to focus on **“the Lord's affairs.”**

Her aim is to be **“devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit.”**
The married woman is concerned with pleasing her husband.
Again, this is not wrong.
It is part of her calling in marriage.
Paul treats men and women equally here.
Both single men and single women have the same opportunity for undivided devotion.
Both married men and married women have the same responsibility to care for their spouses.

Cross References

Luke 10:39
She had a sister named Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to what He taught.
Philippians 4:6
Don't worry about anything. Instead, pray about everything. Tell God what you need, and thank Him for all He has done.
1 Timothy 5:5
A widow who is truly in need and left all alone puts her hope in God. She keeps praying and asking God for help night and day.

Spiritual Principle

Whether married or single, every believer is called to devotion to the Lord.

Key Truth

Single women have a valuable and honored place in God's work.

XXXV. UNDIVIDED DEVOTION

1 Corinthians 7:35 — For Your Own Good

“I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”
Paul explains his motive.
“For your own good.”
He is not trying to burden them.
“Not to restrict you.”
The word pictures throwing a noose around someone.
Paul is not trying to trap anyone or take away their freedom.
His goal is clear:
“That you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”
This is the heart of the whole chapter.
Married or single, the goal is the same.
A life devoted to the Lord.

Cross References

Colossians 3:2
Set your minds on the things above, not on earthly things.

Luke 10:42
> But only one thing is needed. Mary has chosen what is better, and it will not be taken away from her.

Matthew 6:33
> But seek first God's kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of every Christian life is undivided devotion to the Lord.

Application

What divides your heart?
Ask God to help you seek Him first.

XXXVI. IF HE FEELS HE OUGHT TO MARRY

1 Corinthians 7:36 — They Should Marry

“If anyone is worried that he is not acting honorably toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should marry.”
Paul now speaks to engaged couples.
This passage has been understood in different ways.
Some believe Paul is speaking about a father deciding whether to give his daughter in marriage.
The Crawford Standard Bible understands it as an engaged man and his fiancée.
Some engaged men in Corinth may have been holding back from marriage because they thought it was more spiritual to stay single.
But Paul says if the man feels he is not treating his fiancée **“honorably”**—
If she is **“getting along in years”**—
If he **“feels he ought to marry”**—
“He should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should marry.”
Paul gives full freedom to marry.
Delaying marriage out of a false idea of holiness is not required.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 22:28
> If a man meets a young woman who is a virgin and not engaged, takes hold of her, and sleeps with her, and they are found out,

Genesis 29:21
> Then Jacob said to Laban, “Give me my wife. My time is up, and I want to marry her.”

1 Timothy 5:8
> Anyone who does not take care of his relatives, especially his own family, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage entered in honor before God is right and good.

Key Truth

It is no sin to marry.

XXXVII. SETTLED IN HIS OWN MIND

1 Corinthians 7:37 — He Also Does the Right Thing

“But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his will, and has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing.”
Paul now describes the other choice.
Some men may decide not to marry.
Paul gives four conditions.
He has settled the matter in his own mind. He is firm in his decision.
He is under no compulsion. No one is forcing him, and he is not driven by uncontrolled desire.
He has control over his will. He has the self-control to remain single.
He has made up his mind. He has chosen freely.
If all this is true:
“This man also does the right thing.”
Both choices can honor God.

Cross References

Numbers 30:2
> When a man makes a promise to the LORD or swears an oath to bind himself, he must not break his word. He must do everything he said.

Ecclesiastes 5:4
> When you make a promise to God, do not delay in keeping it. He takes no pleasure in fools. Keep your promise.

Psalm 15:4
> He looks down on the wicked but honors those who respect the LORD. He keeps his promise even when it costs him.

Spiritual Principle

A decision made freely, with self-control, before God, can honor Him whether it leads to marriage or singleness.

XXXVIII. RIGHT AND EVEN BETTER

1 Corinthians 7:38 — Two Good Choices

“So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better.”
Paul sums up his counsel.
“He who marries does right.”

Marriage is not second-class.
“He who does not marry does even better.”
Paul says this because of the present crisis and the freedom singleness gives for undivided service.
He is not saying that single people are better people.
He is saying that, in that situation, singleness had practical advantages for serving the Lord.
Both choices are good.
Neither is sinful.

Cross References

Genesis 2:24
> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Matthew 19:11
> Jesus replied, “Not everyone can accept this teaching, but only those to whom it has been given.”

Proverbs 18:22
> The man who finds a wife finds something good and receives favor from the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

God gives His people freedom to choose between good options.

Key Truth

The question is not, **“Which choice is holy?”**
The question is, **“How can I best serve the Lord?”**

XXXIX. BOUND AS LONG AS HE LIVES

1 Corinthians 7:39 — Free to Marry in the Lord

“A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.”
Paul ends with a word to widows.
“A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives.”
Marriage is meant to last for life.
“But if her husband dies, she is free to marry.”
Death ends the marriage covenant.
A widow is free to marry again.
And she may marry **“anyone she wishes.”**
Paul gives her real freedom of choice.
But there is one condition:
“He must belong to the Lord.”
A believer should marry only another believer.
This is wise and loving counsel.
Marriage is the closest of all human partnerships.
It works best when both share the same Lord.

Cross References

Romans 7:2
For example, a married woman is bound by law to her husband as long as he is alive. But if her husband dies, she is released from the law that bound her to him.
Romans 7:3
So if she marries another man while her husband is alive, she is called an adulteress. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and she is not an adulteress if she marries another man.
2 Corinthians 6:14
Do not team up with unbelievers. What does goodness have in common with evil? What does light have in common with darkness?

Spiritual Principle

Believers should marry only those who belong to the Lord.

Application

If you are single and hope to marry, make a shared faith in Christ your first requirement.

XL. HAPPIER AS SHE IS

1 Corinthians 7:40 — “I Think That I Too Have the Spirit of God”

“In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.”
Paul gives his final opinion.
“She is happier if she stays as she is.”
For the reasons he has already given, Paul believes a widow may find greater freedom and joy in remaining single.
But notice he says **“in my judgment.”**
This is counsel, not command.
Then Paul adds a gentle but pointed statement:
“I think that I too have the Spirit of God.”
Some in Corinth claimed to be especially spiritual.
Paul reminds them that he also speaks by the Spirit of God.
His counsel was not merely human opinion.
It came from a heart guided by God's Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 8:9
But you are not controlled by your sinful nature. You are controlled by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to Him.
1 Corinthians 14:37
If anyone thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him recognize that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

1 Thessalonians 4:8

So anyone who rejects this teaching is not rejecting a human being, but God, who gives you His Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

Counsel given by the Spirit through God's word deserves careful attention.

Key Truth

Whether married, single, or widowed, the believer can find true happiness in the Lord.

XLI. SEVEN GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 7

1. Marriage Is a Safeguard Against Immorality

Each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband.

Principle:

Husbands and wives belong to each other and must fulfill their responsibilities in love and faithfulness.

2. Singleness Is a Gift

Paul wished that all could be as he was.

Principle:

Some are called to remain single for the sake of undivided devotion to the Lord.

3. Marriage to Unbelievers

The believer should stay if the unbelieving spouse is willing.

Principle:

If the unbelieving partner leaves, the believer is not bound; God has called His children to peace.

4. Stay Faithful in Your Calling

Married, single, slave, or free—each should remain with God where he was called.

Principle:

God's command is to serve Him faithfully right where you are.

5. The World Is Passing Away

The time is short, and this world in its present form is passing away.

Principle:

Christians are to live with eternity in mind, not absorbed in worldly concerns.

6. Undivided Devotion to God

The unmarried can focus on the Lord's affairs.

Principle:

Singleness provides greater freedom to serve the Lord wholeheartedly.

7. Marriage Is Honorable

“If you do marry, you have not sinned.”

Principle:

Both marriage and singleness are gifts, and each person must live according to the grace given them.

XLII. THE GIFTS OF MARRIAGE AND SINGLENESS

1 Corinthians 7 honors both marriage and singleness.

The Gift of Marriage

- Designed by God from the beginning.
- A safeguard against sexual sin.
- A covenant of mutual love and belonging.
- A place to care for and serve one another.
- An opportunity to bless children and unbelieving spouses.
- Brings joy, but also responsibilities and troubles.

The Gift of Singleness

- Modeled by Paul and by Jesus Himself.
- Free from the divided interests of family life.
- Allows undivided devotion to the Lord.
- Gives freedom to serve in hard times.
- Requires self-control.
- Is a gift, not a lesser calling.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The question is not whether marriage or singleness is better, but how you will serve the Lord with the gift you have been given.

XLIII. PAUL'S TEACHING ON DIVORCE

Verses 10–16 give important teaching on marriage and divorce.

For Two Believers

The Lord's command is to stay together.
If a separation happens, remain unmarried or be reconciled.

For a Believer Married to an Unbeliever

If the unbeliever is willing to stay, the believer must not divorce.
The believing spouse brings God's blessing into the home.

If the Unbeliever Leaves

The believer should let them go.
The believer is not bound in such cases.
God has called us to peace.

What Jesus Added

In Matthew, Jesus spoke of an exception for sexual unfaithfulness.

A Word About Safety

Paul is not addressing marriages where a spouse is in danger.
Scripture never requires anyone to remain in a place of abuse or harm.
Those in danger should seek safety and get help from church leaders and the proper authorities.

Key Truth

God's design is lifelong faithfulness, and His heart is always for reconciliation, peace, and the protection of the vulnerable.

XLIV. CONTENT WHERE GOD CALLED YOU

Verses 17–24 give one principle three times.

Verse 17

“Each one should live the life the Lord has assigned him.”

Verse 20

“Each one should remain in the situation in which he was when God called him.”

Verse 24

“Each one should remain with God in the condition they were in when called.”

Three Examples

- Married or single.

- Circumcised or uncircumcised.
- Slave or free.

What This Does Not Mean

It does not mean Christians can never change their situation.
Paul told slaves to gain their freedom if they could.

What This Does Mean

Your situation is not a barrier to serving God.
You can be faithful right where you are.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Contentment is not giving up on change; it is trusting God in the place He has put you.

XLV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 7 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Taught About Marriage

“Not I, but the Lord.” Paul repeats Jesus' own teaching on marriage.

Jesus Bought Us with a Price

“You were bought with a price.”

Jesus Sets Slaves Free

The slave who believes is the Lord's freedman.

Jesus Is Our Master

The free person who believes is Christ's slave.

Jesus Deserves Undivided Devotion

The goal of every life is **“undivided devotion to the Lord.”**

Key Truth

Whether married or single, slave or free, every believer belongs to Christ and lives for Him.

XLVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Was Paul against marriage?
No.
He said that marriage is good, that marrying is not sin, and that husbands and wives should care for one another.
He also valued singleness and wanted people to understand its advantages.

Question 2

Why did Paul say each man should have his own wife?
Because of sexual temptation.
Marriage is God's good and holy place for sexual love.

Question 3

What does it mean that husbands and wives have authority over each other's bodies?
In marriage, husband and wife belong to each other equally.
This calls for giving in love, never for force or pressure.

Question 4

Is singleness a lesser calling?
No.
Paul calls singleness a gift.
It allows a person to serve the Lord with undivided devotion.

Question 5

What does Paul say to married believers?
They must not separate or divorce.
If a separation happens, they should remain unmarried or be reconciled.

Question 6

What should a believer do if married to an unbeliever?
Stay if the unbeliever is willing.
The believer's faith brings blessing into the home.
If the unbeliever leaves, the believer is not bound.

Question 7

What does it mean that the unbelieving spouse and children are “sanctified” or “holy”?
It does not mean they are automatically saved.
It means they are set apart in a special place of blessing because a believer is in the home.

Question 8

Does this chapter require someone to stay in a dangerous marriage?
No.
Paul is not addressing situations of abuse.
Anyone in danger should seek safety and get help from church leaders and the proper authorities.

Question 9

Why did Paul tell people to remain as they were when called?
Because a person's situation is not a barrier to serving God.
Faithfulness matters more than circumstances.

Question 10

Did Paul approve of slavery?
No.
He told slaves to take their freedom if they could.
He taught that in Christ slaves and free people are equal, and the gospel's teaching worked against slavery.

Question 11

What does “the time is short” mean?
Since Christ came, we are living in the last age before His return.
Believers should hold the things of this world loosely and live with eternity in mind.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 7 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 7 should cause believers to live:

- Honoring marriage as God's good gift.
- Honoring singleness as God's good gift.
- Caring for their spouses with self-giving love.
- Keeping their commitments.
- Content and faithful where God has placed them.
- Free from slavery to human approval.
- Holding the things of this world loosely.
- With undivided devotion to the Lord.

XLVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 7 asks several important questions.

If I Am Married, Am I Caring for My Spouse?

Am I giving myself in love, or only looking out for myself?

If I Am Single, Am I Using My Freedom for the Lord?

Or am I wasting this season?

Do I See My Situation as a Gift?

Married or single, God has given me a gift to use.

Am I Keeping My Commitments?

Do I honor the promises I have made before God?

Am I Content Where God Has Placed Me?

Am I serving Him here, or always waiting for something else?

Am I Living for Human Approval?

I was bought with a price.

Am I Holding the World Too Tightly?

Is my heart absorbed in things that are passing away?

Is My Devotion to the Lord Divided?

What is pulling my heart away from Him?

XLVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Bloom Where God Has Planted You”

Many people believe they could serve God better if only their situation were different.
“If only I were married.”
“If only I were single.”
“If only I had a better job.”
“If only my spouse were a believer.”
“If only I were free.”
But Paul says something powerful.
God called you right where you are.
The slave could serve God as a slave.
The married could serve God in marriage.
The single could serve God in singleness.
The believer with an unbelieving spouse could be a light in that home.
God does not wait for perfect circumstances to use His people.
He uses them in the circumstances they have.
This creates a powerful principle.
Your situation is not your limitation.

It is your assignment.

Principle:

Remain with God where He has called you, and serve Him there with undivided devotion.

XLIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 7 was written to a church confused about marriage.
Some thought sex did not matter.
Some thought sex was unspiritual.
Some wanted to leave their marriages.
Some wanted to change everything about their lives once they became Christians.
Paul brought them back to balance.
Marriage is good.
Singleness is good.
Both are gifts.
Faithfulness matters more than circumstances.
And this world is passing away.
1 Corinthians 7 therefore reminds us:
Never despise marriage.
Never look down on singleness.
Never treat your marriage vows lightly.
Never think your situation keeps you from serving God.
Never let the passing things of this world capture your heart.
The church does not need people who are always waiting for a different life.
It needs:
Faithful husbands and wives.
Devoted single men and women.
Believers content in Christ.
And hearts fully given to the Lord.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that marriage is God's good gift.
Tell people that singleness is God's good gift.
Tell people that they were bought with a price.
Tell people that this world is passing away, but those who do God's will live forever.
And until He comes:
Love faithfully.
Serve wholeheartedly.
Remain with God.
Keep eternity in view.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the gift of marriage.
Thank You for the gift of singleness.
Thank You that You have given each of us our own gift from You.
Thank You that You called us right where we were.

Thank You that we were bought with a price and now belong to You.
Thank You that in Christ the slave is free and the free person belongs to the Lord.
Forgive us when we have treated marriage lightly.
Forgive us when we have looked down on those who are single.
Forgive us when we have been discontent with the life You assigned to us.
Forgive us when our hearts have been divided.
For those who are married, help them love one another with faithful, self-giving love.
For those who are single, help them use their freedom to serve You wholeheartedly.
For those married to unbelievers, give them grace to be a light in their homes.
For those who have been hurt in marriage, bring healing, safety, and peace.
For those who are widowed, be their comfort and their strength.
Teach us to hold the things of this world loosely.
Remind us that the time is short and this world is passing away.
Free us from living for the approval of people.
And give us undivided devotion to You.
“That you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord.” — 1 Corinthians 7:35

Central Truth

Both marriage and singleness are gifts from God, and whatever our situation, we are called to live faithfully where God has placed us, with undivided devotion to the Lord, because this world is passing away.

1 Corinthians 7 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that marriage and singleness are both good gifts from God, calls husbands and wives to faithful, self-giving love and believers to remain with God wherever He called them, and urges all to live with undivided devotion to the Lord because this world in its present form is passing away.

1 Corinthians Chapter 8 — Knowledge, Love, and Christian Liberty

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 8 answers another question from the Corinthians' letter.
“Now concerning food offered to idols.”
To modern readers, this may sound like a strange question.
But in Corinth, it touched almost every part of daily life.
Animals were sacrificed in the city's many temples.
Part of the meat was burned on the altar.
Part was eaten by the worshipers and priests.
And much of what was left was sold in the public market.
Temple dining rooms were also used for social events.
Family celebrations, business dinners, and community gatherings often took place there.
So the question was real:
Can a Christian eat meat that was offered to an idol?
Some believers said, **“Yes, of course.”**
They had knowledge.
They knew idols were nothing.
They knew there is only one true God.
So they ate freely, even in temple dining rooms.
But other believers had a weaker conscience.
They had worshiped idols for years before coming to Christ.
For them, eating that meat still felt like worshiping a false god.
When they saw the “strong” believers eating it, they were tempted to eat too, against their conscience.
And it was damaging their faith.
Paul's answer is wise and surprising.
He agrees with the theology of the strong.
Idols are nothing.
There is only one God and one Lord.
Food does not bring us closer to God.
But Paul says knowledge is not enough.
“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”
The real question is not, **“Am I allowed?”**
The real question is, **“How will this affect my brother or sister for whom Christ died?”**
The chapter moves through four movements:

- Knowledge vs. Love (verses 1–3).
- Idols and the One True God (verses 4–6).
- The Weak Conscience of Believers (verses 7–9).
- Responsibility Toward the Weak (verses 10–13).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 8 is:
Knowledge alone makes us proud, but love builds others up, so believers must gladly limit their freedom rather than cause a brother or sister for whom Christ died to stumble.

I. KNOWLEDGE PUFFS UP

1 Corinthians 8:1 — But Love Builds Up

“Now concerning food offered to idols: we know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”

Paul introduces the new topic.
“Now concerning food offered to idols.”
Then he seems to quote the Corinthians:
“We all possess knowledge.”
The strong believers were proud of what they knew.
Paul does not deny that they had knowledge.
But he immediately warns them:
“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”
Puffs up is the word Paul has used again and again in this letter.
It pictures something swollen with air.
Big on the outside, empty on the inside.
Builds up is a construction word.
It means to build a house, brick by brick.
Knowledge by itself makes **me** bigger.
Love makes **others** stronger.
Paul is not against knowledge.
He is against knowledge without love.

Cross References

Romans 14:1
Welcome anyone whose faith is weak, but do not argue with them about their opinions.
1 Corinthians 13:2
If I have the gift of prophecy, understand all secret truths, and have all knowledge, and if I have faith strong enough to move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.
Romans 15:2
Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Spiritual Principle

Knowledge without love inflates the self; love uses knowledge to strengthen others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Being right is not enough; we must also be loving.

II. HE DOES NOT YET KNOW

1 Corinthians 8:2 — The Limits of Our Knowledge

“If anyone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.”
This is a humbling verse.
The person who is proud of his knowledge has missed something.
He **“does not yet know as he ought to know.”**
True knowledge always comes with humility.
The more we truly understand God, the more we realize how much we do not understand.
Proud knowledge is partial knowledge.
It knows facts but misses love.
It knows truth but forgets people.

Cross References

Proverbs 3:7
Don't think of yourself as wise. Respect the LORD and turn away from evil.
Galatians 6:3
If anyone thinks he is something when he is really nothing, he is fooling himself.
Romans 12:16
Live in harmony with one another. Don't be proud, but be willing to spend time with ordinary people. Don't think you are wiser than you really are.

Spiritual Principle

The more truly we know, the more humbly we hold what we know.

Application

Be careful when you feel sure you know more than others.
That feeling can be a warning sign of pride.

III. KNOWN BY GOD

1 Corinthians 8:3 — Loving God

“But if anyone loves God, he is known by God.”
Here is the beautiful turn.
The Corinthians wanted to be known for their knowledge.
Paul points to something far greater.
“If anyone loves God, he is known by God.”
The most important thing is not how much you know about God.
It is whether God knows you.
To be **known by God** means to be loved by Him, chosen by Him, and claimed as His own.
And the sign that God knows you is that you love Him.
We love Him because He loved us first.

Cross References

Galatians 4:9
But now that you know God—or rather, now that God knows you—how can you turn back to those weak and worthless basic powers? Do you want to be slaves to them all over again?
1 John 4:19
We love because He loved us first.
Psalm 1:6
For the LORD watches over the path of those who do right, but the path of the wicked leads to ruin.

Spiritual Principle

Being known and loved by God matters more than anything we know.

Key Truth

Knowledge can make us proud.
Being known by God makes us humble and grateful.

IV. AN IDOL IS NOTHING

1 Corinthians 8:4 — There Is No God But One

“So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that “an idol is nothing at all in the world” and that “there is no God but one.””
Paul returns to the question.
He quotes two statements the strong believers were making.
“An idol is nothing at all in the world.”
“There is no God but one.”
Paul agrees with both.
An idol is a piece of wood, stone, or metal.
It has no real divine power.
And there is only one true God.
This was the great confession of Israel.
“The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”
So, in itself, meat offered to an idol is just meat.
The idol cannot change it.
The theology of the strong believers was correct.
But as Paul will show, correct theology must be applied with love.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 4:39
> So know today and keep it in mind: The LORD is God in heaven above and on the earth below. There is no other.

Isaiah 44:6
> This is what the LORD says—Israel's King and Redeemer, the LORD of Armies: “I am the first and I am the last. There is no God except Me.”

Deuteronomy 6:4
> Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.

Spiritual Principle

There is only one true God, and every idol is empty.

Key Truth

Idols have no power over those who belong to the living God.

V. SO-CALLED GODS

1 Corinthians 8:5 — Many “Gods” and Many “Lords”

“For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—”
Paul admits that the world is full of **“so-called gods.”**
Corinth had temples to Apollo, Aphrodite, Asclepius, Demeter, and many others.
Roman emperors were also honored as gods.

People called these beings **“gods”** and **“lords.”**
Paul says they are **so-called.**
They are gods in name only.
They are real in the sense that people worship them and give them power over their lives.
And later in this letter, Paul will warn that demons can stand behind idol worship.
But they are not real gods.
There is only one God who made heaven and earth.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 10:17
For the LORD your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome. He shows no favoritism and cannot be bribed.
Psalm 96:5
All the gods of the nations are worthless idols, but the LORD made the heavens.
Galatians 4:8
In the past, when you did not know God, you were slaves to things that by nature are not gods at all.

Spiritual Principle

Anything people worship in place of God is a false god, no matter what they call it.

Application

Modern idols may not be statues.
They may be money, success, pleasure, or people.
Anything we trust and love more than God becomes a so-called god.

VI. ONE GOD AND ONE LORD

1 Corinthians 8:6 — The Father and Jesus Christ

“yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we live; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we live.”
This is one of the most important verses in the New Testament about who Jesus is.
The world had many gods and many lords.
“Yet for us.”
Christians confess something different.
“One God, the Father.”
All things come **from** Him.
We live **for** Him.
“One Lord, Jesus Christ.”
All things come **through** Him.
We live **through** Him.
Paul is echoing Israel's great confession:
“The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”
And he places Jesus right inside it.
The Father is the one God.
Jesus is the one Lord.
Jesus is not one of many lords.

He is the one Lord through whom everything was created.
This is a clear statement that Jesus shares the identity of the one true God.

Cross References

Malachi 2:10
Don't we all have one Father? Didn't one God create us? Then why are we unfaithful to one another, breaking the covenant God made with our ancestors?
Ephesians 4:6
There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.
John 1:3
Everything was made through Him. Nothing that was made was made without Him.

Spiritual Principle

All of life comes from God the Father and through the Lord Jesus Christ, and all of life is for Him.

Key Truth

Jesus is not one god among many.
He is the one Lord through whom all things were made.

VII. NOT EVERYONE HAS THIS KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 8:7 — A Weak Conscience Defiled

“But not everyone possesses this knowledge. Some, still accustomed to idols, eat food as if it were sacrificed to a god, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled.”
Now Paul turns.
“But not everyone possesses this knowledge.”
Some believers knew in their minds that idols were nothing.
But their hearts had not yet caught up.
They were **“still accustomed to idols.”**
For years, they had worshiped false gods.
They had eaten sacrificial meals as acts of worship.
Now, even as Christians, eating that meat still felt like worship.
Paul says their **“conscience is weak.”**
A weak conscience is a sensitive conscience.
It is not yet fully trained by the truth.
When they ate against their conscience, they felt they were sinning.
And so their conscience was **“defiled”**—stained with guilt.

Cross References

Romans 14:14
I know and am fully convinced in the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean in itself. But if someone believes something is unclean, then for that person it is unclean.

Romans 14:23

> But anyone who has doubts and eats anyway is condemned, because he is not acting from faith. And anything not done from faith is sin.

Titus 1:15

> To the pure, everything is pure. But to those who are corrupt and do not believe, nothing is pure. Their minds and consciences are corrupted.

Spiritual Principle

Going against your conscience is spiritually harmful, even when the act itself is not wrong.

Key Truth

Believers grow at different speeds.
Not everyone's heart has caught up with what their head knows.

VIII. FOOD DOES NOT BRING US NEAR TO GOD

1 Corinthians 8:8 — No Worse, No Better

“But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.”
Paul makes a key point.
“Food does not bring us near to God.”
Our relationship with God does not depend on what we eat.
The strong believers may have thought that eating showed their spiritual maturity.
The weak believers may have thought that not eating made them more holy.
Paul says both are wrong.
“We are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do.”
Food is morally neutral.
It does not make anyone more or less spiritual.
Only Jesus Christ brings us near to God.

Cross References

Romans 14:17

> For the kingdom of God is not about eating and drinking. It is about righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit.

Colossians 2:16

> So don't let anyone judge you about what you eat or drink, or about religious festivals, New Moon celebrations, or Sabbath days.

Hebrews 13:9

> Do not be carried away by all kinds of strange teachings. It is good for our hearts to be made strong by grace, not by rules about food, which have not helped those who follow them.

Spiritual Principle

What brings us near to God is Christ, not food or any outward practice.

Key Truth

If something does not make you closer to God, it is not worth hurting your brother over.

IX. A STUMBLING BLOCK TO THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 8:9 — Be Careful with Your Rights

“Be careful, however, that the exercise of your rights does not become a stumbling block to the weak.”
Paul now gives the warning.
“Be careful.”
The strong believers had **rights.**
They were free to eat.
Paul does not deny it.
But he warns that their freedom could become **“a stumbling block to the weak.”**
A stumbling block is something in the path that makes someone trip and fall.
The strong believer's freedom could cause a weaker believer to fall into sin.
Freedom is good.
But freedom used carelessly can do real harm.

Cross References

Romans 14:13
> So let's stop judging one another. Instead, decide never to put anything in the way of a brother or sister that would make them stumble or fall.

Romans 14:21
> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes your brother or sister to stumble.

Galatians 5:13
> Brothers and sisters, you were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to please your sinful nature. Instead, serve one another in love.

Spiritual Principle

Christian freedom must always be guided by love for others.

Application

Before you use your freedom, ask: **“Who might be watching, and how will this affect them?”**

X. EMBOLDENED TO EAT

1 Corinthians 8:10 — Eating in an Idol's Temple

“For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you, who have this knowledge, eating in an idol's temple, won't he be emboldened to eat what is sacrificed to idols?”
Paul gives a real example.
A strong believer is seen **“eating in an idol's temple.”**
Temple dining rooms were common places for meals and celebrations.

A weak believer sees him.
And he thinks, **“If he can do it, so can I.”**
He is **“emboldened.”**
The word means **built up.**
It is the same word Paul used in verse 1.
There is sad irony here.
The strong believer thinks he is building up his brother.
But he is really building him up to sin against his own conscience.
That is not the kind of building up love does.

Cross References

Romans 14:15
> If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Romans 15:1
> We who are strong should help carry the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.

Romans 14:20
> Do not tear down God's work over food. All food is clean, but it is wrong to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Our example teaches others, for good or for harm.

Key Truth

Someone is always watching.
Make sure your example leads them toward Christ.

XI. FOR WHOM CHRIST DIED

1 Corinthians 8:11 — Destroyed by Your Knowledge

“So this weak brother or sister, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge.”
This is a sobering verse.
The weak believer is **“destroyed”** by the strong believer's knowledge.
The word means ruined or brought to harm.
The weak believer's faith is damaged.
He may be pulled back into idol worship.
And notice how Paul describes this weak believer:
“For whom Christ died.”
Jesus loved this person enough to die for him.
How then can a strong believer refuse to give up a meal for him?
Christ gave His life.
Can we not give up our rights?

Cross References

Matthew 18:6
> But if anyone causes one of these little ones who trust in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone hung around his neck and be drowned in the deep sea.

Romans 14:15
> If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Romans 14:21
> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes your brother or sister to stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer is precious because Christ died for them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If Christ gave His life for my brother, I can give up my rights for him.

XII. YOU SIN AGAINST CHRIST

1 Corinthians 8:12 — Wounding a Weak Conscience

“When you sin against them in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.”
Paul calls it what it is.
“Sin.”
Causing a weaker believer to stumble is not just unwise.
It is not just unkind.
It is sin.
The word **wound** means to strike or beat.
A weak conscience is easily hurt.
And then Paul says the most serious thing of all:
“You sin against Christ.”
Christ is so united with His people that what we do to them, we do to Him.
Jesus told Saul on the road to Damascus, **“Why are you persecuting Me?”**
Saul was persecuting Christians.
Jesus took it personally.

Cross References

Matthew 25:40
> The King will answer, “I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of Mine, you did for Me.”

Acts 9:4
> He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?”

Romans 14:15
> If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Spiritual Principle

How we treat Christ's people is how we treat Christ.

Key Truth

There is no such thing as a small offense against one of Christ's own.

XIII. I WILL NEVER EAT MEAT AGAIN

1 Corinthians 8:13 — Love Limits Liberty

“Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause them to stumble.”
Paul ends the chapter with a personal decision.
He does not just tell others what to do.
He shows them.
“I will never eat meat again.”
Paul was free to eat meat.
He knew idols were nothing.
But if his freedom would cause a brother or sister to fall into sin, he would gladly give it up.
Not just once.
“Never.”
This is love in action.
Love does not ask, **“What am I allowed to do?”**
Love asks, **“What will help my brother?”**
In the next chapter, Paul will show how he gave up many of his rights for the sake of the gospel.

Cross References

Romans 14:21
> It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes your brother or sister to stumble.

Mark 9:42
> If anyone causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a large millstone tied around his neck and be thrown into the sea.

2 Corinthians 11:29
> Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with distress?

Spiritual Principle

Love gladly gives up personal rights for the good of others.

Application

Is there a freedom you enjoy that might cause someone else to stumble?
Are you willing to set it aside out of love?

XIV. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 8

1. Knowledge Without Love Is Dangerous

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”

Principle:

True Christian maturity is not about proving what we know, but showing love that builds others up.

2. Idols Are Powerless, but Consciences Are Fragile

Idols are nothing, but some believers still struggled with their past.

Principle:

We must be sensitive to the weaknesses of believers who are still growing.

3. Food Is Morally Neutral, but Love Is Not

Food does not bring us near to God.

Principle:

Eating or not eating makes no difference to God, but using our freedom without care can harm others.

4. Our Actions Affect Others

When we wound a weak conscience, we sin against Christ.

Principle:

Causing a weaker believer to stumble is not just unkind—it is sin against Christ Himself.

5. Love Limits Liberty

“I will never eat meat again.”

Principle:

The Christian should gladly lay aside personal rights when they threaten another's faith, because love comes before freedom.

XV. FOOD OFFERED TO IDOLS IN CORINTH

Paul's discussion makes more sense when we understand daily life in Corinth.

Sacrifices in the Temples

Animals were offered to many gods in Corinth's temples.
Part of the animal was burned, and part was eaten.

Meat in the Market

Leftover meat from the temples was often sold in the public market.
Many people could not tell where their meat had come from.

Meals in the Temple Dining Rooms

Temples had dining rooms where people gathered for birthdays, weddings, business meals, and community events.
Turning down an invitation could mean losing friends, customers, or social standing.

Paul Says More Later

In Chapter 10, Paul will give further teaching.
Meat bought in the market may be eaten with a clear conscience.
But taking part in idol feasts is dangerous, because demons stand behind idol worship.

Key Truth

The question about idol food was not small; it touched the believer's work, family, friendships, and witness.

XVI. THE STRONG AND THE WEAK

1 Corinthians 8 describes two kinds of believers.

The Strong Believer

- Knows idols are nothing.
- Has a clear conscience about eating.
- Has real freedom in Christ.
- Can become proud of his knowledge.
- Must be careful not to cause others to stumble.

The Weak Believer

- Is still affected by his past with idols.
- Has a sensitive conscience.
- Feels guilty if he eats.
- Can be pulled into sin by the example of others.
- Is a brother or sister for whom Christ died.

What Each Must Do

The strong must use freedom with love.
The weak must grow in understanding.

Both must stop judging one another.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The strong are not called to win the argument, but to carry the weak.

XVII. ONE GOD AND ONE LORD

Verse 6 is one of the great confessions of the Christian faith.

Israel's Confession

“Listen, Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one.”
Every faithful Jew confessed this daily.

Paul's Christian Confession

“One God, the Father.”
“One Lord, Jesus Christ.”
Paul takes Israel's words about the one God and places Jesus within them.

What the Father Does

All things are **from** Him.
We live **for** Him.

What Jesus Does

All things are **through** Him.
We live **through** Him.

Key Truth

Jesus is not a second god beside the Father; He is the one Lord who shares the identity of the one true God.

XVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 8 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

The One Lord

There are many so-called lords, but only one Lord, Jesus Christ.

The Creator

All things came into being through Him.

The Giver of Life

We live through Him.

The Savior Who Died for the Weak

The weak believer is one **“for whom Christ died.”**

The Lord Who Is United with His People

To sin against a believer is to sin against Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Lord through whom all things were made is the same Lord who died for the weakest believer.

XIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why was food offered to idols such an important question in Corinth?
Much of the meat sold in the city came from temple sacrifices.
Many social events took place in temple dining rooms.
The question affected daily life, work, and friendships.

Question 2

What does “knowledge puffs up, but love builds up” mean?
Knowledge by itself can make a person proud.
Love uses knowledge to help and strengthen others.

Question 3

Why is being known by God more important than knowing about God?
Our knowledge is always limited.
Being known by God means being loved and claimed by Him.
That is the foundation of our faith.

Question 4

Were the strong believers wrong about idols?
No.
Paul agreed that idols are nothing and that there is only one God.
Their problem was not wrong theology but a lack of love.

Question 5

What does verse 6 teach about Jesus?
It places Jesus within Israel's confession of the one true God.
He is the one Lord through whom all things were created.

Question 6

What is a “weak conscience”?
A conscience that is sensitive and not yet fully trained by the truth.
These believers still felt that eating idol food was worship of a false god.

Question 7

Why is it harmful to act against your conscience?
Even if the act itself is not wrong, going against conscience means acting against what you believe God wants.
That damages your relationship with God.

Question 8

Does food make us closer to God?
No.
Food is morally neutral.
Only Christ brings us near to God.

Question 9

What is a stumbling block?
Something that causes another person to fall into sin.
A believer's freedom can become a stumbling block when it leads a weaker believer to sin against his conscience.

Question 10

Why does Paul say causing a brother to stumble is sin against Christ?
Christ is united with His people.
He died for them.
What we do to them, we do to Him.

Question 11

Was Paul saying that Christians must never eat meat?
No.
He was saying that he personally would give up meat if it caused a brother or sister to fall into sin.
Love sets the limits of liberty.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 8 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 8 should cause believers to live:

- Humble about what they know.
- Using knowledge to build others up.
- Worshiping the one God and one Lord.
- Patient with those who are still growing.
- Careful about the example they set.
- Valuing every believer as one for whom Christ died.

- Willing to give up their rights out of love.

XX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 8 asks several important questions.

Am I Proud of What I Know?

Does my knowledge make me bigger, or make others stronger?

Do I Love God?

Am I known by Him?

Are There Modern Idols in My Life?

What do I trust and love more than God?

Am I Patient with Weaker Believers?

Or do I look down on them?

Who Is Watching My Example?

Am I leading anyone toward sin?

Do I See Others as People for Whom Christ Died?

How would that change the way I treat them?

Am I Willing to Give Up My Rights?

Is there a freedom I need to set aside out of love?

XXI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Love Limits Liberty”

Christians are truly free.
Free from the law as a way of salvation.
Free from the power of idols.
Free from rules about food.
But Christian freedom is not the freedom to do whatever we want.
It is the freedom to love.
Sometimes love means using our freedom.
Sometimes love means laying it down.
The question is never only, **“Is this allowed?”**
The question is also, **“Is this loving?”**

Jesus had every right as the Son of God.
Yet He laid them down for us.
He did not insist on His rights.
He went to the cross.
This creates a powerful principle.
The strongest Christian is not the one with the most freedom.
It is the one most willing to give it up for others.

Principle:

Love comes before liberty, because Christ gave up everything for us.

XXII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 8 was written to a church that knew a lot.
They knew idols were nothing.
They knew there was one God.
They knew food did not matter.
They were right.
But they were not loving.
Their knowledge had made them proud.
And their pride was hurting their brothers and sisters.
Paul pointed them to a better way.
Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.
1 Corinthians 8 therefore reminds us:
Never be proud of what you know.
Never forget that you are known by God.
Never despise a weaker believer.
Never use your freedom to harm someone for whom Christ died.
The church does not need more people who are right.
It needs:
Humble knowledge.
Patient love.
Careful examples.
And believers willing to give up their rights for others.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that there is one God and one Lord, Jesus Christ.
Tell people that idols are empty.
Tell people that Christ died even for the weakest believer.
Tell people that love is greater than knowledge.
And as you use your freedom:
Build others up.
Watch your example.
Protect the weak.
Let love lead.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,

Thank You that there is one God, the Father, from whom all things come and for whom we live.
Thank You that there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live.
Thank You that You know us and love us.
Thank You that Christ died for every believer, the strong and the weak.
Thank You for the freedom we have in Christ.
Forgive us when our knowledge has made us proud.
Forgive us when we have looked down on others.
Forgive us when we have used our freedom carelessly.
Forgive us when our example has caused someone else to stumble.
Teach us that love is greater than knowledge.
Help us use what we know to build others up.
Give us patience with those who are still growing.
Make us careful about the example we set.
Help us see every brother and sister as someone for whom Christ died.
Give us hearts willing to lay down our rights for the good of others.
Keep us from every idol, and keep our hearts fixed on You alone.
And may our lives show that we love You and are known by You.
“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.” — 1 Corinthians 8:1

Central Truth

Knowledge alone makes us proud, but love builds others up, so believers must gladly limit their freedom rather than cause a brother or sister for whom Christ died to stumble.

1 Corinthians 8 in One Sentence

Paul agrees that idols are nothing and that there is one God and one Lord, Jesus Christ, but warns that knowledge without love puffs up, and calls believers to give up their freedom rather than cause a weaker brother or sister for whom Christ died to stumble.

1 Corinthians Chapter 9 — Paul’s Rights, His Sacrifice, and His Discipline

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 9 can seem like a sudden change of subject.
In Chapter 8, Paul was talking about food offered to idols.
He ended with a personal decision:
“If what I eat causes my brother or sister to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again.”
Now, in Chapter 9, Paul shows that this was not just talk.
He had already given up far more than meat.
Chapter 9 is Paul's living example of the principle he taught in Chapter 8:
Love limits liberty.
Some in Corinth were questioning whether Paul was a true apostle.
After all, he did not accept money from them.
Other teachers did.
Maybe, they thought, Paul refused support because he knew he did not really deserve it.
Paul answers with a powerful defense.
He is an apostle.
He has seen the risen Lord.
The Corinthian church itself is proof of his ministry.
And as an apostle, he had every right to be supported.
Soldiers are paid.
Farmers eat their crops.
Shepherds drink the milk of their flock.
The Law of Moses says so.
The priests in the temple lived from the offerings.
And the Lord Jesus Himself commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.
But Paul did not use this right.
Why?
So that nothing would hinder the gospel.
He made himself a servant to all.
He became all things to all people so that by all possible means he might save some.
Then Paul turns to a picture every Corinthian would understand.
Corinth hosted the famous Isthmian Games, second only to the Olympics.
Athletes trained hard, controlled their bodies, and ran to win.
And all for a crown that would wither in a few days.
Christians run for a crown that will last forever.
So they must run with purpose and discipline.
The chapter moves through five movements:

- Paul's Apostolic Authority (verses 1–3).
- The Rights of an Apostle (verses 4–14).
- Paul's Sacrificial Example (verses 15–18).
- Paul's Servanthood for the Gospel (verses 19–23).
- Running to Win the Prize (verses 24–27).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 9 is:
For the sake of the gospel, Paul gladly gave up his rights, made himself a servant to all, and disciplined himself like an athlete, because winning people to Christ and receiving the eternal prize was worth any sacrifice.

I. AM I NOT AN APOSTLE?

1 Corinthians 9:1 — Four Questions

“Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not you my work in the Lord?”
Paul opens with four questions.
Each one expects the answer **“Yes!”**
“Am I not an apostle?”
Some in Corinth doubted Paul's authority.
But he was a true apostle, sent by Christ.
“Am I not free?”
Paul had just said he would give up meat for others.
That did not mean he was not free.
He was free.
He chose to limit his freedom out of love.
“Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?”
An apostle had to be a witness of the risen Christ.
Paul had seen Him on the road to Damascus.
“Are not you my work in the Lord?”
The Corinthian church itself was the fruit of Paul's ministry.

Cross References

Acts 9:17

> So Ananias went to the house and placed his hands on Saul. He said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”

Galatians 1:1

> Paul, an apostle—not sent by people or appointed by any man, but sent by Jesus Christ and by God the Father, who raised Him from the dead.

Acts 22:14

> Then he said, “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know His will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear words from His own mouth.”

Spiritual Principle

True authority in ministry comes from Christ's call, not from human approval.

Key Truth

Paul was free.
That is what made his sacrifice meaningful.

II. THE SEAL OF MY APOSTLESHIP

1 Corinthians 9:2 — “Surely I Am to You”

“If I am not an apostle to others, yet surely I am to you: for you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”
Paul makes a strong point.
Others might question whether he was an apostle.
But the Corinthians could not.
“You are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.”
A **seal** was a mark stamped in wax to prove that a document was genuine.
The church in Corinth was Paul's seal.
He came to their city.
He preached the gospel.
He stayed a year and a half teaching them.
And a church was born.
If they doubted Paul, they were doubting their own salvation.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 3:2
You yourselves are our letter, written on our hearts, known and read by everyone.
Acts 18:11
So Paul stayed there for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.
1 Corinthians 4:15
Even if you had ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers. In Christ Jesus I became your father through the good news.

Spiritual Principle

Changed lives are the clearest proof of a genuine ministry.

Key Truth

The best letter of recommendation is a life transformed by the gospel.

III. MY DEFENSE

1 Corinthians 9:3 — To Those Who Examine Me

“My defense to those who examine me is this:”
Paul now begins a formal defense.
The word **defense** was used in a courtroom.
The word **examine** was used for a judge questioning someone.
Some in Corinth were putting Paul on trial.
They questioned his authority.
They questioned his motives.
They questioned why he refused their money.
Paul answers them.

But notice that his defense is not mainly about protecting himself.
It is about showing why he gave up his rights.
He is teaching the Corinthians by example.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 12:19
Have you been thinking all along that we are defending ourselves to you? We are speaking in Christ before God. Everything we do, dear friends, is to build you up.

Philippians 1:7
It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, because I hold you in my heart. Whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the good news, all of you share with me in God's grace.

1 Corinthians 4:3
But it matters very little to me if I am judged by you or by any human court. I do not even judge myself.

Spiritual Principle

When a servant of God must defend himself, the goal should be to build others up, not to protect his pride.

IV. THE RIGHT TO EAT AND DRINK

1 Corinthians 9:4 — Support for Ministry

“Do we not have the right to eat and to drink?”
Paul begins listing his rights.
The first is simple.
“The right to eat and to drink.”
This means the right to have food and drink provided by the churches he served.
It is the right to be supported in ministry.
Jesus taught this when He sent out His disciples.
He told them to accept the food and drink people gave them, because the worker deserves his pay.

Cross References

Luke 10:7
Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, because the worker deserves his pay. Do not move from house to house.

1 Timothy 5:18
For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his pay.”

Matthew 10:10
Do not take a bag for the trip, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, because the worker deserves his food.

Spiritual Principle

Those who serve in gospel ministry have a right to be supported.

V. THE RIGHT TO A BELIEVING WIFE

1 Corinthians 9:5 — Like the Other Apostles

“Do we not have the right to take along a believing wife, as the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?”
Paul's second right was to have a **believing wife** travel with him.
And to have the churches support her as well.
Paul mentions three groups who did this.
The other apostles.
The brothers of the Lord—Jesus' half-brothers, such as James and Jude, who became believers after His resurrection.
Cephas—Peter, who was married.
Paul was single.
But even if he had married, he would have had the right to bring his wife and have the church support her.
This verse also shows that ministry and marriage go together well.
Many of the early church leaders were married.

Cross References

Matthew 8:14
When Jesus came into Peter's house, He saw Peter's mother-in-law lying in bed with a fever.
Mark 1:30
Simon's mother-in-law was in bed with a fever, and they told Jesus about her right away.
Acts 1:14
All of them joined together and kept praying, along with the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.

Spiritual Principle

Marriage and family are honored in ministry.

Key Truth

Even Jesus' own brothers, who once doubted Him, became His servants.

VI. BARNABAS AND I

1 Corinthians 9:6 — Working to Support Themselves

“Or is it only Barnabas and I who must work to support ourselves?”
Paul's third right was the right **not** to work at another job.
Paul and Barnabas had chosen to work with their hands to support themselves.
Paul was a tentmaker.
But this was their choice, not an obligation.
Barnabas was a generous leader in the early church.
His name meant **“son of encouragement.”**
He was the one who first brought Paul to the apostles after Paul's conversion.

Together they went on the first missionary journey.
Later they had a sharp disagreement and went separate ways.
Yet here Paul speaks warmly of him.
They shared the same commitment to serve without being a burden.

Cross References

Acts 4:36
> Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means “son of encouragement”),

Acts 13:2
> While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart Barnabas and Saul for Me, for the work I have called them to do.”

Acts 15:39
> They had such a sharp disagreement that they went their separate ways. Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus,

Spiritual Principle

Choosing to give up a right is a different thing from not having it.

Key Truth

Paul and Barnabas once disagreed sharply.
But Paul still honored his old partner.

VII. SOLDIERS, FARMERS, AND SHEPHERDS

1 Corinthians 9:7 — Examples from Everyday Life

“Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock?”
Paul gives three examples from ordinary life.
The soldier.
No soldier pays his own way.
The army supports him.
The farmer.
No one plants a vineyard and refuses to eat the grapes.
The shepherd.
No shepherd tends a flock and refuses to drink its milk.
The point is simple.
Those who work have a right to benefit from their work.
The same is true of those who serve in ministry.
Notice that these three pictures are also pictures of ministry.
The minister is a soldier in the Lord's army.
He is a farmer planting the gospel.
He is a shepherd caring for God's flock.

Cross References

2 Timothy 2:4
No soldier on duty gets tangled up in everyday affairs, because he wants to please the officer who enlisted him.
2 Timothy 2:6
The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.
Deuteronomy 20:6
Has anyone planted a vineyard and not yet enjoyed its fruit? He should go home, or he might die in battle and someone else will enjoy it.

Spiritual Principle

Common sense and fairness both say that workers should share in the fruit of their labor.

VIII. DOES NOT THE LAW SAY THE SAME?

1 Corinthians 9:8 — More Than Human Reasoning

“Do I say this from a human point of view? Does not the Law say the same also?”
Paul does not want anyone to think he is only using human logic.
“Do I say this from a human point of view?”
The examples of soldiers and farmers are good.
But Paul has a stronger argument.
“Does not the Law say the same also?”
God's own word teaches this principle.
Paul always went back to Scripture.
Human reasoning can support a point.
But only God's word settles it.

Cross References

Romans 3:19
Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.
Galatians 4:21
Tell me, you who want to be under the law, don't you listen to what the law says?
Romans 7:1
Brothers and sisters—I am speaking to people who know the law—don't you know that the law has authority over a person only as long as he lives?

Spiritual Principle

God's word, not human opinion, is the final authority.

Application

When you make a case for something, ask: **“What does Scripture say?”**

IX. DO NOT MUZZLE THE OX

1 Corinthians 9:9 — Is It for Oxen That God Is Concerned?

“For it is written in the Law of Moses: “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.” Is it for oxen that God is concerned?”
Paul quotes Deuteronomy 25:4.
In Israel, oxen walked in circles over the harvested grain to separate the grain from the stalks.
God commanded that the ox must not be muzzled.
It should be free to eat some of the grain while it worked.
Then Paul asks:
“Is it for oxen that God is concerned?”
God does care for animals.
The Bible is clear about that.
But Paul's point is that this law had a deeper purpose.
If God cared that a working ox could eat, how much more does He care that His working servants are supported?

Cross References

Deuteronomy 25:4
Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.
1 Timothy 5:18
For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his pay.”
Deuteronomy 22:10
Do not plow with an ox and a donkey yoked together.

Spiritual Principle

God's laws reveal His heart, and His heart is fair and generous toward those who work.

X. WRITTEN FOR OUR SAKE

1 Corinthians 9:10 — Plowing and Threshing in Hope

“Or does He not certainly speak for our sake? Yes, it was written for us—because the plowman should plow in hope, and the thresher should share in the harvest.”
Paul explains the deeper meaning.
“It was written for us.”
God's law about oxen teaches a principle for people.
The plowman should plow in hope.
He works now, expecting a harvest later.
The thresher should share in the harvest.
The one who does the work should benefit from it.
The Old Testament was not written only for ancient Israel.
It was written to teach God's people in every age.

Cross References

1 Timothy 5:18
For Scripture says, “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “The worker deserves his pay.”
2 Timothy 2:6
The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops.
Romans 15:4
Everything written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

Spiritual Principle

The Old Testament still teaches and encourages God's people today.

Key Truth

God's word speaks to every generation.

XI. SPIRITUAL SEED, MATERIAL HARVEST

1 Corinthians 9:11 — Is It Too Much?

“If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?”
Paul applies the principle to himself.
He had **sown spiritual things** in Corinth.
He brought them the gospel.
He taught them God's word.
He led them to eternal life.
Was it too much to expect **material things** in return—food, shelter, and support?
Spiritual blessings are worth far more than material ones.
Supporting those who bring us the word of God is only fair.

Cross References

Romans 15:27
They were glad to do it, and they really owe it to them. Since the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to help them with material blessings.
Galatians 6:6
The one who is taught the word should share all good things with the one who teaches him.
2 Corinthians 9:6
Remember this: whoever plants only a few seeds will harvest only a little, and whoever plants generously will harvest generously.

Spiritual Principle

Those who receive spiritual blessings should gladly share material blessings.

Application

Do you support those who teach you God's word?

XII. WE HAVE NOT USED THIS RIGHT

1 Corinthians 9:12 — So That We Will Not Hinder the Gospel

“If others share this right over you, do not we more? Nevertheless, we have not used this right, but we endure all things so that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.”
Other teachers in Corinth were accepting support.
Paul says he had even more right to it, since he founded the church.
Then comes the great turn:
“Nevertheless, we have not used this right.”
Paul chose not to take their money.
Instead, he would **“endure all things.”**
He would work hard, go hungry, and suffer hardship.
Why?
“So that we will not hinder the gospel of Christ.”
In Corinth, many traveling teachers spoke for money.
Paul did not want anyone to think he was one of them.
He did not want money to become an obstacle to the message.

Cross References

Acts 20:33
I have not wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.
2 Corinthians 11:9
When I was with you and needed something, I did not burden anyone. The believers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and I will continue to do so.
2 Corinthians 12:13
How were you treated worse than the other churches, except that I never was a burden to you? Forgive me this wrong!

Spiritual Principle

Nothing we have is worth keeping if it hinders the gospel.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The gospel is more important than our rights.

XIII. THOSE WHO SERVE AT THE ALTAR

1 Corinthians 9:13 — The Example of the Temple

“Do you not know that those who minister at the temple eat from the temple offerings, and those who serve at the altar partake of what is offered on the altar?”
Paul gives another example.
In Israel, the priests and Levites did not own land.
They served in the temple.
And God provided for them from the offerings people brought.

They received part of the sacrifices as their food.
This was God's plan for supporting those who served Him.
The same principle was common even in pagan temples in Corinth.

Cross References

Leviticus 6:16
> Aaron and his sons will eat what is left of it. It must be eaten without yeast in a holy place, in the courtyard of the tent of meeting.

Numbers 18:8
> Then the LORD said to Aaron, “I have put you in charge of the offerings given to Me. All the holy gifts the Israelites give Me I have given to you and your sons as your share, a portion forever.”

Deuteronomy 18:1
> The Levitical priests—the whole tribe of Levi—will have no land of their own in Israel. They will live on the offerings made to the LORD by fire, which are their share.

Spiritual Principle

God has always provided for those who give their lives to serving Him.

XIV. THE LORD HAS COMMANDED

1 Corinthians 9:14 — Living from the Gospel

“In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”
Paul gives his final and strongest argument.
“The Lord has commanded.”
Jesus Himself taught this.
When He sent out His disciples, He told them that the worker deserves his pay.
So those who preach the gospel **“should live from the gospel.”**
This is the Lord's plan for supporting gospel ministry.
Paul has now given six reasons why he had the right to be supported:

- His apostleship.
- The example of the other apostles.
- Everyday life—soldiers, farmers, shepherds.
- The Law of Moses.
- The temple priests.
- The command of the Lord Jesus.

His right was beyond question.

Cross References

Luke 10:7
> Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, because the worker deserves his pay. Do not move from house to house.

Galatians 6:6
> The one who is taught the word should share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Matthew 10:10
Do not take a bag for the trip, or an extra shirt, sandals, or a walking stick, because the worker deserves his food.

Spiritual Principle

Supporting gospel ministry is the Lord's command, not just a good idea.

Application

Supporting those who preach the gospel is an act of obedience to Christ.

XV. I HAVE USED NONE OF THESE RIGHTS

1 Corinthians 9:15 — Rather Die

“But I have used none of these rights. And I am not writing these things to suggest it should be done for me. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my boasting.”
After proving his right, Paul says:
“I have used none of these rights.”
And he makes clear he is not hinting for money.
“I am not writing these things to suggest it should be done for me.”
Then he says something very strong:
“I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my boasting.”
What was Paul's **boasting?**
Not pride in himself.
It was his joy in being able to preach the gospel free of charge.
He would rather die than lose that privilege.

Cross References

Acts 20:33
I have not wanted anyone's silver or gold or clothing.
2 Corinthians 11:10
As surely as the truth of Christ is in me, no one in the region of Achaia will stop me from boasting about this.
Philippians 3:7
But whatever I once counted as gain, I now count as loss because of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

The joy of giving freely can be greater than the benefit of receiving.

Key Truth

Paul gave up his rights, not reluctantly, but gladly.

XVI. WOE TO ME

1 Corinthians 9:16 — Necessity Is Laid Upon Me

“For when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, since necessity is laid upon me; indeed, woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”
Paul explains something important.
He cannot boast simply because he preaches.
Preaching was not his choice.
“Necessity is laid upon me.”
God had called him.
He had no option.
“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”
Paul felt a holy compulsion.
Like Jeremiah, the word of God burned in his heart like fire.
He could not keep it in.
So preaching itself was not something to boast about.
It was simply obedience.

Cross References

Jeremiah 20:9
> But if I say, “I will not mention Him or speak in His name anymore,” His word burns in my heart like a fire shut up in my bones. I am worn out from holding it in. I cannot do it.

Romans 1:14
> I owe a debt to Greeks and non-Greeks, to the wise and the foolish.

Acts 4:20
> For we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel is not a career; it is a calling.

Key Truth

Those who truly know Christ cannot stay silent about Him.

XVII. ENTRUSTED WITH A STEWARDSHIP

1 Corinthians 9:17 — Willingly or Unwillingly

“For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if unwillingly, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.”
Paul thinks about his calling.
“If I do this willingly, I have a reward.”
A person who chooses to serve might expect a reward.
“But if unwillingly, I am still entrusted with a stewardship.”
Paul did not choose this work.
God chose him.

He was like a steward or household manager given a job by his master.
A steward does not expect special pay for doing his duty.
He simply does what he was given to do.

Cross References

Luke 17:10
> So you also, when you have done everything you were told to do, should say, “We are unworthy servants. We have only done our duty.”

1 Peter 4:10
> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Ephesians 3:2
> Surely you have heard about the responsibility God gave me to share His grace with you.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer is a steward of what God has entrusted to them.

Key Truth

Obedience is our duty, not our achievement.

XVIII. WHAT THEN IS MY REWARD?

1 Corinthians 9:18 — Free of Charge

“What then is my reward? That when I preach the gospel, I may offer it free of charge, so as not to misuse my rights in the gospel.”
If preaching itself is Paul's duty, what is his reward?
“That when I preach the gospel, I may offer it free of charge.”
Paul's reward was the joy of giving the gospel away freely.
He did not have to preach for free.
That part was his choice.
And it brought him deep joy.
God gave the gospel to Paul freely.
Paul wanted to give it to others the same way.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:7
> Was it wrong for me to humble myself so that you could be lifted up, by preaching God's good news to you free of charge?

2 Corinthians 12:14
> Now I am ready to visit you for the third time, and I will not be a burden to you. I don't want what you have—I want you. After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

Acts 18:3
> Because Paul was a tentmaker just as they were, he stayed and worked with them.

Spiritual Principle

The greatest reward in serving God is often the joy of serving itself.

Application

What could you do for the Lord that goes beyond what is required?

XIX. A SERVANT TO ALL

1 Corinthians 9:19 — That I Might Win More

“For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more.”
Here is the heart of the chapter.
“Though I am free from all men.”
Paul owed no one anything.
He was not under anyone's control.
“I have made myself a servant to all.”
The word is **slave.**
Paul freely made himself everyone's slave.
He gave up his comfort, his preferences, and his rights.
Why?
“That I might win more.”
Paul's goal was to win people to Christ.
He would do anything, short of sin, to remove barriers between people and the gospel.
This is the example of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve.

Cross References

Galatians 5:13
> Brothers and sisters, you were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to please your sinful nature. Instead, serve one another in love.

Mark 10:44
> and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of everyone.

Romans 15:1
> We who are strong should help carry the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.

Spiritual Principle

True freedom is shown in choosing to serve others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The freest person is the one who chooses to become a servant for Christ's sake.

XX. TO THE JEWS AS A JEW

1 Corinthians 9:20 — Under the Law to Win Those Under the Law

“To the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win the Jews. To those under the law, I became as one under the law (though not myself under the law), that I might win those under the law.”
Paul gives examples.
“To the Jews I became as a Jew.”
Paul was Jewish by birth.
But in Christ, he was no longer bound by Jewish customs as a way to be right with God.
Still, when he was with Jews, he followed their customs.
He did this so that nothing unnecessary would offend them and keep them from hearing the gospel.
For example, he had Timothy circumcised before taking him to Jewish areas.
And he took part in a purification ceremony at the temple.
But notice Paul's careful words:
“Though not myself under the law.”
He did not do these things to earn salvation.
He did them out of love, to reach people.
And when someone said circumcision was required for salvation, Paul refused, as with Titus.

Cross References

Acts 16:3
> Paul wanted Timothy to travel with him, so he circumcised him because of the Jews in that area, since they all knew his father was Greek.

Acts 21:26
> The next day Paul took the men, purified himself along with them, and went into the temple to announce when their days of purification would end and the offering would be made for each of them.

Galatians 2:3
> Yet not even Titus, who was with me, was forced to be circumcised, even though he was a Greek.

Spiritual Principle

We may adapt our customs to reach people, but we must never change the gospel.

Key Truth

Paul was flexible in method and firm in message.

XXI. TO THOSE OUTSIDE THE LAW

1 Corinthians 9:21 — Under the Law of Christ

“To those outside the law, I became as one outside the law (not being outside God's law, but under the law of Christ), that I might win those outside the law.”
Paul's next example is the Gentiles.
“To those outside the law.”

Gentiles did not live by the Law of Moses.
When Paul was with them, he did not insist on Jewish customs.
He ate their food and lived among them.
But again, he adds a careful explanation:
“Not being outside God's law, but under the law of Christ.”
Paul was not lawless.
He did not live however he wanted.
He lived under **“the law of Christ”**—the law of love.
Being flexible did not mean being immoral.

Cross References

Romans 2:14
> When Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law.

Galatians 6:2
> Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Romans 3:19
> Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.

Spiritual Principle

Christian freedom is never freedom from obedience to Christ.

Spiritual Warning

Reaching people must never mean copying their sin.

XXII. ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE

1 Corinthians 9:22 — That I Might Save Some

“To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some.”
Paul's final example connects directly to Chapter 8.
“To the weak I became weak.”
The weak were the believers with sensitive consciences.
Paul gave up his rights so as not to make them stumble.
He would not eat meat if it hurt them.
Then Paul sums up his whole approach:
“I have become all things to all people.”
This does not mean Paul changed his beliefs to please everyone.
It means he was willing to adjust his customs, his habits, and his comfort to reach people.
“So that by all possible means I might save some.”
Paul was realistic.
Not everyone would be saved.
But he would do everything possible to win **some.**

Cross References

Romans 15:1
We who are strong should help carry the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.
Romans 14:1
Welcome anyone whose faith is weak, but do not argue with them about their opinions.
2 Corinthians 11:29
Who is weak, and I do not feel weak? Who is led into sin, and I do not burn with distress?

Spiritual Principle

Love is willing to meet people where they are to bring them to Christ.

Application

What could you change about your habits, schedule, or comfort to reach someone with the gospel?

XXIII. FOR THE SAKE OF THE GOSPEL

1 Corinthians 9:23 — Sharing in Its Blessings

“I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings.”
Paul explains his motive.
“I do all this for the sake of the gospel.”
Everything Paul gave up, he gave up for the gospel.
The gospel was the center of his life.
“That I may share in its blessings.”
Paul did not see his sacrifice as pure loss.
He saw it as a way to share in the blessings of the gospel.
The joy of seeing people saved.
The joy of fellowship with Christ.
The joy of the reward to come.

Cross References

Philippians 1:12
Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually helped spread the good news.
2 Timothy 1:8
So don't be ashamed to tell others about our Lord, and don't be ashamed of me, His prisoner. Instead, join me in suffering for the gospel, relying on the power of God.
Romans 1:16
I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.

Spiritual Principle

Those who give themselves for the gospel share in its richest blessings.

Key Truth

No one ever loses by giving up something for the gospel.

XXIV. RUN TO WIN

1 Corinthians 9:24 — Only One Receives the Prize

“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”
Paul now turns to a picture every Corinthian knew well.
Every two years, Corinth hosted the **Isthmian Games.**
Only the Olympics were more famous.
Crowds gathered to watch runners, boxers, and wrestlers.
“In a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize.”
In a race, many run, but only one wins.
Paul is not saying that only one Christian will be saved.
He is saying, **“Run with the same focus and effort as a runner who wants to win.”**
“Run in such a way that you may obtain it.”
Do not just jog along.
Run to win.

Cross References

Philippians 3:14
> I keep running toward the finish line to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

Hebrews 12:1
> So since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that slows us down and the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race set before us.

Galatians 2:2
> I went because God showed me I should. I met privately with those who seemed to be leaders and explained to them the good news I preach among the Gentiles. I wanted to be sure I was not running, and had not run, my race for nothing.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian life is a race to be run with focus and commitment.

Application

Are you running to win, or just wandering along?

XXV. AN IMPERISHABLE CROWN

1 Corinthians 9:25 — Self-Control in All Things

“Everyone who competes exercises self-control in all things. They do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we an imperishable one.”
Paul describes the athlete's training.
“Everyone who competes exercises self-control in all things.”
Athletes in the Isthmian Games trained for ten months.

They controlled what they ate.
They controlled when they slept.
They gave up many pleasures.
And what was the prize?
“A perishable crown.”
The winner received a wreath made of plants, such as pine.
Within days, it would dry up and fall apart.
Christians run for something far greater.
“An imperishable one.”
A crown that will never fade.
Eternal life and reward in the presence of God.
If athletes discipline themselves for a crown that dies, how much more should we for a crown that lasts forever?

Cross References

2 Timothy 2:5
Likewise, an athlete does not receive the winner's crown unless he competes by the rules.
2 Timothy 4:8
Now the crown of righteousness is waiting for me. The Lord, the righteous Judge, will give it to me on that day—and not only to me, but to all who have longed for His appearing.
James 1:12
Blessed is the person who endures testing. After he has passed the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love Him.

Spiritual Principle

Eternal rewards are worth far more discipline than earthly rewards.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

If the world will sacrifice for a crown that withers, believers can sacrifice for a crown that lasts forever.

XXVI. RUNNING WITH PURPOSE

1 Corinthians 9:26 — Not Beating the Air

“Therefore I run with purpose, not aimlessly. I fight not as one beating the air.”
Paul uses two more athletic pictures.
“I run with purpose, not aimlessly.”
A runner who does not know where the finish line is will never win.
Paul knew his goal.
He ran straight toward it.
“I fight not as one beating the air.”
Now Paul pictures a boxer.
A boxer who swings wildly and hits nothing wastes his energy.
Paul's blows landed.
His life was focused.
He did not waste his effort on things that did not matter.

Cross References

2 Timothy 4:7
I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.
Ephesians 6:12
For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, the authorities, the powers of this dark world, and the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.
Hebrews 12:1
So since we are surrounded by such a great crowd of witnesses, let us throw off everything that slows us down and the sin that so easily trips us up. And let us run with endurance the race set before us.

Spiritual Principle

A focused life accomplishes more for God than a busy, scattered one.

Application

What is your goal?
Are your days moving you toward it, or are you beating the air?

XXVII. I DISCIPLINE MY BODY

1 Corinthians 9:27 — Not Disqualified

“But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”
Paul ends with a personal confession.
“I discipline my body.”
The word Paul uses is a boxing term.
It means to strike hard, to give a black eye.
Paul treated his own desires like an opponent in the ring.
“And bring it into subjection.”
He made his body serve him, instead of letting his body rule him.
Why?
“So that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”
Paul knew the danger of preaching to others and failing himself.
Bible students understand **disqualified** in different ways.
Some believe Paul feared losing his reward or his usefulness in ministry.
Others believe he is warning that a life without self-control can show that a person's faith was never real.
Either way, the warning is serious.
Even the great apostle did not take his own faithfulness for granted.

Cross References

Romans 8:13
For if you live by your sinful nature, you will die. But if by the Spirit you put to death the evil deeds of the body, you will live.

Colossians 3:5

So put to death whatever belongs to your earthly nature: sexual sin, impurity, lust, evil desires, and greed, which is idol worship.

Galatians 5:24

Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the sinful nature with its passions and desires.

Spiritual Principle

Self-discipline is a vital part of following Christ.

Spiritual Warning

No one is too gifted or too experienced to fall.
Watch your own life as carefully as you teach others.

XXVIII. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 9

1. True Leadership Sacrifices Rights

Paul had every right to be supported, but he did not use it.

Principle:

Though Paul had every right as an apostle to receive support, he laid it down for the sake of the gospel.

2. The Gospel Demands Flexibility

Paul became all things to all people.

Principle:

We may adjust our approach so more might come to Christ, but we must never compromise the truth.

3. Preaching Is a Necessity, Not a Choice

“Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel!”

Principle:

For Paul, the gospel was not a career but a divine calling.

4. Discipline Is Vital for Discipleship

Athletes discipline their bodies for a prize.

Principle:

Christians must bring their desires under control for an eternal reward.

5. Eternal Perspective Guides Service

Earthly crowns fade, but ours is imperishable.

Principle:

The prize of eternal life in Christ makes every sacrifice worthwhile.

XXIX. SIX REASONS PAUL HAD THE RIGHT TO SUPPORT

In verses 1–14, Paul builds a strong case.

1. His Apostleship (verses 1–3)

He was a true apostle who had seen the risen Lord.

2. The Other Apostles (verses 4–6)

Peter, the Lord's brothers, and the other apostles received support.

3. Everyday Life (verse 7)

Soldiers, farmers, and shepherds all benefit from their work.

4. The Law of Moses (verses 8–10)

“You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.”

5. The Temple Priests (verse 13)

Those who served at the altar ate from the offerings.

6. The Command of Jesus (verse 14)

“Those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.”

Key Truth

Paul proved his right beyond question, and then gladly gave it up.

XXX. FLEXIBLE IN METHOD, FIRM IN MESSAGE

Verses 19–23 show both Paul's flexibility and his firmness.

What Paul Was Willing to Change

- His customs.
- His diet.

- His comfort.
- His rights.
- His way of relating to different cultures.

What Paul Would Never Change

- The gospel of Christ crucified and risen.
- Salvation by grace through faith.
- Obedience to the law of Christ.
- His refusal to sin.

An Important Example

Paul circumcised Timothy to reach Jews.
But he refused to circumcise Titus when others said it was required for salvation.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Change your methods to reach people, but never change the message that saves them.

XXXI. THE ISTHMIAN GAMES

Paul's athletic pictures would have spoken powerfully to the Corinthians.

A Famous Contest

The Isthmian Games were held near Corinth every two years.
Only the Olympic Games were more famous.

Strict Training

Athletes trained for months under strict rules.
They controlled their diet, sleep, and habits.

A Perishable Prize

The winner received a wreath made from plants, which quickly withered.

The Christian's Contest

Christians run a race for an imperishable crown.
They fight against sin and the desires of the flesh.
They aim for the prize God has promised.

Key Truth

The Christian life calls for at least as much discipline as an athlete gives to a fading prize.

XXXII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 9 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

The Risen Lord

Paul saw **“Jesus Christ our Lord”** after His resurrection.

The Lord Who Sends

Paul's apostleship came **“in the Lord.”**

The Lord Who Commands Support for His Workers

“The Lord has commanded.”

The Lord Whose Law We Live Under

Believers are **“under the law of Christ.”**

The Servant King

Paul's servanthood reflects Jesus, who came to serve and give His life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Paul gave up his rights because Jesus gave up His glory.

XXXIII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Chapter 9 come right after Chapter 8?
In Chapter 8, Paul said he would give up meat rather than cause a brother to stumble.
In Chapter 9, he shows that he had already given up many rights for the sake of others.

Question 2

How did Paul prove he was an apostle?
He had seen the risen Lord.
And the Corinthian church itself was the fruit of his ministry.

Question 3

What rights did Paul have as an apostle?
The right to be supported with food and drink.
The right to bring a believing wife and have her supported.
The right not to work at another job.

Question 4

What does the law about not muzzling an ox teach?
If God cared that a working ox could eat, He certainly cares that His servants are supported.
The Old Testament was written to teach us.

Question 5

Why did Paul refuse to take money from the Corinthians?
So that nothing would hinder the gospel.
He did not want to be confused with teachers who spoke for money.

Question 6

Does this mean churches should not pay their pastors?
No.
Paul clearly taught that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel.
He chose to give up his right in Corinth for a special reason.

Question 7

Why couldn't Paul boast about preaching?
Preaching was not his choice.
God had called him, and he could not keep silent.

Question 8

What was Paul's reward?
The joy of offering the gospel free of charge.

Question 9

What does it mean to become “all things to all people”?
It means adjusting customs and habits to reach different people.
It does not mean changing the gospel or joining in sin.

Question 10

What is the “law of Christ”?
It is the law of love that Christ taught and lived.
Believers are free from the Law of Moses as a way of salvation, but they are not free to live without obeying Christ.

Question 11

What does Paul mean by disciplining his body?
He refused to let his desires rule him.
He fought against sin and kept himself under control.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 9 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 9 should cause believers to live:

- Willing to give up their rights for the gospel.
- Supporting those who preach God's word.
- Serving others, not demanding their own way.
- Flexible in method but firm in the message.
- Unable to keep silent about Christ.
- Running the Christian race with purpose.
- Disciplining their desires.
- Living for the imperishable crown.

XXXIV. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 9 asks several important questions.

What Rights Am I Holding Too Tightly?

Is there something I need to give up for the sake of others?

Do I Support Those Who Teach Me?

Am I generous with those who serve me in God's word?

Am I a Servant to Others?

Or do I expect others to serve me?

Am I Willing to Leave My Comfort Zone?

Could I adjust my habits to reach someone for Christ?

Do I Feel the Urgency of the Gospel?

Is there a fire in my heart to share Christ?

Am I Running to Win?

Or am I drifting through my Christian life?

Am I Disciplined?

Do my desires control me, or do I control them?

Am I Watching My Own Life?

Am I living what I tell others to live?

XXXV. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Rights Given Up, Souls Won”

Most people fight for their rights.
They insist on what they deserve.
They demand to be treated fairly.
Paul had more rights than most.
He was an apostle.
He had seen the risen Lord.
He founded the church.
He had every reason to expect support.
But he gave it all up.
He worked with his hands.
He went hungry.
He became a servant to all.
Why?
Because he wanted to win people to Christ.
He followed the example of Jesus.
Jesus had every right as the Son of God.
Yet He laid them all down and became a servant, even to death on a cross.
This creates a powerful principle.
The rights we give up for the gospel are never lost.
They are invested in eternity.

Principle:

Fight for souls, not for rights.

XXXVI. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 9 was written to a church that loved its rights.
They insisted on their freedom to eat what they wanted.
They judged Paul for not taking their money.
They admired leaders who demanded support.
Paul showed them a better way.
The way of the servant.
The way of the athlete.
The way of the cross.
He gave up his rights.
He became all things to all people.
He disciplined himself to win an imperishable crown.
1 Corinthians 9 therefore reminds us:
Never let your rights hinder the gospel.
Never think you are too important to serve.
Never change the message to please people.

Never take your own faithfulness for granted.
Never forget the crown that will last forever.
The church does not need people who demand their rights.
It needs:
Servants who give up their rights.
Witnesses who cannot stay silent.
Runners who run to win.
And disciples who discipline themselves for Christ.
The same gospel still calls us:
Tell people that Christ gave up everything to save them.
Tell people the gospel is offered freely.
Tell people that there is a prize that will never fade.
And as you run your race:
Serve all.
Win some.
Discipline yourself.
Run to win.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the gospel of Jesus Christ, offered freely to all who believe.
Thank You for faithful servants like Paul who gave up everything to share it.
Thank You for those who have taught us Your word and served us in Christ.
Thank You that Jesus, who had every right as Your Son, made Himself a servant for us.
Forgive us when we have held on to our rights more tightly than to Your purposes.
Forgive us when we have expected others to serve us.
Forgive us when we have kept silent about the gospel.
Forgive us when we have drifted instead of running the race.
Give us hearts that would rather serve than be served.
Help us support those who preach and teach Your word.
Make us willing to leave our comfort to reach others for Christ.
Keep us firm in the gospel while we adjust our ways to reach people.
Put a fire in our hearts that will not let us stay silent.
Help us run with purpose and fight not as those beating the air.
Give us self-control and discipline in every part of life.
Keep us faithful to the end, so that after we have shared the gospel with others, we ourselves will stand approved.
And may we receive the crown that will never fade.
“I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“I have become all things to all people, so that by all possible means I might save some.” — 1 Corinthians 9:22

Central Truth

For the sake of the gospel, Paul gladly gave up his rights, made himself a servant to all, and disciplined himself like an athlete, because winning people to Christ and receiving the eternal prize was worth any sacrifice.

1 Corinthians 9 in One Sentence

Paul proves his right as an apostle to be supported, explains that he gave up that right so nothing would hinder the gospel, describes how he became a servant to all to win as many as possible, and calls believers to run the Christian race with discipline for a crown that will never fade.

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 — Examples, Warnings, and the Glory of God

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 continues Paul's answer about food offered to idols.
In Chapter 8, Paul taught that knowledge must be guided by love.
In Chapter 9, he showed how he gave up his own rights for the gospel.
He ended Chapter 9 with a warning about himself.
Even an apostle must discipline himself so that he is not disqualified.
Now, in Chapter 10, Paul applies that warning to the whole church.
The strong believers in Corinth felt very secure.
They had been baptized.
They shared in the Lord's Supper.
They knew idols were nothing.
So they thought they could go to idol feasts without any danger.
Paul answers with a history lesson.
Israel also had great spiritual privileges.
They were all under the cloud.
They all passed through the sea.
They all ate the manna and drank from the rock.
And that Rock was Christ.
Yet most of them died in the wilderness.
They craved evil things.
They worshiped idols.
They committed sexual immorality.
They tested the Lord.
They grumbled.
Their story was written as a warning for us.
“Let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”
But Paul also gives one of the greatest promises in the Bible.
God is faithful.

He will never allow His people to be tempted beyond what they can bear.
He always provides a way of escape.
Then Paul gives a clear command.
“Flee from idolatry.”
Idols themselves are nothing.
But demons stand behind idol worship.
A believer cannot share in the Lord's table and the table of demons.
Finally, Paul gives practical guidance.
Meat sold in the market may be eaten freely.
A meal in an unbeliever's home may be enjoyed freely.
But if someone points out that the food was offered to idols, love may call us to set it aside.
And Paul sums up everything with one great principle:
“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
The chapter moves through six movements:

- Israel as an Example (verses 1–5).
- Lessons from Israel's Failures (verses 6–12).
- God's Faithfulness in Temptation (verse 13).
- Flee from Idolatry (verses 14–22).
- Seeking the Good of Others (verses 23–30).
- Do All Things for God's Glory (verses 31–33).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 10 is:
Spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, but God is faithful to help His people escape temptation, so believers must flee idolatry, seek the good of others, and do everything to the glory of God.

I. UNDER THE CLOUD, THROUGH THE SEA

1 Corinthians 10:1 — Our Fathers

“Moreover, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud and all passed through the sea.”
Paul begins with Israel's history.
“I do not want you to be unaware.”
The Corinthians were proud of their knowledge.
But they had forgotten important lessons.
Paul calls the Israelites **“our fathers.”**
Most of the Corinthians were Gentiles.
But in Christ, they had become part of God's family.
Israel's story was now their story.
Then Paul reminds them of two great blessings.
They were under the cloud.
God led them by a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night.
His presence was with them.
They passed through the sea.
God opened the Red Sea and brought them out of Egypt.
Notice the word **“all.”**

Every Israelite shared in these blessings.

Cross References

Exodus 13:21
By day the LORD went ahead of them in a pillar of cloud to lead them on their way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so they could travel by day or night.
Exodus 14:22
and the Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.
Psalm 78:13
He split the sea and led them through it. He made the water stand up like a wall.

Spiritual Principle

The history of God's people is written for all who belong to Him.

Key Truth

Every believer has a family history that goes back to Abraham and the Exodus.

II. BAPTIZED INTO MOSES

1 Corinthians 10:2 — In the Cloud and in the Sea

“They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,”
Paul uses a surprising word.
“Baptized.”
Israel was **“baptized into Moses.”**
Passing through the sea and walking under the cloud joined them to Moses as their leader.
It was like a baptism.
It marked them as God's people under the leadership of Moses.
Paul is drawing a picture for the Corinthians.
They had been baptized into Christ.
They thought baptism made them safe, no matter how they lived.
But Israel had been **“baptized”** too.
And as Paul will show, that did not protect them when they turned away from God.

Cross References

Exodus 14:22
and the Israelites went through the middle of the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.
Exodus 14:29
But the Israelites had walked through the sea on dry ground, with walls of water on their right and on their left.
Romans 6:3
Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?

Spiritual Principle

Outward religious signs are good, but they cannot replace a faithful heart.

Spiritual Warning

Do not trust in a ceremony while ignoring the Lord.

III. SPIRITUAL FOOD

1 Corinthians 10:3 — They All Ate

“and all ate the same spiritual food,”
Israel also received **spiritual food.**
This was the manna.
Every morning for forty years, God sent bread from heaven.
Paul calls it **spiritual** because it came directly from God.
It was a miracle of His provision.
Once again, the word is **“all.”**
Every Israelite ate it.
Paul is pointing to the Lord's Supper.
The Corinthians ate the bread of the Lord's Supper.
Israel ate bread from heaven too.

Cross References

Exodus 16:15
> When the Israelites saw it, they asked one another, “What is it?” because they did not know what it was. Moses told them, “It is the bread the LORD has given you to eat.”

Exodus 16:35
> The Israelites ate manna for forty years, until they came to a land where people lived. They ate manna until they reached the border of Canaan.

Psalm 78:24
> He rained down manna for them to eat. He gave them grain from heaven.

Spiritual Principle

God faithfully provides for His people every day.

Key Truth

Jesus is the true bread from heaven, far greater than the manna.

IV. THAT ROCK WAS CHRIST

1 Corinthians 10:4 — Spiritual Drink

“and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.”
Israel also received **spiritual drink.**
In the desert, there was no water.
God told Moses to strike a rock, and water poured out.
This happened more than once.

Then Paul makes an astonishing statement.
“That Rock was Christ.”
Christ Himself was present with Israel in the wilderness.
He was the true source of their life and provision.
In the Old Testament, God is often called **“the Rock.”**
Paul identifies Christ with that Rock.
This is another clear testimony to the deity of Jesus.
He existed long before Bethlehem.
And He cared for His people in the wilderness.

Cross References

Exodus 17:6

> I will stand there in front of you on the rock at Horeb. Strike the rock, and water will come out of it for the people to drink. So Moses did this while the elders of Israel watched.

Numbers 20:11

> Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water poured out, and the people and their animals drank.

Deuteronomy 32:4

> He is the Rock. His work is perfect, and all His ways are just. He is a faithful God who does no wrong. He is upright and fair.

Spiritual Principle

Christ has always been the source of life for God's people.

Key Truth

The same Christ who gave water in the desert gives living water to all who come to Him today.

V. GOD WAS NOT PLEASED

1 Corinthians 10:5 — Scattered in the Wilderness

“But with many of them God was not pleased, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”
Here is the shocking turn.
All received God's blessings.
But with many of them God was not pleased.
In fact, of the adults who left Egypt, only two—Joshua and Caleb—entered the Promised Land.
The rest died in the wilderness.
“Their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.”
They had been delivered from Egypt.
They had seen miracles.
They had eaten bread from heaven.
Yet they never reached the land God promised.
Privileges did not save them from the results of their sin and unbelief.

Cross References

Numbers 14:29
Your bodies will fall in this wilderness—every one of you twenty years old or older who was counted and who complained against Me.
Numbers 14:32
But as for you, your bodies will fall in this wilderness.
Hebrews 3:17
And with whom was God angry for forty years? Wasn't it with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

Spiritual Principle

Great spiritual privileges bring great responsibility.

Spiritual Warning

Being near God's blessings is not the same as being faithful to God.

VI. EXAMPLES FOR US

1 Corinthians 10:6 — Do Not Crave Evil Things

“Now these things became examples for us, so that we should not crave evil things as they did.”
Paul explains why he is telling this story.
“These things became examples for us.”
The word Paul uses is the source of our word **type.**
It means a pattern or a warning sign.
Israel's story is a pattern for us to learn from.
The first warning is about **craving.**
“So that we should not crave evil things as they did.”
In the wilderness, the Israelites grew tired of manna.
They craved the meat they used to eat in Egypt.
God gave them meat, but a plague followed.
The place was named **“the graves of craving.”**
Craving is where every other sin begins.

Cross References

Numbers 11:4
The mixed crowd of people among them began to crave other food, and the Israelites started crying again and said, “If only we had meat to eat!”
Numbers 11:34
So that place was named Kibroth-hattaavah, because there they buried the people who had craved other food.
Psalm 106:14
In the wilderness they gave in to their cravings. In the desert they put God to the test.

Spiritual Principle

Sinful desire is the root of sinful action.

Application

Watch your cravings.
What you long for will shape where you go.

VII. DO NOT BE IDOLATERS

1 Corinthians 10:7 — They Rose Up to Play

“Do not be idolaters as some of them were, as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.””
The second warning is about **idolatry.**
Paul quotes from the story of the golden calf.
While Moses was on the mountain receiving God's law, the people made a calf of gold.
They called it their god.
Then they held a feast.
“The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.”
Play here means wild partying that likely included immoral behavior.
This is exactly what was happening at idol feasts in Corinth.
Eating, drinking, and partying in honor of false gods.
Paul says, **“Do not be like them.”**

Cross References

Exodus 32:6
> So the next day they got up early and offered burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then the people sat down to eat and drink, and got up to party.

Exodus 32:4
> He took what they gave him, shaped it with a tool, and made it into a metal calf. Then they said, “Israel, these are your gods, who brought you up out of Egypt.”

Exodus 32:19
> When Moses came near the camp and saw the calf and the dancing, he burned with anger. He threw the tablets out of his hands and broke them at the foot of the mountain.

Spiritual Principle

Idolatry often comes dressed as celebration.

Key Truth

The golden calf was made by people who had just seen God part the sea.
No one is too blessed to fall into idolatry.

VIII. NOR SEXUAL IMMORALITY

1 Corinthians 10:8 — Twenty-Three Thousand in One Day

“Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell.”

The third warning is about **sexual immorality.**
Paul points to the time when Israel was camped near Moab.
The Israelite men began sleeping with Moabite women.
And these women invited them to worship their gods.
Sexual sin and idolatry went together.
The same was true in Corinth.
God judged Israel with a plague.
“In one day twenty-three thousand fell.”
The book of Numbers gives the total as twenty-four thousand.
Many Bible students explain that Paul is speaking of those who died **“in one day,”** while Numbers gives the full number for the whole plague. Others note that both numbers are round figures.
Either way, the judgment was terrible.

Cross References

Numbers 25:1
While Israel was staying at Shittim, the men began to commit sexual sin with Moabite women.
Numbers 25:9
But 24,000 people died in the plague.
Psalm 106:29
They made the LORD angry by what they did, and a plague broke out among them.

Spiritual Principle

Sexual sin and idolatry often travel together.

Spiritual Warning

God takes sexual sin seriously.
It cost Israel dearly, and it still brings great harm today.

IX. DO NOT TEST CHRIST

1 Corinthians 10:9 — Destroyed by Serpents

“Nor let us test Christ, as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents.”
The fourth warning is about **testing the Lord.**
In the wilderness, the people complained against God and Moses.
They hated the manna.
They doubted God's goodness.
They pushed to see how far they could go.
God sent poisonous snakes, and many died.
Notice that Paul says they tested **Christ.**
Once again, Paul shows that Christ was present with Israel in the wilderness.
The Corinthians were testing Christ too.
They were going to idol feasts to see how much they could get away with.

Cross References

Numbers 21:5
They spoke against God and against Moses: “Why did you bring us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? There is no bread and no water, and we hate this worthless food!”
Numbers 21:6
Then the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people. They bit the people, and many Israelites died.
Psalm 78:18
They tested God on purpose by demanding the food they craved.

Spiritual Principle

It is dangerous to see how close we can get to sin without being hurt.

Application

Do not test the Lord's patience.
Trust Him and obey Him.

X. NOR GRUMBLE

1 Corinthians 10:10 — Destroyed by the Destroyer

“Nor grumble, as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer.”
The fifth warning is about **grumbling.**
Grumbling might seem like a small sin.
But in the wilderness, Israel grumbled again and again.
They grumbled against Moses and Aaron.
And in doing so, they grumbled against God.
After Korah's rebellion, the people grumbled, and a plague killed thousands.
Paul says they were **“destroyed by the destroyer.”**
This may refer to the angel God used to bring judgment, as at the first Passover.
Grumbling is the opposite of trust.
It says, **“God is not good, and I deserve better.”**

Cross References

Numbers 16:41
The next day the whole community of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron. “You have killed the LORD's people,” they said.
Numbers 16:49
But 14,700 people died from the plague, besides those who had died because of Korah.
Exodus 12:23
When the LORD passes through to strike down the Egyptians, He will see the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe and will pass over that doorway. He will not let the destroyer enter your houses to strike you down.

Spiritual Principle

Grumbling is a sign of a heart that does not trust God.

Application

Replace complaining with thanksgiving.
Thankfulness is the cure for grumbling.

XI. WRITTEN FOR OUR WARNING

1 Corinthians 10:11 — The Ends of the Ages

“Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our warning, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”
Paul repeats his main point.
“These things happened to them as examples.”
These were real events in history.
“They were written for our warning.”
God had them recorded so that we would learn from them.
“Upon whom the ends of the ages have come.”
Believers live at the turning point of history.
In Christ, all the ages of God's plan have reached their goal.
We are living in the last days.
That makes the lessons of history even more urgent.

Cross References

Romans 15:4
> Everything written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.

2 Timothy 3:16
> All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Hebrews 9:26
> Otherwise Christ would have had to suffer many times since the world was created. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to take away sin by sacrificing Himself.

Spiritual Principle

The Old Testament is God's word for us today.

Key Truth

Those who do not learn from history are in danger of repeating it.

XII. TAKE HEED LEST YOU FALL

1 Corinthians 10:12 — The One Who Thinks He Stands

“Therefore let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”
Here is the warning in one sentence.
The strong believers in Corinth felt very secure.
“I know idols are nothing.”

“I have been baptized.”
“I share in the Lord's Supper.”
“Nothing can hurt me.”
Paul says that kind of confidence is dangerous.
“Let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall.”
The person most in danger is the one who thinks he cannot fall.
Pride lowers our guard.
Humility keeps us watchful.

Cross References

Proverbs 16:18
Pride comes before destruction, and a proud spirit comes before a fall.
Galatians 6:1
Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should gently help that person back on the right path. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.
Romans 11:20
That is true. They were broken off because they did not believe, and you stand only because you believe. So do not be proud, but be afraid.

Spiritual Principle

Overconfidence is one of the most dangerous places a believer can stand.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The moment you think you cannot fall is the moment you are most likely to.

XIII. GOD IS FAITHFUL

1 Corinthians 10:13 — A Way of Escape

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity. 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, so that you may be able to bear it.”
After the warning comes a wonderful promise.
This is one of the most loved verses in the Bible.
Paul gives four great truths about temptation.
First, your temptation is not unique.
“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity.”
Others have faced it.
Others have overcome it.
You are not alone.
Second, God is faithful.
“But God is faithful.”
This is the foundation of the promise.
Our hope is not in our strength, but in God's character.
Third, God sets limits.
“Who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”
God controls how far temptation can go.

Fourth, God provides a way out.
“But with the temptation will also make the way of escape.”
With every temptation comes a door.
Our job is to look for it and take it.
This means no believer can honestly say, **“I had no choice.”**

Cross References

James 1:13
When someone is tempted, he should not say, “God is tempting me.” God cannot be tempted by evil, and He does not tempt anyone.
Hebrews 2:18
Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.
2 Peter 2:9
So the Lord knows how to rescue godly people from their trials and to hold the wicked for punishment on the day of judgment.

Spiritual Principle

God's faithfulness is greater than any temptation we face.

Application

When temptation comes, do not ask, **“Can I resist?”**
Ask, **“Where is the way out God has given me?”**
Then take it.

XIV. FLEE FROM IDOLATRY

1 Corinthians 10:14 — “My Dearly Loved”

“Therefore, my dearly loved, flee from idolatry.”
Paul now gives a clear command.
Notice how tenderly he begins:
“My dearly loved.”
His warning comes from love.
Then the command:
“Flee from idolatry.”
Paul does not say, **“Be careful around idolatry.”**
He does not say, **“See how close you can get.”**
He says, **“Run.”**
In Chapter 6, Paul told them to flee sexual immorality.
Now he tells them to flee idolatry.
Some sins must not be managed.
They must be escaped.
And notice how this connects to verse 13.
Fleeing is often the way of escape God provides.

Cross References

1 John 5:21
Dear children, keep yourselves away from idols.
Exodus 20:3
You must not have any other gods besides Me.
1 Thessalonians 1:9
For people everywhere are telling how you welcomed us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

Spiritual Principle

Some temptations are not to be fought but fled.

Key Truth

Anything that takes God's place in our hearts is an idol.

XV. JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 10:15 — I Speak to Wise People

“I speak to wise people; judge for yourselves what I say.”
Paul appeals to their understanding.
“I speak to wise people.”
The Corinthians prided themselves on their wisdom.
Paul invites them to use it.
“Judge for yourselves what I say.”
He is about to give them an argument.
He wants them to think it through and see that it is true.
Paul does not just give orders.
He reasons with them.

Cross References

Proverbs 1:5
Let the wise listen and learn more, and let those who understand gain good guidance.
1 Kings 3:9
So give Your servant an understanding heart to govern Your people and to know the difference between good and evil. For who is able to govern this great people of Yours?
Hebrews 5:14
But solid food is for the mature, who by constant practice have trained themselves to tell the difference between good and evil.

Spiritual Principle

God wants His people to think carefully and understand His truth.

XVI. THE CUP AND THE BREAD

1 Corinthians 10:16 — Participation in Christ

“The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?”
Paul points to the Lord's Supper.
“The cup of blessing.”
This was the cup over which believers gave thanks to God.
“The bread that we break.”
This was the bread shared at the Lord's Table.
Paul says both are **“a participation”** in Christ.
The word means **sharing**, **fellowship**, or **communion.**
When believers share the Lord's Supper, they share in the benefits of Christ's death.
They express their fellowship with Him.
They declare that they belong to Him.
This is not just a meal.
It is a spiritual union.

Cross References

Matthew 26:27
Then He took a cup, gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, “All of you drink from it.
Matthew 26:28
This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.”
Luke 22:20
In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.”

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper expresses our deep fellowship with Christ.

Key Truth

To share in the Lord's Supper is to say, **“I belong to Jesus.”**

XVII. ONE BREAD, ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 10:17 — We All Partake

“For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”
The Lord's Supper also expresses unity among believers.
“We, being many, are one bread and one body.”
Many people.
One loaf.
One body.
When believers eat from the same bread, they show that they belong to one another.
The Lord's Supper is not only a vertical fellowship with Christ.

It is also a horizontal fellowship with His people.
This was an important lesson for a divided church.

Cross References

Romans 12:5
In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.
Ephesians 4:4
There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.
John 17:21
I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Spiritual Principle

Sharing in Christ means sharing life with His people.

Application

When you come to the Lord's Table, remember that you are coming with your brothers and sisters.

XVIII. PARTAKERS OF THE ALTAR

1 Corinthians 10:18 — The Example of Israel

“Look at Israel according to the flesh: are not those who eat the sacrifices partakers of the altar?”
Paul gives a second example.
In Israel, when people brought certain sacrifices, part of the animal was burned on the altar.
Part was eaten by the priests.
And part was eaten by the worshiper and his family.
By eating from the sacrifice, the worshiper shared in the worship at the altar.
He was joined to the God to whom the sacrifice was offered.
The point is clear.
Eating a sacrificial meal is not neutral.
It means taking part in worship.

Cross References

Leviticus 7:15
The meat of the fellowship offering given to give thanks must be eaten on the day it is offered. None of it may be left until morning.
Leviticus 3:3
From the fellowship offering, he must present to the LORD an offering made by fire: all the fat that covers the inner organs and all the fat attached to them,
Deuteronomy 12:27
Present your burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD your God, both the meat and the blood. The blood of your other sacrifices must be poured beside the altar of the LORD your God, but you may eat the meat.

Spiritual Principle

Sharing in a sacrificial meal means sharing in worship.

XIX. IS AN IDOL ANYTHING?

1 Corinthians 10:19 — Paul Clarifies

“What do I mean then? That an idol is anything, or that what is offered to idols is anything?”
Paul anticipates a question.
If eating at the altar means sharing in worship, is Paul saying idols are real gods?
Is he saying that idol meat has some special power?
No.
In Chapter 8, Paul already agreed that **“an idol is nothing.”**
A statue cannot hear, see, or act.
The meat is just meat.
But as the next verse shows, there is something more going on.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 8:4
> So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: we know that an idol is nothing at all in the world, and there is no God but one.

Isaiah 44:9
> All who make idols are nothing, and the things they treasure are worthless. Those who speak up for idols are blind and foolish, and they will be put to shame.

Psalm 115:4
> Their idols are silver and gold, made by human hands.

Spiritual Principle

Idols themselves have no power.

XX. SACRIFICED TO DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:20 — Fellowship with Demons

“No, but that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”
Here is the hidden danger.
The idol is nothing.
But behind idol worship stand **demons.**
“The things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God.”
Paul is echoing Moses, who said the same thing about Israel's idolatry.
People may think they are worshiping Apollo or Aphrodite.
But in reality, their worship is going to evil spiritual powers.
So Paul says:
“I do not want you to have fellowship with demons.”
The strong believers thought idol feasts were harmless.

Paul warns them that they were stepping into spiritual danger.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 32:17
> They sacrificed to demons, not to God—to gods they had never known, new gods that had only recently appeared, gods your ancestors never feared.

Leviticus 17:7
> They must no longer offer their sacrifices to goat-idols, which they have been chasing after like an unfaithful wife. This is a law for them that will last for all generations.

Psalm 106:37
> They even sacrificed their sons and daughters to demons.

Spiritual Principle

False worship is never spiritually neutral.

Key Truth

The idol is nothing.
The demon behind it is real.

XXI. THE LORD'S TABLE AND THE TABLE OF DEMONS

1 Corinthians 10:21 — You Cannot Have Both

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and the table of demons.”
Paul draws the line.
“You cannot.”
Not, **“You should not.”**
You cannot.
It is impossible to be loyal to both.
The cup of the Lord and **the cup of demons.**
The Lord's table and **the table of demons.**
A believer cannot share in the Lord's Supper on Sunday and share in idol feasts during the week.
This is spiritual unfaithfulness.
It is like a husband who is loyal to his wife on some days and to another woman on other days.

Cross References

Malachi 1:12
> But you treat My name as unholy when you say, “The Lord's table is defiled, and its food is not worth respecting.”

Deuteronomy 32:38
> Where are the gods who ate the fat of their sacrifices and drank the wine of their drink offerings? Let them rise up and help you! Let them give you shelter!

2 Corinthians 6:16

> What agreement can God's temple have with idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God said: “I will live with them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they will be My people.”

Spiritual Principle

Loyalty to Christ cannot be shared with any rival.

Application

Is there anything in your life that competes for the loyalty that belongs to Christ?

XXII. PROVOKING THE LORD TO JEALOUSY

1 Corinthians 10:22 — Are We Stronger Than He?

“Or do we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than He?”
Paul ends this section with two sharp questions.
“Do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?”
God's jealousy is not like human jealousy.
It is His holy love for His people.
He will not share them with false gods.
Israel provoked God to jealousy with idols, and they suffered for it.
“Are we stronger than He?”
The strong believers called themselves **“strong.”**
Paul asks, **“Are you stronger than God?”**
Can you challenge Him and win?
Of course not.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 32:21

> They made Me jealous with what is not God and made Me angry with their worthless idols. So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people. I will make them angry with a foolish nation.

Deuteronomy 32:16

> They made Him jealous with foreign gods. They made Him angry with their disgusting idols.

Exodus 20:5

> Do not bow down to them or worship them, because I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God. I punish children for the sin of their parents to the third and fourth generation of those who hate Me.

Spiritual Principle

God's jealous love will not share His people with idols.

Spiritual Warning

No one is strong enough to play games with God.

XXIII. NOT ALL THINGS BUILD UP

1 Corinthians 10:23 — Beneficial and Upbuilding

“All things are lawful, but not all things are beneficial. All things are lawful, but not all things build up.”
Paul now moves from temple feasts to everyday situations.
He repeats the Corinthian slogan from Chapter 6.
“All things are lawful.”
And he answers it again.
“But not all things are beneficial.”
Some things may be allowed, but they are not helpful.
“But not all things build up.”
Some things may be allowed, but they do not strengthen others.
The question is not only, **“Can I do this?”**
The question is also, **“Will this help me and others grow in Christ?”**

Cross References

Romans 14:19
So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.
Galatians 5:13
Brothers and sisters, you were called to be free. But do not use your freedom as an excuse to please your sinful nature. Instead, serve one another in love.
Romans 15:2
Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Spiritual Principle

Christian freedom asks not only what is allowed, but what is helpful and upbuilding.

XXIV. THE GOOD OF OTHERS

1 Corinthians 10:24 — Not One's Own Good

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of others.”
This verse sums up the Christian way of life.
The world says, **“Look out for yourself.”**
Jesus says, **“Look out for others.”**
The Corinthians were seeking their own good.
Their own freedom.
Their own rights.
Their own comfort.
Paul calls them to seek **the good of others.**
This is exactly what Jesus did.
He did not seek His own good.
He gave Himself for us.

Cross References

Philippians 2:4
Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
Romans 15:2
Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.
Philippians 2:21
For everyone else looks out for his own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Love seeks the good of others before its own.

Application

In every decision this week, ask, **“How will this affect others?”**

XXV. EAT WHATEVER IS SOLD

1 Corinthians 10:25 — No Questions of Conscience

“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience,”
Now Paul gives practical guidance.
Much of the meat sold in Corinth's market had come from temple sacrifices.
Should a believer ask where every piece of meat came from?
Paul says no.
“Eat whatever is sold in the meat market.”
Once the meat is sold in the market, it is just food.
Buying it is not worship.
“Without raising questions of conscience.”
There is no need to investigate.
Believers can eat with a clear conscience.
Paul is not being careless here.
He is drawing a clear line between taking part in idol worship and eating ordinary food.

Cross References

Romans 14:14
I know and am fully convinced in the Lord Jesus that no food is unclean in itself. But if someone believes something is unclean, then for that person it is unclean.
1 Timothy 4:4
For everything God created is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanks.
Romans 14:20
Do not tear down God's work over food. All food is clean, but it is wrong to eat anything that causes someone else to stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Believers are free to enjoy ordinary things without needless worry.

XXVI. THE EARTH IS THE LORD'S

1 Corinthians 10:26 — Everything in It

“for “the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.””
Paul gives the reason from Psalm 24.
“The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.”
Jewish families often said these words as a blessing before meals.
All food comes from God.
It belongs to Him, not to idols.
An idol cannot claim the meat.
God made it, and He gives it to His people to enjoy with thanksgiving.

Cross References

Psalm 24:1
The earth belongs to the LORD, and everything in it—the world and all who live in it.
Psalm 50:12
If I were hungry, I would not tell you, because the world and everything in it is Mine.
Deuteronomy 10:14
The heavens, even the highest heavens, belong to the LORD your God, and so do the earth and everything in it.

Spiritual Principle

Everything good in creation belongs to God and can be received with thanks.

Key Truth

Every meal is a gift from the Lord who owns the whole earth.

XXVII. INVITED BY AN UNBELIEVER

1 Corinthians 10:27 — Eat What Is Set Before You

“If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you choose to go, eat whatever is set before you without raising questions of conscience.”
Paul now addresses meals in an unbeliever's home.
Notice that he does not forbid believers from going.
“If an unbeliever invites you to a meal and you choose to go.”
Christians are free to share meals with unbelievers.
This is a great opportunity to build friendships and share Christ.
“Eat whatever is set before you.”
Do not insult your host by questioning every dish.
Enjoy the meal with thanks.
This is just what Jesus told His disciples when He sent them out.

Cross References

Luke 10:7
Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, because the worker deserves his pay. Do not move from house to house.
Luke 10:8
When you enter a town and they welcome you, eat whatever they serve you.
Romans 14:6
Whoever sets apart a certain day does it for the Lord. Whoever eats meat does it for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And whoever does not eat meat does it for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Spiritual Principle

Believers are free to build friendships with unbelievers and enjoy their hospitality.

Application

Accept invitations from unbelievers.
Your presence at their table can open doors for the gospel.

XXVIII. “THIS HAS BEEN OFFERED IN SACRIFICE”

1 Corinthians 10:28 — For Conscience' Sake

“But if anyone says to you, “This has been offered in sacrifice to idols,” do not eat it, for the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience—”
Paul now gives an exception.
Suppose someone at the meal says, **“This was offered to idols.”**
Then the situation changes.
“Do not eat it.”
Why?
“For the sake of the one who told you and for the sake of conscience.”
The person who spoke up may be a weaker believer who is troubled by it.
Or it may be an unbeliever who is testing whether you take your faith seriously.
Either way, eating now would send the wrong message.
It might wound a weak conscience.
Or it might make it look like you approve of idol worship.

Cross References

Romans 14:15
If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.
Romans 14:21
It is better not to eat meat or drink wine or do anything else that causes your brother or sister to stumble.
1 Corinthians 8:9
Be careful, however, that the way you use your freedom does not make a weaker believer stumble.

Spiritual Principle

Love may call us to give up a freedom when someone else's conscience or witness is at stake.

XXIX. THE OTHER PERSON'S CONSCIENCE

1 Corinthians 10:29 — Why Should My Freedom Be Judged?

“I mean the other person's conscience, not your own. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?”
Paul clarifies.
“I mean the other person's conscience, not your own.”
Your own conscience may be perfectly clear.
But you give up the meat for the sake of the other person.
Then Paul asks a question:
“Why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience?”
This question can be read in two ways.
Some see it as Paul explaining why he gives up his freedom: so that it will not be wrongly judged and spoken of as evil.
Others see it as Paul protecting the believer's freedom: another person's conscience does not get to control what you believe is right in general.
Either way, the believer's freedom remains real, but love decides how it is used in each situation.

Cross References

Romans 14:16
> So do not let what you think is good be spoken of as evil.

Romans 14:22
> Keep what you believe about these things between yourself and God. Blessed is the person who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

1 Corinthians 8:12
> When you sin against your brothers and sisters in this way and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Our freedom is real, but love decides when to use it and when to lay it down.

XXX. WITH THANKFULNESS

1 Corinthians 10:30 — Why Am I Denounced?

“If I partake with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?”
Paul continues the thought.
“If I partake with thankfulness.”
A believer who eats with thanks to God is not sinning.
The food is God's gift.

“Why am I denounced because of that for which I give thanks?”
Paul does not want his good gift from God to be spoken of as evil.
So in some situations, he will choose not to eat, so that his thanksgiving is not turned into a cause for blame.

Cross References

1 Timothy 4:3
> They forbid people to marry and tell them not to eat certain foods. But God created those foods to be received with thanks by those who believe and know the truth.

1 Timothy 4:4
> For everything God created is good, and nothing should be rejected if it is received with thanks.

Romans 14:6
> Whoever sets apart a certain day does it for the Lord. Whoever eats meat does it for the Lord, since he gives thanks to God. And whoever does not eat meat does it for the Lord and gives thanks to God.

Spiritual Principle

What we receive with thanks should never become a cause of harm to others.

Key Truth

Thankfulness turns ordinary meals into acts of worship.

XXXI. DO ALL TO THE GLORY OF GOD

1 Corinthians 10:31 — Whatever You Do

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
Here is the great principle that ties everything together.
“Whether you eat or drink.”
Even the most ordinary things.
Breakfast.
Lunch.
A cup of water.
“Or whatever you do.”
Work.
Rest.
Family.
Friendships.
Everything.
“Do all to the glory of God.”
To glorify God means to show how great and good He is.
Every part of life can display His worth.
This answers the question about food offered to idols.
The question is not just, **“Is it allowed?”**
The question is, **“Will it bring glory to God?”**

Cross References

Colossians 3:17
Whatever you do, in word or action, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.
Colossians 3:23
Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord and not for people.
1 Peter 4:11
If anyone speaks, he should speak as one speaking God's words. If anyone serves, he should serve with the strength God gives, so that in all things God may be praised through Jesus Christ. To Him be glory and power forever and ever. Amen.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of the Christian life is the glory of God in everything.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

There is no part of life too small to be done for the glory of God.

XXXII. GIVE NO OFFENSE

1 Corinthians 10:32 — To Jews, Gentiles, or the Church

“Give no offense, either to Jews, or to Gentiles, or to the church of God,”
Paul names three groups.
Jews—God's ancient people who did not yet believe in Jesus.
Gentiles—the nations who did not know God.
The church of God—believers from both groups.
Christians must not needlessly offend any of them.
This does not mean Christians should never say anything people disagree with.
The message of the cross itself offends many.
But we must not put unnecessary obstacles in anyone's path.
Our behavior should never be the reason someone rejects Christ.

Cross References

Romans 14:13
So let's stop judging one another. Instead, decide never to put anything in the way of a brother or sister that would make them stumble or fall.
2 Corinthians 6:3
We do not put any obstacle in anyone's way, so that no one can find fault with our ministry.
Romans 15:2
Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel may offend, but our behavior should not.

Application

Is there anything in how you live that might keep someone from Christ?

XXXIII. THAT THEY MAY BE SAVED

1 Corinthians 10:33 — The Profit of Many

“just as I also please all people in all things, not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.”
Paul points again to his own example.
“I also please all people in all things.”
This does not mean Paul was a people-pleaser who changed the truth to win approval.
It means he gave up his own preferences to serve others.
“Not seeking my own profit, but the profit of many.”
He put others first.
And his goal was clear:
“That they may be saved.”
Everything Paul did was aimed at bringing people to Christ.
This ties together Chapters 8, 9, and 10.
Love limits liberty.
The gospel is more important than rights.
And all of it is for the glory of God and the salvation of others.

Cross References

Romans 15:1
> We who are strong should help carry the weaknesses of those who are not strong, and not just please ourselves.

Romans 15:2
> Each of us should please our neighbor for his good, to help him grow strong in faith.

1 Corinthians 9:22
> To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, so that by every possible means I might save some.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of Christian freedom is not self-pleasing but the salvation of others.

Key Truth

The best use of our freedom is to help others come to Christ.

XXXIV. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 10

1. History Is Written for Our Instruction

Israel's failures in the wilderness were recorded for our warning.

Principle:

We must learn from Israel to avoid idolatry, immorality, testing God, and grumbling.

2. God Limits Temptation

“God is faithful.”

Principle:

Though trials come, God is faithful to provide a way of escape so His people can endure.

3. Idolatry Is Deadly

“You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons.”

Principle:

Participation in idol feasts is fellowship with demons and cannot be joined with the Lord's Table.

4. Christian Freedom Is Governed by Love

“Let no one seek his own good, but the good of others.”

Principle:

Our liberty must never become a stumbling block for a weaker brother or sister.

5. Everything Must Glorify God

“Whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

Principle:

The believer's ultimate aim is to magnify God and to seek the good of others.

XXXV. ISRAEL'S BLESSINGS AND ISRAEL'S SINS

Verses 1–10 set Israel's privileges beside Israel's failures.

Five Blessings All Israel Shared

- They were under the cloud.
- They passed through the sea.
- They were baptized into Moses.
- They ate spiritual food.
- They drank from the spiritual Rock, which was Christ.

Five Sins That Brought Judgment

- They craved evil things.
- They worshiped idols.
- They committed sexual immorality.
- They tested Christ.
- They grumbled.

Key Truth

Being surrounded by God's blessings does not guarantee faithfulness to God.

XXXVI. FOUR PROMISES ABOUT TEMPTATION

Verse 13 is one of the most encouraging verses in the Bible.

1. You Are Not Alone

“No temptation has overtaken you except what is common to humanity.”

2. God Is Faithful

“But God is faithful.”

3. God Sets the Limits

“He will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able.”

4. God Provides a Way Out

“With the temptation will also make the way of escape.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every temptation comes with a door marked “Exit,” and God Himself put it there.

XXXVII. GUIDANCE ON IDOL FOOD

Chapters 8–10 give a complete picture of how to handle food offered to idols.

Temple Feasts

Do not go.
Eating in honor of idols is fellowship with demons.

Meat in the Market

Eat freely without asking questions.
The earth is the Lord's.

A Meal in an Unbeliever's Home

Go if you wish, and eat what is served.

When Someone Says, “This Was Offered to Idols”

Do not eat it, for the sake of that person's conscience and your witness.

In Every Case

Seek the good of others.
Do everything to the glory of God.

Key Truth

Christian freedom is real, but it is always guided by loyalty to Christ and love for others.

XXXVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 10 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Christ Was with Israel in the Wilderness

“That Rock was Christ.”

Christ Can Be Tested

Israel tested Christ in the wilderness.

Christ Gave His Body and Blood

The cup and the bread are a participation in His blood and body.

Christ Unites His People

“We, being many, are one bread and one body.”

Christ Is the Jealous Lord

He will not share His people with idols.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The same Christ who provided for Israel in the wilderness provides for His church today.

XXXIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul tell the story of Israel in the wilderness?
To warn the Corinthians.
Israel had great spiritual privileges, yet most of them fell in the wilderness because of sin.
The Corinthians must not think their privileges made them safe.

Question 2

What does it mean that “that Rock was Christ”?
Christ was present with Israel, providing for them in the wilderness.
He was the true source of their life.

Question 3

What five sins of Israel does Paul warn against?
Craving evil things, idolatry, sexual immorality, testing Christ, and grumbling.

Question 4

Why is grumbling so serious?
Grumbling shows a lack of trust in God's goodness.
In the wilderness, it led to judgment.

Question 5

What does “let the one who thinks he stands take heed, lest he fall” mean?
Overconfidence is dangerous.
The person who thinks he cannot fall is in the greatest danger.

Question 6

What does verse 13 promise?
Our temptations are common to all.
God is faithful.
He will not allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.
He always provides a way of escape.

Question 7

Why does Paul say to “flee” from idolatry?
Idolatry is too dangerous to play with.
The best way to escape it is to run from it.

Question 8

What does the Lord's Supper teach about our relationship with Christ and each other?
It is a participation in Christ's body and blood.
It also shows that all believers are one body.

Question 9

If an idol is nothing, why is idol worship dangerous?
Because behind idol worship stand demons.
Taking part in idol feasts means fellowship with demons.

Question 10

Can a Christian eat meat bought in the market?
Yes.
The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it.
Believers can eat without raising questions of conscience.

Question 11

When should a Christian not eat something?
When someone points out that it was offered to idols.
Eating then could wound a weak conscience or look like approval of idol worship.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 10 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 10 should cause believers to live:

- Learning from the mistakes of others.
- Humble and watchful, never overconfident.
- Trusting God's faithfulness in temptation.
- Fleeing idolatry in every form.
- Loyal to Christ alone.
- Seeking the good of others.
- Enjoying God's gifts with thanks.
- Doing everything for the glory of God.

XL. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 10 asks several important questions.

Am I Learning from the Failures of Others?

Or do I think I am too strong to fall?

What Am I Craving?

Are my desires leading me toward God or away from Him?

Do I Grumble?

Or do I give thanks?

Am I Looking for the Way of Escape?

When temptation comes, do I take the exit God provides?

Is There an Idol in My Life?

What competes with Christ for my loyalty?

Do I Take the Lord's Supper Seriously?

Do I remember what it means to share in Christ?

Am I Seeking the Good of Others?

Or only my own good?

Am I Doing Everything for God's Glory?

Even the ordinary things?

XLI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Privilege Is Not Protection”

Israel had every advantage.
God's presence in the cloud.
God's power at the sea.
God's bread from heaven.
God's water from the rock.
Christ Himself was with them.
And yet most of them fell.
The Corinthians had every advantage too.
Baptism.
The Lord's Supper.
Spiritual gifts.
Great teachers.
And yet they were in danger.
It is possible to be surrounded by blessings and still drift from God.
It is possible to sit in church every week and still be playing with sin.
This creates a powerful principle.
God's blessings are meant to draw us closer to Him, not to make us careless.
The answer is not fear.
God is faithful.
He provides a way of escape.
The answer is humble watchfulness and wholehearted loyalty.

Principle:

Spiritual privilege is a call to faithfulness, not a license for carelessness.

XLII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 10 was written to a church that felt very safe.
They were baptized.
They took the Lord's Supper.

They knew idols were nothing.
So they felt free to go to idol feasts.
Paul warned them with Israel's story.
He encouraged them with God's faithfulness.
He commanded them to flee idolatry.
He taught them to seek the good of others.
And he lifted their eyes to the highest purpose of all.
The glory of God.
1 Corinthians 10 therefore reminds us:
Never think you are too strong to fall.
Never play with sin.
Never forget that God is faithful.
Never divide your loyalty between Christ and anything else.
Never use your freedom without thinking of others.
The church does not need people who feel safe while playing with sin.
It needs:
Humble believers who learn from history.
Watchful believers who flee temptation.
Loyal believers who belong to Christ alone.
And joyful believers who do everything for God's glory.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that God is faithful.
Tell people that there is a way of escape.
Tell people that Christ is the Rock who gives living water.
Tell people that every part of life can glorify God.
And in all you do:
Take heed.
Flee idolatry.
Seek the good of others.
Glorify God.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the record of Your people in the wilderness, written for our warning and our hope.
Thank You that Christ was the Rock who provided for Israel, and that He provides for us today.
Thank You that You are faithful.
Thank You that You never allow us to be tempted beyond what we can bear.
Thank You that You always provide a way of escape.
Thank You for the cup and the bread, by which we share in Christ and in one another.
Forgive us when we have craved what is evil.
Forgive us when we have grumbled instead of trusting You.
Forgive us when we have tested Your patience.
Forgive us when we have been overconfident and careless.
Forgive us for every idol we have allowed into our hearts.
Help us learn from the failures of others.
Keep us humble and watchful.
When temptation comes, open our eyes to the way of escape and give us strength to take it.

Help us flee from every form of idolatry.
Keep our hearts loyal to You alone.
Teach us to seek the good of others before our own.
And in everything we do—whether we eat or drink or whatever we do—may we do it all to Your glory.
“Whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Therefore, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” — 1 Corinthians 10:31

Central Truth

Spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, but God is faithful to help His people escape temptation, so believers must flee idolatry, seek the good of others, and do everything to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10 in One Sentence

Paul warns from Israel's history that spiritual privileges do not protect those who play with sin, promises that God is faithful to provide a way of escape in temptation, commands believers to flee idolatry because they cannot share both the Lord's table and the table of demons, and calls them to seek the good of others and do everything to the glory of God.

1 Corinthians Chapter 11 — Headship, Worship, and the Lord’s Supper

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 11 turns to how the church behaved when it gathered for worship.
For three chapters, Paul has been answering questions about food offered to idols.
He ended Chapter 10 with the call to do everything for the glory of God and the good of others.
He begins Chapter 11 with a call to follow his example as he follows Christ.
Then Paul deals with two problems in the church's worship.
The first was about **how men and women presented themselves** when they prayed and prophesied in public worship.
In Corinth's culture, a woman's head covering was a sign of modesty and honor, especially for a married woman.
Some women in the church seem to have set aside the covering.
Perhaps they thought that in Christ such customs no longer mattered.
Paul teaches that God has built an order into creation.
Christ is the head of every man.
The man is the head of the woman.

God is the head of Christ.
And how believers present themselves in worship should honor that order.
But Paul is also careful to say that in the Lord, men and women depend on each other.
Neither is independent.
All things come from God.
The second problem was far more serious.
It was at **the Lord's Supper.**
In the early church, believers often shared a full meal together along with the bread and the cup.
In Corinth, this meal had become a scene of division.
The wealthy came early and ate their fill.
Some even got drunk.
The poor, who often had to work late, arrived to find nothing left.
They went home hungry and humiliated.
Paul is shocked.
“In this I do not praise you.”
He reminds them of what the Lord's Supper really is.
He repeats the words Jesus spoke on the night He was betrayed.
This bread is His body, given for us.
This cup is the new covenant in His blood.
Every time we eat it, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
So no one should come to it carelessly.
Each person must examine himself.
Because the Lord takes His table seriously.
The chapter moves through five movements:

- Following Christ's Example (verses 1–2).
- Order in Headship (verses 3–16).
- Abuses at the Lord's Supper (verses 17–22).
- Institution of the Lord's Supper (verses 23–26).
- Self-Examination Required (verses 27–34).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 11 is:
Worship must honor God's design and reflect the self-giving love of Christ, so believers must come to the Lord's Supper with reverence, self-examination, and love for one another, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes.

I. IMITATORS OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 11:1 — “Be Imitators of Me”

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”
This verse most likely belongs with the end of Chapter 10.
Paul has just said that he seeks the good of others, not his own good, so that they may be saved.
Now he says:
“Be imitators of me.”
But notice the important condition:
“Just as I also am of Christ.”
Paul was not asking people to follow him blindly.
He was asking them to follow him as he followed Jesus.
Jesus is the true pattern.

Paul was a living example of what following Jesus looks like.
Every believer needs examples.
And every believer should be an example to others.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 4:16
So I urge you to follow my example.
Philippians 3:17
Brothers and sisters, join together in following my example. Pay attention to those who live the way we showed you.
Ephesians 5:1
So be imitators of God, as dearly loved children,

Spiritual Principle

We should follow godly people only as far as they follow Christ.

Application

Who are you imitating?
Who might be imitating you?

II. HOLDING TO THE TRADITIONS

1 Corinthians 11:2 — “I Praise You”

“Now I praise you, brothers and sisters, because you remember me in everything and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.”
After many chapters of correction, Paul gives praise.
“I praise you.”
The Corinthians did some things right.
They remembered Paul.
And they held firmly to **“the traditions.”**
In the Bible, this word does not mean human customs.
It means the teachings Paul **delivered**—the truths about Christ and the gospel that he received from the Lord and passed on to them.
Paul is about to correct them in two areas.
But first he encourages them where he can.

Cross References

2 Thessalonians 2:15
So then, brothers and sisters, stand firm and hold on to the teachings we passed on to you, whether by word of mouth or by letter.
2 Thessalonians 3:6
Brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we command you to stay away from any believer who lives a lazy life and does not follow the teaching you received from us.
Jude 1:3
Dear friends, I was eager to write to you about the salvation we share. But I felt I had to write and urge you to fight hard for the faith that God handed down to His holy people once and for all.

Spiritual Principle

Faithful believers hold firmly to the teaching of the apostles.

Key Truth

Good leaders encourage before they correct.

III. CHRIST, MAN, WOMAN, AND GOD

1 Corinthians 11:3 — The Order of Headship

“But I want you to understand that the head of every man is Christ, the head of the woman is the man, and the head of Christ is God.”
Paul now begins his first correction.
He starts with a principle.
“The head of every man is Christ.”
“The head of the woman is the man.”
“The head of Christ is God.”
What does **head** mean here?
Bible students have understood it in different ways.
Many believe it means **authority**—the one who leads.
Others believe it means **source**—the one from whom another comes.
Both ideas may be present.
Notice the last line very carefully.
“The head of Christ is God.”
Christ is fully God and equal with the Father.
Yet in His work as Savior, the Son willingly honors and obeys the Father.
This shows that headship does not mean one person is worth more than another.
The Father and the Son are equal in worth, yet there is order in how they relate.
In the same way, Paul teaches that men and women are equal in worth before God, yet God has given an order to their relationship.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:23
> For the husband is the head of the wife, just as Christ is the head of the church—His body, of which He is the Savior.

Ephesians 1:22
> God placed everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the good of the church,

John 14:28
> You heard Me say, “I am going away, and I am coming back to you.” If you loved Me, you would be glad that I am going to the Father, because the Father is greater than I.

Spiritual Principle

God's order is not about worth but about relationship.

Key Truth

If headship can exist between the Father and the Son without any difference in worth, it does not make anyone less valuable.

IV. A MAN WITH HIS HEAD COVERED

1 Corinthians 11:4 — Dishonoring His Head

“Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head.”
Paul speaks first to men.
When a man **prays or prophesies** in public worship, he should not cover his head.
If he does, he **“dishonors his head.”**
The word **head** may have a double meaning here.
He dishonors his own physical head.
And he dishonors his spiritual Head, who is Christ.
In the Roman world, men often covered their heads when leading pagan worship.
Paul may have wanted Christian men to stand apart from that practice.
A man was to stand before God openly, showing that he honored Christ as his head.

Cross References

Exodus 28:40
Make tunics, sashes, and headbands for Aaron's sons, to give them honor and beauty.
1 Timothy 2:8
So I want men everywhere to pray, lifting up holy hands without anger or arguing.
2 Corinthians 3:18
And all of us, with unveiled faces, see the Lord's glory as if in a mirror, and we are being changed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

How we come before God in worship matters to God.

V. A WOMAN WITH HER HEAD UNCOVERED

1 Corinthians 11:5 — As If Her Head Were Shaved

“But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as if her head were shaved.”
Now Paul speaks to women.
First, notice something very important.
Paul assumes that women **pray and prophesy** in public worship.
He does not forbid it.
He gives instructions for how it should be done.
Women had a real and active part in the worship of the early church.
Paul says a woman who prays or prophesies **“with her head uncovered dishonors her head.”**

In Corinth's culture, a respectable woman, especially a married woman, covered her head in public.
To remove it was seen as shameful.
Paul compares it to having her head shaved.
In that world, a shaved head on a woman was a sign of disgrace.
By refusing the covering, a woman would be bringing shame on her husband and on herself.

Cross References

Numbers 5:18
The priest will have the woman stand before the LORD, loosen her hair, and put the grain offering of remembrance in her hands.
Deuteronomy 21:12
Bring her into your home. She must shave her head and trim her nails.
1 Peter 3:3
Your beauty should not come from outward things, like fancy hairstyles, gold jewelry, or fine clothes.

Spiritual Principle

Women have an honored and active place in the worship of the church.

Key Truth

Paul's concern was not to silence women, but to see that worship honored God and one another.

VI. LET HER BE COVERED

1 Corinthians 11:6 — Shorn or Shaved

“For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.”
Paul makes his point with a strong argument.
If a woman will not cover her head, then she might as well cut off her hair.
But everyone in that culture agreed that a woman with a shaved head was disgraced.
So the conclusion is simple:
“Let her be covered.”
Paul is appealing to what the Corinthians themselves recognized as honorable and shameful.
He wanted the women of the church to avoid bringing shame on themselves or their families in worship.

Cross References

Deuteronomy 21:12
Bring her into your home. She must shave her head and trim her nails.
Numbers 5:18
The priest will have the woman stand before the LORD, loosen her hair, and put the grain offering of remembrance in her hands.
1 Corinthians 11:5
But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head. It is just like having her head shaved.

Spiritual Principle

Christian freedom must not be used in ways that bring shame on others or on the gospel.

VII. THE IMAGE AND GLORY OF GOD

1 Corinthians 11:7 — The Glory of Man

“For a man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.”
Paul now points back to creation.
“He is the image and glory of God.”
Man was created in God's image.
Genesis also says that woman was created in God's image.
Paul is not denying that.
He is focusing on the order of creation in Genesis 2.
“But woman is the glory of man.”
The word **glory** here means something that brings honor.
Just as man brings honor to God, woman brings honor to man.
When Adam first saw Eve, he rejoiced.
She was the crown of creation, the one who completed him.
Paul is not saying woman is less valuable.
He is saying she is the one in whom man finds his honor and joy.

Cross References

Genesis 1:27
> So God created human beings in His own image. In the image of God He created them; male and female He created them.

Genesis 2:18
> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Genesis 5:1
> This is the written record of Adam's family line. When God created human beings, He made them in His own likeness.

Spiritual Principle

Men and women both bear God's image and bring Him glory.

Key Truth

Genesis 1:27 makes it clear: male and female are both made in the image of God.

VIII. WOMAN FROM MAN

1 Corinthians 11:8 — The Order of Creation

“For man is not from woman, but woman from man.”
Paul continues with Genesis 2.

God formed Adam first.
Then He made Eve from Adam's side.
“Woman from man.”
This is the order in which God created them.
Paul points to this order as part of God's design.
It is not a cultural idea.
It goes back to the beginning.

Cross References

Genesis 2:21
> So the LORD God made the man fall into a deep sleep. While he slept, God took one of his ribs and closed up the place with flesh.

Genesis 2:22
> Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken from the man, and He brought her to the man.

Genesis 2:23
> The man said, “At last! This is bone from my bones and flesh from my flesh. She will be called ‘woman,’ because she was taken from man.”

Spiritual Principle

God's design for men and women goes back to creation itself.

IX. WOMAN FOR MAN

1 Corinthians 11:9 — A Helper Who Is Right for Him

“Neither was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.”
Paul gives another point from Genesis.
God said it was not good for the man to be alone.
So He created woman as **“a helper who is right for him.”**
The word **helper** in the Old Testament is never a word of weakness.
It is often used of God Himself, who helps His people.
Woman was created to stand beside man as his partner.
Paul's point is about God's purpose and order in creation.
It is not about one being better than the other.

Cross References

Genesis 2:18
> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Genesis 2:20
> The man gave names to all the livestock, the birds, and all the wild animals. But no helper who was right for him was found.

1 Timothy 2:13
> For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

Spiritual Principle

A helper is not a lesser person; God Himself is called the helper of His people.

X. BECAUSE OF THE ANGELS

1 Corinthians 11:10 — A Symbol of Authority

“For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.”
Paul draws a conclusion.
“The woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head.”
The head covering was a symbol.
Some understand it as a sign that she honors the order God has given.
Others understand it as a sign of her own authority to pray and prophesy in the church.
Then Paul adds a mysterious phrase:
“Because of the angels.”
Bible students have offered several explanations.
Many believe that angels are present when the church worships, and that they watch to see God's order honored.
The Bible teaches that angels serve God's people and care about His glory.
Whatever the full meaning, Paul is reminding the church that worship is watched by heaven.

Cross References

Genesis 6:2
> the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took as wives any of them they chose.

Psalm 103:20
> Praise the LORD, you His angels, you mighty ones who carry out His word and obey His voice.

Hebrews 1:14
> Aren't all angels spirits who serve God and are sent to help those who will receive salvation?

Spiritual Principle

Worship takes place before an audience in heaven.

Key Truth

When the church gathers, it is never only people who are watching.

XI. NOT INDEPENDENT

1 Corinthians 11:11 — In the Lord

“Nevertheless, in the Lord, woman is not independent of man, nor man independent of woman.”
This is a very important verse.
Paul has been speaking about order.
Now he guards against misunderstanding.
“Nevertheless.”

He wants to balance what he has said.
“In the Lord.”
In Christ, men and women are bound together.
Woman is not independent of man.
Nor man independent of woman.
They need each other.
They depend on each other.
Order does not mean that one can do without the other.
In the Lord, they are partners.

Cross References

Galatians 3:28
> There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female. You are all one in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 5:21
> Submit to one another out of respect for Christ.

Genesis 2:24
> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two become one flesh.

Spiritual Principle

In Christ, men and women need each other and depend on each other.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

God's order never cancels mutual dependence and love.

XII. ALL THINGS ARE FROM GOD

1 Corinthians 11:12 — Man Comes Through Woman

“For just as woman came from man, so also man comes through woman; and all things are from God.”
Paul gives the other side of creation.
“Woman came from man.”
Eve came from Adam.
“So also man comes through woman.”
Every man since Adam has been born of a woman.
Men owe their lives to their mothers.
Neither can boast over the other.
Then Paul gives the final word:
“All things are from God.”
Men and women both come from God.
Both depend on Him.
Both belong to Him.

Cross References

Genesis 2:22
Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib He had taken from the man, and He brought her to the man.
Genesis 3:20
The man named his wife Eve, because she would become the mother of all who live.
Romans 11:36
For everything comes from Him, exists through Him, and is for Him. To Him be glory forever! Amen.

Spiritual Principle

All people, men and women alike, come from God and depend on Him.

Key Truth

No one has room for pride, because everyone owes their life to God.

XIII. JUDGE FOR YOURSELVES

1 Corinthians 11:13 — Is It Proper?

“Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God uncovered?”
Paul invites the Corinthians to think it through.
“Judge for yourselves.”
He asks them to use their own sense of what is fitting.
“Is it proper?”
In their culture, everyone knew what was considered proper and respectful.
Paul expected them to see that the women's behavior was not fitting for worship.
He was not asking them to follow a rule without understanding.
He wanted them to see why it mattered.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 10:15
I am speaking to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I say.
1 Timothy 2:9
In the same way, I want women to dress modestly and sensibly, with decency. Their beauty should not come from fancy hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes,
1 Peter 3:4
Instead, let it come from the inner self, the lasting beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is very precious to God.

Spiritual Principle

God wants His people to think carefully about what honors Him in worship.

XIV. WHAT NATURE TEACHES

1 Corinthians 11:14 — Long Hair on a Man

“Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him,”
Paul appeals to **nature.**
He means the natural sense of what is fitting that people shared in his day.
In that culture, long hair on a man was seen as a disgrace.
It was viewed as blurring the difference between men and women.
There were special exceptions, such as the Nazirite vow, where a man let his hair grow as a sign of his dedication to God.
But generally, men wore their hair short.
Paul's point is that God made men and women different, and that difference should be honored.

Cross References

Leviticus 19:27
Do not cut the hair at the sides of your head or trim the edges of your beard.
Ezekiel 44:20
The priests must not shave their heads or let their hair grow long. They must keep their hair trimmed.
Numbers 6:5
During the whole time of his Nazirite vow, no razor may be used on his head. Until the time of his dedication to the LORD is over, he must be holy and let his hair grow long.

Spiritual Principle

God created men and women different, and that difference should be honored, not erased.

XV. HER GLORY

1 Corinthians 11:15 — Hair Given as a Covering

“but if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For her hair is given to her for a covering.”
In contrast, a woman's long hair was considered her glory.
It was a sign of her beauty and honor.
“For her hair is given to her for a covering.”
God has given woman a natural covering.
Paul uses this to support his point.
Just as nature gives her a covering, so it is fitting for her to be covered in worship.
Some Bible students believe that Paul is saying her hair itself is the covering he has been talking about.
Others believe he is using her hair as an illustration that points to the need for a head covering.

Cross References

Song of Solomon 4:1
How beautiful you are, my darling! How beautiful you are! Your eyes behind your veil are like doves. Your hair is like a flock of goats coming down from Mount Gilead.

Luke 7:38
She stood behind Him at His feet, weeping. She began to wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. She kissed His feet and poured perfume on them.
1 Peter 3:3
Your beauty should not come from outward things, like fancy hairstyles, gold jewelry, or fine clothes.

Spiritual Principle

Womanhood is a glory God has given, to be honored and not hidden in shame.

Key Truth

The woman who wiped Jesus' feet with her hair laid her glory at His feet.

XVI. NO SUCH CUSTOM

1 Corinthians 11:16 — If Anyone Is Contentious

“But if anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”
Paul ends this section with a word to those who want to argue.
“If anyone is inclined to be contentious.”
Some in Corinth loved to argue.
Paul says the matter is settled.
“We have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.”
The other churches did not follow the practice the Corinthians were adopting.
Corinth must not go its own way.
The church in every place belongs to the same Lord and should walk in the same way.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:33
For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the churches of God's people.
1 Timothy 6:4
he is proud and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy love of arguments and fights about words. These lead to envy, quarrels, insults, and evil suspicions,
Titus 3:9
But stay away from foolish arguments, debates about family histories, quarrels, and fights about the law, because they are useless and worthless.

Spiritual Principle

A contentious spirit does not honor God.

Application

When you disagree, ask yourself whether you are seeking truth or simply seeking to win.

XVII. NOT FOR THE BETTER

1 Corinthians 11:17 — “I Do Not Praise You”

“But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.”
Paul now turns to a much more serious problem.
At the start of the chapter, he said, **“I praise you.”**
Now he says:
“I do not praise you.”
Why?
“Because you come together not for the better but for the worse.”
This is a shocking statement.
The church's gatherings were supposed to build people up.
Instead, they were doing harm.
It would have been better if they had stayed home.

Cross References

James 3:16
Wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there will be disorder and every kind of evil.
1 Corinthians 1:11
For some from Chloe's household have told me, my brothers and sisters, that there are quarrels among you.
1 Corinthians 3:3
You are still worldly. Since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, aren't you living like people of the world?

Spiritual Principle

Church gatherings should make us better, not worse.

Application

When you leave church, are you more loving, more humble, and more like Christ?

XVIII. DIVISIONS AMONG YOU

1 Corinthians 11:18 — When You Come Together

“For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.”
Paul explains the problem.
“When you come together as a church.”
This is the gathered church at worship.
“I hear that there are divisions among you.”
In Chapter 1, the divisions were over leaders.
Here, they were over social class.
The rich and the poor were divided even at the Lord's table.

“In part I believe it.”
Paul is careful.
He does not want to believe the worst.
But he knows enough to be concerned.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:10
I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be completely united in mind and purpose.
Romans 16:17
I urge you, brothers and sisters, watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that go against the teaching you have learned. Stay away from them.
1 Corinthians 3:3
You are still worldly. Since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, aren't you living like people of the world?

Spiritual Principle

Divisions in the church dishonor the One who made us one.

Key Truth

Paul was slow to believe bad reports, but he did not ignore them.

XIX. THOSE WHO ARE GENUINE

1 Corinthians 11:19 — Factions Reveal the Heart

“For there must be factions among you, so that those who are genuine may be recognized among you.”
This is a hard verse.
Paul is not saying factions are good.
He has already condemned them.
Some Bible students believe Paul is speaking with irony:
“I suppose you must have your factions, so that you can show everyone who is truly approved!”
Others believe Paul is saying that God allows divisions as a test.
In times of conflict, it becomes clear who is truly faithful and who is not.
Either way, the point is the same.
Conflict reveals hearts.

Cross References

1 John 2:19
They went out from us, but they did not really belong to us. If they had belonged to us, they would have stayed with us. But by leaving, they showed that none of them belonged to us.
Deuteronomy 13:3
do not listen to that prophet or dreamer. The LORD your God is testing you to find out whether you love Him with all your heart and soul.

1 Corinthians 3:13
each person's work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will make it clear. It will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what kind of work each one has done.

Spiritual Principle

Times of conflict reveal what is truly in our hearts.

XX. NOT THE LORD'S SUPPER

1 Corinthians 11:20 — What It Had Become

“Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper.”
Paul makes a startling claim.
The Corinthians thought they were eating the Lord's Supper.
But Paul says:
“It is not to eat the Lord's Supper.”
Their meal had become so selfish and divided that it no longer deserved to be called the Lord's Supper.
It had become their own supper.
The Lord's Supper is meant to remember the Lord who gave Himself for others.
A selfish meal cannot honor a self-giving Savior.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 11:23
For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: on the night the Lord Jesus was betrayed, He took bread.
Acts 2:42
They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer.
Acts 20:7
On the first day of the week, we gathered to break bread. Paul spoke to the people, and since he planned to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper must reflect the Lord's love, or it is no longer truly His Supper.

XXI. ONE HUNGRY, ANOTHER DRUNK

1 Corinthians 11:21 — Each One Goes Ahead

“For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal; one goes hungry, another gets drunk.”
Paul describes what was happening.
In the early church, believers often met in the homes of wealthier members.
They shared a full meal together, sometimes called a **love feast**, along with the Lord's Supper.
But in Corinth, the wealthy arrived early.
They did not wait.
“Each one goes ahead with his own meal.”

They ate the best food.
They drank too much wine.
“One goes hungry, another gets drunk.”
The poor, including slaves who worked late, arrived to find little or nothing left.
What should have been a picture of unity had become a picture of selfishness.

Cross References

James 2:3
> If you pay special attention to the man in fine clothes and say, “Here's a good seat for you,” but say to the poor man, “You stand over there,” or “Sit on the floor by my feet,”

Jude 1:12
> These people are hidden reefs at your love feasts. They eat with you without shame, caring only for themselves. They are clouds without rain, blown along by the wind; autumn trees without fruit, twice dead and pulled up by the roots.

Philippians 3:19
> Their end is destruction. Their god is their stomach, and they are proud of what should shame them. Their minds are set on earthly things.

Spiritual Principle

Selfishness at the Lord's table denies the very meaning of the Lord's table.

Key Truth

The world divides people by wealth.
The church must not.

XXII. DO YOU DESPISE THE CHURCH OF GOD?

1 Corinthians 11:22 — Humiliating Those Who Have Nothing

“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you.”
Paul's anger comes through clearly.
“What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in?”
If they wanted a private feast, they should have it at home.
“Do you despise the church of God?”
By their behavior, they were treating God's church with contempt.
“And humiliate those who have nothing?”
The poor were being shamed in front of everyone.
This was not just bad manners.
It was sin against God's people.
“Shall I praise you? In this I do not praise you.”

Cross References

James 2:5
Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?
James 2:6
But you have treated the poor with dishonor. Isn't it the rich who oppress you and drag you into court?
Proverbs 14:31
Whoever oppresses the poor insults their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors Him.

Spiritual Principle

To humiliate the poor is to despise the church of God.

Application

Is there anyone in your church who feels left out or looked down on?
What could you do to welcome them?

XXIII. ON THE NIGHT HE WAS BETRAYED

1 Corinthians 11:23 — Received from the Lord

“For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus, on the night when He was betrayed, took bread.”
Paul now reminds them of what the Lord's Supper really is.
“I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you.”
This teaching did not come from Paul.
It came from the Lord Himself.
Paul faithfully passed it on.
“On the night when He was betrayed.”
Notice when Jesus gave this meal.
On the darkest night of His earthly life.
One of His own disciples was betraying Him.
The others would soon run away.
And in that moment, Jesus gave His people a meal to remember His love.
“Took bread.”
An ordinary loaf of bread.
But Jesus was about to give it a new and holy meaning.

Cross References

Matthew 26:26
While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is My body.”
Luke 22:19
Then He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, given for you. Do this to remember Me.”

Mark 14:22

> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “Take it; this is My body.”

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper was given by Jesus Himself, in the shadow of the cross.

Key Truth

On the night He was betrayed, Jesus was thinking about His people.

XXIV. THIS IS MY BODY

1 Corinthians 11:24 — In Remembrance of Me

“And when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, “Take, eat; this is My body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me.””
Jesus did three things with the bread.
He gave thanks.
Even facing the cross, Jesus thanked the Father.
He broke it.
A picture of His body soon to be broken on the cross.
He said, “This is My body, which is for you.”
His death was not for Himself.
It was **for you.**
Then He gave a command:
“Do this in remembrance of Me.”
The Lord's Supper is a meal of remembering.
Not just recalling a fact.
But calling to mind, with faith and gratitude, everything Jesus did for us.

Cross References

Matthew 26:26

> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to His disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is My body.”

Luke 22:19

> Then He took bread, gave thanks, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body, given for you. Do this to remember Me.”

Mark 14:22

> While they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, “Take it; this is My body.”

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper calls us to remember that Christ's body was given for us.

Key Truth

The Corinthians were each eating their own meal.
Jesus gave His body **for** others.

XXV. THE NEW COVENANT IN MY BLOOD

1 Corinthians 11:25 — The Cup After Supper

“In the same way, He also took the cup after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.””
Then Jesus took the cup.
“This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”
A **covenant** is a binding agreement.
God made the old covenant with Israel at Mount Sinai, sealed with the blood of animals.
Through the prophet Jeremiah, God promised a new covenant.
He would write His law on their hearts.
He would forgive their sins and remember them no more.
Jesus says that new covenant is sealed **in My blood.**
His death makes the new covenant real.
Again He commands:
“Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.”

Cross References

Luke 22:20
> In the same way, after supper He took the cup and said, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is poured out for you.”

Matthew 26:28
> This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

Jeremiah 31:31
> “The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the people of Israel and the people of Judah.”

Spiritual Principle

The blood of Christ establishes the new covenant of forgiveness and new life.

Key Truth

Every time we drink the cup, we remember the promise God kept in Christ.

XXVI. YOU PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH

1 Corinthians 11:26 — Until He Comes

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”
Paul explains what the Lord's Supper does.
“You proclaim the Lord's death.”
The Lord's Supper is a sermon without words.

Every time the church eats the bread and drinks the cup, it announces to the world that Christ died for sinners.
“Until He comes.”
The Lord's Supper looks backward to the cross.
It also looks forward to Christ's return.
It is a meal for the time in between.
One day, we will eat with Him in His kingdom.
Until then, we remember and proclaim.

Cross References

Matthew 26:29
> I tell you, I will not drink this fruit of the vine again until the day I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom.

Luke 22:18
> For I tell you, from now on I will not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.

Acts 1:11
> “Men of Galilee,” they said, “why do you stand here looking up into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you saw Him go into heaven.”

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper looks back to the cross and forward to Christ's return.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every time the church takes the Lord's Supper, it preaches the gospel.

XXVII. IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER

1 Corinthians 11:27 — Guilty of the Body and Blood

“Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”
Paul now gives a serious warning.
Notice the words carefully.
Paul does not say **“whoever is unworthy.”**
No one is worthy of Christ's sacrifice.
That is the whole point of grace.
Paul says **“in an unworthy manner.”**
This means taking the Lord's Supper carelessly, selfishly, or without regard for what it means.
In Corinth, it meant eating while despising the poor and dishonoring the church.
Such a person **“will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord.”**
He is treating Christ's sacrifice as if it did not matter.

Cross References

Hebrews 10:29
How much worse punishment do you think a person deserves who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, treated as common the blood of the covenant that made him holy, and insulted the Spirit of grace?
John 6:53
Jesus said to them, “I tell you the truth, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.”
Numbers 9:13
But if a man who is clean and not on a journey fails to celebrate the Passover, he must be cut off from his people, because he did not bring the LORD's offering at the appointed time. He will bear the guilt of his sin.

Spiritual Principle

The Lord's Supper must be received with reverence, because it represents Christ's sacrifice.

Key Truth

No one comes to the table because they are worthy.
We come because Christ is worthy, and we come in a worthy manner when we come humbly.

XXVIII. EXAMINE YOURSELF

1 Corinthians 11:28 — Then Eat and Drink

“But let a person examine himself, and in this way let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”
What is the answer to Paul's warning?
“Let a person examine himself.”
Before coming to the Lord's table, each believer should look honestly at his own heart.
Am I holding on to sin?
Am I at peace with my brothers and sisters?
Do I understand what this meal means?
Am I coming in faith?
Notice what Paul says next:
“And in this way let him eat.”
Self-examination is not meant to keep believers away from the table.
It is meant to prepare them to come.
We examine, confess, and then come with joy.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 13:5
Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Don't you realize that Jesus Christ is in you—unless you fail the test?
Lamentations 3:40
Let us look closely at our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.
Galatians 6:4
Each person should test his own actions. Then he can take pride in himself alone, without comparing himself to someone else.

Spiritual Principle

Self-examination prepares us to come to the Lord's table, not to stay away from it.

Application

Before the next time you take the Lord's Supper, spend time in honest prayer.
Confess your sin, make things right with others, and come with thanksgiving.

XXIX. DISCERNING THE BODY

1 Corinthians 11:29 — Eating Judgment

“For the one who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself.”
What does **“discerning the body”** mean?
Bible students understand it in two ways, and both may be true.
Some believe it means recognizing **the Lord's body**—understanding that this bread represents Christ's body given for us.
Others believe it means recognizing **the church as Christ's body**—seeing that all believers are one, and treating them with love.
In Corinth, both were missing.
They did not honor Christ's sacrifice.
And they did not honor their poor brothers and sisters.
Such a person **“eats and drinks judgment on himself.”**

Cross References

Hebrews 10:29

> How much worse punishment do you think a person deserves who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, treated as common the blood of the covenant that made him holy, and insulted the Spirit of grace?

1 Corinthians 10:16

> The cup of blessing that we bless, isn't it a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, isn't it a sharing in the body of Christ?

Leviticus 7:20

> But if anyone who is unclean eats meat from the fellowship offering that belongs to the LORD, that person must be cut off from his people.

Spiritual Principle

To honor Christ at His table, we must honor both His sacrifice and His people.

XXX. WEAK, SICK, AND ASLEEP

1 Corinthians 11:30 — The Lord's Discipline

“For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and many sleep.”
Paul makes a sobering statement.
“For this reason.”

Because of how they were treating the Lord's Supper.
“Many among you are weak and sick.”
“And many sleep.”
Sleep is a gentle word the New Testament uses for the death of believers.
Paul is saying that God was disciplining the Corinthian church.
Some were ill.
Some had died.
This does not mean that every sickness is caused by sin.
The Bible clearly teaches otherwise.
But in this case, Paul says God was using physical discipline because of their careless and selfish behavior at His table.

Cross References

John 5:14
> Later Jesus found him at the temple and said to him, “Look, you are well now. Stop sinning, or something worse may happen to you.”

James 5:15
> The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.

1 Thessalonians 4:13
> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who have fallen asleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

Spiritual Principle

God takes His table seriously.

Spiritual Warning

Not all sickness is caused by sin.
But some sin does bring God's discipline.

XXXI. IF WE JUDGED OURSELVES

1 Corinthians 11:31 — We Would Not Be Judged

“But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged.”
Paul gives the way to avoid God's discipline.
“If we judged ourselves truly.”
If we honestly examine our hearts and deal with our sin, God will not need to step in.
“We would not be judged.”
This is a promise of mercy.
When we confess our sins, God forgives.
Honest self-judgment spares us from God's discipline.

Cross References

Psalm 32:5
> Then I admitted my sin to You and did not hide my wrongdoing. I said, “I will confess my sins to the LORD,” and You forgave the guilt of my sin.

1 John 1:9
If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all wrongdoing.
Lamentations 3:40
Let us look closely at our ways and test them, and let us return to the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

Honest confession spares us from God's discipline.

Application

Do not wait for God to correct you.
Examine yourself and confess your sin today.

XXXII. DISCIPLINED, NOT CONDEMNED

1 Corinthians 11:32 — Not Condemned with the World

“But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned with the world.”
Here is great comfort.
Even when God disciplines His children, it is an act of love.
“We are disciplined.”
The word means to train a child.
God's discipline is like a loving father correcting his children.
“So that we may not be condemned with the world.”
God's discipline of believers is not condemnation.
It is meant to keep them from the condemnation that will fall on the world.
God disciplines His children because they are His children.

Cross References

Hebrews 12:6
The Lord disciplines the one He loves, and He corrects everyone He accepts as His child.
Hebrews 12:11
No discipline seems pleasant at the time; it seems painful. But later it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.
Revelation 3:19
I correct and discipline everyone I love. So be eager to obey, and turn away from your sins.

Spiritual Principle

God's discipline is proof of His love, not His rejection.

Key Truth

The Lord disciplines His children to keep them, not to destroy them.

XXXIII. WAIT FOR ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 11:33 — When You Come Together

“Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.”
Paul now gives the practical solution.
Notice how tenderly he speaks:
“My brothers and sisters.”
Then the simple command:
“Wait for one another.”
Do not rush ahead.
Do not eat before others arrive.
Welcome one another.
Share with one another.
This small act of waiting would show love, honor, and unity.
It would turn their selfish meal back into the Lord's Supper.

Cross References

Romans 12:10
Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.
Philippians 2:4
Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
Hebrews 10:24
And let us think about how to stir one another up to love and good works.

Spiritual Principle

Love waits for others and makes room for them.

Application

In your church, who might need you to wait for them, welcome them, and include them?

XXXIV. EAT AT HOME

1 Corinthians 11:34 — Not for Judgment

“If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.”
Paul gives one more practical instruction.
“If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home.”
If someone is so hungry that he cannot wait for others, he should eat before he comes.
The gathering of the church is not mainly about filling stomachs.
It is about worshiping the Lord together.
“So that when you come together it will not be for judgment.”
Paul wants their gatherings to bring blessing, not discipline.
“The remaining matters I will arrange when I come.”
There were other issues Paul would deal with in person.

Not everything needed to be written in a letter.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 4:19
But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord wants me to. Then I will find out not only what these proud people are saying, but what power they really have.

1 Corinthians 16:5
I will come to you after I go through Macedonia, because I plan to travel through Macedonia.

Titus 1:5
I left you in Crete so that you could put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I told you.

Spiritual Principle

The church's gatherings should bring blessing, not judgment.

Key Truth

Simple acts of consideration can protect the unity of the church.

XXXV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 11

1. Follow Christ Through Faithful Examples

“Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.”

Principle:

We follow godly examples as they follow Christ.

2. God's Order in Headship

Christ is the head of man, man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ.

Principle:

This order reflects God's design, not human pride, and it does not mean any difference in worth.

3. Worship Must Be Honorable

How men and women presented themselves in worship mattered.

Principle:

Reverence in prayer and prophecy should reflect God's created order.

4. The Lord's Supper Is Sacred

“This is My body, which is for you.”

Principle:

The Lord's Supper is not a common meal, but a holy remembrance of Christ's sacrifice.

5. Self-Examination Prevents Judgment

“Let a person examine himself.”

Principle:

Those who examine themselves approach the Table in humility and are spared the Lord's discipline.

6. Unity and Love in Gathering

“Wait for one another.”

Principle:

Believers must show honor to one another, so that worship builds up instead of bringing judgment.

XXXVI. UNDERSTANDING HEAD COVERINGS

Verses 3–16 are among the most debated in Paul's letters.
Faithful Bible students have understood them in different ways.

What Is Clear

- God has built an order into creation.
- Men and women are equal in worth before God.
- Men and women are different, and that difference should be honored.
- Women prayed and prophesied in the worship of the early church.
- In the Lord, men and women depend on each other.
- Worship should honor God and avoid bringing shame on others.

The Culture of Corinth

A respectable woman, especially a married woman, usually covered her head in public.
An uncovered or shaved head on a woman was seen as shameful.
Roman men often covered their heads when leading pagan worship.

How Churches Apply It Today

Some churches believe the head covering is still required for women in worship, because Paul bases his teaching on creation.
Other churches believe the outward custom belonged to that culture, while the principle behind it remains: honoring God's design, showing modesty, and respecting one another in worship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Whatever our practice, our hearts must honor God's design, respect one another, and keep worship focused on Him.

XXXVII. THE LORD'S SUPPER

Verses 23–26 are the earliest written account of the Lord's Supper in the New Testament.

Its Origin

It was given by the Lord Jesus Himself, on the night He was betrayed.

The Bread

“This is My body, which is for you.”
It reminds us that Christ's body was given for us.

The Cup

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”
It reminds us that Christ's blood brings forgiveness and a new relationship with God.

Its Purpose

- To remember Christ.
- To proclaim His death.
- To look forward to His return.
- To express the unity of His body, the church.

How to Come

- With faith.
- With self-examination.
- With confession of sin.
- With love for one another.
- With thanksgiving.

Key Truth

The Lord's Supper looks back to the cross, looks around at the church, looks within at our hearts, and looks forward to Christ's return.

XXXVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 11 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Is Our Example

“Just as I also am of Christ.”

Jesus Is the Head of Every Man

He leads and cares for His people.

Jesus Honors the Father

“The head of Christ is God.”

Jesus Gave His Body for Us

“This is My body, which is for you.”

Jesus Established the New Covenant

“This cup is the new covenant in My blood.”

Jesus Is Coming Again

“You proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Lord who gave His body for us now invites us to His table and will one day return for us.

XXXIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Paul tell the Corinthians to imitate him?
Because he was following Christ.
He was a living example of what it means to put others first.

Question 2

What does “the head of the woman is the man” mean?
It describes an order God built into creation.
Bible students differ on whether “head” mainly means authority, source, or both.
It does not mean women are of less worth, just as Christ is not of less worth than the Father.

Question 3

Did women take part in worship in the early church?
Yes.
Paul assumes that women prayed and prophesied in public worship.
His concern was how they did it, not whether they did it.

Question 4

Why were head coverings important in Corinth?

In that culture, a woman's head covering was a sign of modesty and honor.
Removing it would bring shame on her and her husband.

Question 5

Must Christian women wear head coverings today?
Faithful churches answer this differently.
Some believe it is still required because Paul points back to creation.
Others believe the principle remains while the outward custom was cultural.
All agree that worship must honor God and one another.

Question 6

What does verse 11 add to Paul's teaching?
In the Lord, men and women are not independent of each other.
They need each other and depend on each other.

Question 7

What was wrong with the way the Corinthians observed the Lord's Supper?
The wealthy ate first and some got drunk.
The poor arrived to find nothing left.
The meal had become selfish and divided.

Question 8

What did Jesus say about the bread and the cup?
The bread is His body, given for us.
The cup is the new covenant in His blood.
We are to do this in remembrance of Him.

Question 9

What does it mean to eat in an “unworthy manner”?
It means taking the Lord's Supper carelessly, selfishly, or without regard for its meaning.
It does not mean that only perfect people may come.

Question 10

What does it mean to “discern the body”?
It means recognizing the meaning of Christ's sacrifice.
It also means recognizing the church as Christ's body and treating fellow believers with love.

Question 11

Is all sickness a result of sin?
No.
But Paul says that in Corinth, God was disciplining some believers because of how they treated the Lord's Supper.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 11 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 11 should cause believers to live:

- Following Christ and godly examples.
- Honoring God's design for men and women.
- Treating one another as equal in worth and mutually dependent.
- Coming to worship with reverence.
- Remembering Christ's sacrifice at His table.
- Examining their hearts before the Lord's Supper.
- Welcoming and honoring the poor.
- Waiting for one another in love.

XL. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 11 asks several important questions.

Whose Example Am I Following?

And is my life an example worth following?

Do I Honor God's Design?

In my home, my relationships, and my worship?

Do I Value Men and Women Equally?

Do I treat others as fellow image-bearers of God?

Do I Come to Worship with Reverence?

Or do I come carelessly?

How Do I Treat Those Who Have Less?

Do I welcome them, or overlook them?

Do I Remember Christ at His Table?

Or has the Lord's Supper become a routine?

Do I Examine Myself?

Am I holding on to sin I need to confess?

Am I at Peace with My Brothers and Sisters?

Is there someone I need to make things right with before I come to the table?

XLI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Table Shows the Heart”

What happens around a table reveals what is in the heart.
In Corinth, the table revealed selfishness.
The rich ate first.
The poor went hungry.
And the Lord's Supper became a picture of the world instead of a picture of Christ.
But the Lord's table was meant to show something very different.
On the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread.
He gave thanks.
He broke it.
And He said, **“This is My body, which is for you.”**
Jesus did not come to the table to be served.
He came to give Himself.
This creates a powerful principle.
The way we treat one another at the Lord's table should look like the way the Lord treated us.
If He gave Himself for us, we can wait for one another.
If He was broken for us, we can make room for others.

Principle:

The Lord's Supper must be shared in the same self-giving love it remembers.

XLII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 11 was written to a church whose worship had gone wrong.
Some had ignored the customs that showed honor in worship.
Some had turned the Lord's Supper into a selfish feast.
The rich were honored.
The poor were humiliated.
And God was disciplining His church.
Paul called them back.
Back to God's design.
Back to the cross.
Back to the Lord's table as Jesus gave it.
Back to love for one another.
1 Corinthians 11 therefore reminds us:
Never come to worship carelessly.
Never forget God's good design.
Never look down on a brother or sister.
Never take the Lord's Supper lightly.
Never stop examining your own heart.
The church does not need gatherings that make people worse.
It needs:

Worship that honors God.
Respect between men and women.
Tables where the poor are welcomed.
And hearts that remember the Lord's death until He comes.
The same gospel still calls us:
Tell people that Christ's body was given for them.
Tell people that His blood established the new covenant.
Tell people that they can be forgiven.
Tell people that He is coming again.
And whenever you gather:
Remember Him.
Examine yourself.
Welcome one another.
Proclaim His death until He comes.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the example of faithful believers who follow Christ.
Thank You for the good design You built into creation.
Thank You that men and women are made in Your image and are equal in worth before You.
Thank You that in the Lord, we need one another and belong to one another.
Thank You for the Lord's Supper.
Thank You that on the night He was betrayed, Jesus took bread and gave Himself for us.
Thank You for His body, given for us.
Thank You for His blood, which sealed the new covenant.
Thank You that He is coming again.
Forgive us when we have come to worship carelessly.
Forgive us when we have overlooked or humiliated those who have less.
Forgive us when the Lord's Supper has become a routine instead of a remembrance.
Forgive us when we have come to Your table without examining our hearts.
Teach us to honor Your design.
Teach us to honor one another.
Help us to wait for one another, welcome one another, and love one another.
Search our hearts before we come to Your table.
And may every time we eat this bread and drink this cup, we proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.
“Do this in remembrance of Me.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.” — 1 Corinthians 11:26

Central Truth

Worship must honor God's design and reflect the self-giving love of Christ, so believers must come to the Lord's Supper with reverence, self-examination, and love for one another, proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes.

1 Corinthians 11 in One Sentence

Paul calls the Corinthians to follow his example as he follows Christ, to honor God's created order in worship while remembering that men and women depend on each other in the Lord, and to stop turning the Lord's Supper into a selfish meal, instead examining themselves and waiting for one another as they proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 — The Gifts of the Spirit and the Body of Christ

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 begins one of the most important sections of Paul's letter.
Chapters 12, 13, and 14 all deal with one subject:
Spiritual gifts.
The Corinthians had written to Paul with questions about these gifts.
The church in Corinth was richly gifted.
Paul said in Chapter 1 that they did not lack any spiritual gift.
But their gifts had become a source of pride and division.
Some gifts, especially speaking in tongues, were seen as signs of being more spiritual.
Those who had these gifts felt superior.
Those who did not felt left out, or even wondered whether they belonged.
Paul answers with one of the most beautiful pictures in the Bible.
The church is the body of Christ.
A body has many parts.
Each part is different.
Each part has its own job.
But all the parts belong to one body.
The foot cannot say, **“I am not part of the body.”**
The eye cannot say to the hand, **“I don't need you.”**
In fact, the parts that seem weakest are the most necessary.
Paul also shows that every gift comes from the same source.
The same Spirit.
The same Lord.
The same God.
Gifts are not trophies to be shown off.
They are tools given **“for the common good.”**
And at the end of the chapter, Paul points to something even greater than gifts:

“A still more excellent way.”
That way is love, which he will describe in Chapter 13.
The chapter moves through five movements:

- Spiritual Gifts and the Spirit's Work (verses 1–3).
- The Same Spirit, Many Gifts (verses 4–11).
- Unity in the Body of Christ (verses 12–20).
- All Members Are Needed (verses 21–26).
- God's Appointed Ministries (verses 27–31).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 12 is:
The one Spirit gives different gifts to every believer for the good of the whole church, so that the many members, each needed and honored, may serve together as one body in Christ.

I. CONCERNING SPIRITUAL GIFTS

1 Corinthians 12:1 — “I Do Not Want You to Be Ignorant”

“Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers and sisters, I do not want you to be ignorant.”
Paul begins a new topic from the Corinthians' letter.
“Now concerning spiritual gifts.”
The Greek word can mean **spiritual gifts** or **spiritual things**, and it can also refer to **spiritual people.**
The Corinthians wanted to be known as spiritual.
They were fascinated by gifts that seemed dramatic and impressive.
But Paul says:
“I do not want you to be ignorant.”
The Corinthians thought they knew a lot about spiritual things.
In reality, they had much to learn.
Paul is about to correct their thinking about what it means to be truly spiritual.

Cross References

Romans 12:6
> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Romans 11:25
> I do not want you to be unaware of this secret truth, brothers and sisters, so that you will not think you are wiser than you are: part of Israel has been hardened until the full number of Gentiles has come in.

1 Thessalonians 4:13
> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who have fallen asleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts must be understood according to God's word, not according to human ideas.

Key Truth

Being fascinated with spiritual things is not the same as understanding them.

II. LED ASTRAY TO MUTE IDOLS

1 Corinthians 12:2 — When You Were Gentiles

“You know that when you were Gentiles, you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led.”
Paul reminds them of their past.
“When you were Gentiles.”
Before they knew Christ, they worshiped idols.
“You were led astray to mute idols.”
The idols were **mute.**
They could not speak.
They could not hear.
They could not help.
“However you were led.”
In pagan worship, people were sometimes swept away by wild excitement, frenzy, and strange experiences.
They thought these experiences proved they were in touch with the gods.
Paul is warning them.
Powerful spiritual experiences are not automatically from God.
The Corinthians had once been carried away by false spiritual experiences.
They needed to be careful not to judge spiritual gifts by how dramatic they seemed.

Cross References

Psalm 115:5
> They have mouths but cannot speak, and eyes but cannot see.

Habakkuk 2:18
> What good is an idol carved by a craftsman? What good is a metal image that teaches lies? The one who made it trusts in his own creation—a god that cannot even speak!

1 Thessalonians 1:9
> For people everywhere are telling how you welcomed us, and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God,

Spiritual Principle

Not every powerful spiritual experience comes from God.

Key Truth

Idols are silent.
The living God speaks.

III. “JESUS IS LORD”

1 Corinthians 12:3 — The Test of the Spirit

“Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, “Jesus be cursed,” and no one can say, “Jesus is Lord,” except by the Holy Spirit.”

Paul gives the most basic test of true spiritual activity.
What does it say about Jesus?
“No one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus be cursed.’”
Bible students are not sure exactly where this phrase came from.
It may have been said by unbelievers who opposed Christ.
It may have been said by someone claiming to speak in a spiritual trance.
Either way, Paul's point is clear.
The Holy Spirit would never lead anyone to curse Jesus.
“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”
Anyone can say the words.
But to confess from the heart that Jesus is Lord requires the work of the Holy Spirit.
This was the earliest Christian confession.
In a world where people said, **“Caesar is Lord,”** Christians said, **“Jesus is Lord.”**
This verse also means something very important for the Corinthians.
Every true believer has the Holy Spirit.
The Spirit is not only for those with dramatic gifts.

Cross References

Romans 10:9
> If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.

1 John 4:2
> This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: every spirit that declares that Jesus Christ has come in a human body is from God.

Philippians 2:11
> and every tongue will declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Spiritual Principle

The true test of the Spirit is whether Jesus is honored as Lord.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Every believer who truly confesses Jesus as Lord has the Holy Spirit.

IV. DIFFERENT GIFTS, THE SAME SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 12:4 — Variety and Unity

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.”
Paul now begins to explain the variety of gifts.
“There are different kinds of gifts.”
The word Paul uses for **gifts** comes from the word for **grace.**
These are grace gifts.
They are given freely.
No one earns them.
“But the same Spirit.”
Every gift comes from the same source.
The Holy Spirit is the giver.

So no one can boast about his gift.
And no one should look down on another's gift.
They all come from the same Spirit.

Cross References

Romans 12:6
We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.
Ephesians 4:11
Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.
1 Peter 4:10
Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Spiritual Principle

Every spiritual gift is a gift of grace from the same Spirit.

Key Truth

A gift is not a reward.
It is grace.

V. DIFFERENT MINISTRIES, THE SAME LORD

1 Corinthians 12:5 — Ways of Serving

“There are different kinds of ministries, but the same Lord.”
Paul adds a second description.
“There are different kinds of ministries.”
The word means **service.**
Gifts are given to be used in serving others.
“But the same Lord.”
Every way of serving is done for the same Lord—Jesus Christ.
Some serve by teaching.
Some serve by helping.
Some serve by leading.
Some serve quietly behind the scenes.
But all serve the same Master.

Cross References

Romans 12:7
If your gift is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach.
Ephesians 4:11
Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.

Ephesians 4:12
Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Spiritual Principle

Every gift is meant for service, and every servant serves the same Lord.

VI. DIFFERENT ACTIVITIES, THE SAME GOD

1 Corinthians 12:6 — God Works in All

“And there are different kinds of activities, but it is the same God who works all things in all people.”
Paul adds a third description.
“There are different kinds of activities.”
The word means **workings** or the results of power.
“But it is the same God who works all things in all people.”
God is the One working through every gift.
Notice something beautiful in verses 4 through 6.
The same Spirit.
The same Lord.
The same God.
Paul mentions the Spirit, the Son, and the Father.
The one God, in three Persons, is at work in the gifts of the church.
The unity of God is the foundation for the unity of the church.

Cross References

Ephesians 1:11
In Him we have also received an inheritance. We were chosen ahead of time according to the plan of God, who works out everything to fit His purpose and will.
Philippians 2:13
For it is God who is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases Him.
Ephesians 4:6
There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

Spiritual Principle

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together in the gifts of the church.

Key Truth

The variety in the church reflects the variety in God.
The unity in the church reflects the unity of God.

VII. FOR THE COMMON GOOD

1 Corinthians 12:7 — To Each One

“But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
This verse gives two key truths.
First, every believer has a gift.
“To each one is given.”
Not just the leaders.
Not just the gifted speakers.
Every believer has been given some way in which the Spirit shows Himself.
Second, gifts are for others.
“For the common good.”
Gifts are not given to make us look important.
They are given to help the whole church.
The Corinthians were using their gifts to show off.
Paul reminds them that gifts are meant to serve.

Cross References

1 Peter 4:10
> Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.

Romans 12:6
> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Ephesians 4:12
> Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer has a gift, and every gift is for the good of others.

Application

What gift has God given you?
How are you using it to serve others?

VIII. WISDOM AND KNOWLEDGE

1 Corinthians 12:8 — The Word of Wisdom and Knowledge

“For to one is given through the Spirit the word of wisdom, to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit,”
Paul now gives examples of the Spirit's gifts.
The word of wisdom.
This is the Spirit-given ability to speak wisely, applying God's truth to real situations.
The word of knowledge.
This is the Spirit-given ability to understand and explain God's truth.

Notice again:
“Through the Spirit” and “by the same Spirit.”
Paul keeps repeating that every gift comes from the same source.
Remember that the Corinthians were proud of their wisdom and knowledge.
Paul reminds them that even these are gifts, not achievements.

Cross References

Isaiah 11:2
The Spirit of the LORD will rest on Him—the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and strength, the Spirit of knowledge and of respect for the LORD.
Colossians 2:3
In Him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.
James 1:5
If any of you lacks wisdom, ask God, who gives generously to everyone without finding fault, and He will give it to you.

Spiritual Principle

True wisdom and knowledge are gifts from God's Spirit.

IX. FAITH AND HEALING

1 Corinthians 12:9 — By the Same Spirit

“to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the same Spirit,”
Faith.
Every believer has saving faith.
But Paul is speaking here of a special gift of faith.
This is an unusual confidence in God to do great things.
It is the kind of faith that trusts God for the impossible.
Gifts of healing.
Notice that Paul says **gifts**, plural.
God may heal in different ways and at different times.
In the New Testament, the apostles and others healed the sick in Jesus' name.
Healing is always God's work, not the healer's power.

Cross References

James 5:15
The prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well, and the Lord will raise him up. If he has sinned, he will be forgiven.
Mark 16:18
they will pick up snakes with their hands, and if they drink anything deadly, it will not hurt them. They will place their hands on the sick, and the sick will get well.
Acts 3:6
But Peter said, “I don't have silver or gold, but I give you what I have. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, get up and walk!”

Spiritual Principle

God is able to do far more than we can imagine, and He works through His people to show His power and care.

X. MIRACLES, PROPHECY, TONGUES

1 Corinthians 12:10 — More Gifts of the Spirit

“to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues.”
Paul continues the list.
The working of miracles.
Acts of God's power beyond the natural.
Prophecy.
Speaking a message from God to build up, encourage, and comfort the church.
Discerning of spirits.
The ability to tell whether a message or activity comes from God, from the human spirit, or from evil spirits.
Various kinds of tongues.
Speaking in languages the speaker has not learned.
The interpretation of tongues.
The ability to explain what was spoken in tongues so the church can understand.
Notice that Paul puts tongues and interpretation **last.**
The Corinthians placed tongues first.
Paul does not despise tongues, but he gently shows they are not the most important gift.

Cross References

Acts 2:4
> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

1 John 4:1
> Dear friends, do not believe every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they come from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Acts 19:6
> When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.

Spiritual Principle

Every gift has a place, but no gift should be exalted above others for show.

Key Truth

Churches today differ on whether some of these gifts continue as they did in the early church.
But all agree that every gift must be used in love and for the good of others.

XI. AS HE WILLS

1 Corinthians 12:11 — One and the Same Spirit

“But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.”
Paul sums up the list.
“One and the same Spirit works all these things.”
All these different gifts come from one Spirit.
“Distributing to each one individually.”
The Spirit gives gifts personally to each believer.
“As He wills.”
The Spirit decides who receives which gift.
We do not choose our gifts.
We cannot demand a certain gift.
This means no one can boast about having a certain gift.
And no one should feel inferior for not having it.
The Spirit gives as He pleases, and He makes no mistakes.
Notice also that the Spirit **wills.**
The Holy Spirit is not just a force or power.
He is a Person who makes choices.

Cross References

Romans 12:6
> We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.

Hebrews 2:4
> God also confirmed it with signs, wonders, many kinds of miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit that He handed out as He chose.

John 3:8
> The wind blows wherever it wants. You hear its sound, but you don't know where it comes from or where it is going. It is the same with everyone born of the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit chooses which gifts each believer receives.

Application

Be content with the gift God has given you.
Use it faithfully, and rejoice in the gifts of others.

XII. ONE BODY, MANY MEMBERS

1 Corinthians 12:12 — So Also Is Christ

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so also is Christ.”
Now Paul introduces his great picture.

“The body is one and has many members.”
A human body is one body.
But it has many parts.
Hands, feet, eyes, ears, heart, lungs.
Each one is different.
But together they make one body.
“So also is Christ.”
Notice that Paul does not say, **“So also is the church.”**
He says, **“So also is Christ.”**
The church is so closely joined to Christ that it is called His body.
He is the head.
Believers are the members.

Cross References

Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
Romans 12:5
In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.
Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Spiritual Principle

The church is one body made up of many different members, joined together in Christ.

Key Truth

Unity does not mean being the same.
It means many different parts working together.

XIII. BAPTIZED INTO ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:13 — One Spirit

“For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”
How did believers become part of this body?
“In one Spirit we were all baptized into one body.”
When a person comes to Christ, the Holy Spirit places them into the body of Christ.
Notice the word **“all.”**
Every believer has experienced this.
Not just a special few.
“Whether Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.”
The body of Christ breaks down every wall.
Race does not divide it.
Social class does not divide it.
“And we were all made to drink of one Spirit.”

Every believer has received the same Spirit, like drinking from the same fountain.
The Spirit is not the property of one group in the church.
He lives in all.

Cross References

Galatians 3:28
There is no longer Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female. You are all one in Christ Jesus.
Ephesians 4:5
There is one Lord, one faith, and one baptism.
Colossians 3:11
In this new life, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, uncivilized person, slave, or free person. Christ is all, and He is in all.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer has received the Spirit and been placed into the one body of Christ.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit does not create first-class and second-class Christians.

XIV. NOT ONE MEMBER, BUT MANY

1 Corinthians 12:14 — The Need for Variety

“For the body is not one member, but many.”
This is a simple statement.
But it is very important.
“The body is not one member, but many.”
A body made of only one part would not be a body.
Variety is not a problem.
It is part of God's design.
The Corinthians wanted everyone to have the same impressive gift.
But God never intended that.
He made the church with many different members on purpose.

Cross References

Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.
Ephesians 1:23
The church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.

Spiritual Principle

Diversity in the church is God's design, not a mistake.

XV. IF THE FOOT SHOULD SAY

1 Corinthians 12:15 — “I Am Not a Hand”

“If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body,” it does not stop being part of the body.”
Paul now pictures the body parts talking.
The foot says, “I am not a hand.”
The foot compares itself to the hand.
The hand seems more useful, more skilled, more noticed.
So the foot feels it does not belong.
Paul says:
“It does not stop being part of the body.”
This speaks to believers who feel inferior.
Some in Corinth did not have the impressive gifts.
They felt left out.
They wondered whether they even belonged.
Paul says your feelings do not change the truth.
You belong.

Cross References

Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.
Ephesians 4:25
So stop telling lies. Each of you must speak the truth to your neighbor, because we are all parts of the same body.

Spiritual Principle

Comparing ourselves to others leads us to doubt our place in the body.

Application

Stop comparing your gift with someone else's.
You are part of the body because God placed you there.

XVI. IF THE EAR SHOULD SAY

1 Corinthians 12:16 — “I Am Not an Eye”

“And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I am not part of the body,” it does not stop being part of the body.”
Paul repeats the point with another example.
The ear says, “I am not an eye.”
The eye seems more important, more beautiful, more central.

But the ear is just as much a part of the body.
Paul repeats it because the feeling of not belonging is so common.
Many believers think, **“My gift doesn't matter.”**
“I'm not needed.”
“Others are more important.”
God says, **“You belong.”**

Cross References

Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.
1 Corinthians 12:21
The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don't need you.” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don't need you.”

Spiritual Principle

Your place in the body does not depend on how important your gift seems.

Key Truth

Feeling unimportant does not make you unimportant.

XVII. IF THE WHOLE BODY WERE AN EYE

1 Corinthians 12:17 — Where Would the Hearing Be?

“If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the sense of smell?”
Paul now uses humor.
Imagine a body that was nothing but one giant eye.
It could see.
But it could not hear.
It could not smell.
It could not walk or speak.
It would be a strange and useless body.
The same is true of the church.
If everyone had the same gift, the church could not function.
The Corinthians wanted everyone to speak in tongues.
But a church of only tongues would be like a body made only of tongues.
God's design needs variety.

Cross References

Psalm 94:9
Does the One who made the ear not hear? Does the One who formed the eye not see?

Ephesians 4:16

From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.

Romans 12:4

Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,

Spiritual Principle

The church needs every kind of gift to function as God designed.

XVIII. JUST AS HE PLEASED

1 Corinthians 12:18 — God Placed Each One

“But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased.”
Here is the answer to every feeling of inferiority and every attitude of pride.
“God has set the members.”
God placed each part where He wanted it.
“Each one of them.”
Not one part is there by accident.
“Just as He pleased.”
God was pleased to put you where you are.
If you feel unimportant, remember that God placed you there on purpose.
If you feel superior, remember that you did not choose your place.
God did.

Cross References

Psalm 139:14

I praise You because You made me in an amazing and wonderful way. Your works are wonderful, and I know it very well.

Ephesians 1:11

In Him we have also received an inheritance. We were chosen ahead of time according to the plan of God, who works out everything to fit His purpose and will.

Romans 9:21

Doesn't the potter have the right to make from the same lump of clay one pot for special use and another for ordinary use?

Spiritual Principle

God has placed every believer in the body exactly where He wants them.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Your place in the church is not an accident; it is an appointment.

XIX. WHERE WOULD THE BODY BE?

1 Corinthians 12:19 — All One Member

“And if they were all one member, where would the body be?”
Paul asks another simple question.
If every part were the same, there would be no body at all.
Just a pile of identical parts.
A body needs different parts working together.
The church is the same.
Sameness does not make unity.
Different gifts, working together in love, make the body.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.
Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
1 Corinthians 12:14
For the body is not made up of one part, but of many.

Spiritual Principle

Without variety, there would be no body.

XX. MANY MEMBERS, ONE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:20 — The Balance

“But now there are many members, yet one body.”
Paul sums up the first half of his picture.
“Many members.”
Variety.
“Yet one body.”
Unity.
This is God's design for His church.
Not uniformity.
Not division.
Unity in diversity.

Cross References

Romans 12:5
In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.
Ephesians 4:4
There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called.

Colossians 3:15
Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since you were called to peace as members of one body. And be thankful.

Spiritual Principle

God's church is many members joined as one body.

Key Truth

The church is not a crowd of individuals.
It is a body.

XXI. “I HAVE NO NEED OF YOU”

1 Corinthians 12:21 — The Eye and the Hand

“The eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you,” nor again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.””
Now Paul turns to those who feel superior.
The eye says to the hand, “I have no need of you.”
The head says to the feet, “I have no need of you.”
The eye and the head seem important and impressive.
They might think they could get along without the hand and the feet.
But they cannot.
The eye can see something, but it cannot pick it up.
The head can decide where to go, but it cannot get there without feet.
Some in Corinth looked down on those with less visible gifts.
Paul says they need them.

Cross References

Romans 12:5
In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.
Ephesians 4:16
From Him the whole body is joined and held together by every supporting part. As each part does its work, the body grows and builds itself up in love.
Genesis 2:18
Then the LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is right for him.”

Spiritual Principle

No believer can say to another, “I don't need you.”

Spiritual Warning

Pride makes us think we can do without others.
God made us to need each other.

XXII. THE WEAKER PARTS

1 Corinthians 12:22 — Indispensable

“On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”
Paul makes a surprising statement.
“The parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”
Think of the body.
The heart, the lungs, the brain, and other vital organs are hidden and delicate.
They seem weak.
But you cannot live without them.
The same is true in the church.
The quiet prayer warrior.
The faithful helper.
The one who serves behind the scenes.
These may seem weak or unimportant.
But the church cannot live without them.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 12:9
> But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.

Isaiah 40:29
> He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.

1 Corinthians 1:27
> But God chose the things the world thinks are foolish to shame the wise. God chose the things the world thinks are weak to shame the strong.

Spiritual Principle

The members who seem weakest are often the most necessary.

Application

Thank God for the quiet servants in your church.
Tell them how much they matter.

XXIII. GREATER HONOR

1 Corinthians 12:23 — Treated with Modesty

“And those parts of the body that we think less honorable, we give greater honor; and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty.”
Paul continues his picture.
Some parts of the body we consider less honorable.
So we cover them with clothing.
We give them special care and modesty.

In the same way, the church should give special honor and care to those members who might seem less important.
Instead of overlooking them, we should take extra care of them.

Cross References

1 Peter 3:7
> In the same way, husbands, live with your wives with understanding. Treat them with honor as the more delicate partner and as those who share with you the gift of life. Then nothing will stand in the way of your prayers.

1 Timothy 2:9
> In the same way, I want women to dress modestly and sensibly, with decency. Their beauty should not come from fancy hair, gold, pearls, or expensive clothes,

Genesis 3:7
> Then their eyes were opened, and they realized they were naked. So they sewed fig leaves together and made coverings for themselves.

Spiritual Principle

The church should give special care and honor to those who are easily overlooked.

XXIV. GOD ARRANGED THE BODY

1 Corinthians 12:24 — Honor to the Part That Lacked It

“But our presentable parts have no need of it. Instead, God has so arranged the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it,”
Paul explains God's purpose.
“Our presentable parts have no need of it.”
The parts of the body that are already attractive do not need special attention.
“God has so arranged the body.”
God Himself designed the body this way.
“Giving greater honor to the part that lacked it.”
God's way is to lift up the lowly.
He honors those the world overlooks.
This is how God works in His kingdom.
And this is how His church should work too.

Cross References

James 2:5
> Listen, my dear brothers and sisters: Hasn't God chosen people who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the kingdom He promised to those who love Him?

Luke 14:10
> But when you are invited, take the lowest place, so that when your host comes, he will say to you, “Friend, move up to a better place.” Then you will be honored in front of all the other guests.

1 Peter 5:5
> In the same way, you who are younger, submit to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Spiritual Principle

God gives greater honor to those the world overlooks.

Key Truth

In God's kingdom, the last are often first.

XXV. THE SAME CARE FOR ONE ANOTHER

1 Corinthians 12:25 — No Division in the Body

“so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another.”
Paul explains why God arranged the body this way.
“So that there may be no division in the body.”
The Corinthians were divided.
Over leaders.
Over food.
Over wealth.
Over gifts.
God's design was meant to prevent this.
“But that the members may have the same care for one another.”
In a healthy body, every part cares for every other part.
The hand protects the eye.
The feet carry the whole body.
The church should be like this.

Cross References

John 17:21
> I pray that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us, so that the world will believe that You sent Me.

Philippians 2:2
> Make my joy complete by thinking the same way, having the same love, and being one in spirit and purpose.

Romans 12:10
> Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Spiritual Principle

God designed the church for mutual care, not division.

Application

Who in your church needs your care this week?

XXVI. SUFFERING AND REJOICING TOGETHER

1 Corinthians 12:26 — All the Members

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice together.”
Paul describes how a healthy body works.
“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together.”
When you stub your toe, your whole body feels it.
You do not say, **“That's just my toe's problem.”**
In the church, when one believer suffers, the whole church should feel it.
“If one member is honored, all the members rejoice together.”
When one part of the body is honored, the whole body shares the joy.
In the church, when one believer is blessed, the others should rejoice, not be jealous.
This is real fellowship.
Shared pain.
Shared joy.

Cross References

Romans 12:15
Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep.
Hebrews 13:3
Remember those in prison as if you were in prison with them. Remember those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering.
Galatians 6:2
Carry one another's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

In the body of Christ, we share both suffering and joy.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

A healthy church weeps together and rejoices together.

XXVII. YOU ARE THE BODY OF CHRIST

1 Corinthians 12:27 — Individually Members

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”
Paul now applies the picture directly.
“Now you are the body of Christ.”
This is not just a nice illustration.
It is a spiritual reality.
The church in Corinth, with all its problems, was the body of Christ.
“And individually members of it.”

Each believer is a member.
Each one has a place.
Each one belongs.
The church is both **together** and **individual.**
We are one body, and we are each important members.

Cross References

Romans 12:5
In the same way, though we are many, we are one body in Christ, and each of us belongs to all the others.
Ephesians 1:23
The church is His body, the fullness of Him who fills everything in every way.
Ephesians 5:30
because we are parts of His body.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer is a member of Christ's body, with a place and a purpose.

Key Truth

You are not just going to church.
You are part of the church.

XXVIII. GOD HAS APPOINTED

1 Corinthians 12:28 — First, Second, Third

“And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, and various kinds of tongues.”
Paul now lists ministries and gifts God has placed in the church.
Notice that he numbers the first three.
First apostles.
Those sent by Christ to lay the foundation of the church.
Second prophets.
Those who spoke God's message to the church.
Third teachers.
Those who explain and apply God's word.
These three focus on the word of God.
They come first because the church is built on God's truth.
Then Paul lists other gifts.
Miracles and **gifts of healings.**
Helps—those who assist and support others.
Administrations—those who guide and organize, like a pilot steering a ship.
Various kinds of tongues.
Once again, tongues come last.
Notice also that **helps** and **administrations** are listed among the gifts of the Spirit.
Quiet, practical service is a spiritual gift too.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:11
Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.
Romans 12:7
If your gift is serving, then serve. If it is teaching, then teach.
Ephesians 2:20
You are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the cornerstone.

Spiritual Principle

God has appointed different ministries in the church, with the ministry of His word at the foundation.

Key Truth

Helping and organizing are spiritual gifts.
Behind-the-scenes service is God's work too.

XXIX. ARE ALL APOSTLES?

1 Corinthians 12:29 — Not Everyone Has the Same Gift

“Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles?”
Paul asks a series of questions.
Each one expects the answer **“No.”**
Are all apostles? No.
Are all prophets? No.
Are all teachers? No.
Do all work miracles? No.
God does not give every gift to every believer.
This is His design.
No believer should expect to have every gift.
And no believer should demand that others have the same gift as he does.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:11
Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers.
Romans 12:4
Just as each of us has one body with many parts, and these parts do not all have the same job,
James 3:1
My brothers and sisters, not many of you should become teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.

Spiritual Principle

God gives different gifts to different believers, and no one has them all.

XXX. DO ALL SPEAK WITH TONGUES?

1 Corinthians 12:30 — Not All Gifts for All

“Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret?”
Paul continues his questions.
Do all have gifts of healing? No.
Do all speak with tongues? No.
Do all interpret? No.
This was especially important in Corinth.
Some believed that speaking in tongues was the sign of being truly spiritual.
They expected everyone to do it.
Paul says no.
Not every believer speaks in tongues.
And that does not make anyone less spiritual.
The Spirit gives as He wills.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:26
> What then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a song, a teaching, a revelation, a message in another language, or an interpretation. Everything must be done to build up the church.

Mark 16:17
> These signs will go with those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons, and they will speak in new languages.

Acts 10:46
> For they heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Then Peter said,

Spiritual Principle

No single gift is the test of whether a person is truly spiritual.

Key Truth

The mark of the Spirit's presence is confessing Jesus as Lord, not having a certain gift.

XXXI. A STILL MORE EXCELLENT WAY

1 Corinthians 12:31 — Desire the Greater Gifts

“But earnestly desire the greater gifts. And yet I will show you a still more excellent way.”
Paul ends the chapter with two statements.
“But earnestly desire the greater gifts.”
Some gifts do more to build up the church.
In Chapter 14, Paul will explain that gifts like prophecy, which build up others through understandable words, are greater than tongues without interpretation.
The church should eagerly desire gifts that help others most.
Then Paul turns to something even more important:

“And yet I will show you a still more excellent way.”
What could be better than the greatest gifts?
Love.
In Chapter 13, Paul will describe it.
Gifts without love are nothing.
Love is the way all gifts must be used.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:1
Follow the way of love, and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy.
1 Corinthians 14:12
It is the same with you. Since you are eager for spiritual gifts, try to excel in the gifts that build up the church.
Colossians 3:14
And over all these, put on love, which ties everything together in perfect unity.

Spiritual Principle

Love is the more excellent way that makes every gift worthwhile.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Gifts are the tools; love is the way they must be used.

XXXII. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 12

1. The Spirit Gives Diverse Gifts

“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit.”

Principle:

Every ability or gift in the church comes from the Holy Spirit for the good of all, not for personal glory.

2. Unity in Diversity

“There are many members, yet one body.”

Principle:

Just as a body has many parts with different functions, so the church thrives when every believer plays their role.

3. No One Is Unnecessary

“The parts of the body that seem weaker are indispensable.”

Principle:

Even the weakest or least visible members are vital, and God gives them honor.

4. Shared Suffering and Joy

“If one member suffers, all the members suffer together.”

Principle:

When one believer suffers, all suffer; when one is honored, all rejoice.

5. God Appoints Ministries

“God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers.”

Principle:

Apostles, prophets, teachers, and others serve by divine appointment.

6. The More Excellent Way

“I will show you a still more excellent way.”

Principle:

Spiritual gifts are important, but love is the greatest foundation for all ministry.

XXXIII. THE GIFTS LISTED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12

Paul names many gifts in this chapter.

Gifts of Speaking and Understanding

- The word of wisdom.
- The word of knowledge.
- Prophecy.
- Teaching.
- Discerning of spirits.

Gifts of Power

- Faith.
- Gifts of healing.
- The working of miracles.

Gifts of Tongues

- Various kinds of tongues.
- The interpretation of tongues.

Gifts of Service and Leadership

- Apostles.
- Helps.

- Administrations.

Other Lists

Paul gives other lists of gifts in Romans 12 and Ephesians 4, and Peter mentions gifts in 1 Peter 4.
No single list includes every gift.

A Note on Gifts Today

Faithful churches differ on whether gifts such as tongues, prophecy, and healing continue in the same way today as in the early church.
All agree that every gift comes from the Spirit, must honor Jesus as Lord, and must be used in love to build up the church.

Key Truth

Every gift comes from the same Spirit, serves the same Lord, and is empowered by the same God.

XXXIV. LESSONS FROM THE HUMAN BODY

Paul's picture of the body teaches many lessons.

The Body Is One

All the parts belong to one body.

The Body Has Many Parts

Variety is God's design.

Every Part Belongs

The foot is still part of the body, even if it is not a hand.

Every Part Is Needed

The eye cannot say to the hand, **“I have no need of you.”**

The Weakest Parts Are Vital

Hidden, delicate parts are necessary for life.

God Arranged the Body

God placed every part just as He pleased.

The Parts Care for Each Other

When one part hurts, the whole body hurts.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The body works best when every part does its job and cares for every other part.

XXXV. TWO WRONG ATTITUDES

Paul's picture corrects two opposite problems in the church.

Feeling Inferior

“Because I am not a hand, I am not part of the body.”
Some believers think their gift does not matter.
They compare themselves to others and feel left out.
God's answer: **You belong, and you are needed.**

Feeling Superior

“I have no need of you.”
Some believers think their gift makes them more important.
They look down on others.
God's answer: **You need every part, and the weakest are indispensable.**

Key Truth

Both pride and self-pity forget that God placed every member in the body just as He pleased.

XXXVI. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 12 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Is Lord

“No one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.”

Jesus Is the One We Serve

“There are different kinds of ministries, but the same Lord.”

The Church Is the Body of Christ

“Now you are the body of Christ.”

Jesus Unites His People

Jews and Greeks, slaves and free, are one body in Him.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit's greatest work is to lead people to confess Jesus as Lord and to join them together as His body.

XXXVII. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul write about spiritual gifts?
The Corinthians had asked about them.
Their gifts had become a source of pride and division.
Some gifts, especially tongues, were seen as signs of being more spiritual.

Question 2

How can we tell whether something is from the Holy Spirit?
The Spirit always leads people to honor Jesus as Lord.
He would never lead anyone to curse Jesus.

Question 3

Does every believer have the Holy Spirit?
Yes.
No one can truly say “Jesus is Lord” except by the Spirit.
All believers were baptized by one Spirit into one body.

Question 4

Does every believer have a spiritual gift?
Yes.
“To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit.”

Question 5

What are spiritual gifts for?
They are given **“for the common good.”**
They are meant to serve others and build up the church, not to bring glory to ourselves.

Question 6

Who decides which gifts a person receives?
The Holy Spirit.
He gives to each one **“as He wills.”**

Question 7

What do verses 4–6 teach about God?
The Spirit, the Lord, and God are all at work in the gifts.
The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together.

Question 8

Why does Paul compare the church to a body?
A body is one, yet it has many different parts.
Each part is needed.
This shows how the church should work together in unity.

Question 9

What should a believer do who feels his gift is unimportant?
Remember that God placed him in the body just as He pleased.
He belongs, and he is needed.

Question 10

What should a believer do who feels his gift makes him superior?
Remember that he cannot say to anyone, **“I have no need of you.”**
The weaker parts are indispensable.

Question 11

Do all believers speak in tongues?
No.
Paul's questions in verses 29–30 show that not every believer has the same gift.
No single gift proves that someone is truly spiritual.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 12 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 12 should cause believers to live:

- Confessing Jesus as Lord.
- Discovering and using their gifts.
- Serving for the good of others.
- Content with the gifts God has given.
- Valuing every member of the church.
- Honoring those who are easily overlooked.
- Suffering and rejoicing with one another.
- Seeking the more excellent way of love.

XXXVIII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 12 asks several important questions.

Do I Confess Jesus as Lord?

Is He truly Lord of my life?

What Gift Has God Given Me?

Am I using it for the good of others?

Am I Comparing Myself to Others?

Do I feel left out because I do not have someone else's gift?

Do I Look Down on Anyone?

Is there someone I treat as if I do not need them?

Do I Honor the Overlooked?

Who in my church needs encouragement and honor?

Do I Feel the Pain of Others?

Am I weeping with those who weep?

Do I Rejoice When Others Are Blessed?

Or am I jealous?

Am I Walking in the Way of Love?

Is love guiding how I use my gifts?

XXXIX. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Every Member Matters”

In many churches, a few people do most of the work.
Others sit and watch.
Some think, **“I don't have anything to offer.”**
Others think, **“They need me more than I need them.”**
But Paul's picture changes everything.
The church is a body.
And in a body, every member matters.
The one who preaches and the one who prays.
The one who leads and the one who helps.
The one who is seen and the one who is hidden.
All are placed by God.
All are needed.
All are honored.
This creates a powerful principle.
No believer is too small to matter.
No believer is too important to need others.

Principle:

God has placed you in the body on purpose, and the body needs you.

XL. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 12 was written to a church rich in gifts but poor in unity.
Some were proud of their gifts.
Some felt they had nothing to offer.
Some looked down on others.
And the body of Christ was being torn apart.
Paul reminded them of the truth.
Every believer has the Spirit.
Every believer has a gift.
Every gift comes from the same God.
Every member belongs to the same body.
And every member is needed.
1 Corinthians 12 therefore reminds us:
Never use your gift to show off.
Never think your gift doesn't matter.
Never say to another believer, **“I don't need you.”**
Never forget the overlooked members of the body.
Never use any gift without love.
The church does not need a few gifted stars.
It needs:
Every member serving.
Every gift used for the common good.
Every person honored.
And love guiding everything.
The same Spirit still calls us:
Tell people that Jesus is Lord.
Tell people that the Spirit gives gifts to every believer.
Tell people that there is a place for them in the body of Christ.
Tell people that in Christ, they belong.
And as you serve:
Use your gift.
Honor others.
Share their burdens and joys.
Walk in love.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the gift of Your Holy Spirit.
Thank You that by Your Spirit we can confess that Jesus is Lord.
Thank You that You have given gifts to every believer.
Thank You that the same Spirit, the same Lord, and the same God are at work in all of us.
Thank You that You have placed us in the body of Christ just as You pleased.
Thank You that we belong to one another.
Forgive us when we have used our gifts to draw attention to ourselves.
Forgive us when we have compared ourselves to others and felt we did not matter.
Forgive us when we have looked down on others and acted as if we did not need them.

Forgive us when we have overlooked the quiet members of Your body.
Help us discover the gifts You have given us.
Help us use them faithfully for the good of others.
Help us honor those who are easily forgotten.
Teach us to weep with those who weep and rejoice with those who rejoice.
Make Your church one body, united in love.
And show us the still more excellent way of love, so that every gift we use brings glory to You.
“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Now you are the body of Christ, and individually members of it.” — 1 Corinthians 12:27

Central Truth

The one Spirit gives different gifts to every believer for the good of the whole church, so that the many members, each needed and honored, may serve together as one body in Christ.

1 Corinthians 12 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that the one Spirit gives a variety of gifts to every believer for the common good, that the church is one body in Christ with many members who all belong and are all needed, and that even the greatest gifts must be used in the still more excellent way of love.

1 Corinthians Chapter 13 — The Greatest Gift: Love

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 13 is one of the most famous chapters in the Bible.
It is read at weddings.
It is quoted on cards and plaques.
It is loved by believers and unbelievers alike.
But Paul did not write it as a wedding poem.
He wrote it to a divided church.
In Chapter 12, Paul taught that the Spirit gives many different gifts to the body of Christ.
He ended that chapter with these words:
“And yet I will show you a still more excellent way.”
Chapter 13 is that more excellent way.
It is the way of **love.**
The Corinthians had gifts.
Tongues.
Prophecy.

Knowledge.
Faith.
But they were using those gifts with pride, jealousy, and selfishness.
They had the gifts of the Spirit without the fruit of the Spirit.
Paul shows them that without love, even the greatest gifts are worthless.
Then he paints a portrait of love.
Love is patient.
Love is kind.
Love does not envy or boast.
Every phrase gently exposes a problem in Corinth.
Finally, Paul shows that love will outlast every gift.
Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge belong to this present age.
One day they will no longer be needed.
But love will last forever.
The word Paul uses for love is **agape.**
It is not mainly a feeling.
It is a self-giving love that seeks the good of others, even at a cost.
It is the kind of love God showed us in Jesus Christ.
The chapter moves through four movements:

- Without Love, Gifts Are Nothing (verses 1–3).
- The Character of Love (verses 4–7).
- The Supremacy of Love (verses 8–12).
- The Greatest of All (verse 13).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 13 is:
Without love, every gift and sacrifice is worthless, but love—patient, kind, humble, and enduring—reflects the heart of God and will last forever.

I. A NOISY GONG

1 Corinthians 13:1 — The Tongues of Men and of Angels

“Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but do not have love, I have become as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”
Paul begins with the gift the Corinthians prized most.
“The tongues of men and of angels.”
Even if someone could speak every human language and even the language of heaven—
“But do not have love.”
Then all that speech is just noise.
“I have become as a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”
Corinth was famous for its bronze.
Gongs and cymbals were used in pagan temple worship to make loud, attention-getting noise.
They were loud.
But they had no meaning.
No melody.
No message.
Just noise.
That is what impressive spiritual speech becomes without love.
Notice that Paul speaks in the first person: **“I.”**

He applies this to himself first.

Cross References

John 13:34
I give you a new command: Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another.
1 Peter 4:8
Above all, keep loving one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.
Colossians 3:14
And over all these, put on love, which ties everything together in perfect unity.

Spiritual Principle

Words without love are only noise.

Application

Before you speak, ask: **“Am I saying this in love?”**

II. I AM NOTHING

1 Corinthians 13:2 — Prophecy, Knowledge, and Faith

“And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith so that I could move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.”
Paul now lists the greatest gifts imaginable.
The gift of prophecy.
Speaking God's message.
Understanding all mysteries and all knowledge.
Knowing everything there is to know about God's plans.
All faith so that I could move mountains.
Faith strong enough to do the impossible.
These are wonderful gifts.
But if they are exercised without love:
“I am nothing.”
Not, **“My gifts are nothing.”**
“I am nothing.”
A person may be highly gifted and spiritually empty.
The Corinthians measured spirituality by gifts.
God measures it by love.

Cross References

1 John 4:7
Dear friends, let us love one another, because love comes from God. Everyone who loves has been born of God and knows God.
1 Corinthians 8:1
Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.

Matthew 17:20

> He told them, “Because your faith is so small. I tell you the truth, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you.”

Spiritual Principle

Without love, even the greatest gifts leave a person spiritually empty.

Key Truth

God does not measure us by our gifts.
He measures us by our love.

III. IT PROFITS ME NOTHING

1 Corinthians 13:3 — Even Great Sacrifice

“And though I give away all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”
Paul goes even further.
Now he speaks of sacrifice.
“Though I give away all my goods to feed the poor.”
Giving away everything you own.
Surely that must be love?
“And though I give my body to be burned.”
Dying as a martyr.
Surely that must be love?
Not necessarily.
A person can give to be praised.
A person can sacrifice out of pride.
Even the greatest acts of giving and suffering can come from wrong motives.
“But do not have love, it profits me nothing.”
God looks at the heart behind the act.
Without love, even the greatest sacrifice gains nothing in God's eyes.

Cross References

Matthew 6:2

> So when you give to the needy, do not announce it with trumpets, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and on the streets, so that people will praise them. I tell you the truth, they have already received their full reward.

Proverbs 19:17

> Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for what he has done.

Matthew 19:21

> Jesus answered, “If you want to be complete, go, sell what you own, and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow Me.”

Spiritual Principle

God values the love behind our actions more than the size of our actions.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Gifts without love are noise.
Knowledge without love is nothing.
Sacrifice without love is loss.

IV. LOVE IS PATIENT AND KIND

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Love Does Not Envy or Boast

“Love is patient and kind. Love does not envy. Love does not boast, it is not arrogant.”
Now Paul describes what love looks like.
He does not define love with a dictionary.
He describes it in action.
Love is patient.
The word means **long-tempered.**
It puts up with people for a long time without losing its temper.
Love is kind.
It looks for ways to do good to others.
Patience holds back from harm.
Kindness reaches out to help.
Love does not envy.
It does not resent the gifts or blessings of others.
The Corinthians were jealous of each other's gifts.
Love does not boast.
It does not show off.
The Corinthians loved to show off their gifts.
It is not arrogant.
It is not **puffed up**—the same word Paul has used again and again for the Corinthians.
Every phrase in this description is a mirror held up to the church.

Cross References

Galatians 5:22
> But the fruit the Spirit produces is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness,

Proverbs 10:12
> Hatred stirs up fights, but love covers over every wrong.

James 3:14
> But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not brag about it or deny the truth.

Spiritual Principle

Love is shown in patience with others and kindness toward them.

Application

Who tests your patience?
How could you show that person kindness this week?

V. LOVE KEEPS NO RECORD OF WRONGS

1 Corinthians 13:5 — Not Rude, Not Selfish, Not Easily Angered

“It does not behave rudely, it does not seek its own way, it is not easily provoked, it keeps no record of wrongs.”
Paul continues his portrait.
It does not behave rudely.
Love has good manners.
It does not act in shameful or disrespectful ways.
The Corinthians were behaving rudely in worship and at the Lord's Supper.
It does not seek its own way.
Love is not selfish.
It looks for the good of others.
This is the heart of everything Paul taught in Chapters 8–10.
It is not easily provoked.
Love is not touchy or quick to get angry.
It keeps no record of wrongs.
The word was used for an accountant writing in a ledger.
Love does not keep a list of every wrong done to it.
It does not hold grudges.
It forgives and lets go.
This is how God treats us in Christ.
He has removed our sins as far as the east is from the west.

Cross References

Philippians 2:4
Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.
Proverbs 10:12
Hatred stirs up fights, but love covers over every wrong.
Psalm 103:12
As far as the east is from the west, so far has He removed our sins from us.

Spiritual Principle

Love forgives instead of keeping score.

Application

Is there someone whose wrongs you are still keeping a record of?
Ask God to help you tear up the list.

VI. LOVE REJOICES IN THE TRUTH

1 Corinthians 13:6 — Not in Unrighteousness

“Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth.”
Love is not blind to right and wrong.

“Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.”
Love does not take pleasure in sin.
It does not enjoy hearing about other people's failures.
It does not gossip with delight.
It does not cheer when others fall.
Remember that the Corinthians were proud while sin was tolerated in their midst.
That was not love.
“But rejoices in the truth.”
Love is glad when truth wins.
Love and truth go together.
True love does not excuse sin.
It rejoices when people walk in God's truth.

Cross References

2 John 1:4
It gave me great joy to find some of your children living in the truth, just as the Father commanded us.
3 John 1:4
Nothing gives me greater joy than to hear that my children are living in the truth.
Romans 12:9
Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, and hold tightly to what is good.

Spiritual Principle

True love never celebrates sin; it celebrates truth.

Key Truth

Love without truth becomes weak.
Truth without love becomes harsh.
God calls us to both.

VII. LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

1 Corinthians 13:7 — Believes, Hopes, Endures

“It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”
Paul finishes his portrait with four great phrases.
It bears all things.
The word can mean **covers** or **protects.**
Love does not expose others' faults unnecessarily.
It shields and supports.
It believes all things.
Love is not suspicious.
It gives people the benefit of the doubt.
This does not mean love is foolish or naive.
It means love looks for the best rather than assuming the worst.
It hopes all things.
Love does not give up on people.

Even when things look bad, love keeps hoping that God will work.
It endures all things.
Love keeps going.
It holds on through hardship, disappointment, and pain.

Cross References

1 Peter 4:8
Above all, keep loving one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.
Romans 8:25
But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently.
Colossians 1:11
We pray that you will be made strong with all the power that comes from His glorious might, so that you may have great endurance and patience with joy,

Spiritual Principle

Love never gives up on people.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Love covers, trusts, hopes, and endures—because that is how God loves us.

VIII. LOVE NEVER FAILS

1 Corinthians 13:8 — Gifts Will Cease

“Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will vanish away.”
Now Paul shows why love is greater than gifts.
“Love never fails.”
Love never falls down.
It never comes to an end.
It lasts forever.
But the gifts are different.
Prophecies will cease.
Tongues will be stilled.
Knowledge will vanish away.
These gifts are for this present age.
They are tools for building up the church while we wait for Christ.
One day they will no longer be needed.
The Corinthians were building their identity on gifts that will not last.
Paul calls them to build their lives on love, which will never end.

Cross References

Romans 8:35
Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, hardship, persecution, hunger, nakedness, danger, or violent death?
1 Peter 1:25
but the word of the Lord lasts forever. And this word is the good news that was announced to you.

Psalm 119:89
Your word, LORD, lasts forever. It stands firm in the heavens.

Spiritual Principle

Gifts are temporary, but love is eternal.

Key Truth

Build your life on what will last forever.

IX. WE KNOW IN PART

1 Corinthians 13:9 — Partial Knowledge

“For we know in part, and we prophesy in part.”
Paul explains why gifts are temporary.
“We know in part.”
Even our best knowledge of God is incomplete.
“We prophesy in part.”
Even true prophecy gives only part of the picture.
The Corinthians thought they knew so much.
Paul reminds them that all human knowledge, even Spirit-given knowledge, is partial.
This should make us humble.
No one has all the answers.
We see only part of God's great plan.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 8:2
If anyone thinks he knows something, he does not yet know as he ought to know.
Job 26:14
These are only the edges of His works. How faint is the whisper we hear of Him! Who then can understand the thunder of His power?
Romans 11:34
Who has ever known the mind of the Lord? Who has ever been His adviser?

Spiritual Principle

All our knowledge of God in this life is partial, and that should keep us humble.

X. WHEN THE PERFECT COMES

1 Corinthians 13:10 — The Partial Will Be Done Away

“But when the perfect comes, the partial will be done away.”
Paul looks ahead.
“When the perfect comes.”
The word **perfect** means **complete** or **mature.**
What is **“the perfect”**?

Bible students have understood this in different ways.
Most believe it refers to the return of Christ and the eternal state, when we will see Him face to face, as verse 12 describes.
Some believe it refers to the completion of the New Testament Scriptures.
Others believe it refers to the full maturity of the church.
Churches that differ about whether some gifts continue today often differ on this verse.
But all agree on Paul's main point.
“The partial will be done away.”
What is incomplete now will one day be replaced by what is complete.
Our partial knowledge will give way to full knowledge.

Cross References

Hebrews 8:13

> By calling this covenant “new,” God has made the first one old. And what is old and aging will soon disappear.

Revelation 21:4

> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, because the old things have passed away.

Philippians 3:12

> I do not mean that I have already reached the goal or am already perfect. But I keep pressing on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.

Spiritual Principle

What we have now is partial, but God will one day bring what is complete.

Key Truth

The best is yet to come.

XI. WHEN I WAS A CHILD

1 Corinthians 13:11 — Putting Away Childish Things

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. But when I became a man, I put away childish things.”
Paul uses an illustration.
A child speaks, thinks, and reasons like a child.
That is normal.
A child's speech is simple.
A child's understanding is limited.
But when a child grows up, he leaves those childish ways behind.
In the same way, our present gifts and knowledge belong to the childhood of the church.
When Christ returns, we will grow into full maturity.
There is also a gentle rebuke here.
The Corinthians were acting like children.
In Chapter 3, Paul called them **“infants in Christ.”**
Their pride, jealousy, and fascination with flashy gifts were childish.
Love is the mark of maturity.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:14
Then we will no longer be like children, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown around by every new teaching, by people's tricks and clever schemes to deceive.
Ephesians 4:15
Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow up in every way into Christ, who is the head.
Hebrews 5:14
But solid food is for the mature, who by constant practice have trained themselves to tell the difference between good and evil.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual maturity is shown by growing in love and putting away childish pride.

Application

What childish attitudes do you need to put away?

XII. FACE TO FACE

1 Corinthians 13:12 — Then I Will Know Fully

“For now we see through a glass dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I will know fully, even as I am fully known.”
Paul uses another picture.
“Now we see through a glass dimly.”
In Paul's day, mirrors were made of polished metal.
Corinth was famous for making them.
But even the best mirror gave only a blurry, unclear image.
That is how we see God now.
Truly, but not clearly.
“But then face to face.”
One day, we will see God directly.
No more blurry reflections.
Face to face, as Moses spoke with God.
“Now I know in part, but then I will know fully.”
Our knowledge will be complete.
“Even as I am fully known.”
God already knows us completely.
Every thought.
Every fear.
Every sin.
And He loves us anyway.
One day, we will know Him as fully as He now knows us.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 3:18
And all of us, with unveiled faces, see the Lord's glory as if in a mirror, and we are being changed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

1 John 3:2
Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been shown. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is.
Numbers 12:8
With him I speak face to face, plainly and not in riddles. He sees the form of the LORD. So why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?

Spiritual Principle

One day believers will see God face to face and know Him fully.

Key Truth

You are fully known by God.
And you are fully loved.

XIII. FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE

1 Corinthians 13:13 — The Greatest of These

“And now remain faith, hope, and love, these three. But the greatest of these is love.”
Paul ends with three things that remain.
Gifts will pass away.
But these three remain.
Faith—trusting God.
Hope—confidently waiting for what God has promised.
Love—giving ourselves to God and to others.
All three are essential.
But Paul says:
“The greatest of these is love.”
Why is love the greatest?
When we see God face to face, faith will become sight.
When we receive what God promised, hope will be fulfilled.
But love will continue forever.
And most of all, love is the very nature of God.
God is not faith.
God is not hope.
But **God is love.**

Cross References

Galatians 5:6
For in Christ Jesus, being circumcised or not circumcised does not matter. What matters is faith working through love.
Colossians 1:4
because we have heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and of the love you have for all God's people—
1 John 4:8
Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love.

Spiritual Principle

Love is the greatest because it will last forever and because God is love.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Faith looks up to God, hope looks ahead to glory, and love reaches out to others—and love will never end.

XIV. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 13

1. Love Is Essential

Without love, I am a noisy gong, I am nothing, and I gain nothing.

Principle:

Spiritual gifts, great faith, generosity, or even sacrifice are worthless without love.

2. Love's Qualities

“Love is patient and kind.”

Principle:

True love is patient, kind, humble, forgiving, and rejoices in the truth.

3. Love Outlasts Gifts

“Love never fails.”

Principle:

Prophecy, tongues, and knowledge will one day fade, but love will endure forever.

4. Spiritual Maturity

“When I became a man, I put away childish things.”

Principle:

Growing in love is a mark of maturity, putting away childish pride and selfishness.

5. Our Hope of Fullness

“Then face to face.”

Principle:

Now we know in part, but one day we will know fully when we see Christ face to face.

6. The Greatest Gift

“The greatest of these is love.”

Principle:

Faith and hope are vital, but love surpasses them all, for love reflects the very heart of God.

XV. THE PORTRAIT OF LOVE

Verses 4–7 give fifteen descriptions of love.

What Love Does

- Love is patient.
- Love is kind.
- Love rejoices in the truth.
- Love bears all things.
- Love believes all things.
- Love hopes all things.
- Love endures all things.

What Love Does Not Do

- Love does not envy.
- Love does not boast.
- Love is not arrogant.
- Love does not behave rudely.
- Love does not seek its own way.
- Love is not easily provoked.
- Love keeps no record of wrongs.
- Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

Key Truth

Love is not mainly a feeling; it is a way of treating people.

XVI. A MIRROR FOR THE CORINTHIANS

Every quality of love in verses 4–7 answered a problem in Corinth.

They Were Impatient

They rushed ahead at the Lord's Supper.
Love is patient.

They Were Jealous

They envied one another's gifts.
Love does not envy.

They Were Proud

They were puffed up about their knowledge and leaders.
Love is not arrogant.

They Were Rude

They behaved shamefully in worship.
Love does not behave rudely.

They Were Selfish

They insisted on their rights even when it hurt others.
Love does not seek its own way.

They Took Each Other to Court

They kept score and fought over wrongs.
Love keeps no record of wrongs.

They Tolerated Sin

They were proud while sin went unchecked.
Love does not rejoice in unrighteousness.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

1 Corinthians 13 was not written to decorate a wedding; it was written to heal a church.

XVII. JESUS IS LOVE IN PERSON

One helpful way to read verses 4–7 is to put the name **Jesus** in place of the word **love.**
Jesus is patient and kind.
Jesus does not envy.
Jesus does not boast; He is not arrogant.
Jesus does not behave rudely; He does not seek His own way.
Jesus is not easily provoked; He keeps no record of wrongs.
Jesus does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices in the truth.
Jesus bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.
Jesus never fails.
Every line fits perfectly.
That is because Jesus is love in human form.
Now try reading it with your own name.
It does not fit so well.
That shows us how much we need Christ's love to grow in us.

Key Truth

The portrait of love is a portrait of Jesus, and the Spirit is shaping us to look like Him.

XVIII. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 13 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

Jesus Commanded Love

“Love one another. Just as I have loved you.”

Jesus Showed Perfect Love

Every quality of love in verses 4–7 is seen perfectly in Him.

Jesus Gave His Body in Love

He did what verse 3 describes, and He did it with perfect love.

Jesus Will Be Seen Face to Face

“Then face to face.”

Jesus Reveals That God Is Love

In Christ, we see the God whose very nature is love.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

We learn what love is by looking at Jesus.

XIX. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why does Chapter 13 come between Chapters 12 and 14?
Chapters 12 and 14 are about spiritual gifts.
Chapter 13 shows the more excellent way that all gifts must be used—love.

Question 2

What kind of love is Paul describing?
Paul uses the word agape.
It is a self-giving love that seeks the good of others, even at a cost.
It is the kind of love God showed in Christ.

Question 3

What does Paul mean by “a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal”?
Loud noise with no meaning.
Spiritual speech without love is just noise.

Question 4

Can someone give to the poor or suffer for their faith without love?
Yes.
People can give or sacrifice out of pride or a desire for praise.
Without love, it gains nothing before God.

Question 5

What is the difference between patience and kindness?
Patience holds back from harming others when they test us.
Kindness reaches out to do good to others.

Question 6

What does it mean that love “keeps no record of wrongs”?
Love does not hold grudges or keep a list of how others have hurt it.
It forgives, as God has forgiven us.

Question 7

Does “believes all things” mean love is gullible?
No.
It means love gives people the benefit of the doubt and looks for the best instead of assuming the worst.

Question 8

Why will prophecy, tongues, and knowledge pass away?
They are partial gifts for this present age.
When the perfect comes, they will no longer be needed.

Question 9

What is “the perfect” in verse 10?
Most Bible students believe it refers to Christ's return and the eternal state.
Some believe it refers to the completed Scriptures or the maturity of the church.
All agree that what is partial now will one day be made complete.

Question 10

What does it mean to see “through a glass dimly”?
Ancient mirrors gave a blurry image.
In this life, we know God truly but not fully.
One day we will see Him face to face.

Question 11

Why is love greater than faith and hope?
Faith will become sight, and hope will be fulfilled.
But love will continue forever.
And God Himself is love.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 13 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 13 should cause believers to live:

- Valuing love above every gift.
- Patient with difficult people.
- Looking for ways to be kind.
- Free from envy and boasting.
- Putting others first.
- Forgiving instead of keeping score.
- Never giving up on people.
- Looking forward to seeing Christ face to face.

XX. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 13 asks several important questions.

Am I Using My Gifts with Love?

Or am I just making noise?

Am I Patient?

With my family, my coworkers, and my church?

Am I Kind?

Do I look for ways to do good to others?

Do I Envy Others?

Am I glad when others are blessed?

Do I Insist on My Own Way?

Or do I put others first?

Do I Keep a Record of Wrongs?

Is there someone I need to forgive?

Have I Given Up on Someone?

Does love call me to keep hoping?

Am I Growing in Love?

Am I more loving this year than last year?

XXI. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Love Is the Measure”

The world measures people by many things.
Talent.
Intelligence.
Achievement.
Generosity.
The Corinthians measured people by spiritual gifts.
Who spoke in tongues?
Who had knowledge?
Who had the most impressive faith?
But God uses a different measure.
He asks one question:
Did you love?
A person may have every gift and still be nothing.
A person may have few gifts and still be rich in love.
At the end of life, gifts will not matter.
Achievements will fade.
Knowledge will pass away.
But love will remain.
This creates a powerful principle.
The most important thing about you is not what you can do.
It is how you love.

Principle:

At the end of all things, love is what will remain, because love is what God is.

XXII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 13 was written to a gifted church without love.
They spoke in tongues but were noisy.
They had knowledge but were puffed up.
They had faith but were divided.
They had everything except the one thing that mattered most.
Paul showed them the more excellent way.
Not more gifts.
Not more knowledge.
Love.
Patient love.
Kind love.
Humble love.
Forgiving love.
Enduring love.

The love of Jesus.
1 Corinthians 13 therefore reminds us:
Never think gifts are more important than love.
Never use knowledge without love.
Never give without love.
Never keep a record of wrongs.
Never give up on people.
The church does not need more noise.
It needs:
Patient people.
Kind people.
Humble people.
And people who love like Jesus.
The same love still calls us:
Tell people that God is love.
Tell people that He showed His love in Jesus.
Tell people that they are fully known and fully loved.
Tell people that one day they can see Him face to face.
And until that day:
Keep the faith.
Hold on to hope.
Walk in love.
For the greatest of these is love.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You that You are love.
Thank You that You showed Your love to us in Jesus Christ.
Thank You that He is patient and kind with us.
Thank You that He keeps no record of our wrongs.
Thank You that His love never fails.
Thank You that we are fully known by You and fully loved.
Forgive us when we have used our gifts without love.
Forgive us when we have been impatient and unkind.
Forgive us when we have envied others or boasted about ourselves.
Forgive us when we have insisted on our own way.
Forgive us when we have kept a record of wrongs and refused to forgive.
Pour Your love into our hearts by Your Holy Spirit.
Make us patient with those who test us.
Make us kind to those who need it.
Make us humble, forgiving, and full of hope.
Help us put away childish things and grow up in love.
Teach us to love as Jesus loves.
Keep us faithful until the day we see You face to face.
And may faith, hope, and love fill our lives, and may love be the greatest of them all.
“And now remain faith, hope, and love, these three. But the greatest of these is love.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“And now remain faith, hope, and love, these three. But the greatest of these is love.” — 1 Corinthians 13:13

Central Truth

Without love, every gift and sacrifice is worthless, but love—patient, kind, humble, and enduring—reflects the heart of God and will last forever.

1 Corinthians 13 in One Sentence

Paul shows a gifted but divided church that every gift and sacrifice is worthless without love, describes love as patient, kind, humble, forgiving, and enduring, and declares that while gifts will pass away, love will never fail, for the greatest of faith, hope, and love is love.

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 — Order in the Gifts of the Spirit

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 brings Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts to its practical conclusion.
In Chapter 12, Paul taught that the Spirit gives many gifts to one body.
In Chapter 13, he showed that every gift must be used in love.
Now, in Chapter 14, he shows what love looks like when the church gathers for worship.
The problem in Corinth was not a lack of gifts.
It was confusion.
Many people were speaking in tongues at the same time.
No one was interpreting.
Visitors could not understand anything.
Some were interrupting others.
The worship services had become noisy, disorderly, and self-centered.
Paul does not forbid tongues.
He says he speaks in tongues more than all of them.
But he gives a clear principle for public worship:
Everything must build up the church.
That is why prophecy is greater than tongues in the gathered church.
Prophecy speaks in words everyone can understand.
It strengthens, encourages, and comforts.
Tongues without interpretation may bless the speaker, but they leave everyone else in the dark.
Paul uses examples from music, from the battlefield, and from foreign languages to make his point.
Then he gives practical rules for orderly worship.
Speak one at a time.
Let others weigh what is said.

Let there be interpretation.
Because God is not a God of confusion, but of peace.
Paul ends with a simple summary that every church still needs:
“Let all things be done decently and in order.”
The chapter moves through seven movements:

- Prophecy Above Tongues (verses 1–5).
- Clarity in the Church (verses 6–12).
- Praying and Singing with Understanding (verses 13–19).
- The Purpose of Tongues and Prophecy (verses 20–25).
- Orderly Worship (verses 26–33).
- Order Regarding Women in the Assembly (verses 34–35).
- Final Instructions on Gifts (verses 36–40).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 14 is:
In public worship, love seeks to build up the whole church, so spiritual gifts must be used with clarity, understanding, and order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

I. PURSUE LOVE

1 Corinthians 14:1 — Especially That You May Prophesy

“Pursue love, and earnestly desire spiritual gifts, but especially that you may prophesy.”
Paul connects Chapter 13 to Chapter 14.
“Pursue love.”
The word means to chase after, to run hard toward something.
Love is not something we stumble into.
We pursue it.
“And earnestly desire spiritual gifts.”
Paul is not against gifts.
He wants the church to desire them.
But love must come first and guide everything.
“But especially that you may prophesy.”
Paul names the gift he wants them to desire most.
Why prophecy?
Because, as he will explain, it builds up the whole church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:31
So eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.
Romans 12:6
We have different gifts, according to the grace God has given each of us.
1 Thessalonians 5:20
Do not treat prophecies with contempt.

Spiritual Principle

Love comes first, and the best gifts are the ones that help others most.

Application

Pursue love as hard as you pursue anything else in life.

II. SPEAKING TO GOD

1 Corinthians 14:2 — Speaking Mysteries in the Spirit

“For the one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands him; however, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.”
Paul explains the gift of tongues.
“The one who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God.”
Tongues is directed to God.
It is a form of prayer and praise.
“For no one understands him.”
Without interpretation, the people around do not understand.
“However, in the Spirit he speaks mysteries.”
The words are spoken by the Spirit's help.
But they remain hidden from others.
Paul is not putting tongues down.
He is explaining its limits when the church gathers.

Cross References

Acts 2:4
> All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.

1 Corinthians 13:1
> If I speak in the languages of people and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

1 Corinthians 12:10
> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

Spiritual Principle

Words others cannot understand may bless God, but they cannot build up others.

III. STRENGTHENING, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND COMFORT

1 Corinthians 14:3 — Speaking to People

“But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.”
Now Paul describes prophecy.
Tongues speaks to God.

“The one who prophesies speaks to people.”
And prophecy has three purposes.
Strengthening—building people up in their faith.
Encouragement—urging them forward, calling them to action.
Comfort—consoling them in their sorrow and trouble.
This is the heart of true prophecy.
It is not mainly about predicting the future.
It is about speaking God's message in a way that helps people.

Cross References

Romans 14:19
So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.
1 Thessalonians 5:11
So encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.
Acts 15:32
Judas and Silas, who were prophets themselves, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers.

Spiritual Principle

Words from God strengthen, encourage, and comfort His people.

Application

Do your words build up, urge forward, and comfort those around you?

IV. BUILDING UP SELF OR THE CHURCH

1 Corinthians 14:4 — Edifying Others

“The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church.”
Paul makes a simple comparison.
“The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself.”
Tongues can strengthen the person who speaks.
That is not bad.
“But the one who prophesies builds up the church.”
Prophecy strengthens everyone.
In Chapter 13, Paul said love does not seek its own way.
So in the gathered church, love chooses the gift that helps others most.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 8:1
Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.
Ephesians 4:12
Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.

Jude 1:20
> But you, dear friends, build yourselves up in your most holy faith and pray in the Holy Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

In the gathered church, love chooses what builds up others over what builds up self.

Key Truth

The church gathers not just to be blessed, but to bless one another.

V. GREATER IS THE ONE WHO PROPHESIES

1 Corinthians 14:5 — Unless He Interprets

“I wish that you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied. For greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be built up.”
Paul shows that he values tongues.
“I wish that you all spoke with tongues.”
But he values prophecy even more.
“But even more that you prophesied.”
Why?
“Greater is the one who prophesies than the one who speaks in tongues.”
Then Paul adds an important exception:
“Unless he interprets.”
When tongues are interpreted, the church can understand and be built up.
Interpreted tongues become like prophecy.
The key test is always the same:
“So that the church may be built up.”

Cross References

Numbers 11:29
> But Moses replied, “Are you jealous for my sake? I wish all the LORD's people were prophets and that the LORD would put His Spirit on them!”

1 Corinthians 12:10
> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

1 Corinthians 14:39
> So, my brothers and sisters, eagerly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in other languages.

Spiritual Principle

The value of a gift in worship is measured by how much it builds up the church.

VI. WHAT GOOD WILL I BE?

1 Corinthians 14:6 — Revelation, Knowledge, Prophecy, Teaching

“Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what good will I be to you unless I bring some revelation, or knowledge, or prophecy, or teaching?”
Paul uses himself as an example.
Imagine Paul came to Corinth and spoke only in tongues.
“What good will I be to you?”
None.
They would not understand a word.
Paul would only help them if he brought something they could understand:

- Revelation.
- Knowledge.
- Prophecy.
- Teaching.

The church needs words that can be understood and applied.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 13:1
> If I speak in the languages of people and of angels, but do not have love, I am only a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.

2 Timothy 3:16
> All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Colossians 3:16
> Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

Spiritual Principle

God's people need clear words of truth they can understand and live by.

VII. THE PIPE AND THE HARP

1 Corinthians 14:7 — Distinct Sounds

“Even lifeless things, such as the pipe or the harp, if they make no distinction in the sounds, how will it be known what is being played?”
Paul uses an example from music.
A pipe or a harp makes sounds.
But if the notes are all jumbled together, no one can tell what song is being played.
Music needs distinct notes.
It needs order and clarity.
Otherwise it is just noise.
The same is true in worship.

Cross References

Psalm 33:2
Praise the LORD with the harp. Make music to Him on the ten-stringed lyre.
Psalm 150:3
Praise Him with the sound of the trumpet. Praise Him with the harp and lyre.
1 Chronicles 15:16
David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their relatives as singers to play joyful music on musical instruments—harps, lyres, and cymbals.

Spiritual Principle

Worship, like music, needs clarity and order to have meaning.

VIII. AN UNCERTAIN TRUMPET

1 Corinthians 14:8 — Who Will Prepare for Battle?

“For if the trumpet gives an uncertain sound, who will prepare for battle?”
Paul uses another example.
In ancient armies, the trumpet gave signals.
One call meant **attack.**
Another meant **retreat.**
If the trumpeter played a confusing sound, the soldiers would not know what to do.
The battle could be lost.
The church is in a spiritual battle.
It needs clear messages.
An unclear message leaves God's people unprepared.

Cross References

Numbers 10:9
When you go to war in your own land against an enemy who is attacking you, sound an alarm with the trumpets. Then the LORD your God will remember you and rescue you from your enemies.
Joel 2:1
Blow the trumpet in Zion! Sound the alarm on My holy mountain! Let everyone who lives in the land tremble, because the day of the LORD is coming. It is near.
Jeremiah 4:19
My heart, my heart! I am in agony! My heart is pounding, and I cannot keep silent, because I hear the sound of the trumpet and the alarm of war.

Spiritual Principle

God's people need a clear message to be ready for spiritual battle.

Application

Is the message you share with others clear?

IX. SPEAKING INTO THE AIR

1 Corinthians 14:9 — Intelligible Words

“So likewise you, unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will it be understood? You will just be speaking into the air.”
Paul applies his examples.
“Unless you speak intelligible words.”
Words must be understood.
“You will just be speaking into the air.”
Words that no one understands are wasted.
They go out into the air and disappear.
They do not reach anyone's heart or mind.

Cross References

Colossians 4:6
> Let your conversation always be full of grace and seasoned with salt, so that you will know how to answer everyone.

Ecclesiastes 5:2
> Do not be quick to speak, and do not be hasty in your heart to say anything before God. God is in heaven and you are on earth, so let your words be few.

Matthew 6:7
> When you pray, do not keep babbling on like the pagans, who think they will be heard because of their many words.

Spiritual Principle

Words that are not understood cannot help anyone.

X. MANY KINDS OF VOICES

1 Corinthians 14:10 — None Without Meaning

“There are, no doubt, many kinds of voices in the world, and none is without meaning.”
Paul now uses the example of languages.
There are many languages in the world.
Each one has meaning to those who speak it.
No language is meaningless.
But a language only communicates if both people understand it.

Cross References

Genesis 11:7
> Come, let Us go down and confuse their language so that they will not understand one another.

Acts 2:6
> When they heard this sound, a crowd came together in confusion, because each one heard them speaking in his own language.

Revelation 7:9
After this I looked, and there was a great crowd that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people, and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb.

Spiritual Principle

Language is meant to communicate, and communication requires understanding.

Key Truth

At Babel, God confused languages.
At Pentecost, He made the gospel understood in many languages.
One day, every language will praise Him together.

XI. A FOREIGNER

1 Corinthians 14:11 — Not Understanding the Meaning

“Therefore, if I do not understand the meaning of the voice, I will be a foreigner to the one who speaks, and he who speaks will be a foreigner to me.”
Paul describes the result of not understanding.
If someone speaks to me in a language I do not know, we are like strangers to each other.
We cannot connect.
We cannot share.
The church is supposed to be a family.
But tongues without interpretation made believers feel like foreigners in their own church.

Cross References

Acts 2:8
So how is it that each of us hears them speaking in our own native language?
Deuteronomy 28:49
The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, swooping down like an eagle—a nation whose language you will not understand,
Isaiah 33:19
You will no longer see those fierce people, those people with strange speech you could not understand, with a language you could not follow.

Spiritual Principle

Worship that others cannot understand turns family into strangers.

XII. EXCEL IN BUILDING UP

1 Corinthians 14:12 — Zealous for Spiritual Gifts

“So you also, since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, strive to excel in building up the church.”
Paul redirects the Corinthians' enthusiasm.
“Since you are zealous for spiritual gifts.”
They were eager for spiritual things.

That is good.
But Paul gives that eagerness a new direction:
“Strive to excel in building up the church.”
Do not seek to excel in being impressive.
Seek to excel in helping others.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:12
Their job is to equip God's people for the work of serving, so that the body of Christ will be built up.
1 Peter 4:10
Each of you has received a gift. Use it to serve one another, as good managers of God's grace in its many forms.
1 Corinthians 12:7
To each one the Spirit is shown in some way for the good of all.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual zeal should be aimed at building up others.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The goal is not to be the most spiritual person in the room, but to help everyone in the room grow.

XIII. PRAY THAT HE MAY INTERPRET

1 Corinthians 14:13 — The Need for Interpretation

“Therefore let the one who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret.”
Paul gives a practical instruction.
If someone has the gift of tongues, he should pray for the ability to interpret.
Then his gift can help others too.
This shows that the goal is never just personal experience.
It is always the good of the church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:10
to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.
1 Corinthians 14:27
If anyone speaks in another language, two or at most three should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret.
1 Corinthians 12:30
Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in other languages? Do all interpret?

Spiritual Principle

We should pray for ways to make our gifts useful to others.

XIV. MY UNDERSTANDING IS UNFRUITFUL

1 Corinthians 14:14 — Spirit and Mind

“For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful.”
Paul describes what happens when someone prays in a tongue.
“My spirit prays.”
There is real communication with God at a deep level.
“But my understanding is unfruitful.”
The mind is not engaged.
The person does not understand what he is saying.
And no one else benefits either.
Paul values both the spirit and the mind.
God made both.
Worship should involve both.

Cross References

Romans 8:26
> In the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit Himself prays for us with groans too deep for words.

1 Corinthians 2:14
> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.

Nehemiah 8:8
> They read from the Book of the Law of God, explaining it clearly and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.

Spiritual Principle

God wants worship that engages both the spirit and the mind.

XV. WITH THE SPIRIT AND WITH UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:15 — Praying and Singing

“What then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also. I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”
Paul gives his conclusion.
Not one or the other.
Both.
“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”
“I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also.”

True worship is not mindless emotion.
And it is not cold, heartless thinking.
It is heart and mind together.
The spirit gives fire.
The understanding gives light.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:19
speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord from your heart,

Colossians 3:16
Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

Psalm 47:7
For God is the King of all the earth. Sing praises to Him with understanding.

Spiritual Principle

True worship engages both the heart and the mind.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Worship needs both fire and light.

XVI. HOW CAN HE SAY “AMEN”?

1 Corinthians 14:16 — The One Who Is Unlearned

“Otherwise, if you bless with the spirit, how can the one who is unlearned say “Amen” at your giving of thanks, since he does not understand what you say?”
Paul thinks about the other person in the room.
“The one who is unlearned.”
This may be a visitor or a believer who does not have the gift.
When someone prays aloud, the others say **“Amen.”**
Amen means **“Yes, this is true. Let it be so.”**
But how can anyone say **“Amen”** to something he does not understand?
Worship is meant to be shared.
Others should be able to join in.

Cross References

Nehemiah 8:6
Ezra praised the LORD, the great God, and all the people lifted their hands and answered, “Amen! Amen!” Then they bowed down and worshiped the LORD with their faces to the ground.

Psalm 106:48
Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, forever and ever. Let all the people say, “Amen!” Praise the LORD!

1 Chronicles 16:36
Praise the LORD, the God of Israel, forever and ever. Then all the people said, “Amen,” and praised the LORD.

Spiritual Principle

Public worship should invite everyone to join in.

XVII. NOT EDIFIED

1 Corinthians 14:17 — Giving Thanks Well

“You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not edified.”
Paul is fair.
“You may be giving thanks well enough.”
The prayer in tongues may be sincere and good.
“But the other person is not edified.”
The problem is not the prayer.
The problem is that it does not help anyone else.
In public worship, love asks, **“Is this helping others?”**

Cross References

Romans 14:19
So let us work hard at doing what brings peace and what helps one another grow.
1 Corinthians 10:23
“Everything is allowed,” but not everything is good for us. “Everything is allowed,” but not everything builds others up.
1 Corinthians 8:1
Now about food offered to idols: We know that “we all have knowledge.” But knowledge makes people proud, while love builds people up.

Spiritual Principle

Something can be good in itself and still not be helpful to others.

XVIII. I SPEAK IN TONGUES MORE THAN ALL OF YOU

1 Corinthians 14:18 — Paul's Own Gift

“I thank my God, I speak in tongues more than all of you.”
This is a surprising statement.
The Corinthians might have thought Paul was against tongues because he did not have the gift.
Paul says the opposite.
“I speak in tongues more than all of you.”
And he thanks God for it.
Paul was not criticizing tongues from the outside.
He was teaching about its proper use from his own experience.

Cross References

Acts 2:4
All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages as the Spirit gave them the ability.
Acts 10:46
For they heard them speaking in other languages and praising God. Then Peter said,
Acts 19:6
When Paul placed his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other languages and prophesied.

Spiritual Principle

A gift can be valued and still be used with wisdom and restraint.

XIX. FIVE WORDS WITH UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:19 — Rather Than Ten Thousand

“Yet in the church I would rather speak five words with understanding, to teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue.”
Here is Paul's priority.
“In the church.”
When believers are gathered together—
“I would rather speak five words with understanding.”
Just five words that people understand—
“Than ten thousand words in a tongue.”
Paul uses the largest number in the Greek language.
Five clear words are worth more than ten thousand unclear ones.
Why?
“To teach others also.”
In church, Paul's goal was to help others.

Cross References

Proverbs 15:23
A person finds joy in giving a fitting reply. How good is a word spoken at the right time!
Nehemiah 8:8
They read from the Book of the Law of God, explaining it clearly and giving the meaning so that the people could understand what was being read.
Matthew 5:37
Simply let your “Yes” mean yes, and your “No” mean no. Anything more than this comes from the evil one.

Spiritual Principle

A few words that help others are worth more than many that help no one.

Application

Even a few words of truth and encouragement can make a great difference.

XX. MATURE IN UNDERSTANDING

1 Corinthians 14:20 — Children in Malice

“Brothers, do not be children in understanding; in malice be children, but in understanding be mature.”
Paul gives a gentle but direct word.
“Do not be children in understanding.”
The Corinthians were acting like children.
Fascinated by the flashy.
Focused on themselves.
Paul calls them to grow up.
“In malice be children.”
In evil, be as innocent as a little child.
“But in understanding be mature.”
Think like adults.
Understand the purpose of the gifts.

Cross References

Ephesians 4:14
> Then we will no longer be like children, tossed back and forth by the waves and blown around by every new teaching, by people's tricks and clever schemes to deceive.

Hebrews 5:13
> Anyone who lives on milk is still a baby and does not yet understand the teaching about what is right.

1 Peter 2:1
> So get rid of all evil behavior, all lying, hypocrisy, jealousy, and all unkind words.

Spiritual Principle

Be innocent toward evil, but mature in understanding.

XXI. MEN OF OTHER TONGUES

1 Corinthians 14:21 — From Isaiah

“In the law it is written: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; yet even then they will not hear me, says the Lord.””
Paul quotes Isaiah 28.
He calls it **“the law”**—meaning the Old Testament Scriptures.
In Isaiah's day, Israel refused to listen to God's clear words through the prophets.
So God warned that He would speak to them through foreign invaders, whose language they could not understand.
Hearing a strange language was a sign of God's judgment on their unbelief.

And even then, they would not listen.

Cross References

Isaiah 28:11
So God will speak to this people through foreign lips and strange languages.
Isaiah 28:12
He said to them, “This is the place of rest. Let the weary rest. This is the place of peace.” But they would not listen.
Deuteronomy 28:49
The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, swooping down like an eagle—a nation whose language you will not understand,

Spiritual Principle

Refusing God's clear words leads to hearing what cannot be understood.

XXII. A SIGN FOR UNBELIEVERS

1 Corinthians 14:22 — Tongues and Prophecy

“Therefore tongues are a sign, not for those who believe, but for unbelievers. But prophecy is not for unbelievers, but for those who believe.”
Paul draws a conclusion from Isaiah.
“Tongues are a sign... for unbelievers.”
This verse has been understood in different ways.
Many believe Paul means that tongues without understanding are a sign of judgment on unbelief, as in Isaiah's day.
Others believe tongues can also be a sign that gets the attention of unbelievers, as at Pentecost.
“But prophecy is... for those who believe.”
Prophecy strengthens the faith of believers.
As the next verses show, prophecy can also reach unbelievers powerfully.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:22
Jews ask for miraculous signs, and Greeks look for wisdom.
Acts 2:12
Amazed and confused, they asked one another, “What does this mean?”
Mark 16:17
These signs will go with those who believe: In My name they will drive out demons, and they will speak in new languages.

Spiritual Principle

Each gift has its own purpose in God's plan.

XXIII. OUT OF YOUR MIND

1 Corinthians 14:23 — What Visitors Would Think

“If the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and unbelievers or outsiders enter, will they not say you are out of your mind?”
Paul asks the Corinthians to imagine a visitor's experience.
The whole church is gathered.
Everyone is speaking in tongues at once.
An unbeliever walks in.
What will he think?
“Will they not say you are out of your mind?”
He will think the church is crazy.
Instead of being drawn to Christ, he will be pushed away.
Love thinks about how outsiders experience our worship.

Cross References

Acts 2:13
But others laughed at them and said, “They have had too much wine.”
Acts 26:24
While Paul was saying this in his defense, Festus shouted, “Paul, you are out of your mind! Your great learning is driving you insane!”
John 10:20
Many of them said, “He has a demon and has lost His mind. Why listen to Him?”

Spiritual Principle

Love considers how outsiders experience the church's worship.

Application

If a visitor came to your church this Sunday, would they understand what was happening?

XXIV. CONVICTED BY ALL

1 Corinthians 14:24 — When All Prophesy

“But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider comes in, he is convicted by all, he is judged by all.”
Now Paul describes the opposite scene.
The church is gathered.
People are speaking God's word clearly.
An unbeliever walks in.
“He is convicted by all.”
He hears the truth, and his conscience is awakened.
“He is judged by all.”
God's word examines his life.
He sees himself as God sees him.

Clear words from God have power to reach the heart.

Cross References

John 16:8
When He comes, He will show the world the truth about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment.

Hebrews 4:12
For the word of God is alive and powerful. It is sharper than any two-edged sword, cutting deep enough to separate soul and spirit, joints and marrow. It judges the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

2 Timothy 3:16
All Scripture is breathed out by God and is useful for teaching, for correcting, for setting things right, and for training in how to live rightly.

Spiritual Principle

God's word, clearly spoken, has power to convict the heart.

XXV. GOD IS TRULY AMONG YOU

1 Corinthians 14:25 — Falling on His Face

“The secrets of his heart are revealed; and so, falling on his face, he will worship God, declaring that God is truly among you.”
Paul describes what happens next.
“The secrets of his heart are revealed.”
God's word exposes what is hidden.
The visitor feels known.
“Falling on his face, he will worship God.”
He humbles himself before God.
“Declaring that God is truly among you.”
This is the goal of worship.
Not that people would say, **“What impressive gifts!”**
But that they would say, **“God is truly here.”**

Cross References

Isaiah 45:14
They will bow down before you and say, “God is truly with you. There is no other; there is no other God.”

Zechariah 8:23
This is what the LORD of Armies says: “In those days ten men from every language and nation will take hold of the robe of one Jew and say, ‘Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.’”

Daniel 2:47
The king said to Daniel, “Truly your God is the God of gods and Lord of kings, and He reveals mysteries, because you were able to reveal this mystery.”

Spiritual Principle

The best worship leads people to say, “God is truly among you.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The goal of worship is not to impress people with us, but to bring them face to face with God.

XXVI. LET ALL THINGS BE DONE FOR BUILDING UP

1 Corinthians 14:26 — Each One Has Something

“What is the outcome then, brothers? When you come together, each of you has a psalm, a teaching, a tongue, a revelation, an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up.”
Paul now gives practical instructions.
He describes worship in the early church.
“Each of you has.”
Many people took part.
A psalm—a song of praise.
A teaching—an explanation of God's truth.
A tongue—speaking in another language.
A revelation—something God had shown.
An interpretation—explaining a tongue.
Worship was not a performance by one person.
Many members contributed.
But one rule governed it all:
“Let all things be done for building up.”

Cross References

Ephesians 5:19
> speaking to one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, singing and making music to the Lord from your heart,

Colossians 3:16
> Let the message of Christ live among you richly. Teach and warn one another with all wisdom. Sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thankful hearts to God.

1 Corinthians 12:7
> To each one the Spirit is shown in some way for the good of all.

Spiritual Principle

Everything in worship should be done to build up the church.

Key Truth

Every member has something to contribute.

XXVII. TWO OR THREE, IN TURN

1 Corinthians 14:27 — Rules for Tongues

“If anyone speaks in a tongue, let it be by two, or at the most three, each in turn, and let someone interpret.”
Paul gives three rules for speaking in tongues in public worship.
Limit the number.
“Two, or at the most three.”
Take turns.
“Each in turn.”
No one speaking over anyone else.
Interpret.
“Let someone interpret.”
These rules brought order to a chaotic situation.
They ensured that the gift would build up the church.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 12:10
> to another the power to work miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to tell the difference between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of languages, and to another the interpretation of languages.

1 Corinthians 14:40
> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

2 Corinthians 13:1
> This will be my third visit to you. “Every matter must be confirmed by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts should be used with limits, order, and care for others.

XXVIII. LET HIM REMAIN SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:28 — If There Is No Interpreter

“But if there is no interpreter, let him remain silent in the church, and let him speak to himself and to God.”
Paul gives another rule.
“If there is no interpreter, let him remain silent in the church.”
If no one can interpret, the speaker should not speak aloud in tongues.
“And let him speak to himself and to God.”
He can still pray quietly to God.
This shows that the gift was under the person's control.
He could choose to speak or to remain silent.
The Spirit does not force anyone to speak out of turn.

Cross References

Psalm 4:4
Tremble and do not sin. When you are on your beds, search your hearts and be silent.
1 Corinthians 14:34
Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the law also says.
James 1:19
My dear brothers and sisters, understand this: everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry.

Spiritual Principle

Spiritual gifts are under the control of the person who has them.

XXIX. LET THE OTHERS WEIGH

1 Corinthians 14:29 — Testing Prophecy

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said.”
Paul gives rules for prophecy too.
“Let two or three prophets speak.”
Again, there are limits.
“And let the others weigh what is said.”
Prophecy was not to be accepted without question.
The church was to test it.
Was it true?
Did it agree with God's word?
Did it honor Christ?
Every message must be weighed by the word of God.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:19
Do not put out the Spirit's fire.
1 Thessalonians 5:21
But test everything. Hold on to what is good.
1 John 4:1
Dear friends, do not believe every spirit. Instead, test the spirits to see whether they come from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Spiritual Principle

Every message claiming to be from God must be tested by God's word.

Application

Do not accept every teaching you hear.
Weigh it carefully against Scripture.

XXX. LET THE FIRST BE SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:30 — Making Room for Others

“If a revelation comes to another who is seated, let the first be silent.”
Paul gives another rule.
If someone is speaking and God gives a revelation to someone else, the first speaker should stop and let the other speak.
No one should dominate the service.
This takes humility.
It means being willing to step back so someone else can share.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 14:40
> But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Philippians 2:3
> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or empty pride. Instead, in humility, consider others more important than yourselves.

Romans 12:10
> Love one another deeply as brothers and sisters. Outdo one another in showing honor.

Spiritual Principle

Love makes room for others to share.

XXXI. ALL MAY LEARN

1 Corinthians 14:31 — One by One

“For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”
Paul explains why order matters.
“You can all prophesy one by one.”
Everyone who has the gift can share, one at a time.
And the purpose:
“So that all may learn and all may be encouraged.”
Order is not meant to stop people from taking part.
It is meant to help everyone benefit.
When people speak one at a time, everyone can listen, learn, and be encouraged.

Cross References

Acts 2:17
> “In the last days,” God says, “I will pour out My Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.”

1 Corinthians 14:26
> What then, brothers and sisters? When you come together, each of you has a song, a teaching, a revelation, a message in another language, or an interpretation. Everything must be done to build up the church.

1 Thessalonians 5:11
So encourage one another and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

Spiritual Principle

Order in worship allows everyone to learn and be encouraged.

XXXII. SUBJECT TO THE PROPHETS

1 Corinthians 14:32 — Self-Control

“The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets.”
This is an important principle.
In pagan religions, people believed that spiritual experiences took control of the person.
They lost control of themselves.
But Paul says the Holy Spirit does not work that way.
“The spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets.”
A true prophet can control when and how he speaks.
He can wait his turn.
He can stop when another speaks.
The Spirit produces self-control, not chaos.

Cross References

1 Samuel 10:10
When Saul and his servant arrived at Gibeah, a group of prophets met him. The Spirit of God came powerfully on him, and he prophesied along with them.
Numbers 11:25
Then the LORD came down in the cloud and spoke to Moses. He took some of the Spirit that was on Moses and put it on the seventy elders. When the Spirit rested on them, they prophesied, but they did not do it again.
1 Corinthians 14:40
But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Spiritual Principle

The Holy Spirit produces self-control, not loss of control.

Key Truth

No one can say, **“The Spirit made me do it,”** as an excuse for disorder.

XXXIII. NOT THE AUTHOR OF CONFUSION

1 Corinthians 14:33 — But of Peace

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.”
Here is the reason for everything Paul has said.
“God is not the author of confusion.”
Confusion, chaos, and disorder do not come from God.

“But of peace.”
God is a God of order and peace.
Look at creation.
The stars follow their courses.
The seasons follow their pattern.
God's character is reflected in His works.
So worship that honors Him should reflect His peace.
“As in all the churches of the saints.”
This was the practice in every church, not just Corinth.

Cross References

James 3:17
> But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure. It is also peace-loving, gentle, willing to listen, full of mercy and good fruit, fair, and sincere.

Romans 15:33
> May the God of peace be with all of you. Amen.

1 Thessalonians 5:23
> May the God of peace Himself make you completely holy. May your whole spirit, soul, and body be kept blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ comes.

Spiritual Principle

Worship should reflect the peace and order of God's own character.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Where God is truly at work, there is peace, not confusion.

XXXIV. LET YOUR WOMEN KEEP SILENT

1 Corinthians 14:34 — In Submission

“Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but must be in submission, as the law also says.”
This is one of the most debated verses in Paul's letters.
It must be read carefully and in context.
First, remember what Paul said in Chapter 11.
He assumed that women prayed and prophesied in public worship.
So this verse cannot mean that women must never say a word in church.
What then does it mean?
Faithful Bible students have understood it in different ways.
Some believe Paul is speaking about the weighing of prophecies in verse 29.
Women were not to take part in publicly judging the prophecies, which involved authority over the church.
Some believe Paul is speaking about disruptive questions and talking during the service.
Verse 35 suggests that some were interrupting to ask questions.
Some believe Paul is setting a broader pattern that women should not hold the role of authoritative teaching in the gathered church, as in 1 Timothy 2.
All agree that the theme of the whole chapter is order, peace, and building up the church.

And all agree that the word **submission** here means honoring God's order, as Paul taught in Chapter 11. **“As the law also says”** most likely points back to the order of creation in Genesis, which Paul used in Chapter 11.

Cross References

1 Timothy 2:11
A woman should learn quietly and with full submission.
1 Timothy 2:12
I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she should be quiet.
Genesis 3:16
To the woman He said, “I will greatly increase your pain in childbirth; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.”

Spiritual Principle

Worship must honor God's order and be marked by peace.

Key Truth

This verse must be read alongside Chapter 11, where women prayed and prophesied in worship.

XXXV. ASK THEIR HUSBANDS AT HOME

1 Corinthians 14:35 — A Place to Learn

“If they desire to learn anything, let them ask their husbands at home, for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”
Paul continues.
“If they desire to learn anything.”
This suggests that the problem involved asking questions during the service.
Notice that Paul assumes women **want to learn.**
In that culture, women often had less education than men.
Paul does not say women should not learn.
He says they should learn, but in a way that does not disrupt the worship.
“Let them ask their husbands at home.”
Husbands had a responsibility to help their wives learn.
“For it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.”
In that culture, a woman speaking out publicly in this way would have been seen as shameful.
Churches today apply this verse differently.
Some keep public teaching and leadership roles for men while welcoming women's prayers, songs, and other contributions.
Others believe Paul was correcting a local problem of disruption.
Whatever the view, the goal is that worship honors God and builds up the church.

Cross References

Ephesians 5:22
Wives, submit to your own husbands as you do to the Lord.

Titus 2:5
to be self-controlled and pure, to manage their homes well, to be kind, and to submit to their husbands, so that no one will speak badly of the word of God.
1 Peter 3:1
In the same way, wives, submit to your husbands. Then if any of them do not believe God's word, they may be won over without words by the way their wives live,

Spiritual Principle

God wants all His people to learn, and to do so in a way that brings peace to the church.

Key Truth

Paul assumes women desire to learn God's truth, and he makes room for it.

XXXVI. DID THE WORD COME FROM YOU?

1 Corinthians 14:36 — A Rebuke to Pride

“Did the word of God come from you? Or did it reach only you?”
Paul now speaks sharply to the whole church.
The Corinthians were acting as if they could do whatever they wanted.
As if they were the source of God's truth.
“Did the word of God come from you?”
No.
The gospel came to them from outside.
“Or did it reach only you?”
No.
They were one church among many.
They had no right to ignore what all the other churches practiced.

Cross References

Isaiah 2:3
Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” For the law will go out from Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.
Romans 15:20
My goal has always been to preach the good news where Christ was not yet known, so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.
1 Thessalonians 1:8
The Lord's message rang out from you, not only in Macedonia and Achaia—your faith in God has become known everywhere. So we do not need to say anything about it.

Spiritual Principle

No church owns the word of God; every church must submit to it.

XXXVII. THE LORD'S COMMANDS

1 Corinthians 14:37 — Acknowledge It

“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that what I write to you are the Lord's commands.”
Paul addresses those who thought they were especially spiritual.
“If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual.”
Then they should prove it.
“Let him acknowledge that what I write to you are the Lord's commands.”
A truly spiritual person will recognize the authority of God's word through the apostle.
Spirituality is not shown by ignoring Scripture.
It is shown by submitting to it.

Cross References

1 John 4:6
> We belong to God. Whoever knows God listens to us, but whoever does not belong to God does not listen to us. This is how we can tell the Spirit of truth from the spirit of lies.

Galatians 1:8
> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a good news different from the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse!

2 Peter 3:2
> I want you to remember the words spoken long ago by the holy prophets and the command of our Lord and Savior given through your apostles.

Spiritual Principle

True spirituality submits to God's word.

Key Truth

The Spirit who gives gifts is the same Spirit who inspired Scripture.
He never contradicts Himself.

XXXVIII. HE WILL BE IGNORED

1 Corinthians 14:38 — A Warning

“But if anyone ignores this, he himself will be ignored.”
Paul gives a warning.
If someone refuses to recognize God's word, that person should not be recognized as a true prophet or spiritual leader.
Ignoring God's word has consequences.

Cross References

Proverbs 1:24
> But since you refuse to listen when I call, and no one pays attention when I reach out My hand,

Matthew 10:14
If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake the dust off your feet when you leave that house or town.
Hosea 4:6
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as My priests. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.

Spiritual Principle

Those who ignore God's word lose their claim to spiritual authority.

XXXIX. DESIRE TO PROPHESY

1 Corinthians 14:39 — Do Not Forbid Tongues

“Therefore, brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues.”
Paul sums up his teaching on gifts.
“Earnestly desire to prophesy.”
Seek the gift that builds up the church.
“And do not forbid speaking in tongues.”
Paul does not want the church to swing to the other extreme and ban tongues.
Properly used, with interpretation and order, tongues has a place.
Churches today differ on whether tongues continues as in the early church.
But Paul's balance is clear.
Do not overvalue it.
Do not despise it.
Use every gift with love and order.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 5:19
Do not put out the Spirit's fire.
1 Thessalonians 5:20
Do not treat prophecies with contempt.
1 Corinthians 12:31
So eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I will show you the most excellent way.

Spiritual Principle

God's people should avoid both extremes: overvaluing some gifts and despising others.

XL. DECENTLY AND IN ORDER

1 Corinthians 14:40 — The Final Word

“But let all things be done decently and in order.”
Paul ends with a simple rule.
“Let all things be done decently.”
The word means **fittingly** or **beautifully.**

Worship should be beautiful and honoring to God.
“And in order.”
The word was used for soldiers standing in ranks.
Everything in its place.
This is not about rigid rules.
It is about worship that reflects the peace and beauty of God.
It is about love that thinks of others.

Cross References

Colossians 2:5
> Even though I am far away from you in body, I am with you in spirit. I am glad to see how orderly you are and how firm your faith in Christ is.

Titus 1:5
> I left you in Crete so that you could put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I told you.

1 Corinthians 11:34
> If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it will not bring judgment. And I will give further instructions when I come.

Spiritual Principle

Worship should be beautiful, fitting, and orderly, reflecting the God we worship.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Order is not the enemy of the Spirit; it is the fruit of the Spirit.

XLI. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 14

1. Prophecy Builds Up the Church

“The one who prophesies builds up the church.”

Principle:

Tongues are valuable, but prophecy edifies the whole congregation.

2. Clarity Matters

“Unless you speak intelligible words... you will just be speaking into the air.”

Principle:

Worship should be understandable so that all can join in and grow.

3. Balance of Spirit and Understanding

“I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also.”

Principle:

Prayer and song must engage both heart and mind.

4. Tongues as a Sign

“Tongues are a sign... for unbelievers.”

Principle:

Tongues serve unbelievers as a sign, while prophecy strengthens believers.

5. Order in Worship

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

Principle:

Spiritual gifts should be exercised in a way that brings peace and edification, not confusion.

6. Decency and Humility

“Let all things be done decently and in order.”

Principle:

All things in the church must be done with respect, submission, and unity under God's design.

XLII. TONGUES AND PROPHECY COMPARED

Tongues

- Speaks to God.
- Not understood without interpretation.
- Builds up the speaker.
- Engages the spirit, but not the understanding.
- A sign for unbelievers.
- Must be limited to two or three, in turn, with interpretation.

Prophecy

- Speaks to people.
- Understood by all.
- Builds up the church.
- Strengthens, encourages, and comforts.
- Convicts unbelievers and leads them to worship.
- Must be weighed by the church.

Key Truth

In the gathered church, the gift that is understood and builds up others is the greater gift.

XLIII. PAUL'S RULES FOR ORDERLY WORSHIP

Verses 26–33 give clear guidelines.

For Everyone

- Everything must build up the church.
- Everyone may contribute.
- God is a God of peace, not confusion.

For Tongues

- Two or at most three.
- One at a time.
- Someone must interpret.
- If no interpreter, keep silent and speak to God.

For Prophecy

- Two or three should speak.
- Others should weigh what is said.
- If someone else receives a revelation, the first should stop.
- Prophets are in control of themselves.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Spirit who gives the gifts is the same Spirit who brings order to their use.

XLIV. UNDERSTANDING VERSES 34–35

These verses are among the hardest in the letter.

What Is Clear

- In Chapter 11, women prayed and prophesied in worship.
- So Paul is not forbidding all speech by women in church.
- The whole chapter is about order, peace, and building up the church.
- Paul assumes women desire to learn, and he makes room for it.

Common Views

The weighing of prophecy: women were not to take part in publicly judging prophecies.
Disruptive questions: women were to stop interrupting the service with questions and ask at home.
Teaching authority: the gathered church's authoritative teaching role is reserved for qualified men, as in 1 Timothy 2.

How Churches Apply It Today

Faithful churches differ in how they apply these verses.

Some keep the roles of preaching and pastoral leadership for men.
Others see Paul correcting a local problem of disruption.
All agree that worship must honor God, reflect His order, and be marked by peace.

Key Truth

Hard verses should be read humbly, in context, and in light of the whole of Scripture.

XLV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 14 TEACHES ABOUT GOD AND HIS WORD

God Is a God of Peace

“God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”

God Speaks to Be Understood

He wants His people to hear and understand His word.

God Reveals Hearts

When His word is spoken, **“the secrets of his heart are revealed.”**

God Is Present Among His People

“God is truly among you.”

God's Word Comes Through the Apostles

“What I write to you are the Lord's commands.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The God of peace speaks clearly through His word so that His people may be built up and the lost may find Him.

XLVI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

Why did Paul write Chapter 14?
Worship in Corinth had become confusing and disorderly.
Many were speaking in tongues without interpretation, and visitors could not understand.
Paul wanted worship to build up the church.

Question 2

Why is prophecy greater than tongues in public worship?
Prophecy is understood by everyone and builds up the whole church.
Tongues without interpretation builds up only the speaker.

Question 3

What are the three purposes of prophecy?
Strengthening, encouragement, and comfort.

Question 4

Was Paul against speaking in tongues?
No.
He spoke in tongues more than all of them and said not to forbid it.
He wanted it used with interpretation and order.

Question 5

What do the pipe, the harp, and the trumpet teach?
Sounds must be clear to have meaning.
Worship and teaching must be understandable to help anyone.

Question 6

What does it mean to pray “with the spirit” and “with the understanding”?
True worship involves both the heart and the mind.
It should be passionate and also understood.

Question 7

What would an unbeliever think if everyone spoke in tongues at once?
He would think the church was out of its mind.

Question 8

What happens when God's word is spoken clearly to an unbeliever?
He is convicted.
The secrets of his heart are revealed.
He falls down and worships God, saying, “God is truly among you.”

Question 9

Why must prophecies be weighed?
Not every message claiming to be from God is true.
Every message must be tested by God's word.

Question 10

What does “the spirits of prophets are subject to the prophets” mean?

The Holy Spirit does not take away a person's self-control.
People with gifts can choose when and how to use them.

Question 11

How should we understand verses 34–35?
They must be read with Chapter 11, where women prayed and prophesied.
Churches differ on whether Paul meant the weighing of prophecy, disruptive questions, or teaching authority.
All agree worship must honor God's order and bring peace.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 14 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 14 should cause believers to live:

- Pursuing love above all.
- Seeking to build up others in worship.
- Valuing clear teaching of God's word.
- Worshiping with both heart and mind.
- Thinking about how visitors experience the church.
- Testing every message by Scripture.
- Making room for others to contribute.
- Doing all things decently and in order.

XLVII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 14 asks several important questions.

Am I Pursuing Love?

Is love guiding how I use my gifts?

Do I Come to Church to Be Blessed or to Bless?

Am I thinking about building up others?

Do I Worship with Heart and Mind?

Is my worship both passionate and thoughtful?

Are My Words Clear?

When I share God's truth, do people understand?

Would a Visitor Feel Welcome?

Would they understand what is happening and sense that God is present?

Do I Test What I Hear?

Do I weigh teaching by God's word?

Do I Make Room for Others?

Or do I always need to be heard?

Does My Life Reflect God's Peace?

Or do I bring confusion and conflict?

XLVIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Clear Words, Built-Up People”

Some worship impresses.
Some worship confuses.
But God wants worship that builds up.
The Corinthians were impressed by mysterious words.
But mysterious words left people in the dark.
Paul would rather speak five clear words than ten thousand that no one understood.
Why?
Because people matter.
The visitor in the back row matters.
The new believer who is trying to learn matters.
The brother who is struggling matters.
God does not speak to confuse His people.
He speaks to build them up.
And He calls His church to do the same.
This creates a powerful principle.
The measure of worship is not how spiritual it looks.
It is how much it helps people know God.

Principle:

Speak so that others understand, worship so that others are built up, and order everything so that God's peace is seen.

XLIX. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 14 was written to a church whose worship had become chaotic.
They had many gifts.
But they were using them without love.
People spoke over one another.
Few could understand.
Visitors walked away confused.
Paul brought them back to God's purpose.
Worship is for building up.
Words must be understood.
Heart and mind must work together.

Every message must be tested.
Everyone must make room for others.
And everything must reflect the peace of God.
1 Corinthians 14 therefore reminds us:
Never use a gift just for yourself.
Never value what is impressive over what is helpful.
Never forget the visitor in the room.
Never accept a message without testing it by God's word.
Never confuse disorder with the work of the Spirit.
The church does not need more noise.
It needs:
Clear words from God.
Hearts and minds engaged in worship.
Members who build each other up.
And a peace that shows God is truly among us.
The same truth still calls us:
Tell people that God speaks clearly in His word.
Tell people that He reveals the secrets of the heart.
Tell people that He is truly present among His people.
Tell people that He is a God of peace.
And whenever you gather:
Pursue love.
Build one another up.
Worship with spirit and understanding.
Do all things decently and in order.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You that You are not a God of confusion, but of peace.
Thank You for speaking to us clearly through Your word.
Thank You for the gifts of Your Spirit, given to build up Your church.
Thank You that when Your word is spoken, hearts are revealed and people fall down and worship You.
Forgive us when we have used our gifts to draw attention to ourselves.
Forgive us when we have valued what is impressive over what is helpful.
Forgive us when our worship has been confusing to others.
Forgive us when we have not made room for others to share.
Teach us to pursue love above all things.
Help us to worship You with our spirits and with our minds.
Give us words that strengthen, encourage, and comfort others.
Help us test every message by Your word.
Make our gatherings places where visitors sense that You are truly among us.
Fill Your church with Your peace.
And may everything we do be done decently and in order, for Your glory.
“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“For God is not the author of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints.” — 1 Corinthians 14:33

Central Truth

In public worship, love seeks to build up the whole church, so spiritual gifts must be used with clarity, understanding, and order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

1 Corinthians 14 in One Sentence

Paul teaches that love seeks to build up the church, so prophecy and clear words are better than uninterpreted tongues in public worship, that worship should engage both spirit and understanding, and that every gift must be used in turn, tested, and kept in order, because God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 — The Resurrection of Christ and Our Hope

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 is the longest chapter in the letter.
And it may be the most important.
It is the Bible's greatest chapter on the resurrection.
Some in Corinth were saying there is no resurrection of the dead.
This was not surprising in a Greek city.
Many Greeks believed the body was a prison for the soul.
They hoped to escape the body at death, not to receive it back.
The idea of dead bodies being raised seemed foolish to them.
Some believers in Corinth may have kept that way of thinking.
They believed in Jesus.
But they did not believe their own bodies would be raised.
Paul shows that this is no small mistake.
It strikes at the heart of the gospel.
He begins by reminding them of the gospel itself.
Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.
He rose on the third day.
He was seen by Peter, by the Twelve, by more than five hundred at once, by James, by all the apostles, and finally by Paul.
Then Paul shows what would follow if there were no resurrection.
Christ would not be risen.
Preaching would be useless.

Faith would be empty.
Believers would still be in their sins.
Those who died in Christ would be lost.
“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”
He is the firstfruits—the first part of a great harvest that will include all who belong to Him.
Paul then answers the question, **“What kind of body will we have?”**
He uses the picture of a seed.
What is planted is weak and perishable.
What is raised is glorious and imperishable.
And he ends with a shout of victory.
“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”
Because Christ is risen, our labor in the Lord is never in vain.
The chapter moves through eight movements:

- The Gospel of Christ's Death and Resurrection (verses 1–11).
- The Resurrection of the Dead (verses 12–20).
- Death Defeated in Christ (verses 21–28).
- The Reality of the Resurrection (verses 29–34).
- The Nature of the Resurrection Body (verses 35–44).
- The First Adam and the Last Adam (verses 45–49).
- Victory over Death (verses 50–57).
- Stand Firm in the Work of the Lord (verse 58).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 15 is:
Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead, and because He lives, all who belong to Him will be raised with glorious, imperishable bodies, so death is defeated and our labor in the Lord is never in vain.

I. THE GOSPEL I PREACHED

1 Corinthians 15:1 — In Which You Stand

“Brothers and sisters, I remind you of the gospel which I preached to you, which you also received, and in which you stand,”
Paul begins by going back to the basics.
“I remind you of the gospel.”
The Corinthians did not need a new message.
They needed to remember the old one.
Paul describes their relationship with the gospel in three ways.
He preached it.
They received it.
They stand in it.
The gospel is not only where the Christian life begins.
It is where the Christian stands every day.

Cross References

Galatians 1:11

> I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that the good news I preached is not something people made up.

Romans 1:16
I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is God's power to save everyone who believes—first the Jew, and also the Gentile.
2 Timothy 1:13
Hold on to the pattern of sound teaching you heard from me, with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Spiritual Principle

Believers never outgrow the gospel; they stand in it every day.

II. BY WHICH YOU ARE SAVED

1 Corinthians 15:2 — Hold Firmly

“by which you are saved—if you hold firmly to the message I preached to you—unless you believed in vain.”
Paul continues.
“By which you are saved.”
The gospel is the message that saves.
“If you hold firmly to the message I preached to you.”
True faith holds on.
It does not let go of the gospel when new ideas come along.
“Unless you believed in vain.”
Paul is warning them.
If they gave up the resurrection, their faith would be empty.
Faith in a Christ who did not rise would be faith in nothing.

Cross References

Colossians 1:23
as long as you continue in your faith, firmly established and steady, not moving away from the hope of the good news you heard.
Hebrews 3:14
For we share in Christ if we hold firmly to the end the confidence we had at the beginning.
2 Corinthians 6:1
As God's co-workers, we urge you not to receive God's grace and then let it go to waste.

Spiritual Principle

Saving faith holds firmly to the gospel.

Application

Are you holding firmly to the gospel, or are you being moved by new ideas?

III. CHRIST DIED FOR OUR SINS

1 Corinthians 15:3 — Of First Importance

“For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures,”
Now Paul states the gospel.
“As of first importance.”
Of everything Paul taught, this was the most important.
“What I also received.”
Paul did not invent the gospel.
He received it and passed it on.
Many Bible students believe verses 3–5 contain one of the earliest Christian statements of faith, taught within a few years of Jesus' resurrection.
The first truth:
“Christ died for our sins.”
Jesus did not die merely as a good example or a martyr.
He died **for our sins**—in our place, taking the punishment we deserved.
“According to the Scriptures.”
His death fulfilled what the Old Testament had promised.
Isaiah 53 described a Servant who would be pierced for our sins.

Cross References

Isaiah 53:5
> But He was pierced for our rebellion and crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and by His wounds we are healed.

Romans 5:8
> But God shows His love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

1 Peter 3:18
> For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body but made alive by the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

At the heart of the gospel is Christ dying in our place for our sins.

Key Truth

The death of Christ was not an accident.
It was God's plan, foretold in Scripture.

IV. BURIED AND RAISED

1 Corinthians 15:4 — On the Third Day

“that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures,”
Paul continues the gospel.
“That He was buried.”

Jesus truly died.
His body was placed in a tomb.
The burial proves the reality of His death.
“And that He rose again on the third day.”
His body did not stay in the grave.
On the third day, He rose.
The tomb was empty.
“According to the Scriptures.”
The Old Testament pointed to this.
David wrote that God would not let His Holy One see decay.
Jesus Himself pointed to Jonah's three days in the fish.

Cross References

Psalm 16:10
> because You will not abandon me to the grave, and You will not let Your faithful one see decay.

Hosea 6:2
> After two days He will revive us. On the third day He will raise us up, so that we may live in His presence.

Matthew 12:40
> Just as Jonah was in the belly of the great fish for three days and three nights, so the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth for three days and three nights.

Spiritual Principle

The gospel rests on real events: Christ truly died, was truly buried, and truly rose.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Christianity is built on an empty tomb.

V. SEEN BY PETER AND THE TWELVE

1 Corinthians 15:5 — The First Witnesses

“and that He was seen by Peter, then by the twelve.”
Paul now lists the witnesses of the resurrection.
“He was seen by Peter.”
Peter had denied Jesus three times.
Yet the risen Lord appeared to him personally.
What grace!
“Then by the twelve.”
“The twelve” was the name for the group of apostles, even though Judas was gone.
Jesus appeared to them together.
The resurrection was not a private vision.
It was seen by many.

Cross References

Luke 24:34
> saying, “It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon!”

John 20:19

On the evening of that first day of the week, the disciples were together with the doors locked because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Jesus came and stood among them and said, “Peace be with you!”

Mark 16:14

Later Jesus appeared to the Eleven as they were eating. He rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

Spiritual Principle

The risen Christ appeared to real people who could testify to what they saw.

Key Truth

The first person named is the one who had failed Jesus most publicly.
The risen Lord restores the fallen.

VI. MORE THAN FIVE HUNDRED

1 Corinthians 15:6 — Most Still Alive

“After that, He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once, most of whom remain alive until now, though some have fallen asleep.”
This is a remarkable statement.
“He appeared to more than five hundred brothers at once.”
Not one or two people.
Over five hundred at the same time.
This was not a dream or a hallucination.
“Most of whom remain alive until now.”
Paul is inviting the Corinthians to check.
“If you doubt me, go ask them.”
Many eyewitnesses were still living when Paul wrote.
“Though some have fallen asleep.”
Fallen asleep is a gentle way of saying they had died.
For believers, death is like sleep, because they will wake up in the resurrection.

Cross References

Acts 1:3

After His suffering, He showed Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Matthew 28:17

When they saw Him, they worshiped Him, but some doubted.

Luke 24:36

While they were still talking about this, Jesus Himself stood among them and said, “Peace be with you.”

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection is supported by many living witnesses.

Key Truth

Christian faith is not blind faith.
It rests on the testimony of many who saw the risen Lord.

VII. JAMES AND ALL THE APOSTLES

1 Corinthians 15:7 — More Appearances

“Then He appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”
“Then He appeared to James.”
This is James, the brother of Jesus.
During Jesus' earthly ministry, His brothers did not believe in Him.
But after the resurrection, James became a believer and a leader of the church in Jerusalem.
What changed him?
He saw his brother risen from the dead.
“Then to all the apostles.”
Jesus appeared again to the wider group of apostles.

Cross References

Acts 1:14
> All of them joined together and kept praying, along with the women, Mary the mother of Jesus, and His brothers.

Galatians 1:19
> I did not see any of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother.

Acts 1:3
> After His suffering, He showed Himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection transformed even those who once doubted.

Key Truth

It takes a lot to convince a man that his own brother is the Son of God.
The resurrection did it.

VIII. LAST OF ALL, TO ME

1 Corinthians 15:8 — As to One Abnormally Born

“And last of all, He appeared also to me, as to one abnormally born.”
Paul adds himself to the list.
“Last of all, He appeared also to me.”
On the road to Damascus, the risen Jesus appeared to Paul.
“As to one abnormally born.”
Paul uses a word for a child born too early or in an unusual way.
He means that his calling was unexpected and out of the normal order.

He did not walk with Jesus during His earthly ministry.
He was an enemy of the church.
Yet Jesus appeared to him and made him an apostle.

Cross References

Acts 9:3
As he came near Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him.
Acts 9:17
So Ananias went to the house and placed his hands on Saul. He said, “Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here, has sent me so that you can see again and be filled with the Holy Spirit.”
1 Timothy 1:16
But I was shown mercy for this reason: so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus could show His complete patience as an example for those who would believe in Him and receive eternal life.

Spiritual Principle

Christ can reach and transform even His fiercest enemies.

IX. THE LEAST OF THE APOSTLES

1 Corinthians 15:9 — Not Worthy

“For I am the least of the apostles, not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.”
Paul speaks humbly.
“I am the least of the apostles.”
“Not worthy to be called an apostle.”
Why?
“Because I persecuted the church of God.”
Paul never forgot what he had been.
He had arrested believers.
He had approved of their deaths.
He had tried to destroy the church.
His past did not disqualify him from God's grace.
But it kept him humble.

Cross References

Acts 8:3
But Saul was trying to destroy the church. He went from house to house, dragged off men and women, and put them in prison.
1 Timothy 1:15
Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves to be fully accepted: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—and I am the worst of them.
Ephesians 3:8
Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given to me: to preach to the Gentiles the endless riches of Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Remembering what we were keeps us humble before God's grace.

X. BY THE GRACE OF GOD

1 Corinthians 15:10 — I Am What I Am

“But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; on the contrary, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”
This is one of the great statements of grace in the Bible.
“By the grace of God I am what I am.”
Paul's salvation, calling, and ministry were all gifts of grace.
“His grace toward me was not in vain.”
Grace did not make Paul lazy.
It made him work.
“I worked harder than all of them.”
Then he quickly adds:
“Yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.”
Even his hard work was the work of grace.
Grace saves us.
Grace changes us.
Grace works through us.

Cross References

Ephesians 2:8
For you are saved by grace through faith. This is not from yourselves; it is God's gift.
2 Corinthians 12:9
But He told me, “My grace is all you need, because My power works best in weakness.” So I will gladly brag even more about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power can rest on me.
Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Spiritual Principle

Grace does not make us lazy; it makes us work hard for God.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Whatever I am in Christ, I am by the grace of God.

XI. SO WE PREACH, SO YOU BELIEVED

1 Corinthians 15:11 — One Message

“Whether then it was I or they, so we preach, and so you believed.”
Paul sums up.
It does not matter whether the message came from Paul or from the other apostles.

“So we preach.”
They all preached the same gospel.
Christ died, was buried, and rose again.
“And so you believed.”
This is the gospel the Corinthians had received.
The apostles were united in this message.
The Corinthians were divided over leaders.
But all their leaders preached the same risen Christ.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 3:5
> What, after all, is Apollos? What is Paul? We are only servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord gave each of us our work.

Romans 10:17
> So faith comes from hearing the message, and the message comes through the word about Christ.

Philippians 1:18
> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Spiritual Principle

All true preachers proclaim the same gospel of the risen Christ.

XII. HOW CAN SOME SAY?

1 Corinthians 15:12 — No Resurrection of the Dead

“Now if Christ is preached that He has been raised from the dead, how can some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”
Now Paul addresses the problem.
“How can some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead?”
Some in the church denied that believers would be raised.
They did not deny that Jesus rose.
But they did not believe in a bodily resurrection for themselves.
Paul asks how that makes any sense.
If Christ was raised, then resurrection is possible.
If resurrection is impossible, then Christ was not raised.
You cannot have one without the other.

Cross References

Acts 17:32
> When they heard about the resurrection of the dead, some of them laughed, but others said, “We want to hear you speak about this again.”

Acts 23:8
> The Sadducees say there is no resurrection, no angels, and no spirits, but the Pharisees believe in all of these.

Matthew 22:23
> That same day the Sadducees, who say there is no resurrection, came to Jesus with a question.

Spiritual Principle

Christ's resurrection and ours stand or fall together.

XIII. THEN CHRIST IS NOT RISEN

1 Corinthians 15:13 — The Logic of Denial

“If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ is not risen.”
Paul now follows the logic.
If dead people cannot be raised, then Jesus, who died, could not have been raised.
To deny our resurrection is to deny His.
Paul is about to show what that would mean.

Cross References

Acts 4:2
> They were very upset because the apostles were teaching the people and announcing that in Jesus there is resurrection from the dead.

Romans 6:5
> If we have been united with Him in a death like His, we will certainly also be united with Him in a resurrection like His.

1 Thessalonians 4:14
> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

Spiritual Principle

Denying the resurrection of believers is denying the resurrection of Christ.

XIV. PREACHING AND FAITH USELESS

1 Corinthians 15:14 — Empty

“And if Christ is not risen, then our preaching is useless, and your faith is also useless.”
Here is the first result.
“Our preaching is useless.”
The apostles would be preaching an empty message.
“And your faith is also useless.”
The Corinthians' faith would be empty.
Christianity is not just a set of good moral ideas.
It stands or falls on one event.
If Christ did not rise, the whole thing collapses.

Cross References

Galatians 2:21
> I do not set aside the grace of God. For if righteousness could be gained through the law, then Christ died for nothing.

Romans 4:25
He was handed over to die because of our sins and was raised to life so that we could be made right with God.
1 Peter 1:21
Through Him you believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian faith rests entirely on the resurrection of Christ.

XV. FALSE WITNESSES

1 Corinthians 15:15 — Lying About God

“Moreover, we are found to be false witnesses about God, because we testified that God raised Christ from the dead—if in fact the dead are not raised.”
Here is the second result.
If there is no resurrection, the apostles were liars.
Worse, they were lying about God.
They said God raised Jesus.
If He did not, they were false witnesses.
But the apostles suffered and died for this message.
People do not die for what they know is a lie.

Cross References

Acts 2:32
God raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of it.
Acts 3:15
You killed the Author of life, but God raised Him from the dead. We are witnesses of this.
Acts 4:33
With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God's grace was powerfully at work in all of them.

Spiritual Principle

The apostles staked their lives on the truth of the resurrection.

XVI. IF THE DEAD ARE NOT RAISED

1 Corinthians 15:16 — Christ Has Not Been Raised

“For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised.”
Paul repeats the logic to drive it home.
The two truths cannot be separated.
Either the dead are raised and Christ is risen.
Or the dead are not raised and Christ is still in the grave.
There is no middle ground.

Cross References

Acts 26:8
Why do any of you think it is impossible for God to raise the dead?
Romans 8:11
If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then the One who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.
Job 19:25
But I know that my Redeemer lives, and in the end He will stand on the earth.

Spiritual Principle

God, who raised Jesus, has the power to raise the dead.

XVII. STILL IN YOUR SINS

1 Corinthians 15:17 — Futile Faith

“And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins.”
Here is the third result, and it is devastating.
“Your faith is futile.”
Your faith would accomplish nothing.
“You are still in your sins.”
Why?
Because the resurrection is God's proof that Christ's sacrifice was accepted.
If Jesus stayed dead, we would have no proof that His death paid for our sins.
The cross would have been a defeat.
But the resurrection shows that the payment was complete.

Cross References

Romans 5:1
Since we have been made right with God by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.
Colossians 2:13
When you were dead in your sins and in your sinful nature, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins.
1 Peter 1:3
Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In His great mercy He has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection is God's proof that Christ's payment for sin was accepted.

Key Truth

The cross paid for our sins.
The empty tomb proves it.

XVIII. THOSE WHO HAVE FALLEN ASLEEP

1 Corinthians 15:18 — Perished

“Then those who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished.”
Here is the fourth result.
If Christ is not raised, then believers who have died are gone forever.
No reunion.
No hope.
Every Christian funeral would be a final goodbye.
This would be heartbreaking.
But because Christ is risen, those who die in Him are only sleeping.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 4:13
> Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who have fallen asleep in death, so that you will not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope.

1 Thessalonians 4:14
> For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, we also believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in Him.

John 11:25
> Jesus said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life. Whoever believes in Me will live, even though he dies.”

Spiritual Principle

Because Christ is risen, believers who die are not lost.

Application

If you have lost a believing loved one, take comfort.
They are not gone forever.

XIX. MOST TO BE PITIED

1 Corinthians 15:19 — Hope in This Life Only

“If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all people most to be pitied.”
Here is the fifth result.
If Christianity only helps us in this life, it is not worth it.
Believers give up much for Christ.
They suffer persecution.
They deny themselves.
If there is nothing beyond the grave, they have wasted their lives.
Christianity is not just a better way to live.
It is the hope of eternal life.

Cross References

Philippians 3:20
But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.
Hebrews 11:13
All these people were still living by faith when they died. They did not receive what was promised, but they saw it from far away and welcomed it. They admitted that they were foreigners and strangers on earth.
2 Timothy 3:12
In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian hope reaches beyond this life into eternity.

XX. BUT CHRIST HAS BEEN RAISED

1 Corinthians 15:20 — The Firstfruits

“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
After all the **“ifs,”** Paul declares the truth.
“But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead.”
This is not a theory.
It is a fact.
“The firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep.”
In Israel, the firstfruits were the first part of the harvest.
They were offered to God as a promise that the rest of the harvest would follow.
Christ's resurrection is the firstfruits.
It guarantees that all who belong to Him will also be raised.
Many Bible students also note the timing.
Jesus rose on the Sunday after Passover, the day Israel offered the firstfruits of the harvest to God.

Cross References

Acts 26:23
that the Messiah would suffer and, as the first to rise from the dead, would bring the message of light to His own people and to the Gentiles.
Colossians 1:18
He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything He might have first place.
Romans 8:29
For those God knew ahead of time, He also chose to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Spiritual Principle

Christ's resurrection is the guarantee of ours.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The firstfruits have been gathered; the full harvest is coming.

XXI. DEATH THROUGH A MAN

1 Corinthians 15:21 — Resurrection Through a Man

“For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead also came through a man.”
Paul now explains how this works.
“Death came through a man.”
Adam sinned, and death entered the world.
“The resurrection of the dead also came through a man.”
Jesus, fully human, rose from the dead.
One man brought death.
Another Man brought life.
This is why Jesus had to become fully human.
Only a man could undo what a man had done.

Cross References

Romans 5:12
> So sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin. In this way death spread to everyone, because everyone sinned.

Romans 5:17
> Death ruled because of one man's sin. But how much more will those who receive God's overflowing grace and the gift of righteousness rule in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!

Genesis 3:19
> You will sweat to get food to eat until you return to the ground, because you were taken from it. You are dust, and to dust you will return.

Spiritual Principle

Through one man came death; through one Man comes life.

XXII. IN ADAM, IN CHRIST

1 Corinthians 15:22 — All Made Alive

“For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive.”
This is one of the great verses of the Bible.
“In Adam all die.”
Everyone connected to Adam shares his death.
That is all of humanity.
“So in Christ all will be made alive.”
Everyone connected to Christ shares His life.
The key words are **“in Adam”** and **“in Christ.”**
Everyone is born in Adam.
Only those who trust in Christ are in Christ.
The question every person must answer is this:
Am I only in Adam, or am I in Christ?

Cross References

Romans 5:18
So just as one man's sin brought condemnation to all people, one righteous act brought the right standing with God that leads to life for all people.
Romans 5:19
Just as many were made sinners through one man's disobedience, so many will be made righteous through one man's obedience.
Genesis 2:17
but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because on the day you eat from it, you will surely die.

Spiritual Principle

Everyone is in Adam by birth, but life is found only in Christ.

Application

Are you in Christ?

XXIII. EACH IN HIS OWN ORDER

1 Corinthians 15:23 — Christ, Then Those Who Belong to Him

“But each in his own order: Christ the firstfruits, afterward those who belong to Christ at His coming.”
Paul explains the order of the resurrection.
“Christ the firstfruits.”
Jesus rose first.
“Afterward those who belong to Christ at His coming.”
When Jesus returns, all who belong to Him will be raised.
There is a time gap between the firstfruits and the harvest.
We live in that gap now.
But the harvest is certain.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 4:16
For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.
1 Thessalonians 4:17
After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.
Revelation 20:6
Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them. They will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

Spiritual Principle

The resurrection of believers will happen when Christ returns.

XXIV. THEN COMES THE END

1 Corinthians 15:24 — The Kingdom Handed Over

“Then comes the end, when He hands over the kingdom to God the Father, after He has destroyed all rule, authority, and power.”
Paul looks to the very end of history.
“Then comes the end.”
God's plan will reach its goal.
“After He has destroyed all rule, authority, and power.”
Every power that opposes God will be defeated.
Evil rulers.
Spiritual forces of darkness.
Every rebellion against God.
“When He hands over the kingdom to God the Father.”
Christ will present His finished work to the Father.
The victory will be complete.

Cross References

Daniel 7:14
> He was given authority, glory, and a kingdom, so that people of every nation and language would serve Him. His rule is an everlasting rule that will never pass away, and His kingdom will never be destroyed.

Ephesians 1:21
> far above every ruler, authority, power, and lord, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come.

Revelation 11:15
> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and loud voices in heaven said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever.”

Spiritual Principle

History is moving toward Christ's complete victory over every enemy.

XXV. HE MUST REIGN

1 Corinthians 15:25 — Until All Enemies Are Under His Feet

“For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”
Christ is reigning now.
“He must reign.”
This is God's decree.
“Until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”
Paul echoes Psalm 110.
In the ancient world, a conquering king put his foot on the neck of a defeated enemy.
Christ will defeat every enemy.

Not one will remain.

Cross References

Psalm 110:1
The LORD said to my Lord: “Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”
Hebrews 10:13
Since that time He waits for His enemies to be made a footstool for His feet.
Ephesians 1:22
God placed everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the good of the church,

Spiritual Principle

Christ reigns now and will reign until every enemy is defeated.

Key Truth

The world may look out of control.
But Jesus is reigning.

XXVI. THE LAST ENEMY

1 Corinthians 15:26 — Death Destroyed

“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”
Here is one of the most hopeful verses in the Bible.
“The last enemy.”
Death is an enemy.
It was not part of God's original good creation.
It entered through sin.
It tears families apart.
It brings grief and fear.
“That will be destroyed is death.”
Death itself will die.
One day there will be no more graves, no more funerals, no more goodbyes.

Cross References

Revelation 20:14
Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.
Revelation 21:4
He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, because the old things have passed away.
Hosea 13:14
I will rescue them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Death, where are your plagues? Grave, where is your destruction?

Spiritual Principle

Death is an enemy, and Christ will destroy it forever.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The last enemy will be the last to fall—and it will fall.

XXVII. EVERYTHING UNDER HIS FEET

1 Corinthians 15:27 — Except God Himself

“For “He has put everything under His feet.” But when it says “everything,” it is clear that this does not include God Himself, who put everything under Christ.”
Paul quotes Psalm 8.
“He has put everything under His feet.”
God has given Christ authority over all things.
Then Paul adds a clarification.
“It is clear that this does not include God Himself.”
The Father is the One who gave Christ this authority.
So the Father is not under Christ.
Paul is careful to show the relationship between the Father and the Son.

Cross References

Psalm 8:6
> You made him ruler over the works of Your hands. You put everything under his feet:

Hebrews 2:8
> and put everything under his feet. In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not under him. Yet right now we do not see everything under him.

Ephesians 1:22
> God placed everything under His feet and made Him head over everything for the good of the church,

Spiritual Principle

The Father has given the Son authority over all creation.

XXVIII. THAT GOD MAY BE ALL IN ALL

1 Corinthians 15:28 — The Son Subject to the Father

“When all things have been subjected to Him, then the Son Himself will be made subject to the One who put everything under Him, so that God may be all in all.”
Paul describes the final moment of history.
“When all things have been subjected to Him.”
Every enemy defeated.
Every knee bowed.
“Then the Son Himself will be made subject to the One who put everything under Him.”
This does not mean the Son is less than the Father in His nature.
The Son is fully God.
It means that in His role as Savior and King, the Son will joyfully present everything to the Father.
The Son has always delighted to honor the Father.

“So that God may be all in all.”
God will be everything to everyone.
His presence will fill everything.
This is the goal of all history.

Cross References

Philippians 2:10
so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow—in heaven, on earth, and under the earth—
Colossians 3:11
In this new life, there is no Greek or Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, foreigner, uncivilized person, slave, or free person. Christ is all, and He is in all.
Ephesians 4:6
There is one God and Father of all, who is over all, through all, and in all.

Spiritual Principle

The goal of all history is that God will be all in all.

Key Truth

The Son is equal with the Father in nature, yet He delights to honor the Father in His work.

XXIX. BAPTIZED FOR THE DEAD

1 Corinthians 15:29 — A Hard Verse

“Otherwise, what will those do who are baptized for the dead, if the dead are not raised at all? Why then are they baptized for them?”
Paul now gives another argument for the resurrection.
This verse is one of the hardest in the Bible.
Bible students have offered many explanations.
Some believe that some people in Corinth were being baptized on behalf of believers who had died without being baptized.
Paul does not approve of it.
He simply points out that even their practice assumes the dead will rise.
Some believe it refers to people who were baptized because of the testimony of believers who had died, hoping to be reunited with them.
Some believe it refers to being baptized with a view to one's own death and resurrection.
Whatever the exact meaning, Paul's point is clear.
Without the resurrection, the practice makes no sense.
The Bible nowhere else teaches baptism for the dead, and no doctrine should be built on this one unclear verse.

Cross References

Romans 6:3
Don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death?
Colossians 2:12
You were buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him through your faith in the power of God, who raised Him from the dead.

1 Peter 3:21

> And this water pictures baptism, which now saves you—not by washing dirt from the body, but as the pledge of a clear conscience toward God. It saves you through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Hard verses should be interpreted by clear ones.

Key Truth

Baptism points to death and resurrection with Christ.

XXX. IN DANGER EVERY HOUR

1 Corinthians 15:30 — Why Take Risks?

“And why are we in danger every hour?”
Paul gives a personal argument.
The apostles lived in constant danger.
Beatings.
Prison.
Shipwrecks.
Mobs.
Why would they risk their lives every hour if there was no resurrection?
Their willingness to suffer shows how certain they were of the risen Christ.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 11:26

> I have been on many journeys. I have faced danger from rivers, from robbers, from my own people, from the Gentiles, in the city, in the wilderness, at sea, and from false believers.

2 Corinthians 4:11

> For we who are alive are always being handed over to death for Jesus' sake, so that His life may also be seen in our mortal bodies.

Romans 8:36

> As Scripture says: “For Your sake we face death all day long. We are treated like sheep led to be slaughtered.”

Spiritual Principle

The hope of resurrection gives courage to face danger.

XXXI. I DIE DAILY

1 Corinthians 15:31 — Paul's Solemn Affirmation

“I affirm, by the boasting in you which I have in Christ Jesus our Lord, I die daily.”
Paul makes a solemn statement.
“I die daily.”
Every day, Paul faced the possibility of death.

Every day, he gave up his life for Christ.
He swears by his joy in the Corinthians that this is true.
A man does not live this way for a lie.
He lives this way because he knows death is not the end.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 4:10
We always carry in our bodies the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

2 Corinthians 1:9
In fact, we felt we had received the sentence of death. But this happened so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God, who raises the dead.

Galatians 2:20
I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.

Spiritual Principle

Following Christ means dying to self every day.

Application

What do you need to give up to Christ today?

XXXII. LET US EAT AND DRINK

1 Corinthians 15:32 — If the Dead Are Not Raised

“If I fought wild beasts at Ephesus with merely human motives, what did I gain? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.””
Paul gives an example.
“If I fought wild beasts at Ephesus.”
This may describe a real fight with animals.
More likely, it describes the fierce opposition Paul faced from people in Ephesus who acted like wild beasts.
“What did I gain?”
If there is no resurrection, nothing.
Then Paul quotes Isaiah:
“Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.”
If there is no life after death, why not just live for pleasure?
Without the resurrection, there is no reason to live for anything beyond this life.

Cross References

Isaiah 22:13
But instead there was joy and celebration, killing cattle and sheep, eating meat and drinking wine. “Let us eat and drink,” you said, “for tomorrow we die!”

Acts 19:29
Soon the whole city was in an uproar. The people rushed into the theater, dragging along Gaius and Aristarchus, Paul's traveling companions from Macedonia.

Luke 12:19
And I will say to myself, “You have plenty of good things stored up for many years. Relax. Eat, drink, and enjoy yourself.”

Spiritual Principle

What we believe about the future shapes how we live today.

XXXIII. BAD COMPANY

1 Corinthians 15:33 — Corrupts Good Morals

“Do not be deceived: “Bad company corrupts good morals.””
Paul quotes a well-known saying from a Greek poet.
“Bad company corrupts good morals.”
The people who denied the resurrection were having a bad influence on the church.
Their wrong beliefs were leading to wrong living.
The company we keep shapes the way we think and live.

Cross References

Proverbs 13:20
Walk with the wise and become wise, but a companion of fools will suffer harm.
1 Corinthians 5:6
Your bragging is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works its way through the whole batch of dough?
Galatians 6:7
Do not be fooled: God cannot be mocked. A person harvests what he plants.

Spiritual Principle

The people we spend time with shape what we believe and how we live.

Application

Who is shaping your thinking?

XXXIV. WAKE UP

1 Corinthians 15:34 — Do Not Sin

“Wake up to righteousness, and do not sin; for some do not have the knowledge of God—I say this to your shame.”
Paul gives a wake-up call.
“Wake up to righteousness.”
Like a person shaking off a drunken sleep.
“And do not sin.”
Wrong beliefs about the resurrection were leading to sinful living.
“For some do not have the knowledge of God.”
Some in the church did not truly know God.

“I say this to your shame.”
The Corinthians boasted of their knowledge.
Yet some among them did not even know God.

Cross References

Romans 13:11
Do this because you know what time it is. It is time to wake up from sleep, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed.
Ephesians 5:14
This is why it is said: “Wake up, sleeper! Rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you.”
Hosea 4:6
My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as My priests. Because you have forgotten the law of your God, I will also forget your children.

Spiritual Principle

Right belief about the resurrection leads to right living.

XXXV. HOW ARE THE DEAD RAISED?

1 Corinthians 15:35 — With What Kind of Body?

“But someone will ask, “How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?””
Paul now answers the objections.
Someone asks two questions.
“How are the dead raised?”
How is it even possible?
Bodies decay.
Some are burned.
Some are lost at sea.
“With what kind of body do they come?”
Will we have the same body?
A sick body?
An old body?
These were real questions.
And Paul answers them.

Cross References

Ezekiel 37:3
He asked me, “Son of man, can these bones live?” I answered, “Sovereign LORD, only You know.”
John 11:24
Martha answered, “I know he will rise again in the resurrection on the last day.”
Acts 26:8
Why do any of you think it is impossible for God to raise the dead?

Spiritual Principle

Honest questions about the resurrection have answers in God's word.

XXXVI. WHAT YOU SOW MUST DIE

1 Corinthians 15:36 — The Picture of a Seed

“Foolish one! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”
Paul answers sharply.
“Foolish one!”
The answer is all around you in nature.
“What you sow does not come to life unless it dies.”
A farmer plants a seed.
The seed goes into the ground and seems to die.
But from that seed comes new life.
Death is not the end of the seed.
It is the doorway to a new kind of life.
Jesus used the same picture to describe His own death and resurrection.

Cross References

John 12:24
> I tell you the truth, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it stays only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

Galatians 6:8
> Whoever plants to please his sinful nature will harvest destruction from that nature. But whoever plants to please the Spirit will harvest eternal life from the Spirit.

1 Peter 1:23
> For you have been born again, not from a seed that perishes, but from one that cannot perish—through the living and lasting word of God.

Spiritual Principle

In God's design, death can be the doorway to new life.

XXXVII. A BARE GRAIN

1 Corinthians 15:37 — Not the Body That Is to Be

“What you sow is not the body that is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of some other grain.”
Paul continues the picture.
“What you sow is not the body that is to be.”
When you plant a seed, you do not plant the full-grown plant.
You plant something small and plain.
“But a bare grain.”
A tiny seed of wheat looks nothing like a field of golden grain.
Yet the plant comes from the seed.
There is both connection and change.
The resurrection body will be connected to our present body.
But it will be far more glorious.

Cross References

Mark 4:26
He also said, “God's kingdom is like a man who scatters seed on the ground.
Mark 4:27
He sleeps and gets up, night and day, and the seed sprouts and grows, though he does not know how.
Matthew 13:31
He told them another parable: “The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that a man took and planted in his field.”

Spiritual Principle

Our resurrection body will be connected to our present body, yet far more glorious.

XXXVIII. GOD GIVES IT A BODY

1 Corinthians 15:38 — As He Has Determined

“But God gives it a body as He has determined, and to each kind of seed its own body.”
Who makes the seed grow into a plant?
“God gives it a body.”
God does it.
“As He has determined.”
God decides what kind of body each seed will have.
“And to each kind of seed its own body.”
Wheat produces wheat.
Barley produces barley.
God, who does this in nature every season, can certainly raise the dead.

Cross References

Genesis 1:11
Then God said, “Let the earth produce plants: plants that make seeds, and fruit trees on the earth that bear fruit with seeds in it, each according to its kind.” And it was so.
Genesis 1:12
The earth produced plants: plants making seeds according to their kinds, and trees bearing fruit with seeds in it according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.
Matthew 6:30
If that is how God clothes the grass of the field, which is here today and thrown into the fire tomorrow, won't He clothe you even more, you people of little faith?

Spiritual Principle

The God who gives life to every seed can give resurrection life to His people.

XXXIX. NOT ALL FLESH IS THE SAME

1 Corinthians 15:39 — People, Animals, Birds, Fish

“Not all flesh is the same: people have one kind of flesh, animals another, birds another, and fish another.”
Paul gives another example.
God has made many different kinds of bodies.
People.
Animals.
Birds.
Fish.
Each one is suited to its own life.
If God can create so many kinds of bodies, He can create a resurrection body suited to eternal life.

Cross References

Genesis 1:24
> Then God said, “Let the earth produce living creatures according to their kinds: livestock, creatures that crawl on the ground, and wild animals, each according to its kind.” And it was so.

Genesis 1:25
> God made the wild animals according to their kinds, the livestock according to their kinds, and all the creatures that crawl on the ground according to their kinds. And God saw that it was good.

Genesis 1:20
> Then God said, “Let the waters swarm with living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth across the open sky.”

Spiritual Principle

God's creativity has no limits.

XL. HEAVENLY AND EARTHLY BODIES

1 Corinthians 15:40 — Different Kinds of Glory

“There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies; but the glory of the heavenly is one kind, and the glory of the earthly is another.”
Paul widens the picture.
There are **earthly bodies**—people, animals, plants.
There are **heavenly bodies**—the sun, the moon, the stars.
Each has its own kind of glory.
The point is that God gives different kinds of glory to different kinds of bodies.
Our resurrection bodies will have a glory suited to heaven.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 5:1
> We know that if the earthly tent we live in is torn down, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Philippians 3:21
By the power that lets Him bring everything under His control, He will change our weak earthly bodies to be like His glorious body.
Psalm 19:1
The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky shows the work of His hands.

Spiritual Principle

God gives each kind of body its own kind of glory.

XLI. STAR DIFFERS FROM STAR

1 Corinthians 15:41 — The Sun, Moon, and Stars

“The sun has one kind of glory, the moon another, and the stars another; and star differs from star in glory.”
Paul looks up at the sky.
The sun shines brightly.
The moon glows softly.
The stars sparkle.
And even each star is different.
God loves variety.
His creation is full of different kinds of beauty.

Cross References

Genesis 1:16
God made two great lights—the greater light to rule the day and the lesser light to rule the night. He also made the stars.
Psalm 19:1
The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky shows the work of His hands.
Daniel 12:3
Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

Spiritual Principle

God's creation shows endless variety of glory.

Key Truth

Daniel says those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever.

XLII. PERISHABLE AND IMPERISHABLE

1 Corinthians 15:42 — So It Is with the Resurrection

“So it is with the resurrection of the dead: what is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.”
Now Paul applies his examples.

“So it is with the resurrection of the dead.”
He gives four contrasts in verses 42–44.
The first:
“What is sown is perishable, what is raised is imperishable.”
Our present bodies grow old, get sick, and die.
They decay.
But our resurrection bodies will never decay.
They will never wear out.
They will last forever.

Cross References

1 Peter 1:4
and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. It is kept in heaven for you,
1 Peter 1:23
For you have been born again, not from a seed that perishes, but from one that cannot perish—through the living and lasting word of God.
2 Corinthians 5:1
We know that if the earthly tent we live in is torn down, we have a building from God, an eternal house in heaven, not built by human hands.

Spiritual Principle

Our resurrection bodies will never decay.

XLIII. DISHONOR AND GLORY, WEAKNESS AND POWER

1 Corinthians 15:43 — Raised in Glory and Power

“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”
Paul gives the next two contrasts.
“It is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory.”
There is nothing glorious about death.
A body in a grave is a picture of humiliation.
But it will be raised in glory, shining with God's beauty.
“It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”
A dead body is completely weak.
It cannot move.
But it will be raised in power, full of strength and life.

Cross References

Philippians 3:21
By the power that lets Him bring everything under His control, He will change our weak earthly bodies to be like His glorious body.
2 Corinthians 13:4
It is true that He was crucified in weakness, but He lives by God's power. We also are weak in Him, but by God's power we will live with Him in order to serve you.

Daniel 12:3

> Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness will shine like the stars forever and ever.

Spiritual Principle

What is buried in weakness and dishonor will be raised in power and glory.

Application

If you struggle with weakness, illness, or age, remember that God has promised you a body of glory and power.

XLIV. A SPIRITUAL BODY

1 Corinthians 15:44 — Natural and Spiritual

“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”
The fourth contrast.
“It is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”
What is a **spiritual body?**
It does not mean a body made of spirit, like a ghost.
Jesus' resurrection body could be touched.
He ate food.
A **spiritual body** is a real body, fully empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit.
Our natural bodies are suited for life in this world.
Our spiritual bodies will be suited for life in God's eternal kingdom.
“If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.”
Just as surely as we have these bodies now, we will have resurrection bodies then.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 2:14

> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.

John 3:6

> Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.

Romans 8:11

> If the Spirit of the One who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, then the One who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit, who lives in you.

Spiritual Principle

A spiritual body is a real body fully empowered by God's Spirit.

Key Truth

Heaven is not a place of floating spirits.
It is a place of glorified, resurrected people.

XLV. THE FIRST ADAM AND THE LAST ADAM

1 Corinthians 15:45 — A Life-Giving Spirit

“So it is written: “The first man Adam became a living being.” The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”
Paul compares Adam and Christ.
“The first man Adam became a living being.”
God breathed life into Adam, and he became alive.
He received life.
“The last Adam became a life-giving spirit.”
Jesus is the **last Adam.**
He is the head of a new humanity.
And He does more than receive life.
He **gives** life.
Through His resurrection, He gives resurrection life to all who belong to Him.

Cross References

Genesis 2:7
> Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Romans 5:14
> Yet death ruled from the time of Adam to the time of Moses, even over those who did not sin by breaking a command as Adam did. Adam was a picture of the One who was to come.

John 5:21
> For just as the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so the Son gives life to whomever He wants.

Spiritual Principle

Adam received life; Christ gives life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The first Adam brought us into a dying world; the last Adam brings us into eternal life.

XLVI. FIRST THE NATURAL

1 Corinthians 15:46 — Then the Spiritual

“However, the spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual.”
Paul explains God's order.
“The spiritual did not come first, but the natural.”
We begin with natural bodies.
“And after that the spiritual.”
We will end with spiritual bodies.

God's plan moves from good to better.
From earthly to heavenly.
From what is temporary to what is eternal.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 2:14
The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from God's Spirit. They seem foolish to him, and he cannot understand them, because they can only be understood with the Spirit's help.
Romans 8:5
Those who live by their sinful nature set their minds on what that nature wants. But those who live by the Spirit set their minds on what the Spirit wants.
Genesis 2:7
Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.

Spiritual Principle

God's plan moves His people from the natural to the spiritual, from the temporary to the eternal.

XLVII. THE LORD FROM HEAVEN

1 Corinthians 15:47 — Dust and Heaven

“The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second man is the Lord from heaven.”
Paul continues the contrast.
“The first man was of the earth, made of dust.”
Adam was formed from the ground.
“The second man is the Lord from heaven.”
Jesus came down from heaven.
He is truly man.
But He is also the Lord who came from heaven.
This is a clear statement of who Jesus is.

Cross References

Genesis 2:7
Then the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being.
John 3:13
No one has gone up into heaven except the One who came down from heaven—the Son of Man.
John 6:38
For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but to do the will of the One who sent Me.

Spiritual Principle

Jesus is the Lord from heaven who became man to save us.

XLVIII. THOSE WHO ARE OF HEAVEN

1 Corinthians 15:48 — Like Their Head

“As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust; and as is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.”
Paul shows how we are connected to Adam and to Christ.
“As was the man of dust, so are those who are of the dust.”
Everyone born of Adam shares his earthly, mortal nature.
“As is the heavenly man, so also are those who are of heaven.”
Everyone who belongs to Christ will share His heavenly nature.
We become like the one we belong to.

Cross References

Philippians 3:20
> But our citizenship is in heaven, and we eagerly wait for a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ.

1 John 3:2
> Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been shown. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is.

Romans 8:29
> For those God knew ahead of time, He also chose to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Spiritual Principle

Those who belong to Christ will become like Him.

XLIX. THE IMAGE OF THE HEAVENLY MAN

1 Corinthians 15:49 — We Will Bear His Image

“And just as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we will also bear the image of the heavenly man.”
This is a wonderful promise.
“Just as we have borne the image of the man of dust.”
We look like Adam.
We share his weakness, his sin, and his death.
“We will also bear the image of the heavenly man.”
One day we will look like Jesus.
We will share His glory, His holiness, and His life.
God's goal is to make us like His Son.

Cross References

Romans 8:29
For those God knew ahead of time, He also chose to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.
1 John 3:2
Dear friends, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet been shown. But we know that when Christ appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him as He really is.
2 Corinthians 3:18
And all of us, with unveiled faces, see the Lord's glory as if in a mirror, and we are being changed into His likeness with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit.

Spiritual Principle

God's goal is to make His people like Jesus.

Key Truth

You look like Adam now.
You will look like Jesus forever.

L. FLESH AND BLOOD CANNOT INHERIT

1 Corinthians 15:50 — Perishable Cannot Inherit the Imperishable

“Now this I say, brothers and sisters, flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does perishable inherit imperishable.”
Paul explains why we must be changed.
“Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God.”
Flesh and blood means our present, mortal human nature.
Our bodies as they are now are not fit for God's eternal kingdom.
“Nor does perishable inherit imperishable.”
What decays cannot inherit what lasts forever.
We must be transformed.

Cross References

John 3:6
Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit.
Galatians 5:21
envy, drunkenness, wild parties, and other things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.
1 Peter 1:4
and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. It is kept in heaven for you,

Spiritual Principle

Our mortal bodies must be transformed to enter God's eternal kingdom.

LI. A MYSTERY

1 Corinthians 15:51 — We Shall All Be Changed

“Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,”
Paul reveals something new.
“Behold, I tell you a mystery.”
A truth that was hidden but is now revealed.
“We shall not all sleep.”
Not every believer will die.
Some will still be alive when Jesus returns.
“But we shall all be changed.”
Whether dead or alive, every believer will be transformed.
The dead will be raised.
The living will be changed.
All will receive glorious, imperishable bodies.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 4:15
> According to the Lord's own word, we tell you this: we who are still alive and remain until the Lord comes will certainly not go ahead of those who have fallen asleep.

1 Thessalonians 4:17
> After that, we who are still alive will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever.

Romans 11:25
> I do not want you to be unaware of this secret truth, brothers and sisters, so that you will not think you are wiser than you are: part of Israel has been hardened until the full number of Gentiles has come in.

Spiritual Principle

Every believer, living or dead, will be changed when Christ returns.

LII. IN THE TWINKLING OF AN EYE

1 Corinthians 15:52 — At the Last Trumpet

“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”
Paul describes how fast this will happen.
“In a moment.”
The word is the source of our word **atom**—something so small it cannot be divided.
An instant.
“In the twinkling of an eye.”
Faster than a blink.
“At the last trumpet.”
In the Bible, trumpets announced God's great acts.

This final trumpet will announce Christ's return.
“The dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.”
In a single instant, every believer will be transformed.

Cross References

1 Thessalonians 4:16
> For the Lord Himself will come down from heaven with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet call of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first.

Matthew 24:31
> He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His chosen people from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.

Revelation 11:15
> Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet, and loud voices in heaven said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever.”

Spiritual Principle

Christ's return and our transformation will happen in an instant.

Application

Live ready.
It could happen in the twinkling of an eye.

LIII. PUTTING ON IMMORTALITY

1 Corinthians 15:53 — Corruptible and Mortal

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”
Paul uses the picture of putting on new clothes.
“This corruptible must put on incorruption.”
Our decaying bodies will be clothed with bodies that never decay.
“This mortal must put on immortality.”
Our dying bodies will be clothed with bodies that never die.
Notice the word **“this.”**
It is **this** body that will be changed.
God will not throw our bodies away.
He will transform them.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 5:4
> While we live in this tent, we groan under our burden. We do not want to take it off, but to put on our heavenly body, so that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

Romans 2:7
> To those who keep on doing good and seek glory, honor, and immortality, He will give eternal life.

1 Peter 1:4
> and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade. It is kept in heaven for you,

Spiritual Principle

God will not discard our bodies; He will transform them.

LIV. DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP

1 Corinthians 15:54 — In Victory

“So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.””
When the transformation happens, God's promise will be fulfilled.
Paul quotes Isaiah:
“Death is swallowed up in victory.”
Death has swallowed every human being since Adam.
But one day, death itself will be swallowed.
Completely.
Forever.
Victory will swallow death.

Cross References

Isaiah 25:8
> He will swallow up death forever. The Sovereign LORD will wipe away the tears from every face and remove His people's disgrace from all the earth. The LORD has spoken.

Revelation 21:4
> He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, because the old things have passed away.

Revelation 20:14
> Then death and the grave were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death.

Spiritual Principle

Death, which has swallowed all people, will itself be swallowed up in victory.

LV. O DEATH, WHERE IS YOUR STING?

1 Corinthians 15:55 — O Grave, Where Is Your Victory?

“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”
Paul bursts into a song of triumph.
He quotes Hosea and taunts death itself.
“O death, where is your sting?”
Death once had a deadly sting, like a scorpion or a bee.
But Jesus took the sting.
“O grave, where is your victory?”
The grave once seemed to win every battle.
But Jesus walked out of the grave.
Death has lost.
The grave has lost.

For the believer, death is no longer something to fear.

Cross References

Hosea 13:14
I will rescue them from the power of the grave. I will redeem them from death. Death, where are your plagues? Grave, where is your destruction?
Revelation 21:4
He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death, sorrow, crying, or pain, because the old things have passed away.
2 Timothy 1:10
and now it has been revealed through the appearing of our Savior, Christ Jesus. He has destroyed death and has brought life and immortality to light through the good news.

Spiritual Principle

For those in Christ, death has lost its sting and the grave has lost its victory.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Believers can look death in the face and say, “You have already lost.”

LVI. THE STING OF DEATH IS SIN

1 Corinthians 15:56 — The Power of Sin Is the Law

“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law.”
Paul explains what makes death so terrible.
“The sting of death is sin.”
Death hurts because of sin.
Sin brings guilt.
Sin brings judgment.
Death is the doorway to facing God with our sin.
“And the power of sin is the law.”
God's law is good.
But it exposes our sin and condemns us.
It shows how far we fall short.
Without Christ, the law gives sin its power to condemn.

Cross References

Romans 6:23
For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.
Romans 7:7
What should we say then? Is the law sin? Absolutely not! But I would not have known what sin was except through the law. I would not have known what it is to covet if the law had not said, “Do not covet.”
1 John 3:4
Everyone who sins breaks the law, because sin is breaking the law.

Spiritual Principle

Death stings because of sin, and the law shows sin's guilt.

LVII. THANKS BE TO GOD

1 Corinthians 15:57 — The Victory Through Our Lord Jesus Christ

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Here is the answer.
“But thanks be to God.”
Paul cannot help but give thanks.
“Who gives us the victory.”
Victory over sin.
Victory over the law's condemnation.
Victory over death.
And it is a **gift.**
We do not win it.
God gives it.
“Through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
Jesus took the sting of death by dying for our sins.
He satisfied the law by fulfilling it.
He defeated death by rising from the grave.
His victory becomes ours.

Cross References

Romans 7:25
> Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!

1 John 5:4
> because everyone born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world: our faith.

2 Corinthians 2:14
> But thanks be to God, who always leads us in victory in Christ and through us spreads the knowledge of Him everywhere like a sweet fragrance.

Spiritual Principle

Victory over sin and death is God's gift through Jesus Christ.

Application

Give thanks to God today for the victory you have in Christ.

LVIII. STEADFAST AND IMMOVABLE

1 Corinthians 15:58 — Your Labor Is Not in Vain

“Therefore, my beloved brothers and sisters, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”
Paul ends this great chapter with a practical command.
“Therefore.”
Because Christ is risen.
Because we will be raised.
Because death is defeated.
“Be steadfast.”
Stand firm in your faith.
“Immovable.”
Do not let anything shake you.
“Always abounding in the work of the Lord.”
Give yourself fully and generously to serving Him.
“Knowing that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”
Nothing done for Christ is wasted.
Every prayer.
Every act of service.
Every word of witness.
Every sacrifice.
The resurrection guarantees that it all matters forever.

Cross References

Galatians 6:9
> So let us not grow tired of doing good, because at the right time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.

Hebrews 6:10
> God is not unfair. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown for His name as you have helped His people and continue to help them.

Colossians 1:23
> as long as you continue in your faith, firmly established and steady, not moving away from the hope of the good news you heard.

Spiritual Principle

Because Christ is risen, nothing done for Him is ever wasted.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The empty tomb guarantees that faithful work for Christ will last forever.

LIX. SIX GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 15

1. The Resurrection Is Central

“If Christ is not risen, then our preaching is useless, and your faith is also useless.”

Principle:

Without Christ's resurrection, faith and preaching are empty.

2. Christ Is the Firstfruits

“Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits.”

Principle:

His resurrection guarantees the resurrection of all believers.

3. Death Is Defeated

“The last enemy that will be destroyed is death.”

Principle:

The final enemy will be destroyed, and immortality will be given to the saints.

4. Our Bodies Will Be Changed

“It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power.”

Principle:

The resurrection body is spiritual, glorious, and incorruptible.

5. Victory Is in Christ

“O death, where is your sting?”

Principle:

Through Christ, death loses its sting, and the grave loses its power.

6. Steadfast Labor

“Your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”

Principle:

Since the resurrection is true, every effort for Christ matters eternally.

LX. THE WITNESSES OF THE RESURRECTION

Paul lists those who saw the risen Christ.

- Peter (Cephas).
- The Twelve.
- More than five hundred believers at one time.
- James, the brother of Jesus.
- All the apostles.
- Paul himself.

The Gospels add others.

- Mary Magdalene and the other women at the tomb.
- Two disciples on the road to Emmaus.
- Thomas, who doubted until he saw.
- Seven disciples by the Sea of Galilee.

Key Truth

The resurrection was seen by many people, on many occasions, in many places.

LXI. IF CHRIST IS NOT RISEN

In verses 13–19, Paul lists what would be true if Christ had not risen.

- Our preaching would be useless.
- Our faith would be useless.
- The apostles would be false witnesses about God.
- Our faith would be futile.
- We would still be in our sins.
- Those who died in Christ would be lost.
- We would be the most pitiful people of all.

But Christ Has Been Raised

Because He is risen, every one of these is reversed.

- Our preaching has power.
- Our faith has meaning.
- The apostles told the truth.
- Our sins are forgiven.
- Those who died in Christ will rise.
- Our hope reaches beyond this life.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Everything hangs on the empty tomb, and the tomb is empty.

LXII. OUR PRESENT BODY AND OUR RESURRECTION BODY

Verses 42–44 give four great contrasts.

Our Present Body

- Perishable.
- Sown in dishonor.
- Sown in weakness.
- A natural body.
- Bears the image of Adam.

Our Resurrection Body

- Imperishable.
- Raised in glory.
- Raised in power.
- A spiritual body.
- Bears the image of Christ.

Key Truth

Our resurrection bodies will be truly ours, yet transformed beyond anything we can imagine.

LXIII. ADAM AND CHRIST

Adam

- The first man.
- Made from the dust.
- Became a living being.
- Through him came death.
- In him all die.

Christ

- The last Adam and the second man.
- The Lord from heaven.
- Became a life-giving spirit.
- Through Him came the resurrection.
- In Him all will be made alive.

Key Truth

Every person is in Adam by birth, but only those in Christ will share His resurrection life.

LXIV. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 15 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Died for Our Sins

“Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.”

He Rose on the Third Day

“He rose again on the third day.”

He Is the Firstfruits

His resurrection guarantees ours.

He Is the Last Adam

He gives life to all who belong to Him.

He Is the Lord from Heaven

He came from heaven to save us.

He Reigns Until Every Enemy Is Defeated

“He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.”

He Gives Us the Victory

“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The Christ who died for us now lives for us, and because He lives, we will live too.

LXV. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What are the main truths of the gospel in verses 3–4?
Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
He was buried.
He rose again on the third day according to the Scriptures.

Question 2

Why does Paul list so many witnesses?

To show that the resurrection was a real event seen by many people.
Many of the witnesses were still alive and could be asked.

Question 3

Why were some in Corinth denying the resurrection?
Many Greeks believed the body was unimportant or even a prison for the soul.
They did not expect dead bodies to be raised.

Question 4

What would be true if Christ had not risen?
Preaching and faith would be useless.
We would still be in our sins.
Those who died in Christ would be lost.
We would be most to be pitied.

Question 5

What does it mean that Christ is the “firstfruits”?
He is the first part of the harvest.
His resurrection guarantees that all who belong to Him will also be raised.

Question 6

What is the difference between being “in Adam” and “in Christ”?
Everyone is born in Adam and shares his death.
Those who trust Christ are in Christ and will share His life.

Question 7

Does verse 28 mean the Son is less than the Father?
No.
The Son is fully God.
In His role as Savior and King, He joyfully presents everything to the Father so that God may be all in all.

Question 8

What does “baptized for the dead” mean?
It is one of the hardest verses in the Bible, and Bible students explain it in different ways.
Paul's point is that the practice assumes a resurrection.
No doctrine should be built on this one unclear verse.

Question 9

How does a seed help us understand the resurrection?
A seed is planted and seems to die, but it produces a new plant.
The plant is connected to the seed, yet far more glorious.
Our resurrection bodies will be connected to our present bodies, yet far more glorious.

Question 10

What is a “spiritual body”?
A real body fully empowered by the Holy Spirit.
It is not a ghost or a spirit without a body.
Jesus' resurrection body could be touched, and He ate food.

Question 11

What will happen to believers who are alive when Jesus returns?
They will be changed in an instant, in the twinkling of an eye.
They will receive imperishable bodies along with the believers who are raised.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 15 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 15 should cause believers to live:

- Standing firmly on the gospel.
- Confident that Christ truly rose.
- Free from the fear of death.
- Comforted when believing loved ones die.
- Living for eternity, not just this life.
- Waking up to righteousness.
- Giving thanks for the victory in Christ.
- Steadfast, immovable, and abounding in the Lord's work.

LXVI. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 15 asks several important questions.

Am I Standing on the Gospel?

Do I hold firmly to the message of Christ's death and resurrection?

Do I Believe Jesus Truly Rose?

Is the resurrection a fact I am staking my life on?

Am I in Adam or in Christ?

Have I trusted Christ for life?

Am I Afraid of Death?

Do I believe that death has lost its sting?

How Do I Grieve?

Do I grieve with hope for believers who have died?

Am I Living for This Life Only?

Or am I living with eternity in view?

Who Is Influencing Me?

Is bad company corrupting my thinking?

Am I Steadfast in the Lord's Work?

Do I believe my labor in the Lord is not in vain?

LXVII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“The Empty Tomb Changes Everything”

If Jesus stayed in the grave, nothing would matter.
Our faith would be empty.
Our sins would remain.
Our loved ones would be gone forever.
Our work for God would be wasted.
And death would have the final word.
But Jesus did not stay in the grave.
On the third day, He rose.
He was seen by Peter, by the Twelve, by more than five hundred, by James, by all the apostles, and by Paul.
And because He rose, everything changes.
Our faith is real.
Our sins are forgiven.
Our loved ones in Christ will rise.
Our bodies will be made new.
Our work for God will last forever.
And death does not have the final word.
Jesus does.
This creates a powerful principle.
Every Christian hope rests on the empty tomb.
And the tomb is empty.

Principle:

Because Christ is risen, death is defeated, and nothing done for Him is ever wasted.

LXVIII. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 15 was written to a church that was losing its grip on the resurrection.
Some thought the body did not matter.
Some thought the dead would not rise.

And their wrong beliefs were leading to wrong living.
Paul brought them back to the heart of the gospel.
Christ died for our sins.
He was buried.
He rose on the third day.
He was seen by many.
And because He lives, we will live too.
1 Corinthians 15 therefore reminds us:
Never let go of the gospel.
Never doubt that Christ is risen.
Never grieve without hope.
Never fear death as the final word.
Never think your work for Christ is wasted.
The church does not need a new message.
It needs:
A risen Savior.
A living hope.
A victory over death.
And believers who stand firm in the work of the Lord.
The same gospel still saves:
Tell people that Christ died for their sins.
Tell people that He rose from the dead.
Tell people that He is the firstfruits of a great harvest.
Tell people that death has lost its sting.
And until the trumpet sounds:
Stand firm.
Be immovable.
Abound in the work of the Lord.
Know that your labor is not in vain.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the gospel by which we are saved and in which we stand.
Thank You that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures.
Thank You that He was buried, and that He rose again on the third day.
Thank You for the many witnesses who saw Him alive.
Thank You that by Your grace we are what we are.
Thank You that Christ is the firstfruits, and that all who belong to Him will be raised.
Thank You that in Adam all die, but in Christ all will be made alive.
Thank You that He reigns, and that the last enemy, death, will be destroyed.
Thank You for the promise of bodies that are imperishable, glorious, powerful, and spiritual.
Thank You that we will bear the image of the heavenly Man.
Thank You that in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet, we will be changed.
Thank You that death is swallowed up in victory.
Forgive us when we have lived as if this life were all there is.
Forgive us when we have feared death more than we have trusted You.
Forgive us when we have grown tired in Your work.

Comfort those who grieve the loss of believing loved ones with the hope of the resurrection.
Wake us up to righteousness.
Make us steadfast and immovable.
Help us abound in the work of the Lord, knowing that our labor in You is not in vain.
And keep us ready for the day the trumpet sounds.
“O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory?”
“Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” — 1 Corinthians 15:57

Central Truth

Jesus Christ truly rose from the dead, and because He lives, all who belong to Him will be raised with glorious, imperishable bodies, so death is defeated and our labor in the Lord is never in vain.

1 Corinthians 15 in One Sentence

Paul declares that Christ died for our sins, was buried, rose on the third day, and was seen by many witnesses, shows that without the resurrection our faith is empty, explains that Christ is the firstfruits of a harvest in which believers will receive imperishable, glorious bodies, and celebrates the victory over death that calls us to stand firm in the Lord's work.

1 Corinthians Chapter 16 — Final Instructions and Closing Greetings

A Verse-by-Verse Bible Study from the Crawford Standard Bible

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 16 brings Paul's letter to a close.
After fifteen chapters of teaching, correction, and encouragement, Paul turns to practical matters.
Money.
Travel plans.
Coworkers.
Greetings.
At first, this chapter may seem less important than the great chapters on love and the resurrection.
But it is full of wisdom.
Right after the soaring truth of Chapter 15, Paul talks about a collection for the poor.
The resurrection hope does not lift believers away from real life.
It sends them into it.
Because our labor in the Lord is not in vain, we give, we plan, we serve, and we love.

Paul tells the Corinthians how to prepare an offering for the poor believers in Jerusalem.
He shares his travel plans, always open to the Lord's will.
He asks them to welcome Timothy and to respect faithful servants like Stephanas.
He gives five short commands that sum up the Christian life.
And he closes with greetings, a warning, a prayer, and a cry:
“Maranatha!”
“Our Lord, come!”
Notice how Paul ends a letter full of correction.
Not with anger.
With love.
“My love be with you all in Christ Jesus.”
The chapter moves through six movements:

- The Collection for the Saints (verses 1–4).
- Paul's Travel Plans (verses 5–9).
- Instructions Regarding Fellow Workers (verses 10–12).
- Exhortation to Stand Firm (verses 13–14).
- Commendation of Faithful Servants (verses 15–18).
- Final Greetings (verses 19–24).

The central truth of 1 Corinthians 16 is:
The hope of the resurrection leads believers to give generously, serve faithfully, stand firm, and do everything in love as they wait for the Lord to come.

I. THE COLLECTION FOR THE SAINTS

1 Corinthians 16:1 — As in Galatia

“Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so also you must do.”
Paul answers another question from the Corinthians' letter.
“Now concerning the collection for the saints.”
The **saints** here are the poor believers in Jerusalem.
The church in Jerusalem had faced famine, persecution, and poverty.
Paul was gathering an offering from the Gentile churches to help them.
This collection mattered to Paul for more than one reason.
It met real needs.
It showed love in action.
And it showed that Jewish and Gentile believers were one family in Christ.
“As I directed the churches of Galatia, so also you must do.”
The Corinthians were not being asked to do something unusual.
Other churches were giving too.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 8:1
Now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace God has given to the churches in Macedonia.
2 Corinthians 9:1
There is really no need for me to write to you about this service to God's people.

Romans 15:26

For the believers in Macedonia and Achaia were glad to give an offering for the poor among God's people in Jerusalem.

Spiritual Principle

Believers are called to care for the needs of other believers, even far away.

Key Truth

The church is one family across every nation.

II. ON THE FIRST DAY OF THE WEEK

1 Corinthians 16:2 — Set Aside as He May Prosper

“On the first day of the week, let each of you set aside something, saving it up as he may prosper, so that there will be no need for collections when I come.”
Paul gives practical guidance for giving.
When?
“On the first day of the week.”
Sunday, the day of Christ's resurrection.
The day the early church gathered for worship.
Who?
“Let each of you.”
Everyone, not just the wealthy.
How?
“Set aside something, saving it up.”
Regularly and with a plan.
How much?
“As he may prosper.”
In proportion to what God has given.
Why?
“So that there will be no need for collections when I come.”
Paul did not want a last-minute rush or pressure.
He wanted thoughtful, faithful giving.

Cross References

Acts 20:7

On the first day of the week, we gathered to break bread. Paul spoke to the people, and since he planned to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

2 Corinthians 9:7

Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give. Do not give reluctantly or because you feel forced, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Malachi 3:10

“Bring the whole tenth into the storehouse, so that there will be food in My house. Test Me in this,” says the LORD of Armies, “and see if I will not open the windows of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”

Spiritual Principle

Christian giving should be regular, personal, planned, and proportional.

Application

Do you have a plan for giving?
Does your giving reflect how God has blessed you?

III. YOUR GIFT TO JERUSALEM

1 Corinthians 16:3 — Approved Messengers

“When I arrive, those you approve by letters I will send with your gift to Jerusalem.”
Paul shows great care in handling money.
“Those you approve.”
The church itself would choose trustworthy people to carry the gift.
“By letters.”
Paul would send letters of introduction with them.
“With your gift to Jerusalem.”
Notice that Paul calls it **“your gift.”**
It was the Corinthians' gift, not Paul's.
Paul made sure that everything was open and honest.
No one could accuse him of using the money for himself.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 8:19
> Not only that, but the churches chose him to travel with us as we carry this offering, which we are handling to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.

Acts 11:29
> The disciples decided that each of them, according to his ability, would send help to the believers living in Judea.

Romans 15:25
> But now I am on my way to Jerusalem to serve God's people there.

Spiritual Principle

Money given to God's work must be handled with honesty and accountability.

Key Truth

Integrity in handling money protects the church's witness.

IV. IF IT IS APPROPRIATE

1 Corinthians 16:4 — They Will Accompany Me

“If it is appropriate for me to go also, they will accompany me.”
Paul was not sure yet whether he would go to Jerusalem himself.
If he did, the church's messengers would travel with him.

Either way, the gift would be carried by people the church trusted.
In the end, Paul did go to Jerusalem with the offering, along with representatives from many churches.

Cross References

Acts 20:4

> He was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia.

2 Corinthians 8:19

> Not only that, but the churches chose him to travel with us as we carry this offering, which we are handling to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.

Acts 24:17

> After several years away, I came to Jerusalem to bring gifts for the poor of my nation and to present offerings.

Spiritual Principle

Wise leaders make plans while staying open to God's direction.

V. THROUGH MACEDONIA

1 Corinthians 16:5 — Paul's Route

“I will come to you after I pass through Macedonia—for I am passing through Macedonia—”
Paul shares his travel plans.
He was in Ephesus.
He planned to travel north through Macedonia, visiting the churches there.
Then he would come south to Corinth.
Paul cared about all the churches.
He wanted to strengthen each one.

Cross References

Acts 19:21

> After all this happened, Paul decided, led by the Spirit, to travel through Macedonia and Achaia and then go to Jerusalem. “After I have been there,” he said, “I must also visit Rome.”

2 Corinthians 1:16

> I wanted to visit you on my way to Macedonia and again on my way back, and then have you send me on to Judea.

Acts 20:1

> When the uproar had ended, Paul sent for the disciples and encouraged them. Then he said goodbye and set out for Macedonia.

Spiritual Principle

Gospel work involves careful planning.

VI. PERHAPS I WILL STAY

1 Corinthians 16:6 — Spending the Winter

“and perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey wherever I go.”
Paul hoped to stay longer in Corinth.
“Perhaps I will stay with you, or even spend the winter.”
In the ancient world, sea travel stopped during winter because storms made it dangerous.
Paul might stay in Corinth until spring.
“So that you may help me on my journey wherever I go.”
Paul hoped the Corinthians would support his next missionary journey.
Notice the word **“perhaps.”**
Paul held his plans loosely.

Cross References

Titus 3:12
> When I send Artemas or Tychicus to you, do your best to come to me at Nicopolis, because I have decided to spend the winter there.

Romans 15:24
> I plan to visit you when I go to Spain. I hope to see you as I pass through, and to have you help me on my journey there after I have enjoyed your company for a while.

Acts 15:3
> The church sent them on their way. As they traveled through Phoenicia and Samaria, they told how the Gentiles had turned to God. This news brought great joy to all the believers.

Spiritual Principle

Churches share in the mission when they help send God's servants on their way.

VII. IF THE LORD PERMITS

1 Corinthians 16:7 — Not Just in Passing

“For I do not wish to see you now only in passing, but I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.”
Paul wanted more than a quick visit.
“I do not wish to see you now only in passing.”
The Corinthians had many problems.
Paul wanted to spend real time with them.
“I hope to remain with you for some time.”
Then he adds an important phrase:
“If the Lord permits.”
Paul made plans.
But he submitted every plan to God.

Cross References

Acts 18:21
But as he left, he promised, “I will come back to you if God wants me to.” Then he sailed from Ephesus.
James 4:15
Instead, you should say, “If the Lord wants, we will live and do this or that.”
Romans 1:10
In my prayers I always ask that now at last, by God's will, the way may be opened for me to come to you.

Spiritual Principle

Make your plans, but always add, “If the Lord permits.”

Application

Are you holding your plans in submission to God's will?

VIII. IN EPHESUS UNTIL PENTECOST

1 Corinthians 16:8 — Where Paul Was Writing

“But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost,”
This verse tells us where Paul wrote this letter.
He was in **Ephesus**, a great city across the sea from Corinth.
He planned to stay there **until Pentecost.**
Pentecost was a Jewish feast that came fifty days after Passover.
This suggests Paul was writing in the spring.
It may also explain why he spoke of Christ as our Passover Lamb in Chapter 5.

Cross References

Acts 19:1
While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the inland regions and came to Ephesus. There he found some disciples.
Acts 2:1
When the day of Pentecost came, they were all together in one place.
Acts 20:16
Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus so that he would not spend time in the province of Asia. He was hurrying to reach Jerusalem, if possible, by the day of Pentecost.

Spiritual Principle

God works through real people in real places at real times.

IX. A GREAT AND EFFECTIVE DOOR

1 Corinthians 16:9 — And Many Adversaries

“because a great and effective door has opened for me, and there are many adversaries.”

Paul explains why he was staying in Ephesus.
“A great and effective door has opened for me.”
God had given Paul a wonderful opportunity.
In Ephesus, Paul taught daily for two years.
The gospel spread throughout the region.
“And there are many adversaries.”
Notice the word **“and.”**
Not **“but.”**
Opportunity and opposition came together.
In fact, the opposition was a sign that God was at work.
Paul did not see opposition as a reason to leave.
He saw it as a reason to stay.

Cross References

2 Corinthians 2:12

> When I came to Troas to preach the good news of Christ, I found that the Lord had opened a door for me.

Acts 19:9

> But some of them became stubborn and refused to believe, and they spoke evil of the Way in front of the crowd. So Paul left them, took the disciples with him, and taught every day in the lecture hall of Tyrannus.

Colossians 4:3

> At the same time, pray for us too, that God will open a door for our message, so that we can tell the secret truth about Christ, for which I am in chains.

Spiritual Principle

Open doors and opposition often come together.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Opposition does not mean the door is closed; it often means the door is open.

X. IF TIMOTHY COMES

1 Corinthians 16:10 — Without Fear

“If Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear, for he is doing the Lord's work as I also do.”
Paul had sent Timothy ahead.
“See that he may be with you without fear.”
Timothy was young.
He may have been timid.
And the Corinthian church could be difficult.
Paul asks them to welcome him and make him feel safe.
“For he is doing the Lord's work as I also do.”
Timothy's authority came from the work he was doing.
He was serving the Lord just as Paul was.

Cross References

1 Timothy 4:12
Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young. Instead, set an example for the believers in your speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity.
1 Corinthians 4:17
That is why I have sent Timothy to you. He is my dear and faithful son in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church.
Philippians 2:19
I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may also be encouraged when I hear news about you.

Spiritual Principle

Churches should welcome and encourage those who serve them.

Application

Is there a young or new servant in your church who needs your encouragement?

XI. LET NO ONE DESPISE HIM

1 Corinthians 16:11 — Send Him in Peace

“Therefore let no one despise him, but send him on his way in peace, that he may come to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.”
Paul continues.
“Let no one despise him.”
The proud Corinthians might look down on a young man like Timothy.
Paul says, **“Don't.”**
“But send him on his way in peace.”
Treat him well and help him on his journey.
“For I am expecting him with the brothers.”
Paul was waiting to hear Timothy's report.

Cross References

Titus 2:15
Teach these things. Encourage and correct with full authority. Do not let anyone look down on you.
3 John 1:6
They have told the church about your love. Please send them on their journey in a way that honors God.
Acts 15:33
After spending some time there, they were sent off in peace by the believers to return to those who had sent them.

Spiritual Principle

God's servants should be honored for their work, not judged by their age or appearance.

XII. OUR BROTHER APOLLOS

1 Corinthians 16:12 — Not His Will to Come Now

“As for our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to come to you with the brothers, but it was not his will to come now; he will come when he has opportunity.”
This verse is beautiful.
Remember the divisions in Chapter 1.
“I follow Paul.”
“I follow Apollos.”
Some thought Paul and Apollos were rivals.
But Paul calls him **“our brother Apollos.”**
And Paul **“strongly urged”** him to visit Corinth.
There was no jealousy between them.
“But it was not his will to come now.”
Apollos decided not to go yet.
Perhaps he did not want to make the divisions worse by showing up.
“He will come when he has opportunity.”
Paul respected Apollos' decision.

Cross References

Acts 18:24
> Meanwhile, a Jew named Apollos, who was born in Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was a gifted speaker and knew the Scriptures very well.

1 Corinthians 3:6
> I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow.

Titus 3:13
> Do everything you can to help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way, and see that they have everything they need.

Spiritual Principle

True servants of God are partners, not rivals.

Key Truth

The Corinthians tried to set Paul and Apollos against each other.
Paul and Apollos never played that game.

XIII. BE WATCHFUL, STAND FIRM

1 Corinthians 16:13 — Courage and Strength

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act with courage, be strong.”
Paul gives four short commands, like a commander calling to his soldiers.
Be watchful.
Stay alert.
Watch for danger, false teaching, and temptation.

Watch for the Lord's return.
Stand firm in the faith.
Do not be moved by every new idea.
Hold on to the truth of the gospel.
Act with courage.
The phrase literally means **“act like men”**—be brave and mature.
Do not be childish or fearful.
Be strong.
Not in your own strength, but in the Lord's.
These commands sum up much of what Paul has taught in the letter.

Cross References

Ephesians 6:10
> Finally, be strong in the Lord and in His mighty power.

1 Peter 5:8
> Be alert and clear-minded. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour.

Joshua 1:9
> Haven't I commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be afraid or discouraged, because the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian life calls for watchfulness, firmness, courage, and strength.

Application

Which of these four commands do you most need to obey today?

XIV. LET ALL BE DONE IN LOVE

1 Corinthians 16:14 — The Final Command

“Let all that you do be done in love.”
After four commands that sound like a soldier's orders, Paul adds a fifth.
“Let all that you do be done in love.”
This balances everything.
Being watchful without love becomes suspicious.
Standing firm without love becomes stubborn.
Courage without love becomes harsh.
Strength without love becomes proud.
Love must guide it all.
This one verse sums up the whole letter.
Divisions, lawsuits, food, worship, gifts—every problem in Corinth would have been solved by love.

Cross References

Colossians 3:14
> And over all these, put on love, which ties everything together in perfect unity.

1 Peter 4:8
Above all, keep loving one another deeply, because love covers a multitude of sins.
Romans 14:15
If your brother or sister is hurt by what you eat, you are no longer living in love. Do not let what you eat destroy someone for whom Christ died.

Spiritual Principle

Love must guide everything we do.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Strength without love becomes harshness; love without strength becomes weakness; Christ calls us to both.

XV. THE HOUSEHOLD OF STEPHANAS

1 Corinthians 16:15 — Devoted to Service

“You know the household of Stephanas—that they were the first converts in Achaia, and that they devoted themselves to the service of the saints—”
Paul points to a faithful family.
“The household of Stephanas.”
Paul had baptized this family himself.
“They were the first converts in Achaia.”
They were the firstfruits of the gospel in that region.
“And they devoted themselves to the service of the saints.”
The word means they **appointed themselves.**
No one assigned them.
They saw the needs and gave themselves to meet them.
This is the heart of a servant.

Cross References

1 Corinthians 1:16
I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I don't remember if I baptized anyone else.
Romans 16:5
Also greet the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first person in the province of Asia to believe in Christ.
Hebrews 6:10
God is not unfair. He will not forget your work and the love you have shown for His name as you have helped His people and continue to help them.

Spiritual Principle

True servants see needs and give themselves to meet them.

Key Truth

God notices those who devote themselves to serving His people.

XVI. SUBMIT TO SUCH AS THESE

1 Corinthians 16:16 — Every Fellow Worker

“be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer.”
Paul tells the church how to respond to faithful servants.
“Be subject to such as these.”
Follow their lead.
Respect their guidance.
“And to every fellow worker and laborer.”
Not just Stephanas, but everyone who works hard in the Lord's service.
Notice what earns this respect.
Not wealth.
Not eloquence.
Not impressive gifts.
Faithful service.

Cross References

Hebrews 13:17
> Obey your leaders and follow their direction. They watch over your souls as people who must give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with sorrow, since that would not help you.

1 Thessalonians 5:12
> Brothers and sisters, we ask you to respect those who work hard among you, who lead you in the Lord and give you guidance.

1 Peter 5:5
> In the same way, you who are younger, submit to those who are older. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.”

Spiritual Principle

Faithful service, not status, earns respect in the church.

XVII. STEPHANAS, FORTUNATUS, AND ACHAICUS

1 Corinthians 16:17 — Supplying What Was Lacking

“I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, for they supplied what was lacking on your part.”
Three men from Corinth had come to visit Paul in Ephesus.
They may have brought the Corinthians' letter with them.
“I rejoice at their coming.”
Their visit brought Paul joy.
“For they supplied what was lacking on your part.”
Paul could not be with the whole church.
But these three men brought the church's love and fellowship to him.

They filled the gap.

Cross References

Philippians 2:30
because he nearly died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to give me the help that you could not give.

2 Corinthians 11:9
When I was with you and needed something, I did not burden anyone. The believers who came from Macedonia supplied what I needed. I have kept myself from being a burden to you in any way, and I will continue to do so.

Philippians 4:10
I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you have shown your concern for me again. You were concerned before, but you had no chance to show it.

Spiritual Principle

A few faithful people can bring great encouragement to God's servants.

XVIII. THEY REFRESHED MY SPIRIT

1 Corinthians 16:18 — Acknowledge Such People

“They have refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore acknowledge such people.”
Paul describes the effect of their visit.
“They have refreshed my spirit and yours.”
They encouraged Paul.
And they encouraged the church back home.
Some people drain others.
Some people refresh others.
“Therefore acknowledge such people.”
Recognize them.
Thank them.
Honor them.

Cross References

Philemon 1:7
Your love has given me great joy and encouragement, because you, brother, have refreshed the hearts of God's people.

1 Thessalonians 5:12
Brothers and sisters, we ask you to respect those who work hard among you, who lead you in the Lord and give you guidance.

1 Timothy 5:17
Elders who lead well should be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Spiritual Principle

God's people should recognize and honor those who refresh others.

Application

Who has refreshed your spirit?
Thank them this week.

XIX. AQUILA AND PRISCILLA

1 Corinthians 16:19 — The Church in Their House

“The churches of Asia greet you. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, with the church that meets in their house.”
Paul begins his final greetings.
“The churches of Asia greet you.”
Believers in other places sent their love.
“Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord.”
This couple had been with Paul in Corinth.
They were tentmakers like Paul.
They had worked side by side with him and later moved to Ephesus.
The Corinthians knew them well.
“With the church that meets in their house.”
The early church met in homes.
Aquila and Priscilla opened their home for worship.
They were a couple who used everything they had for the Lord.

Cross References

Acts 18:2
> There he met a Jew named Aquila, born in Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them,

Romans 16:3
> Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus.

Romans 16:5
> Also greet the church that meets in their home. Greet my dear friend Epenetus, who was the first person in the province of Asia to believe in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

God uses ordinary homes and faithful couples to build His church.

Key Truth

Your home can be a place of ministry.

XX. A HOLY KISS

1 Corinthians 16:20 — Greet One Another

“All the brothers greet you. Greet one another with a holy kiss.”
More greetings.
“All the brothers greet you.”

The whole church in Ephesus sent its love.
“Greet one another with a holy kiss.”
In that culture, a kiss on the cheek was a common greeting among family and friends.
Paul calls it a **holy** kiss.
It was a sign of love, peace, and family belonging in Christ.
In a church torn by divisions, this greeting would show that they were truly one family.
Today, believers in many cultures express the same love with a handshake, an embrace, or a warm greeting.

Cross References

Romans 16:16
Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings.
2 Corinthians 13:12
Greet one another with a holy kiss.
1 Peter 5:14
Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to all of you who are in Christ.

Spiritual Principle

Believers should greet one another with genuine love as members of one family.

XXI. WITH MY OWN HAND

1 Corinthians 16:21 — Paul's Signature

“This greeting is with my own hand—Paul.”
Paul usually dictated his letters to a helper who wrote them down.
But at the end, he took the pen himself.
“This greeting is with my own hand.”
This was his personal signature.
It proved the letter was truly from him.
And it was a personal touch.
After all the correction, Paul wanted them to know that he cared for them personally.

Cross References

Galatians 6:11
See what large letters I use as I write to you with my own hand!
Colossians 4:18
I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. Remember my chains. Grace be with you.
2 Thessalonians 3:17
I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. This is the mark in every letter I write. This is how I write.

Spiritual Principle

Personal care matters in ministry.

XXII. MARANATHA

1 Corinthians 16:22 — Our Lord, Come!

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. Maranatha!”
Paul writes two strong statements.
“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed.”
This is a solemn warning.
The whole letter has been about love.
Love for one another.
Love that builds up.
But the deepest love is love for the Lord Jesus.
Anyone who claims to be a Christian but does not love Jesus is in grave danger.
To reject the love of Christ is to stand under God's judgment.
“Maranatha!”
This is an Aramaic word, the language Jesus spoke.
It means **“Our Lord, come!”**
It was a prayer of the earliest believers.
They longed for Jesus to return.
Paul ends his letter with this cry of hope.

Cross References

Galatians 1:8
> But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach a good news different from the one we preached to you, let that person be under God's curse!

Revelation 22:20
> He who testifies to these things says, “Yes, I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!

Ephesians 6:24
> Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that never fades.

Spiritual Principle

Love for the Lord Jesus is the mark of a true believer.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Those who love Jesus long for Him to come.

XXIII. THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS

1 Corinthians 16:23 — Be with You

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
Paul's letter began with grace.
“Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”
Now it ends with grace.
“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
Everything the Corinthians needed was found in the grace of Christ.

Grace to forgive their sins.
Grace to heal their divisions.
Grace to change their hearts.
Grace to stand firm until He comes.

Cross References

Romans 16:20
The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you.
2 Corinthians 13:14
May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with all of you.
Revelation 22:21
The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all of God's people. Amen.

Spiritual Principle

The Christian life begins in grace, continues in grace, and ends in grace.

XXIV. MY LOVE BE WITH YOU ALL

1 Corinthians 16:24 — In Christ Jesus. Amen.

“My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.”
Paul's final words are remarkable.
This church had criticized him.
Some had rejected his authority.
They had divisions, sin, pride, and confusion.
Paul had to rebuke them many times.
Yet his final words are:
“My love be with you all.”
Not some of them.
All of them.
Even those who opposed him.
“In Christ Jesus.”
Paul's love flowed from Christ's love.
He had written a whole chapter about love.
And he ends by showing it.
“Amen.”
So be it.

Cross References

Philippians 4:23
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.
2 Timothy 4:22
The Lord be with your spirit. Grace be with you.
Romans 16:24
May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with all of you. Amen.

Spiritual Principle

True love continues even toward those who have been difficult.

Key Truth

A letter full of correction ends with love.
That is the mark of a true shepherd.

XXV. FIVE GREAT LESSONS FROM 1 CORINTHIANS 16

1. Generosity Strengthens the Church

“On the first day of the week, let each of you set aside something.”

Principle:

Giving regularly and willingly provides for the needs of fellow believers and displays love in action.

2. Gospel Work Requires Planning and Endurance

“I hope to remain with you for some time, if the Lord permits.”

Principle:

Paul's travel plans show both human responsibility and dependence on God's will.

3. Honor Faithful Servants

“Acknowledge such people.”

Principle:

Believers like Timothy, Stephanas, and others are examples of humble and dedicated ministry.

4. Love Is the Foundation

“Let all that you do be done in love.”

Principle:

Every command—whether to stand firm, be courageous, or serve others—must be rooted in love.

5. Christ's Return Is Near

“Maranatha!”

Principle:

“Our Lord, come!” reminds us to live in expectation of Jesus' appearing.

XXVI. PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

Verses 1–4 give clear guidance for giving.

Giving Is for a Purpose

The collection helped poor believers in Jerusalem.

Giving Is Regular

“On the first day of the week.”

Giving Is for Everyone

“Let each of you.”

Giving Is Planned

“Set aside something, saving it up.”

Giving Is Proportional

“As he may prosper.”

Giving Is Handled with Integrity

Trusted people chosen by the church carried the gift.

Giving Is Shared

Many churches gave together.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

Generous giving is the resurrection hope put into practice.

XXVII. PAUL'S FELLOW WORKERS

Chapter 16 introduces us to people who served alongside Paul.

Timothy

Young and perhaps timid, but doing the Lord's work.

Apollos

A gifted teacher and Paul's brother, not his rival.

Stephanas and His Household

The first converts in Achaia, devoted to serving the saints.

Fortunatus and Achaicus

Men who traveled to encourage Paul and refreshed his spirit.

Aquila and Priscilla

A faithful couple who opened their home for the church.

Key Truth

God's work is never done by one person; it is done by a team of faithful servants.

XXVIII. FIVE COMMANDS FOR THE CHRISTIAN LIFE

Verses 13–14 give five short commands.

- **Be watchful.** Stay spiritually alert.
- **Stand firm in the faith.** Hold on to the truth.
- **Act with courage.** Be brave and mature.
- **Be strong.** Rely on the Lord's strength.
- **Let all that you do be done in love.** Let love guide everything.

Key Truth

The first four commands make us strong; the fifth keeps our strength loving.

XXIX. LOOKING BACK OVER 1 CORINTHIANS

Chapter 16 completes Paul's letter.
Here is a summary of the whole book.

Chapter 1 — Christ the Power and Wisdom of God

The church is united around Christ crucified, not human leaders.

Chapter 2 — The Spirit Reveals the Wisdom of God

God's wisdom is known only through His Spirit.

Chapter 3 — Christ the Only Foundation

God gives the growth, and Christ is the only foundation.

Chapter 4 — Faithfulness in God's Household

God's servants are stewards who must prove faithful.

Chapter 5 — Discipline in the Church

Christ our Passover calls His church to holiness.

Chapter 6 — Glorify God in Your Body

We were bought with a price, so we belong to God.

Chapter 7 — Marriage, Singleness, and Devotion

Both marriage and singleness are gifts for serving the Lord.

Chapter 8 — Knowledge, Love, and Liberty

Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up.

Chapter 9 — Paul's Rights and Sacrifice

Paul gave up his rights for the sake of the gospel.

Chapter 10 — Examples, Warnings, and God's Glory

Do everything to the glory of God.

Chapter 11 — Headship, Worship, and the Lord's Supper

Come to the Lord's Table with reverence and love.

Chapter 12 — The Gifts and the Body

Many members, one body in Christ.

Chapter 13 — The Greatest Gift: Love

The greatest of these is love.

Chapter 14 — Order in the Gifts

God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

Chapter 15 — The Resurrection

Christ is risen, and death is defeated.

Chapter 16 — Final Instructions

Let all that you do be done in love.

Crawford Bible Study Principle

From beginning to end, 1 Corinthians calls a divided church back to Christ crucified, Christ risen, and the love that makes His people one.

XXX. WHAT 1 CORINTHIANS 16 TEACHES ABOUT JESUS

He Is the Lord of Our Plans

“If the Lord permits.”

He Is the Lord Whose Work We Do

“He is doing the Lord's work.”

He Is the Lord We Love

“If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ...”

He Is the Lord Who Is Coming

“Maranatha!”

He Is the Source of All Grace

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”

Crawford Bible Study Principle

The letter that began with the grace of Jesus ends with the grace of Jesus—and with a longing for Him to come.

XXXI. QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FOR PERSONAL STUDY

Question 1

What was the collection for the saints?
An offering from the Gentile churches for poor believers in Jerusalem.

Question 2

What principles of giving does Paul teach in verse 2?
Giving should be regular, on the first day of the week.
Everyone should take part.
It should be planned and set aside.
It should be in proportion to how God has blessed.

Question 3

Why did Paul arrange for others to carry the money?
To make sure the gift was handled with honesty and accountability.

No one could accuse Paul of misusing it.

Question 4

What does “if the Lord permits” teach us?
We should make plans, but always submit them to God's will.

Question 5

Why did Paul stay in Ephesus despite many adversaries?
God had opened a great door for the gospel.
Opposition did not mean the door was closed.

Question 6

Why did Paul ask the Corinthians to welcome Timothy?
Timothy was young and may have been timid.
He was doing the Lord's work and deserved respect.

Question 7

What does verse 12 show about Paul and Apollos?
They were brothers and partners, not rivals.
Paul urged Apollos to visit and respected his decision.

Question 8

What are the five commands in verses 13–14?
Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act with courage, be strong, and let all that you do be done in love.

Question 9

Why did Paul commend the household of Stephanas?
They were the first converts in Achaia.
They devoted themselves to serving the saints.

Question 10

What was the “holy kiss”?
A common greeting of love and family belonging in that culture.
Today believers express the same love in ways that fit their culture.

Question 11

What does “Maranatha” mean?
It is an Aramaic word meaning “Our Lord, come!”
It expresses the early church's longing for Christ's return.

Question 12

What should 1 Corinthians 16 change about the way Christians live today?
1 Corinthians 16 should cause believers to live:

- Giving regularly and generously.
- Handling money with integrity.
- Making plans under God's will.
- Walking through open doors despite opposition.
- Encouraging and honoring faithful servants.
- Standing firm with courage and strength.
- Doing everything in love.
- Longing for the Lord's return.

XXXII. PERSONAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians 16 asks several important questions.

Am I a Generous Giver?

Do I give regularly and in proportion to how God has blessed me?

Do I Hold My Plans Loosely?

Do I say, “If the Lord permits”?

What Open Door Has God Given Me?

Am I walking through it, even if there is opposition?

Do I Encourage Those Who Serve?

Who needs my welcome and support?

Am I Watchful and Firm?

Am I alert to danger and standing firm in the faith?

Is Love Guiding Everything I Do?

Or is my strength becoming harsh?

Do I Refresh Others?

Do people leave my presence encouraged?

Do I Love the Lord Jesus?

Do I long for Him to come?

XXXIII. A CRAWFORD BIBLE STUDY PRINCIPLE

“Resurrection Hope in Everyday Life”

Chapter 15 lifts our eyes to eternity.
Death defeated.
Bodies raised.
Victory in Christ.
Then Chapter 16 brings us right back to earth.
Money for the poor.
Travel plans.
Coworkers.
Greetings.
This is no accident.
The resurrection is not an escape from everyday life.
It is what gives everyday life meaning.
Because Christ is risen, our giving matters.
Our planning matters.
Our serving matters.
Our love matters.
Our labor in the Lord is not in vain.
This creates a powerful principle.
Heavenly hope is lived out in ordinary faithfulness.

Principle:

The hope of the resurrection is shown in the way we give, serve, and love today.

XXXIV. FINAL APPLICATION

1 Corinthians Chapter 16 closes a letter written to a troubled church.
The Corinthians had divisions.
They had pride.
They had sin.
They had confusion.
Paul had to correct them again and again.
But he never gave up on them.
He planned to visit.
He sent Timothy.
He urged them to give.
He honored their faithful members.
And he ended with love.
1 Corinthians 16 therefore reminds us:
Never stop giving.
Never stop serving.
Never stop standing firm.

Never stop loving.
Never stop longing for Jesus to come.
The church does not need perfect people.
It needs:
Generous givers.
Faithful servants.
Courageous believers.
And hearts full of love for the Lord Jesus.
The same grace still calls us:
Tell people that Jesus is coming.
Tell people that His grace is enough.
Tell people that love is the greatest gift.
Tell people that their labor in the Lord is not in vain.
And until He comes:
Be watchful.
Stand firm.
Be strong.
Do everything in love.

Closing Prayer

Heavenly Father,
Thank You for the letter of 1 Corinthians and for every truth You have taught us through it.
Thank You for the gospel of Christ crucified and risen.
Thank You for the opportunity to give to the needs of Your people.
Thank You for faithful servants like Timothy, Apollos, Stephanas, Aquila, and Priscilla.
Thank You for the people who have refreshed our spirits.
Thank You for open doors to share the gospel, even when there are many adversaries.
Forgive us when we have held tightly to what You have given us.
Forgive us when we have made our plans without You.
Forgive us when we have failed to encourage those who serve.
Forgive us when our strength has been without love.
Make us generous givers.
Help us plan wisely and say, “If the Lord permits.”
Give us courage to walk through the doors You open.
Help us welcome, honor, and refresh those who serve.
Make us watchful, firm, courageous, and strong.
And let everything we do be done in love.
Fill our hearts with love for the Lord Jesus Christ.
And until the day He returns, may we live with this prayer on our lips:
“Maranatha! Our Lord, come!”
“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you.”
In Jesus' name, Amen.

Key Verse

“Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act with courage, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love.” — 1 Corinthians 16:13–14

Central Truth

The hope of the resurrection leads believers to give generously, serve faithfully, stand firm, and do everything in love as they wait for the Lord to come.

1 Corinthians 16 in One Sentence

Paul closes his letter by teaching regular, generous giving, sharing his plans under the Lord's will, honoring faithful servants, calling believers to be watchful, firm, courageous, strong, and loving, and ending with a cry for the Lord's return and a word of grace and love to all.

EPILOGUE

The Church Must Stand Where the Cross Stands

When the World Changes, the Word of God Remains

There comes a time when every church, every pastor, every Christian leader, and every believer must make a decision that will define the direction of their spiritual lives.

Will we remain faithful to the Word of God, or will we surrender our convictions to the demands of a changing world?

It is not a new question.

It was the question confronting the church at Corinth nearly two thousand years ago. It has confronted believers throughout the centuries, and it remains one of the most important questions facing Christianity today.

The circumstances have changed, but the underlying struggle has not.

The ancient Corinthians lived in a society characterized by prosperity, intellectual pride, religious confusion, sexual immorality, social divisions, and the pursuit of personal pleasure.

Their world celebrated human achievement while remaining largely ignorant of the saving truth of Jesus Christ.

The Christian congregation that emerged in that environment was called to be different.

It was called to proclaim a crucified and risen Savior in a city filled with competing religious beliefs.

It was called to demonstrate holiness in a society accustomed to moral compromise.

It was called to practice genuine Christian unity in a culture divided by wealth, social position, and personal status.

It was called to demonstrate sacrificial love in a world largely governed by self-interest.

Yet the Corinthian believers struggled.

They allowed the values of their surrounding culture to influence their thinking, relationships, worship, and conduct.

The Apostle Paul did not ignore their failures.

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, he confronted them with the truth of God's Word.

He challenged their pride, corrected their divisions, condemned immorality, instructed them concerning Christian liberty, explained the purpose of spiritual gifts, emphasized the supremacy of love, and proclaimed the certainty of the resurrection.

Above everything else, he directed their attention back to Jesus Christ.

And that is precisely where the modern church must return.

The answer to a compromising church is not a more compromising Gospel. It is a renewed commitment to the unchanging truth of Jesus Christ.

I. THE LESSON CORINTH STILL TEACHES

As we come to the conclusion of this verse-by-verse examination of First Corinthians, one truth should remain firmly impressed upon our hearts:

A church may possess impressive spiritual privileges and still suffer from serious spiritual problems.

The Corinthians were not without knowledge.

They were not without gifted teachers.

They were not without opportunities for ministry.

They were not without spiritual gifts.

Paul acknowledged that they had been enriched through Jesus Christ and had received remarkable blessings from God.

Yet those blessings did not excuse their disobedience.

Their knowledge did not eliminate their pride.

Their spiritual gifts did not automatically produce maturity.

Their religious activities did not guarantee holiness.

And their identity as a Christian congregation did not exempt them from the responsibility to obey God's Word.

This is an essential lesson for the modern church.

We must never confuse outward religious success with genuine spiritual health.

A congregation may have a beautiful building, a substantial budget, talented musicians, impressive programs, and a large attendance while still struggling with doctrinal confusion, spiritual immaturity, or moral compromise.

Likewise, a smaller congregation with limited resources may demonstrate remarkable faithfulness through sound biblical preaching, sincere worship, sacrificial love, and humble obedience to Christ.

The size of a ministry does not determine its spiritual condition.

The popularity of a pastor does not establish the truthfulness of his message.

The excitement of a worship service does not automatically prove the presence of spiritual maturity.

And the approval of society does not demonstrate the approval of God.

Paul reminded the Corinthians:

> "For the kingdom of God is not in word, but in power." — 1 Corinthians 4:20 (KJV)

True Christianity must be more than impressive language and outward appearance.

It must be rooted in the saving work of Jesus Christ and manifested through lives being transformed by the grace of God.

The church at Corinth reminds us that we must continually examine whether our conduct reflects the Gospel we profess.

The greatest tragedy would be to possess the language of Christianity while neglecting the obedience that should characterize those who belong to Christ.

II. WHEN THE CHURCH LOSES SIGHT OF THE CROSS

Throughout this commentary, we have returned repeatedly to the central message of First Corinthians: Jesus Christ and Him crucified.

Paul declared:

> "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified." — 1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV)

This was not a rejection of every other biblical doctrine.

Paul himself addressed numerous theological and practical matters throughout the letter.

Rather, his declaration established the foundation upon which all faithful Christian teaching must rest.

The cross reveals the holiness of God, the seriousness of sin, the helplessness of fallen humanity, and the sufficiency of Christ's saving work.

At Calvary, Jesus Christ accomplished what no human philosophy, religious ceremony, moral achievement, or cultural advancement could ever accomplish.

He offered Himself as the sacrifice for sinners.

His death was not a tragic accident of history.

It was central to God's redemptive purpose.

His resurrection was not a symbolic expression of hope.

It was the historical triumph of the living Savior over death.

Without the cross, there is no atonement for sin.

Without the resurrection, there is no victorious Savior.

Without Jesus Christ, there is no salvation.

Yet the modern church faces a persistent temptation to move away from these foundational truths.

In some places, the message of redemption is overshadowed by promises of financial success, personal fulfillment, or earthly prosperity.

In others, preaching becomes primarily motivational, offering encouragement without clearly explaining humanity's need for repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

Some congregations become so concerned with maintaining public acceptance that they avoid biblical teachings that challenge prevailing cultural attitudes.

The result can be a form of Christianity that retains religious language while losing the centrality of the Gospel.

But the church cannot improve upon the message God has given.

We are not called to replace the cross with human wisdom.

We are not authorized to exchange biblical truth for cultural approval.

And we cannot faithfully proclaim salvation while neglecting the Savior who accomplished it.

The cross is not simply one doctrine among many.

It stands at the heart of the Christian faith.

When the cross is central, human pride is humbled.

When the cross is central, sin is taken seriously.

When the cross is central, grace is magnified.

When the cross is central, salvation is understood as the work of God rather than the achievement of man.

And when the cross is central, the church remembers that its existence is ultimately for the glory of Jesus Christ.

III. THE DANGER OF BECOMING WHAT WE WERE CALLED TO CONFRONT

One of the most troubling realities of spiritual compromise is that it often develops gradually.

A congregation rarely announces that it intends to abandon biblical authority.

A pastor seldom begins his ministry with the stated objective of replacing Scripture with personal opinion.

A believer does not usually wake up one morning having deliberately planned to surrender every spiritual conviction.

Compromise often begins with smaller decisions.

A biblical teaching is avoided because it may produce disagreement.

A sinful practice is excused because confronting it would be uncomfortable.

A doctrinal distinction is dismissed because maintaining it might reduce popularity.

A spiritual warning is neglected because it does not fit the expectations of the audience.

Over time, what was once considered unacceptable becomes tolerated.

What was once tolerated becomes defended.

And what was once defended may eventually be celebrated.

This progression is not inevitable, but it is a danger against which the church must remain watchful.

Paul confronted the Corinthians because their behavior revealed that worldly attitudes had begun influencing the congregation.

Their divisions reflected human pride.

Their tolerance of immorality demonstrated a failure to take holiness seriously.

Their disputes exposed selfish ambition.

Their misuse of Christian liberty showed insufficient concern for others.

Their disorderly worship revealed confusion about the purpose of spiritual gifts.

The problem was not that the Corinthians lived among unbelievers.

Christians are called to live as witnesses in the world.

The problem was that the values of the surrounding world were shaping the life of the church in ways contrary to the Gospel.

The same distinction matters today.

The church must engage society.

It must proclaim Christ to unbelievers.

It must demonstrate compassion toward those who are suffering.

It must care for the poor, encourage the brokenhearted, defend biblical truth, and extend the invitation of salvation to sinners.

But engagement must never be confused with conformity.

We cannot reach the world faithfully by adopting the very sins from which the Gospel calls people to repent.

We cannot demonstrate Christian love by pretending that God has not spoken about holiness.

And we cannot preserve biblical Christianity by surrendering its essential teachings.

Romans 12:2 declares:

> "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

The calling of the Christian is transformation, not conformity.

The church must never forget the difference.

IV. HOLINESS STILL MATTERS TO GOD

Perhaps one of the most neglected truths in contemporary Christianity is the biblical necessity of holiness.

The Corinthian believers had been saved by grace, but that grace was never intended to become an excuse for continued disobedience.

Paul confronted sexual immorality, idolatry, drunkenness, greed, selfishness, and other sins because these practices were inconsistent with the character and calling of God's people.

His instructions were not expressions of personal preference.

They were apostolic teachings grounded in the authority of Jesus Christ.

In 1 Corinthians 6:19–20, Paul reminded believers:

> "What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's."

Those words establish an essential principle.

The Christian does not belong to himself.

He belongs to Jesus Christ.

Redemption involves more than deliverance from the eternal penalty of sin. It also establishes a new relationship in which the believer is called to live under the lordship of Christ.

We are saved by grace through faith, not by our own works.

Yet the grace that saves us also teaches us to reject ungodliness and pursue a life pleasing to God.

Holiness is not the price we pay to purchase salvation.

It is the appropriate response of those who have been redeemed.

This does not mean Christians achieve sinless perfection in this present life.

Believers continue to struggle against temptation, weakness, and the remaining effects of sin.

But there is a profound difference between struggling against sin and making peace with it.

There is a difference between falling into temptation and defending deliberate disobedience.

There is a difference between seeking forgiveness and redefining sin so that repentance appears unnecessary.

A faithful church must communicate those distinctions with both clarity and compassion.

It must encourage repentance without abandoning grace.

It must offer restoration without minimizing wrongdoing.

It must teach holiness without suggesting that human obedience can earn justification before God.

The message of Scripture is not that Christians become acceptable to God through their own righteousness.

It is that those who have been justified through Jesus Christ are called to live in a manner consistent with their new identity.

Grace does not make holiness unnecessary. Grace provides the foundation and motivation for pursuing holiness.

V. THE CHURCH MUST RECOVER BIBLICAL UNITY

The first major problem Paul confronted in First Corinthians was division.

Members of the congregation were identifying themselves with different leaders and allowing personal loyalties to damage their fellowship.

Some claimed allegiance to Paul.

Others preferred Apollos.

Others identified with Cephas.

Paul responded by directing their attention away from human personalities and back toward Jesus Christ.

His question remains powerful:

> "Is Christ divided?" — 1 Corinthians 1:13 (KJV)

The answer is obvious.

Christ is not divided.

Therefore, His people must not allow pride, rivalry, and personal ambition to destroy the unity that should characterize His church.

The modern church continues to struggle with this problem.

Congregations experience conflict over leadership, traditions, music, finances, personalities, and matters of personal preference.

Sometimes disagreements involve essential biblical doctrines that must be addressed faithfully.

At other times, churches become divided over issues that should never have been allowed to destroy Christian fellowship.

The distinction is important.

Biblical unity does not require abandoning truth.

It does not mean that every theological difference is insignificant.

And it does not demand that Christians ignore serious doctrinal error.

True Christian unity must be grounded in Jesus Christ and the truth of His Word.

But where believers share the essential truths of the Gospel, they should seek to demonstrate humility, patience, mutual respect, and genuine love.

We must remember that the church belongs to Christ.

No pastor owns it.

No family owns it.

No committee owns it.

No influential member owns it.

It has been purchased by the blood of Jesus Christ.

When we treat the church as a platform for personal recognition or control, we forget whose church it is.

Paul reminded the Corinthians:

> "For we are labourers together with God: ye are God's husbandry, ye are God's building."
> — 1 Corinthians 3:9 (KJV)

Every faithful minister is a servant.

Every spiritual gift is entrusted by God.

Every opportunity for ministry should be exercised for His glory.

The church will never experience genuine spiritual unity until its members recognize that Jesus Christ must remain supreme over every human personality, preference, and ambition.

VI. LOVE MUST NEVER BE SEPARATED FROM TRUTH

At the center of First Corinthians stands one of the most beautiful descriptions of Christian love ever written.

In chapter 13, Paul explained that eloquent speech, extraordinary knowledge, remarkable faith, and even impressive sacrifice are spiritually empty when separated from genuine love.

His words challenge every generation of believers.

Christianity is not simply about possessing correct information.

It is about knowing and following Jesus Christ in a way that transforms our relationships with others.

A believer may defend biblical doctrine with remarkable precision and yet demonstrate an attitude that contradicts the character of Christ.

A pastor may preach powerful sermons while treating people harshly.

A church may possess an extensive doctrinal statement while failing to show compassion to those who are hurting.

Knowledge is important.

Doctrine matters.

Truth must be defended.

But biblical truth must never become an excuse for pride, cruelty, or selfishness.

Paul wrote:

> "And now abideth faith, hope, charity, these three; but the greatest of these is charity." — 1 Corinthians 13:13 (KJV)

Christian love is not merely an emotional feeling.

It is a commitment to seek the genuine spiritual good of others.

Sometimes love requires encouragement.

Sometimes it requires sacrifice.

Sometimes it requires forgiveness.

And sometimes love requires correction.

To remain silent while someone embraces destructive sin is not necessarily an expression of love.

But neither is harshness proof of faithfulness.

We must reject the false assumption that truth and love are enemies.

The same Lord who commands holiness also commands compassion.

The same Scripture that condemns sin also calls believers to patience, humility, gentleness, and mercy.

The challenge is to remain faithful to both.

A church committed to truth without love becomes harsh and spiritually unhealthy.

A church committed to a sentimental concept of love that refuses biblical correction becomes vulnerable to compromise.

But a church that holds fast to Scripture while demonstrating genuine Christian charity reflects the wisdom of God.

The cross itself reveals this glorious union.

At Calvary, the righteousness of God was not abandoned.

His holiness was not compromised.

Yet His love was displayed through the sacrifice of His Son.

The church must learn to communicate that same truth.

We must never surrender biblical conviction in the name of love, and we must never abandon Christian love in the name of conviction.

VII. THE CHURCH MUST RETURN TO THE AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE

The spiritual confusion of Corinth was corrected through divine revelation.

Paul did not instruct the congregation to determine its beliefs by conducting a survey of public opinion.

He did not encourage believers to decide moral questions according to whatever practices were common in Corinthian society.

He directed them to the authority of God's truth.

This is the foundation the modern church must recover and preserve.

The Bible is not merely a collection of ancient religious opinions.

It is the inspired Word of God.

Its teachings concerning salvation, holiness, worship, Christian conduct, and eternal life possess divine authority.

Second Timothy 3:16 declares:

> "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Every faithful Christian ministry must therefore be grounded in Scripture.

Pastors must preach the Word.

Teachers must explain the Word.

Congregations must examine teaching in light of the Word.

Believers must study, believe, and obey the Word.

And church leaders must never place personal opinions, institutional traditions, or cultural expectations above the authority of Scripture.

This does not mean every biblical passage is equally simple to interpret.

Some texts require careful historical investigation, grammatical examination, and comparison with other passages.

First Corinthians itself contains several passages that have generated substantial theological discussion.

But interpretive difficulty is not permission to disregard Scripture.

It is a reason to study more carefully.

The goal of biblical exposition should always be to discover what the inspired author intended to communicate.

We must resist the temptation to force Scripture to support conclusions we have already determined to believe.

Instead, we must allow the Word of God to shape our convictions.

This is why verse-by-verse Bible study is so valuable.

It requires the teacher and student to encounter the full message of the biblical text rather than selecting only the passages that appear comfortable or convenient.

A faithful expositor cannot continually avoid difficult subjects when he is committed to teaching the whole counsel of God.

And a growing Christian cannot remain satisfied with superficial knowledge when the riches of Scripture are available for careful study.

The church does not need less Bible.

It needs more faithful understanding, proclamation, and application of the Bible.

VIII. THE RESURRECTION CHANGES EVERYTHING

One of the most glorious chapters in all of Scripture is First Corinthians 15.

After addressing numerous problems within the church, Paul directed the Corinthians toward the foundational hope of the Christian faith: the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the future resurrection of those who belong to Him.

Some within the congregation had questioned the resurrection of the dead.

Paul demonstrated that denying the resurrection would undermine the Gospel itself.

He wrote:

> "And if Christ be not risen, then is our preaching vain, and your faith is also vain." — 1 Corinthians 15:14 (KJV)

Christianity is not built upon the memory of a religious teacher who died and remained in the grave.

It is built upon the crucified and risen Lord Jesus Christ.

His resurrection confirms the victory of His redemptive work.

It establishes the certainty of the Christian hope.

It assures believers that death will not have the final word.

For those who belong to Christ, the grave is not the ultimate destination.

The promise of resurrection reminds us that our present struggles are temporary when viewed in the light of eternity.

Church conflicts will not last forever.

Earthly suffering will not last forever.

Cultural opposition will not last forever.

The temptations and weaknesses of this fallen world will not last forever.

A day is coming when the people of God will experience the fullness of the victory secured through Jesus Christ.

Paul declared:

> "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 15:57 (KJV)

This is not merely a comforting thought.

It is a foundational Christian doctrine with profound practical implications.

If Christ has been raised, our labor in His service possesses eternal significance.

If believers will be raised, our present suffering cannot destroy our future hope.

If death has been defeated, the fear of the grave need not govern our lives.

And if Jesus Christ is coming again, the church has every reason to remain faithful.

Paul therefore concluded his great resurrection chapter with an instruction:

> "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord." — 1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)

Notice the connection.

Because the resurrection is certain, faithfulness matters.

Because Christ has conquered death, Christian service is not meaningless.

Because eternity awaits, believers must remain steadfast.

The resurrection is not merely a doctrine to be defended.

It is a truth that should shape the way we live every day.

IX. A PERSONAL WORD TO PASTORS AND CHURCH LEADERS

To every pastor who has grown weary in ministry, I offer this encouragement: remain faithful to the Word of God.

There will be seasons when preaching the truth brings encouragement and visible spiritual fruit.

There may also be seasons when the same faithfulness produces criticism, misunderstanding, opposition, or discouragement.

Some will appreciate careful biblical teaching.

Others may prefer messages that demand less spiritual examination.

Some will welcome correction.

Others may resist it.

But the responsibility of a minister is not to guarantee that every listener approves of his message.

His responsibility is to proclaim the Scriptures faithfully, lovingly, and accurately.

Do not exchange biblical conviction for popularity.

Do not measure the worth of your ministry solely by attendance.

Do not allow discouragement to persuade you that careful exposition of God's Word is unnecessary.

Do not neglect prayer.

Do not abandon personal holiness.

Do not permit pride to replace humility.

And never forget that the people entrusted to your care belong ultimately to Jesus Christ.

The church needs shepherds, not celebrities.

It needs biblical teachers, not merely motivational speakers.

It needs leaders who demonstrate godly character, not simply public charisma.

It needs men who recognize that their authority is ministerial and accountable to Scripture rather than personal and unlimited.

And it needs pastors who love the people of God enough to teach the truth, even when doing so is difficult.

Paul wrote:

> "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." — 1 Corinthians 4:2 (KJV)

Faithfulness is not always accompanied by earthly recognition.

Some of the most devoted servants of God minister in small congregations, rural communities, nursing homes, hospitals, and places where their efforts receive little public attention.

Their labor may never attract national recognition.

Their names may never appear on bestselling books.

Their sermons may never reach enormous audiences.

But faithful service offered to Jesus Christ is never insignificant.

The Lord knows those who belong to Him.

He sees the labor that others overlook.

And He calls His servants to remain faithful.

Preach Christ.

Teach the Scriptures.

Love the people.

Defend sound doctrine.

Live with integrity.

And leave the ultimate results in the hands of God.

X. A PERSONAL WORD TO EVERY BELIEVER

The message of First Corinthians is not intended only for pastors, theologians, or church leaders.

It is a message for every Christian.

Each believer must consider whether the truth of God's Word is shaping his daily life.

It is possible to attend church regularly while allowing worldly attitudes to govern personal decisions.

It is possible to possess several Bibles while neglecting the study of Scripture.

It is possible to know the language of Christianity while failing to demonstrate Christian love.

It is possible to defend sound doctrine publicly while tolerating serious sin privately.

And it is possible to become so occupied with criticizing the failures of other believers that we neglect the condition of our own hearts.

The first responsibility of the reader is not to identify everyone else who needs correction.

It is to examine himself before God.

Paul wrote:

> "Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." — 1 Corinthians 10:12 (KJV)

Spiritual confidence must never become spiritual arrogance.

The Christian life requires continual dependence upon the grace of God.

We need His wisdom.

We need His strength.

We need the instruction of His Word.

We need the fellowship and encouragement of other believers.

And we need the ongoing sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

As you close this commentary, consider several questions.

Has the cross of Jesus Christ remained central to your understanding of Christianity?

Have you allowed cultural opinions to influence your convictions more than the teachings of Scripture?

Are there areas of your life where you have excused conduct that God's Word condemns?

Do your relationships demonstrate the love described in First Corinthians 13?

Are you faithfully using your gifts and opportunities to serve the body of Christ?

Are you living with the hope of the resurrection and the reality of eternity before you?

These questions deserve careful thought.

The goal is not to produce despair, but to encourage honest spiritual examination and renewed obedience.

God's Word exposes sin so that we may respond appropriately.

It corrects error so that we may walk in truth.

It reveals our weakness so that we may depend upon His grace.

The Christian life is not sustained by human determination alone.

It is lived through faith in Jesus Christ and dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, when Scripture reveals an area of compromise, do not attempt to justify it.

Confess it.

Repent of it.

Seek the grace of God to turn from it.

And continue walking in obedience to Christ.

XI. A CHURCH THAT THE WORLD CANNOT REDEFINE

What would happen if churches throughout our nation renewed their commitment to the faithful teaching of Scripture?

What would happen if pastors once again regarded biblical exposition as the central responsibility of their preaching ministries?

What would happen if Christians measured spiritual maturity not by popularity, emotional excitement, or religious performance, but by obedience to Jesus Christ?

What would happen if congregations refused to tolerate serious, unrepentant sin while extending genuine compassion and hope to those seeking restoration?

What would happen if believers demonstrated the sacrificial love described in First Corinthians 13?

What would happen if the church became less concerned with appearing fashionable and more concerned with remaining faithful?

Such a renewal would not guarantee cultural popularity.

The message of the cross has always confronted the pride of fallen humanity.

But it would strengthen the church's faithfulness to its biblical calling.

The world does not need a church that merely repeats what society already believes.

It needs a church that proclaims what God has revealed.

It needs Christians who demonstrate holiness without self-righteousness.

It needs believers who communicate truth without cruelty.

It needs congregations that offer genuine fellowship rather than religious performance.

It needs pastors who preach the whole counsel of God.

It needs Christians who care about the lost, serve the suffering, encourage the weak, and defend the Gospel.

And above all, it needs the faithful proclamation of Jesus Christ, who alone can save sinners.

The church must never confuse its mission with the pursuit of cultural dominance or personal influence.

Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ.

We are called to proclaim His Gospel, teach His commandments, demonstrate His love, and bear witness to His grace.

We cannot accomplish that mission by abandoning the message He entrusted to us.

The church must be willing to stand where the cross stands.

That means standing for truth when truth is unpopular.

It means practicing holiness when holiness is ridiculed.

It means showing love when hatred is easier.

It means exercising humility when pride seeks recognition.

It means defending the Gospel without becoming distracted by unnecessary quarrels.

And it means trusting the power of God when human wisdom declares the message of the cross foolish.

The future faithfulness of the church will not be secured by its ability to imitate every cultural development.

It will depend upon its continuing submission to Jesus Christ and His Word.

XII. WHEN EVERYTHING ELSE PASSES AWAY

The world in which Paul lived has largely disappeared.

The political empire that governed Corinth eventually fell.

The great philosophical movements of antiquity became subjects of historical study.

The temples of pagan worship lost their former influence.

The merchants, rulers, and public figures who once dominated Corinthian society passed into history.

Yet the inspired letter Paul wrote to that troubled congregation remains.

Its warnings still confront us.

Its doctrines still instruct us.

Its commands still challenge us.

Its promises still encourage us.

And its proclamation of the crucified and risen Savior still directs sinners toward the grace of God.

This should remind us that earthly power is temporary.

Human applause is temporary.

Material prosperity is temporary.

Cultural influence is temporary.

Even the most impressive institutions of this world will not endure forever.

But the truth of God remains.

Isaiah 40:8 declares:

> "The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever."

The church must therefore build its ministry upon what is eternal rather than what is temporary.

We must value the approval of God above the applause of men.

We must pursue faithfulness above fame.

We must seek holiness above popularity.

We must treasure the Gospel above worldly acceptance.

And we must remember that the Christian's ultimate hope is not found in the preservation of an earthly institution, but in the eternal kingdom of Jesus Christ.

The world may change its standards a thousand times.

Humanity may invent new philosophies, new technologies, and new explanations for its rebellion against God.

Society may attempt to redefine morality, truth, and religious conviction.

But none of these developments alters the character of God.

None diminishes the authority of His Word.

None changes the finished work of Jesus Christ.

And none can overturn the victory of the resurrection.

The cross remains above the culture because the One who died upon it is Lord over all.

XIII. THE FINAL CHALLENGE: STAND FAST IN THE FAITH

Near the conclusion of his letter, Paul offered a series of instructions that summarize the attitude Christians must maintain in every generation.

First Corinthians 16:13–14 declares:

> "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity."

These words provide an appropriate final challenge for this commentary.

Watch.

Remain spiritually alert.

Recognize the dangers of temptation, false teaching, pride, and worldly compromise.

Do not assume that spiritual failure is impossible simply because you have enjoyed years of Christian experience.

Guard your heart.

Examine your beliefs.

Remain attentive to the instruction of Scripture.

Stand fast in the faith.

Do not abandon biblical truth because it becomes unpopular.

Do not allow cultural pressure to determine your convictions.

Do not substitute human philosophy for divine revelation.

Remain grounded in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Be strong.

Christian courage does not arise from personal arrogance or confidence in human ability.

It comes from dependence upon the Lord.

Faithfulness may require sacrifice.

Obedience may bring opposition.

Standing for truth may involve personal cost.

But the grace of God is sufficient for His people.

Let all your things be done with charity.

Never forget that biblical faithfulness must be accompanied by genuine Christian love.

Do not allow doctrinal conviction to become an excuse for cruelty.

Do not permit spiritual courage to become arrogance.

Do not confuse harshness with holiness.

Speak the truth.

Defend the Gospel.

Correct error.

Encourage repentance.

But do these things with the humility, patience, and compassion appropriate to followers of Jesus Christ.

These four principles—watchfulness, steadfastness, courage, and love—provide an essential foundation for Christian living in every generation.

They are just as necessary today as they were in ancient Corinth.

A FINAL WORD FROM THE AUTHOR

As I bring this commentary to its conclusion, I return to the conviction that inspired its title.

The cross must always stand above the culture.

Not because Christians are morally superior to those around them.

Not because the church has never failed.

Not because believers possess perfect knowledge or flawless conduct.

But because Jesus Christ is Lord, and His truth is not subject to the changing opinions of mankind.

The church belongs to Him.

Its message comes from Him.

Its authority is derived from His Word.

Its salvation rests upon His finished work.

And its eternal hope is secured through His resurrection.

My prayer is that this commentary has encouraged you to look beyond the failures of ancient Corinth and examine the condition of your own heart, your own congregation, and your own commitment to biblical truth.

Perhaps you have recognized attitudes that need to change.

Perhaps certain passages have challenged long-held assumptions.

Perhaps you have been reminded of the necessity of repentance.

Perhaps your appreciation for the resurrection has been strengthened.

Perhaps you have discovered a renewed desire to study Scripture more carefully.

If so, I encourage you not to allow those convictions to fade.

Continue in the Word.

Continue in prayer.

Continue in Christian fellowship.

Continue serving the Lord.

And continue growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

The greatest benefit of biblical study is not the accumulation of information.

It is a deeper knowledge of God that leads to faithful obedience.

A commentary may explain Scripture, but it cannot obey Scripture for the reader.

A preacher may proclaim the truth, but he cannot exercise faith on behalf of another person.

A church may teach sound doctrine, but each believer remains responsible to respond to the Word of God.

The question is not simply what we have learned from First Corinthians.

The question is what we will do with what we have learned.

Will we remain divided by pride, or pursue unity in Christ?

Will we excuse sin, or pursue holiness?

Will we misuse Christian liberty, or serve others through love?

Will we seek spiritual recognition, or faithfully use our gifts for God's glory?

Will we conform our worship to personal preference, or submit it to biblical instruction?

Will we live as though this world is all that matters, or as people who possess the hope of resurrection?

And will we allow the culture to define the church, or will we allow the Word of God to direct our faith and conduct?

These are questions that cannot be answered by words alone.

They must be answered by the way we live.

I do not know what challenges the church may face in the years ahead.

I do not know how society may change, what opposition may arise, or what new temptations future generations may encounter.

But I know that the Gospel of Jesus Christ will remain true.

I know that the Word of God will remain authoritative.

I know that the resurrection of Christ remains the foundation of our eternal hope.

And I know that the church's calling to proclaim the Gospel and make disciples will remain until the Lord completes His purpose.

Therefore, let us not become discouraged by the changing world around us.

Let us not surrender to spiritual apathy.

Let us not exchange biblical conviction for temporary acceptance.

Let us not become so consumed with the problems of the present age that we forget the certainty of eternity.

Instead, let us stand upon the truth.

Let us preach Christ crucified.

Let us proclaim His resurrection.

Let us love one another sincerely.

Let us pursue holiness.

Let us serve faithfully.

And let us remain steadfast until the day we stand before the Savior who redeemed us.

For the final hope of the church is not that the world will eventually approve of its message.

Our hope is that Jesus Christ has conquered sin and death, and that all who belong to Him will share in His eternal victory.

The Apostle Paul declared:

> "But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 15:57 (KJV)

That victory is our confidence.

That Savior is our hope.

That Gospel is our message.

And that cross must remain at the center of everything we believe and proclaim.

The world may change, but God's Word remains.

The culture may compromise, but the church must remain faithful.

Human wisdom may reject the cross, but the cross remains the power of God unto salvation.

And though generations rise and fall, Jesus Christ remains Lord.

May we never forget it.

May we never compromise it.

And may we never stop proclaiming it.

THE FINAL SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)

> "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

THE FINAL THOUGHT

The church was never called to change the Gospel to satisfy the world. It was called to proclaim the Gospel so that sinners might be saved and lives transformed by the grace of God.

We are not called to follow the direction of the culture, but to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

And when the demands of society conflict with the teachings of Scripture, the people of God must remember where their ultimate allegiance belongs.

Not to the applause of men.

Not to the approval of the world.

Not to the shifting standards of society.

But to Jesus Christ, who loved us and gave Himself for us.

THE CROSS ABOVE THE CULTURE.

THE WORD ABOVE THE WORLD.

CHRIST ABOVE ALL.

Dr. Paul Crawford
Author, Bible Teacher, and Founder of Crawford Bible Commentary

The Cross Above the Culture: Biblical Truth for a Compromising Church

Soli Deo Gloria — To God Alone Be the Glory

A NOTE FROM THE AUTHOR

A Personal Message About Biblical Truth, Spiritual Compromise, and the Church of Jesus Christ

Dear Reader,

There are certain books of the Bible that speak with remarkable clarity to the spiritual condition of the generation in which we live. For me, First Corinthians is unquestionably one of those books.

As I have studied the Scriptures throughout my years of ministry, preaching, teaching, and writing, I have become increasingly convinced that many of the problems confronting the modern church are not nearly as new as we sometimes imagine.

The circumstances may have changed. The culture may have developed new forms of communication, entertainment, and influence. Society may have adopted different attitudes toward morality, religion, and personal freedom. Yet the spiritual struggles facing Christians today bear a striking resemblance to those that troubled the believers at Corinth nearly two thousand years ago.

The Corinthian church struggled with division, spiritual pride, sexual immorality, misplaced priorities, abuse of Christian liberty, confusion regarding spiritual gifts, and a failure to demonstrate genuine Christian love.

These were not problems occurring exclusively outside the church.

They were problems existing among people who professed faith in Jesus Christ.

That reality should cause every Christian to stop and examine the spiritual condition of the church today.

I did not write *The Cross Above the Culture* because I believe the church should withdraw from the world or abandon its responsibility to reach the lost. Quite the opposite.

I believe the church has been given the greatest message this world will ever hear: the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

But I also believe that the church cannot faithfully proclaim that message while continually surrendering its biblical convictions to the society it has been commissioned to reach.

The church was never called to become a reflection of the world. It was called to be a faithful witness of Jesus Christ within the world.

That distinction is at the heart of this commentary.

Why This Book Matters to Me

My love for the Word of God has shaped my life and ministry. Through the years, I have had the privilege of studying and teaching Scripture, preaching the Gospel, writing biblical commentaries, and seeking to help others better understand the truths contained in God's Word.

Those experiences have continually reminded me that the Bible is not simply a religious book to be admired.

It is the inspired Word of God, given to reveal His truth, proclaim His salvation, correct our errors, and instruct us in righteousness.

The more I study Scripture, the more I recognize the necessity of allowing God's Word to speak for itself.

We live in a time when many people approach the Bible asking how its teachings can be adjusted to fit contemporary expectations.

I believe we should approach it with a very different question:

How must our lives change to conform to what God has already revealed?

That is the question I hope readers will carry throughout this study.

First Corinthians does not provide a comfortable message for those who wish to excuse sin, elevate human wisdom, or replace the authority of Scripture with personal preference.

It challenges us.

It confronts us.

It exposes the spiritual dangers that arise when Christians become more concerned with worldly approval than biblical obedience.

But it also provides tremendous encouragement.

It reminds us that God's grace is sufficient to transform sinners, that the Holy Spirit equips believers for service, that Christian love must govern our relationships, and that the resurrection of Jesus Christ provides an eternal hope that this world can never take away.

I believe these truths are desperately needed in our generation.

My Concern for the Modern Church

I am concerned about the spiritual direction of any church that begins placing cultural acceptance above biblical faithfulness.

I am concerned when doctrinal truth is minimized because it may offend those who reject the teachings of Scripture.

I am concerned when holiness is presented as optional, when repentance is rarely mentioned, and when the Gospel is reduced to little more than a message of personal happiness and earthly success.

I am concerned when pastors feel pressured to entertain rather than faithfully explain the Word of God.

I am concerned when religious personalities become more influential than the Scriptures they claim to teach.

And I am concerned when churches become so occupied with attendance numbers, financial resources, public recognition, and institutional growth that they neglect the spiritual maturity of the people entrusted to their care.

None of these concerns should lead us to abandon the church.

Jesus Christ loves His church.

He purchased it with His blood.

He is its Head, its Savior, and its eternal Lord.

My desire is not to discourage faithful believers or criticize congregations simply because their methods differ from my personal preferences.

My desire is to encourage a return to biblical priorities.

There is nothing wrong with a church using modern technology, developing effective ministries, or finding appropriate ways to communicate with a changing generation.

The problem begins when methods become more important than the message, when popularity becomes more valuable than faithfulness, or when cultural expectations are permitted to overrule the teachings of Scripture.

We must never forget that the Gospel does not need to be modernized in order to remain powerful.

It needs to be faithfully proclaimed.

Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 1:18:

> "For the preaching of the cross is to them that perish foolishness; but unto us which are saved it is the power of God."

The message of the cross was offensive to many in the first century.

It remains offensive to those who reject its claims today.

But the church has never been authorized to remove the offense of biblical truth merely to gain the approval of unbelieving society.

We are called to proclaim Christ with humility, clarity, conviction, and love.

Why I Chose the Title *The Cross Above the Culture*

The title of this book reflects a conviction that I believe every generation of Christians must recover.

The cross must remain central to the message and mission of the church.

Culture has its place in human society. It influences language, customs, traditions, communication, and many aspects of daily life.

But culture does not possess the authority to redefine God's truth.

Societies change their beliefs.

Governments change their policies.

Popular movements rise and fall.

Ideas once celebrated may eventually be rejected.

Moral standards accepted by one generation may be abandoned by the next.

Yet the character of God remains unchanged.

His Word remains true.

And the Gospel of Jesus Christ remains the only message through which sinners may receive salvation.

When I speak of placing the cross above the culture, I am not suggesting that Christians should become hostile toward the people around them.

We are commanded to love our neighbors.

We are called to show compassion.

We are instructed to share the Gospel with those who do not know Christ.

And we must remember that we ourselves are sinners who stand in need of divine grace.

But love does not require the abandonment of truth.

Compassion does not demand the acceptance of sin.

And reaching the world does not require the church to surrender its identity.

The Apostle Paul wrote:

> "For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."
> — 1 Corinthians 2:2 (KJV)

Those words express the central burden of this book.

Our message must begin with Christ, remain centered upon Christ, and ultimately bring glory to Christ.

Without Him, our religious efforts are empty.

Without His sacrifice, we have no redemption.

Without His resurrection, we have no eternal hope.

And without His Word, we have no reliable foundation upon which to build the life and ministry of the church.

My Approach to This Commentary

In preparing this commentary, my objective has been to examine First Corinthians carefully and systematically, giving appropriate attention to the meaning of each verse.

I believe that faithful Bible study requires more than selecting a passage and immediately applying it to contemporary life.

We must first seek to understand what the biblical author intended to communicate to his original readers.

That requires attention to historical circumstances, cultural practices, grammatical details, literary context, and the broader teaching of Scripture.

Throughout this commentary, I have sought to bring these elements together in a manner that is both theologically meaningful and practically understandable.

My desire is that this work will be useful not only to pastors and serious students of Scripture, but also to ordinary Christians who want to grow in their knowledge of God's Word.

You do not need a seminary education to benefit from careful biblical study.

The Scriptures were given for the instruction of God's people.

Every believer should desire to understand them more deeply.

At the same time, I recognize that some passages in First Corinthians involve difficult interpretive questions.

Subjects such as marriage and divorce, spiritual gifts, head coverings, the role of women in congregational worship, and the meaning of certain resurrection passages have generated considerable theological discussion.

Where such issues arise, my objective is to examine the biblical evidence carefully rather than allowing personal preference or cultural pressure to determine the answer.

I encourage readers to examine the passages for themselves, compare Scripture with Scripture, and consider the arguments presented.

No human commentary possesses the authority of the inspired biblical text.

The Word of God must always remain our final standard.

If this book accomplishes anything worthwhile, I hope it encourages you to spend more time reading the Scriptures themselves.

A Word About Christian Love

One of the most important lessons we discover in First Corinthians is that doctrinal knowledge must never be separated from Christian love.

The Apostle Paul understood that believers could possess impressive spiritual gifts and remarkable knowledge while still failing to demonstrate genuine maturity.

That is why the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians is so important.

Paul reminds us that without love, even extraordinary religious accomplishments lose their proper spiritual significance.

This truth should influence the way we discuss theological differences, correct error, and relate to those with whom we disagree.

I believe strongly in the importance of sound doctrine.

I believe biblical truth must be defended.

I believe the church must confront moral and theological compromise.

But I also believe that defending truth does not give Christians permission to become proud, hateful, or unnecessarily harsh.

We must never confuse a combative personality with spiritual courage.

Nor should we confuse biblical compassion with doctrinal surrender.

The Christian is called to demonstrate both truth and love.

Paul concluded his instructions to the Corinthians by declaring:

> "Let all your things be done with charity." — 1 Corinthians 16:14 (KJV)

That command deserves a place in every church, every pulpit, every home, and every Christian heart.

We can stand firmly upon Scripture while speaking with kindness.

We can correct error while demonstrating humility.

We can reject sin while showing compassion toward sinners.

And we can proclaim the exclusive claims of Jesus Christ while treating others with dignity and respect.

My prayer is that this commentary reflects that commitment.

A Personal Challenge to the Reader

As you study First Corinthians, I encourage you to resist the temptation to view its warnings as instructions intended only for other people.

It is easy to read about the pride of the Corinthians and immediately think of someone else who needs to learn humility.

It is easy to examine Paul's instructions concerning church discipline and focus entirely upon the sins of others.

It is easy to study Christian love and recognize the failures of those around us while overlooking our own shortcomings.

But biblical truth must first be allowed to examine our hearts.

Before asking what is wrong with the modern church, we should ask whether we are personally walking in obedience to Christ.

Before criticizing a congregation for worldliness, we should examine the influences shaping our own decisions.

Before condemning spiritual pride, we should ask whether our own knowledge has produced humility.

Before demanding greater love from others, we should consider whether our attitudes and actions demonstrate the love described in First Corinthians 13.

The Word of God was not given merely to provide material for sermons or theological discussion.

It was given to instruct and transform our lives.

James 1:22 reminds us:

> "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

A person can read this entire commentary, understand its arguments, and agree with its conclusions while still failing to put its teachings into practice.

My hope is that you will do more than acquire knowledge.

I hope you will respond to Scripture with faith, repentance, worship, and obedience.

My Prayer for Those Who Read This Book

I pray that every pastor who reads this commentary will be encouraged to preach the Word of God with renewed confidence.

I pray that Bible teachers will discover greater clarity in explaining the doctrines and practical instructions contained in First Corinthians.

I pray that church leaders will be reminded of the importance of humility, integrity, accountability, and spiritual maturity.

I pray that struggling Christians will find encouragement in the grace of God and recognize that genuine spiritual growth remains possible through Jesus Christ.

I pray that congregations divided by pride and personal conflict will seek biblical reconciliation.

I pray that believers entangled in compromise will be convicted of sin and encouraged to pursue repentance and holiness.

I pray that those who have become spiritually discouraged will be strengthened by the promises of God's Word.

And I pray that anyone reading this book who has never personally trusted Jesus Christ as Savior will come to understand the Gospel and respond to Him in faith.

Above all, I pray that this commentary will bring glory to God.

I do not want readers to finish this book thinking primarily about the author.

I want them thinking about Jesus Christ.

His holiness.

His grace.

His sacrifice.

His resurrection.

His lordship.

And His faithfulness to those who belong to Him.

The greatest privilege of writing a biblical commentary is the opportunity to direct others toward the inexhaustible riches of God's Word.

There is always more to learn.

There is always greater depth to discover.

And there is always room for growth in our understanding and obedience.

No matter how many years we have studied Scripture, we must remain humble students before its divine Author.

A Final Encouragement

As I close this personal note, I want to leave you with a passage that has particular significance for the message of this book.

The Apostle Paul declared:

> "Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit you like men, be strong. Let all your things be done with charity." — 1 Corinthians 16:13–14 (KJV)

These words contain a challenge that every Christian should take seriously.

Be watchful in a world filled with spiritual deception.

Stand firm when biblical truth is challenged.

Demonstrate courage when obedience to Christ becomes difficult.

Depend upon the strength that God provides.

And let genuine Christian love govern everything you do.

The church does not need to become more like the world in order to fulfill its mission.

It needs to become more faithful to Jesus Christ.

We must never be ashamed of the Gospel.

We must never apologize for the authority of Scripture.

We must never treat holiness as an outdated religious concept.

We must never allow human pride to replace the humility of Christian service.

And we must never forget that the greatest message this world will ever hear is the message of Jesus Christ crucified and risen.

The Corinthians lived in a culture that challenged their faith.

So do we.

They struggled with spiritual compromise.

So do many Christians today.

They needed correction, instruction, encouragement, and a renewed focus upon Christ.

And so does the modern church.

The answer has not changed.

The Gospel remains the power of God unto salvation.

The Scriptures remain our foundation for faith and practice.

Jesus Christ remains the only Savior.

And the cross remains the defining symbol of God's redeeming grace.

My sincere hope is that *The Cross Above the Culture* will serve as more than a book on your shelf.

May it become a resource that encourages deeper Bible study, stronger biblical convictions, greater Christian love, and a renewed commitment to the glory of God.

May it challenge you where correction is needed.

May it strengthen you where encouragement is needed.

May it lead you to greater confidence in God's Word.

And may it continually remind you that our allegiance belongs first and foremost to Jesus Christ.

The world may change its opinions, but God has not changed His truth.

The culture may redefine its values, but the Gospel remains the same.

The church may encounter opposition, but the risen Christ remains its eternal hope.

And when the world demands compromise, may we remember the words of the Apostle Paul:

> "For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ." — 1 Corinthians 3:11 (KJV)

That foundation is secure.

That Savior is sufficient.

And that truth is worth standing upon.

Thank you for taking the time to study the Word of God through the pages of this commentary.

May the Lord bless your study, deepen your understanding, strengthen your faith, and use His truth to make you increasingly faithful to Jesus Christ.

Until Christ returns, may we continue to preach the cross, defend the truth, love the brethren, and stand firm in the faith.

For the cross must always remain above the culture.

In Christ's Service,

Dr. Paul Crawford
Author, Pastor, and Bible Teacher
Founder of Crawford Bible Commentary

The Cross Above the Culture: Biblical Truth for a Compromising Church

Soli Deo Gloria — To God Alone Be the Glory

A FINAL SCRIPTURE

1 Corinthians 15:58 (KJV)

> "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

A Closing Prayer

“Father, I thank You for every reader who has walked through these pages. For the one who does not yet know You, I pray they would hear Your voice and receive Your Son, Jesus, as Lord and Savior. For the one who already believes, I pray You would set their heart ablaze with urgency—to speak, to share, to love, and to never be silent. May we all live as faithful watchmen, sounding the trumpet until the day You call us home. In Jesus’ mighty name, Amen.”

THE BIBLE WAY TO HEAVEN

1. Admit you are a sinner.

"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God." (Romans 3:23)

No one is good enough to go to Heaven on his own merit.

No matter how much good we do, we still come short.

2. Realize the penalty for sin.

"For the wages of sin is death..." (Romans 6:23a)

Just as there are wages for good, there is punishment for wrong.

The penalty for our sin is eternal death in a place called Hell.

3. Believe that Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose again for you.

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." (Romans 10:9)

4. Trust Christ alone as your Saviour.

"...But the gift of God is eternal life though Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23b)

"For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:13)

Eternal life is a gift purchased by the blood of Jesus and offered freely to those who call upon Him by faith.

Anyone who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved forever. Being saved is a one-time event.

Dr. Paul Crawford is more than just a Christian Author; His books are a source of inspiration and guidance on your spiritual journey. His books are created with a deep sense of faith and a desire to uplift and inspire all who read.

SAME STRUGGLES. A DIFFERENT CENTURY. THE SAME SAVIOR.

The church at Corinth was gifted, growing, and full of potential—yet deeply compromised by the culture around it. Sound familiar?

In *The Cross Above the Culture*, Dr. Paul Crawford provides a comprehensive, verse-by-verse commentary on 1 Corinthians, helping today's believers understand and apply Paul's timeless truths to the challenges facing the modern church.

With biblical clarity, practical insight, and pastoral wisdom, this book exposes the dangers of compromise, calls the church back to the authority of Scripture, and re-centers our faith on the crucified and risen Lord.

Whether you are a pastor, teacher, student, or devoted believer, this verse-by-verse commentary will strengthen your understanding of God's Word, encourage you to stand firm in a changing culture, and help you live for Christ in a world that constantly pressures the church to compromise.

THIS BOOK WILL HELP YOU:

- Grasp the historical and cultural context of 1 Corinthians
- Understand the meaning of each passage through careful, verse-by-verse study
- Apply timeless biblical principles to today's church and culture
- Recognize and avoid the subtle dangers of worldly influence
- Discover God's design for Christian living, worship, unity, love, and service
- Strengthen your faith, deepen your love for Scripture, and be equipped to live for Christ in a compromising world

"For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified."

1 CORINTHIANS 2:2 (KJV)