

AZ Vineyard Church

1 Corinthians Study Guide

Following Jesus in a Complicated Church and Culture

Purpose:

This study guide is designed to help us read 1 Corinthians carefully, understand Paul's teaching in its original context, and consider how the gospel shapes our lives, relationships, church community, and witness today.

How to Use This Guide

For each chapter:

1. **Read the chapter slowly.**
2. Notice what it says about **God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit, the church, and ourselves.**
3. Identify the problems or questions Paul addresses.
4. Consider how the gospel responds to those problems.
5. Discuss the questions together.
6. Pray about one practical response.

A Key Theme of 1 Corinthians

Paul writes to a church that is gifted but divided, spiritually enthusiastic but struggling with maturity. Throughout the letter, he repeatedly calls believers back to **Jesus and the cross.**

The question underneath much of 1 Corinthians is:

What does it look like for a community of people who belong to Jesus to live differently because of the gospel?

Chapter 1 — The Wisdom of the Cross

Read

1 Corinthians 1:1–31

Big Idea

The church in Corinth is divided by personalities, status, and competing ideas of wisdom. Paul points them away from human boasting and toward **Christ and the cross.**

Key Themes

- We belong to Christ before we belong to any leader or group.
- Christian unity is centered on Jesus.
- God's wisdom often challenges human ideas of power and status.
- The cross undermines boasting and self-reliance.
- God calls ordinary and unlikely people to display His grace.

Look for

As you read, notice how often Paul contrasts:

- wisdom and foolishness
- strength and weakness
- boasting and humility
- human achievement and God's grace

Discussion Questions

1. What divisions were present in the Corinthian church?
2. Why do you think people were identifying themselves with particular Christian leaders?
3. What does Paul mean when he says, "**Is Christ divided?**"
4. Why is the message of the cross considered foolishness by some people?
5. What does the cross reveal about God's definition of wisdom and power?
6. Where are people tempted to find their identity or status apart from Christ?
7. How can Christian preferences become sources of division?
8. What would it look like for our church community to "boast in the Lord" rather than ourselves?
9. **Prayer:** Where do I need to surrender pride, comparison, or competition to Jesus?

Chapter 2 — God's Wisdom Revealed by the Spirit

Read

1 Corinthians 2:1–16

Big Idea

Paul did not build the church through impressive rhetoric or human wisdom. He proclaimed **Jesus Christ and Him crucified**, relying on the Holy Spirit to reveal God's truth.

Key Themes

- The gospel does not depend on human impressiveness.
- God's wisdom is revealed through the Holy Spirit.
- The Spirit enables believers to understand spiritual truth.
- Christian maturity involves learning to see life from God's perspective.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul emphasize his weakness and dependence on God?
2. What is the difference between human wisdom and God's wisdom?
3. Why is the Holy Spirit essential to understanding spiritual truth?
4. What does it mean to have "the mind of Christ"?
5. How can intellectual knowledge of Christianity differ from actually knowing God?
6. How do we make room for the Holy Spirit to teach and transform us?
7. What role should Scripture and the Holy Spirit play together in our discernment?
8. **Practice:** Spend several minutes in silence and ask the Holy Spirit, "Jesus, what do You want me to know or notice today?"

Chapter 3 — Growing Up as God's Church

Read

1 Corinthians 3:1–23

Big Idea

Paul calls the Corinthians immature because jealousy and division are controlling them. The church belongs to God, and every Christian leader is ultimately a servant—not the owner—of God's people.

Key Themes

- Spiritual maturity produces changed relationships.
- Jealousy and rivalry reveal spiritual immaturity.
- Leaders have different roles, but God gives the growth.
- The church is God's temple.
- Christian identity is found in Christ, not in personalities.

Discussion Questions

1. What evidence of spiritual immaturity does Paul identify?
2. Why does Paul use the imagery of planting and watering?
3. What does "**God gave the growth**" teach us about ministry?
4. How can admiration for Christian leaders become unhealthy?
5. What does it mean that God's people are God's temple?
6. How should this truth affect the way we treat one another?
7. What areas of your life are still characterized by comparison or rivalry?
8. What might spiritual maturity look like in a practical relationship this week?

Chapter 4 — Servants and Stewards

Read

1 Corinthians 4:1–21

Big Idea

Christian leaders are servants and stewards, accountable to God. Paul challenges the Corinthians' pride and invites them to imitate his Christ-centered way of life.

Key Themes

- God evaluates faithfulness.
- Christian leadership is fundamentally servanthood.
- Spiritual knowledge can produce pride if it is disconnected from love.

- Following Jesus involves humility and sacrifice.
- Discipleship includes imitation.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Paul mean by being a "servant of Christ"?
2. Why is faithfulness more important than popularity?
3. What forms of pride were affecting the Corinthians?
4. Why does Paul contrast "talk" with "power"?
5. What does Paul's life demonstrate about following Jesus?
6. Who has been a positive spiritual example in your life?
7. What does it mean to say that Christian leadership should be modeled rather than merely taught?
8. Where might God be inviting you to become a more faithful servant?

Chapter 5 — Holiness and Church Discipline

Read

1 Corinthians 5:1–13

Big Idea

Paul confronts serious, unrepentant sexual immorality within the church. Christian community requires both **grace and holiness**, and believers are called to take sin seriously while maintaining a posture of restoration.

Key Themes

- Grace does not mean indifference toward destructive sin.
- The church is called to holiness.
- Unaddressed sin can affect an entire community.
- Church discipline is intended to protect the community and pursue restoration.
- Christians are not called to judge outsiders as though they were already part of the church.

Discussion Questions

1. Why was Paul so concerned about the situation in Corinth?
 2. What does the image of "a little leaven" communicate?
 3. Why is confronting serious sin difficult for a church community?
 4. How can a church pursue holiness without becoming self-righteous?
 5. What is the difference between judgment, accountability, and condemnation?
 6. Why does Paul distinguish between judging those inside and those outside the church?
 7. What should restoration and repentance look like in a healthy Christian community?
 8. How can we create a culture where people can confess sin and receive loving accountability?
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Chapter 6 — Our Bodies Belong to the Lord

Read

1 Corinthians 6:1–20

Big Idea

Because believers belong to Christ, their bodies matter. Paul connects Christian identity, sexuality, holiness, and resurrection hope.

Key Themes

- Christians are called to resolve conflict within the community wisely.
- Sexual immorality is incompatible with union with Christ.
- Our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit.
- We have been bought with a price.
- Christian freedom is not freedom to destroy ourselves or others.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul object to believers taking one another to court?
2. What does our future identity as God's people have to do with how we live now?

3. What makes sexual sin particularly significant in Paul's argument?
 4. What does it mean that our bodies are temples of the Holy Spirit?
 5. How does "**you were bought with a price**" shape our understanding of Christian freedom?
 6. How does our culture communicate messages about bodies, sex, and identity?
 7. What does honoring God with our bodies look like practically?
 8. Where do you need God's grace to bring greater freedom or holiness?
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Chapter 7 — Marriage, Singleness, and Following Jesus

Read

1 Corinthians 7:1–40

Big Idea

Paul addresses marriage, singleness, sexuality, divorce, and calling. His larger principle is that believers can faithfully follow Jesus in different circumstances and stages of life.

Key Themes

- Marriage is honorable.
- Singleness is also a valuable calling and gift.
- Sexuality belongs within God's purposes.
- Christian faithfulness matters within difficult circumstances.
- Our circumstances do not determine our ultimate identity in Christ.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Paul teach about the mutual responsibilities of husbands and wives?
2. Why does Paul speak positively about singleness?
3. How does this chapter challenge the idea that marriage is necessary for a complete Christian life?
4. What principles does Paul give concerning divorce?
5. What does it mean to remain faithful to Jesus in one's present circumstances?

6. How can the church better honor both married and single people?
 7. What does Christian contentment look like in this chapter?
 8. **Prayer:** Ask God to help you faithfully follow Jesus in your present season rather than constantly waiting for a different one.
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Chapter 8 — Freedom, Knowledge, and Love

Read

1 Corinthians 8:1–13

Big Idea

Christian freedom must be governed by love. Knowledge can produce pride, but love builds others up.

Key Themes

- Knowing something is not the same as loving someone.
- Christian freedom is relational.
- We should consider how our choices affect others.
- Love sometimes voluntarily limits legitimate freedom.
- The well-being of another believer matters.

Discussion Questions

1. What problem was Paul addressing regarding food sacrificed to idols?
2. What does Paul mean by "**knowledge puffs up, but love builds up**"?
3. How can something permissible still be unwise?
4. What freedoms might Christians need to consider differently because of other people?
5. What is the difference between legalism and loving self-restraint?
6. How can concern for others become an expression of Christlike freedom?
7. Are there areas where your personal rights might be more important to you than another person's spiritual well-being?

8. What is one way you could choose love over personal preference this week?
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Chapter 9 — The Rights of a Servant

Read

1 Corinthians 9:1–27

Big Idea

Paul willingly gives up legitimate rights for the sake of the gospel. His freedom is expressed through becoming a servant to others.

Key Themes

- Christian freedom is freedom to serve.
- Paul has legitimate rights but chooses not to insist upon them.
- The gospel shapes how we use our time, resources, and privileges.
- Mission requires intentionality.
- Spiritual discipline supports faithful discipleship.

Discussion Questions

1. What rights does Paul describe?
 2. Why does he sometimes choose not to exercise those rights?
 3. What does "**I have become all things to all people**" mean—and what does it not mean?
 4. How can we adapt our communication without compromising the gospel?
 5. What does Paul's athletic imagery teach us about spiritual discipline?
 6. Where might comfort or personal preference interfere with your participation in God's mission?
 7. What is the relationship between grace and spiritual discipline?
 8. What practice could help you become more intentional about following Jesus?
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Chapter 10 — Learning from Israel's Story

Read

1 Corinthians 10:1–33

Big Idea

Paul uses Israel's wilderness experience as a warning against idolatry, presumption, and spiritual complacency. Believers are called to flee idolatry and live for God's glory.

Key Themes

- Spiritual experiences do not automatically produce faithfulness.
- Idolatry remains a serious danger.
- God provides a way to resist temptation.
- Christian freedom must be shaped by love.
- **"Whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God."**

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul remind the Corinthians of Israel's history?
2. What does their story teach us about spiritual complacency?
3. What modern forms can idolatry take?
4. What does Paul mean by saying God provides a way of escape from temptation?
5. How can something permissible become spiritually destructive?
6. What does it mean to seek the good of others?
7. What would change if you consciously approached ordinary activities as opportunities to glorify God?
8. What competing "gods" or loyalties can subtly capture our attention today?

Chapter 11 — Worship, Communion, and the Body

Read

1 Corinthians 11:1–34

Big Idea

Paul addresses issues surrounding worship and the Lord's Supper, emphasizing that Christian worship must honor God and recognize the unity and dignity of the entire body of Christ.

Key Themes

- Worship involves both devotion to God and relationships with people.
- Christian gatherings should reflect honor and order.
- Social divisions have no place at the Lord's Table.
- Communion proclaims the death of Jesus.
- Believers should examine themselves and discern the body.

Discussion Questions

1. What problems were occurring when the Corinthians gathered together?
2. Why was the way they treated one another so serious?
3. What does the Lord's Supper proclaim about Jesus?
4. What does it mean to "examine yourself" before communion?
5. What might it mean to "discern the body"?
6. How can economic, social, generational, or cultural differences create divisions in churches?
7. What does the communion table tell us about our identity as God's family?
8. **Practice:** Before taking communion, spend time thanking Jesus for the cross and asking Him to reveal any broken relationship or attitude that needs attention.

Chapter 12 — One Body, Many Gifts

Read

1 Corinthians 12:1–31

Big Idea

The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to believers, but every gift comes from the same Spirit and is intended for the common good.

Key Themes

- Spiritual gifts come from the Holy Spirit.
- Jesus is Lord.
- There are different gifts but one Spirit.
- Every member of the body matters.
- Spiritual gifts are given for the benefit of others.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul begin by emphasizing Jesus as Lord?
2. What different kinds of spiritual gifts are mentioned?
3. Why does Paul repeatedly emphasize diversity within unity?
4. What happens when one person considers their gift unimportant?
5. What happens when one person considers their gift more important than others?
6. How can we encourage people to discover and use their spiritual gifts?
7. How might the Holy Spirit want to use you to bless someone else?
8. What gift or ministry area would you like to explore more intentionally?

Chapter 13 — The Way of Love

Read

1 Corinthians 13:1–13

Big Idea

Spiritual gifts without love are empty. Love is not merely an emotion but a Spirit-shaped way of living that reflects God's character.

Key Themes

- Love is more important than impressive spiritual activity.
- Love is patient and kind.
- Love rejects envy, pride, selfishness, and resentment.

- Love perseveres.
- Spiritual gifts are temporary; love endures.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul place love at the center of his teaching about spiritual gifts?
2. What does this chapter teach us about the difference between ability and character?
3. Which description of love challenges you most?
4. What does love look like when you are dealing with someone difficult?
5. How can spiritual gifts be used without love?
6. Why does Paul say love "never ends"?
7. How would our church relationships change if we practiced 1 Corinthians 13 intentionally?
8. Choose one characteristic of love and ask God to develop it in you this week.

Chapter 14 — Spiritual Gifts and Building Up the Church

Read

1 Corinthians 14:1–40

Big Idea

Paul encourages the Corinthians to pursue spiritual gifts, especially prophecy, while insisting that everything in gathered worship should **build up the church** and reflect God's character.

Key Themes

- Pursue love and desire spiritual gifts.
- Spiritual gifts are for strengthening the church.
- Prophecy communicates in a way people can understand.
- Public worship should be intelligible and orderly.
- Spiritual freedom and spiritual order are not opposites.

- God's presence should produce edification rather than confusion.

Discussion Questions

1. Why does Paul place love immediately before his discussion of spiritual gifts?
 2. Why does Paul emphasize intelligibility?
 3. What does it mean for a spiritual gift to "build up" the church?
 4. What principles does Paul give for gathered worship?
 5. How can a church make room for the Holy Spirit while maintaining healthy order?
 6. What is the difference between genuine spiritual freedom and simply doing whatever we want?
 7. How can we encourage spiritual gifts without making people feel pressured to perform?
 8. What would a Spirit-filled, loving, and orderly gathering look like in practice?
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Chapter 15 — The Resurrection

Read

1 Corinthians 15:1–58

Big Idea

The resurrection of Jesus is central to the Christian faith. Because Christ has been raised, death does not have the final word, and believers have a future hope of resurrection.

Key Themes

- The gospel centers on the death, burial, resurrection, and appearances of Jesus.
- Christ's resurrection is essential to Christian faith.
- The resurrection gives meaning to Christian perseverance.
- Death is defeated through Christ.
- Believers look forward to resurrection life.
- Our work for the Lord is not in vain.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Paul identify as the essential message of the gospel?
2. Why would Christianity collapse if Jesus had not been raised?
3. How does Christ's resurrection change our understanding of death?
4. What does Paul's teaching suggest about the future resurrection of believers?
5. Why is resurrection hope connected to how we live now?
6. How can grief and resurrection hope exist together?
7. What does "**your labor in the Lord is not in vain**" mean to you?
8. How should resurrection hope change the way we face suffering, service, and uncertainty?

Prayer

"Jesus, because You are risen, help us live with courage, hope, holiness, and purpose. Let the reality of resurrection shape how we live today."

Chapter 16 — Faithful Living and Mission

Read

1 Corinthians 16:1–24

Big Idea

Paul closes his letter with practical instructions about generosity, relationships, leadership, mission, and perseverance. Theology becomes visible through everyday faithfulness.

Key Themes

- Christian generosity is intentional.
- Ministry involves relationships and partnership.
- Leaders deserve appropriate respect.
- Christians are called to courage and strength.
- Everything should be done in love.
- The church is part of God's mission beyond itself.

Discussion Questions

1. What does Paul teach about intentional generosity?
 2. Why are relationships so prominent in the closing of the letter?
 3. What does Paul mean by "**Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love**"?
 4. Why is love necessary even when Paul calls believers to courage and strength?
 5. What does this chapter teach us about supporting Christian workers and ministry?
 6. How can generosity become part of our discipleship rather than simply a financial obligation?
 7. Where is God inviting you to become more courageous or faithful?
 8. What does it look like for everything we do to be done in love?
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1 Corinthians — Putting It All Together

After completing all sixteen chapters, discuss these questions as a group.

The Gospel

1. What does 1 Corinthians teach us about the centrality of Jesus and the cross?
2. How does the resurrection shape Paul's entire understanding of Christian life?
3. What does the gospel challenge in the way our culture defines success, power, identity, and wisdom?

The Church

4. What does 1 Corinthians teach us about what the church is supposed to be?
5. What destroys Christian unity?
6. What creates genuine Christian unity?
7. What does it mean to belong to the body of Christ?

The Holy Spirit

8. What does this letter teach us about the Holy Spirit?
9. How should spiritual gifts function within a healthy church?
10. How do we pursue spiritual gifts while keeping love at the center?

Christian Character

11. Which character issue does Paul address most frequently throughout the letter?
12. How are humility, holiness, love, generosity, and self-control connected?
13. Where do you see areas of spiritual immaturity in your own life?

Mission

14. What does Paul teach us about sharing the gospel with people who are different from us?
 15. How can our freedom become a tool for serving others?
 16. What might it look like for AZ Vineyard Church to embody the values of 1 Corinthians in its neighborhood and community?
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A Final Group Exercise

Have each person complete these three statements:

Jesus is teaching me:

The Holy Spirit is inviting me to:

One thing I will practice this week is:

Then pray for one another.

Closing Prayer

Father,
thank You for calling us into the family of Christ. Teach us to live with the humility of the cross, the power of the resurrection, and the love of Jesus. Give us wisdom through Your Spirit. Make us one body with many gifts, using what You have given us for the good of others. Help us pursue holiness without pride, freedom without selfishness, truth without harshness, and spiritual gifts without losing sight of love.

Make us a church that reflects Jesus in our relationships, our worship, our homes, our workplaces, and our community.

May everything we do be done in love.

Amen.