
How This Study Supports the Discipleship Plan (see page 129).

SERVE GOD AND OTHERS. The Christian life is not lived in isolation from other believers. We are called to do life together. God is glorified when believers serve one another and work together.

ESSENTIALS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

- Session 1** Fellowship with Believers • 1 Corinthians 1:1-13
- Session 2** Wisdom from God • 1 Corinthians 1:20-25; 2:9-16
- Session 3** A Servant's Heart • 1 Corinthians 3:5-15
- Session 4** A Humble Attitude • 1 Corinthians 3:18–4:7
- Session 5** An Outward Focus • 1 Corinthians 10:23-33
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INTRODUCTION

ESSENTIALS FOR CHRISTIAN LIVING

When summer arrives, many people start pulling together what they consider to be the essentials for a great summer break: beach towel, sun-screen, sunglasses, and a book or two; baseball bat, glove, and ballcap; a grill, charcoal, a few steaks, and Uncle Bernie's special BBQ sauce.

We can debate over the essentials for a good summer, but what about the essentials for the Christian life? Thankfully, we're not left to our own opinions because the Bible gives us the direction we need. I'm referring to more than just what we are to believe. Beliefs are certainly important, but the Christian life is more than just a set of truths. Our trust in Christ and our relationship with Him comes out in our character and the way we live. In the book of 1 Corinthians, Paul helped the church deal with several issues and problems. And in his instruction, we

discover traits, attitudes, and actions that are just as essential for us today.

- Fellowship with other believers
- Wisdom
- Humility
- Seeking the welfare of others
- Using your spiritual gifts
- Love

When we let these "essentials" permeate our lives, our walk with Christ becomes far more than a set of beliefs. It becomes visible—compelling. People notice. And when our lives point others to Jesus, we're living a life that truly matters. That's essential.

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Session 1



Fellowship with Believers

THE POINT

*A life in Christ is a life of fellowship
with other believers.*

THE BIBLE MEETS LIFE

How's your gym membership going? Over 72 million Americans have gym memberships¹, yet 67 percent of those gym memberships are never used!² People are paying good money for something that could benefit them—if they would only go.

Even those who prefer to stay parked on the couch with a bag of chips would agree there are benefits to regularly going to the gym, but do we see the benefit when it comes to attending church? Many people claim to follow Christ but have little connection to a local church. Among those who identify as Christians, 43 percent seldom or never attend church, and an additional 13 percent only show up once a month.³

No church saves us, and no matter how involved we may be in a local church, it's only by trusting Jesus that we come into a relationship with God. But we'll see in the opening chapter of 1 Corinthians that faith in Jesus is a shared faith. When we come to Christ, we come into fellowship with other believers—and the benefits are far better than any gym membership.

QUESTION 1:

What's your favorite way to get some exercise?

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE SAY?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-3

Paul, called as an apostle of Christ Jesus by God's will, and Sosthenes our brother: ² To the church of God at Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called as saints, with all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord—both their Lord and ours. ³ Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

"I like Jesus, but I don't like the church." Our culture is full of people with that mentality. They describe themselves as "spiritual," but resist any group that expects something from them or calls for any accountability. Maybe in their younger days, they experienced church as simply an institution or some formal, rigid environment with rituals and practices that hadn't changed in decades. But that's not the church! Far from it. The church is a living, vibrant group of people who come together because of their shared faith in Christ. Yes, there is organization and order in the life of the church, which we'll look into later in this study. For now let's see the church for what it is: an organic community of believers with unique gifts and callings who do life together. It's the fellowship of the church. Paul gave us a wonderful picture in verse 2.

- **The church of God.** God used Paul to plant the church in Corinth, but it was God's church. When God brought you to faith in Him, you became a child of God. As His child, you were brought into His family—the community of those who belong to Jesus.
- **Sanctified in Christ Jesus.** To be sanctified is to be set apart. When you came to faith in

Christ, you were called out from the world and set apart. But this doesn't just apply to you as an individual believer. The Greek word for church is *ekklesia*, which literally means "the called-out ones." We are called out and set apart *together*, and because we are sanctified and set apart, we are given a new name: we are "called as saints."

- **Call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord.** The church doesn't give lip service to Jesus; the church recognizes the lordship of Jesus and submits to living under His authority.

Let me stress again that this description applies to us as a group. As we read through Scripture, many of us see what God is saying to us as individuals: *"What does He want me to do?"* That's good, but keep in mind that most of the commands in Scripture were written to the church, not to individuals. We are in fellowship with one another because we are sanctified, we are saints together, and we look to the lordship of Christ together.

This concept of the church as a fellowship certainly applies to your local church, but it doesn't stop there. It applies to "all those in every place who call on the name of Jesus Christ our

Lord—both their Lord and ours.” Believers aren’t just a part of a local church; we’re a part of the universal church—believers from every tribe, tongue, and nation.

During my student ministry days, I met with other local student pastors, and we decided to bring our students together once a month for a time of shared worship and fellowship. A member of my own church expressed concern about this. He asked, “Aren’t you worried that our kids might change churches or pick up something not a part of our church’s beliefs?” The churches were all conservative evangelical churches, and while we didn’t all adhere to the same polity and practice, I told this individual, “We don’t gather to talk about our differences;

we gather to celebrate what we have in common: Jesus.”

It’s likely you don’t agree with everyone in your own church—and that may be perfectly fine, because we are called to unity, not uniformity. The fellowship of the church is centered on a shared truth and commitment to Jesus.

QUESTION 2:

Why is belonging to a church important for a Christian?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:4-9

⁴ I always thank my God for you because of the grace of God given to you in Christ Jesus, ⁵ that you were enriched in him in every way, in all speech and all knowledge. ⁶ In this way, the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you, ⁷ so that you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁸ He will also strengthen you to the end, so that you will be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God is faithful; you were called by him into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

Paul expressed his thanks to God for the church in Corinth, and in his thanks, we see two more descriptions of the church.

Recipients of grace. We don’t enter into a relationship with God through our own merits or efforts. The last thing we deserve is a relationship with Him, yet that is the very thing we are offered in Christ—and it’s all because of God’s grace. As recipients of God’s grace, we are embraced and accepted right where we are—we don’t have to change first. But in His grace,

God doesn’t leave us there either. He forgives us and works in us to make us more like Christ.

Enriched in every way. One of the things God does for us in His grace is empower us. The Greek word for “enriched” refers to a very wealthy person, and Christ certainly makes us wealthy in the things that matter. We are enriched “in all speech and in all knowledge,” and Paul will go deeper on this in chapter 12. Peter underscored this connection between God’s grace and His enrichment of our lives:

“His divine power has given us everything required for life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness” (2 Pet. 1:3).

This strength and enrichment occur as believers work together in unity and fellowship. You’re never alone—your church family stands with you, and Christ leads the way. In the church, we can help each other get spiritually fed. As one person digs into the Bible and learns, they can teach the rest of us, and we all grow. Christian growth works best when it is a group process; in the church we teach and encourage one another. The church, then, ought to be like a school of fish, swimming together and providing each other with growth, protection, and encouragement.

Unfortunately, the church in Corinth wasn’t living up to this. As you read through the book of 1 Corinthians, you’ll see that the church had a whole mess of problems, but in these opening remarks, Paul focused on who they were in

Christ and what God was doing in them. And God was indeed at work! The church was far from perfect or blameless, but because of God’s work of strengthening them, they would “be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Paul said something similar to the church in Philippi: “I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:6).

God would see this through. “God is faithful.” What a wonderful truth! We can trust that God will continue to work in us, making us blameless and more and more like Jesus. And as He does this, our fellowship together is strengthened.

QUESTION 3:

What are some ways we can strengthen our fellowship with other believers?

1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-13

¹⁰ Now I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, that there be no divisions among you, and that you be united with the same understanding and the same conviction. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me about you, my brothers and sisters, by members of Chloe’s people, that there is rivalry among you. ¹² What I am saying is this: One of you says, “I belong to Paul,” or “I belong to Apollos,” or “I belong to Cephas,” or “I belong to Christ.” ¹³ Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul’s name?

Paul did his part to strengthen the fellowship of the church by highlighting where they were *not* in fellowship. In fact, their disunity was the very

opposite of their “fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Cor. 1:9). They divided over leadership style and personality.

Engage

THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Use the space below to draw a representation of the church and its fellowship.

Think beyond the building to the life the people live together.

Then write a prayer thanking God for His church.

My Prayer:

Paul. During his second missionary trip, Paul came to Corinth and planted the church (Acts 18:1-17). Many of the believers may have felt a strong loyalty to him because he was their first leader, but we also know from his writing that Paul was a brilliant thinker.

Apollos. Apollos came later to Corinth (Acts 19:1), and he was known as “an eloquent man who was competent in the use of the Scriptures” (18:24). Since Apollos was a skilled speaker, it’s easy to see why some people preferred to follow and listen to him.

Cephas. Peter (whose name means “rock”) was sometimes referred to as Cephas (the Aramaic word for rock). It’s possible that Peter had been to Corinth, although there’s no explicit reference to this in Scripture. However, Paul mentioned Cephas several times in his letter (1:12, 3:22, 9:5, and 15:5), so the people had either met Peter or were familiar with his leadership role in the early church. His close connection to Jesus made him an easy reference for some.

Jesus. This is the group you’d want to be classed with, right? After all, isn’t “Christ follower” the very definition of a Christian? But Paul likely included them as a divisive group because, while their claim sounded spiritual, it carried a tone of superiority. They didn’t need a human leader. They saw themselves as beyond that and “more spiritual” than the others.

QUESTION 4:

How do we determine when something is worth dividing over?

Paul had just stressed in verse 9 the fellowship they had with Jesus. Logic tells us that if you have fellowship with Jesus and I have fellowship with Jesus, then we have fellowship with each other. Paul asked, “Is Christ divided?” It’s a question that’s answered with a clear no. These men—Paul, Peter, and Apollos—were just that: men. They all worked for the same reason—to build up the kingdom of God and glorify Christ. With his follow-up questions (“Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in Paul’s name?”), Paul was underscoring that he was only a servant. The one that matters, the *only* One that matters, is Jesus.

While some people take their preferences seriously, it’s doubly sad and grievous when they lead to divisions in the church. It’s OK to have preferences, but when we make our preferences the grounds for relating to others, we bring dishonor to the One who calls us together as one body. On the other hand, those outside the church stand up and take notice when people from all walks of life come together because of Jesus. The world focuses on our differences, but it’s quite a testimony to God when they see us rise above our preferences and love one another. It’s a love that arises out of a shared love and commitment to Jesus—who makes us one.

QUESTION 5:

What are some practical steps our group can take to promote unity in the church?

LIVE IT OUT

A life in Christ is a life of fellowship with other believers. Choose one of the following applications:

- **Confess.** If you've avoided someone or looked down on someone in the church because they have different preferences or interests than you, confess that to God. Ask Him to help you see the individual as a fellow believer who loves Jesus.
- **Meet.** Choose someone in your church family you don't know well. Start a conversation. Ask questions. Find common ground in your shared faith.
- **Invite.** As a group, write down specific ways you can deepen fellowship beyond your meeting time—like sharing meals, serving together, or praying for one another throughout the week.



1. Fitness On Demand, "Gym Membership Statistics You Should Know in 2024," *Fitness On Demand*, <https://www.fitnessondemand247.com/news/gym-membership-statistics-you-should-know-in-2024>.

2. Alyssa Oursler, "Is Your Gym Membership a Good Investment?" *USA Today*, April 27, 2016, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/personalfinance/2016/04/27/your-gym-membership-good-investment/82758866/>.

3. Aaron Earls, "Fewer Americans Regularly Attend Church," *Lifeway Research*, March 28, 2024, <https://research.lifeway.com/2024/03/28/fewer-americans-regularly-attend-church/>.