

Church Talk – A Study of 1 & 2 Corinthians, Pastor Brandon Ball

Student Handout

Background of the Corinthian Church

1. Corinth as a City

- **Strategic Location** – Corinth was a narrow strip of land connecting northern and southern Greece. A major trade hub with ports on both sides, making it wealthy and cosmopolitan.
- **Wealth & Luxury** – A booming city filled with merchants, athletes, travelers, and immigrants. With wealth came materialism and status-seeking.
- **Immorality** – Known for loose morals. The temple of Aphrodite (goddess of love) had thousands of prostitutes. To “Corinthianize” meant living a sexually immoral life.

2. Corinthian Culture & Identity

- **Diversity** – A melting pot of Greeks, Romans, Jews, freedmen, and slaves.
- **Love of Rhetoric & Philosophy** – Public speaking was entertainment. People valued eloquence over truth (1 Cor. 1:17–20).
- **Status Competition** – Who you followed, who taught you, and who you admired all determined status. This mindset spilled into the church (1:12).

3. The Corinthian Church Itself

- **Planted by Paul** – Acts 18 shows Paul stayed 18 months in Corinth.
 - **Spiritually Gifted, but Spiritually Immature** – Abundant gifts (1 Cor. 1:7), but pride and immaturity often surfaced.
 - **Divisions** – Some followed Paul, others Apollos, Cephas, or Christ. Culture had crept into the church.
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I. The Presence of Division in the Church

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 1:10–13

Paul asks: “*Is Christ divided?*”

- Division came from elevating personalities over Christ.
- It happens when we:
 - Categorize certain giftings or leaders above others.
 - Divide by region, organization, or even local preference.

Truth: Every Spirit-filled believer has a gift. Those gifts are meant to **unify**, not divide.

1 Corinthians 12:4–7 – “To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”

Reflection:

- How can I use my gift to strengthen the body of Christ?
- Am I more focused on a personality than the purpose of Christ?

Illustration Quote:

“You are the answer to somebody’s prayer. If you silence your gift, you silence God’s voice in their life.”

II. The Absence of the Cross in the Church

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 1:18–19

- In Paul’s day, the cross was considered shameful and horrific.
- Yet, Paul boldly declared it as the **power of God**.
- Today, we often see crosses as decoration, but forget the scandal of the message.

Truth: The cross is central. Without it, church is empty performance.

Applications:

- The gospel is not about eloquence but about Christ crucified.
- We should be able to explain how and why the cross has changed our lives.

Reflection:

- Can I clearly share how the cross has impacted me?
 - Do I ever get more impressed with style than with the substance of the gospel?
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III. The Corinthians and Their Love for Wisdom

Key Verse: 1 Corinthians 1:17–20

- **The “Wise Man”** – Greek philosophers who shaped worldviews.
- **The “Scribe”** – Jewish experts in the Law.
- **The “Debater”** – Skilled orators who elevated form over content.

Paul’s point: *God chose what looks foolish to the world (the cross) to display His power.*

Takeaway Lessons

1. Do not divide the church by elevating people over Christ.
2. Do not be impressed with style over substance—the gospel is the true power.
3. Do not silence your gift—the body needs what God put in you.