



What is It?

1st and 2nd Corinthians are two epistles (letters) of the New Testament. Though they are together, both in the Bible and for next week's class, they are different letters written by Paul at different times for different reasons.

Who, What, When, Where and WHY

Who – Again, Paul (formerly Saul) self-identifies as the author of these letters in the first few verses of both books. Christian scholarship has never seriously proposed different authors.

What – There were problems in the church in Corinth! Paul spent more ink trying to correct this church, even if you don't include a third letter referred to but not in the Bible, than he did any other of the churches he founded. Paul alternates between gentleness and direct rebuke in both letters.

When – Both 1st and 2nd Corinthians were probably written in or near 55 AD, though at different times and from different places.

Where – Paul wrote 1st Corinthians while he was staying in Ephesus (in present-day Turkey) and 2nd Corinthians while in Macedonia (in present-day northern Greece). Corinth was and is in southern Greece and was known to be a wild city; some have called it the Los Vegas of ancient Rome.

Why – In 1st Corinthians, Paul was addressing divisions in the church, allegations of immorality, erroneous practices (especially about the Lord's Supper), litigiousness and poor adherence to sound doctrine (i.e., the resurrection). In 2nd Corinthians, Paul addresses false teachings, false allegations against himself, and details about his impending visit to Corinth. Throughout both epistles, Paul reaffirms the Gospel's tenets and provides practical instructions for dealing with each other and the world.

Reading Advice

To read both 1st and 2nd Corinthians in one week you will need to read 4 to 5 chapters a day (29 chapters/6 days = 4.8 per day). We recommend at least 15 minutes a day, Monday through Saturday. If you include a Sunday reading, then you can reduce the chapters and/or minutes per day a little. Even if you have never read through both books of Corinthians completely before, they will be very familiar to you – these verses are used often in church.