

1 Corinthians : Overview of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

Opening Question: What was the problem in the Corinthian church that caused Paul to write this letter (1:10)?

Key Takeaways:

1. Paul's letter to the Corinthians came as a response to a request by the Corinthians to address the problems facing their church.
2. Paul's letter to the Corinthians does not have direct application for the church today; however, Paul's response to the Corinthians provides insight for the church today.
3. The book of the Acts of the Apostles provides background insight into who Paul was and his ministry to the church.
4. The church at Corinth did not understand who they were in Christ nor the implications of what it meant to follow Christ.
5. The church at Corinth was divided and following individual leaders.
6. The Corinthians valued worldly wisdom rather than the wisdom of God and evaluated Paul accordingly.
7. Paul's singular goal was building up the body of Christ.

Discussion Questions:

1. 1 Corinthians is the second lengthiest of Paul's letters. It will take you an hour to read. It is important that you dedicate time early in this study to read the letter in one sitting. As a group, discuss other ways you will approach reading Paul's letter to gain understanding. These may include tracking the pronouns, ignoring chapter and verse markings, using Paul's definitions for the words he chose, identifying the one problem and solution that caused Paul to write.
2. Read together Acts 22 and discuss Paul's life story and purpose. Next read Acts 18-19 to identify Sostenes and Apollos, who Paul referenced in this letter.
3. Where does Paul's first letter to the Corinthians fit in the biblical narrative (Acts 18)?

Practical Application:

1. In one sitting, slowly read aloud the letter of 1 Corinthians. This should take about an hour. Paul explained the reason for the letter in 1:10. What is the reason? Beginning with Paul's introduction in 1:1-3 begin to tie each part of Paul's letter to the reason he wrote the letter.
2. What is the common goal of each individual member of the Body of Christ according to Paul? How did Paul put this goal on display in his ministry?
3. Two types of wisdom are identified and contrasted by Paul in this letter. What are the characteristics of each?

Closing Prayer:

Father, Thank You for Paul's letter to the Corinthians and the valuable insights it contains for the church today. May our singular desire be to build up the body of Christ. Give us discernment in rejecting the world's wisdom and holding fast to Your wisdom found in Your Word. Amen.