

## **1 CORINTHIANS 4**

Life is *a stewardship*, so be faithful (vv. 1–5). We judge ourselves, and others judge us; but the Final Judge is the Lord. Live to please Him alone.

Life is *a gift*, so be humble (vv. 6–9). Your abilities and blessings came from God; you cannot take credit for them. They are God’s gift to you, and your use of them is your gift to God. It is sinful to contrast various Christian workers (1:12) because only God knows their hearts.

Life is *a battle*, so be courageous (vv. 9–13). If the apostles were the greatest Christians who ever lived, and they were filth and the scum of the earth, where did that leave the boasting Corinthians?

Life is *a school*, so be teachable (vv. 14–21). Paul saw himself as a father in the Lord who had to instruct and discipline his children. Our Father in heaven uses many hands and voices to teach us, and we must be willing pupils as we go through life.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 5**

**Separation** (1–7). The background of the chapter is the Passover Feast (Exod. 12). The presence of the immoral man should have turned the feast into a funeral (v. 2), but the church was boasting about the sinner instead of weeping over him. Tolerating known sin in the church is like putting leaven into the Passover Feast: it does not belong.

**Celebration** (8). Paul saw the Christian life as “keeping the feast” (v. 8), that is, feeding on Christ, being ready to move, and being sure we are not defiled by sin (leaven, yeast). The Lamb has set us free, and we are on our way to our promised inheritance!

**Isolation** (9–13). Sin in the life of the believer is far worse than sin in the life of an unbeliever. We cannot isolate ourselves from the world, but we can separate ourselves from disobedient believers so that God can discipline them.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 6**

Not only were the Corinthian believers compromising with the world, but they were also losing their testimony before the world by taking each other to court before pagan judges. Paul repeatedly asked, “Do you not know?” (vv. 2, 3, 15, 16, 19).

**We will judge angels** (1–8). If God entrusts that great a responsibility to His people, can’t He help us with our petty decisions today?

**We have been changed** (9–12). We are not what we once were, so why should we live as we once lived? It is a matter not of “What is lawful?” but of “What is helpful?”

**We belong to the Lord** (13–20). He made the human body, He dwells in believers by His Spirit, and He purchased us at the Cross. The believer’s body belongs to God and must be used to glorify Him.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 7**

Marriage is *a gift* (vv. 1–9), and not everybody has the same gift. Some people have more self-control than others.

Marriage is *a ministry* (vv. 10–16). He addressed people who had been converted after marriage and who wondered if they should remain with their unsaved spouses. “Yes,” said Paul, “because you might win them to Christ.” But even Christian spouses can have a wonderful ministry to each other as they grow in the Lord and love each other (Eph. 5:22ff.).

Marriage is *a calling* (vv. 17–24). When you become a Christian, that does not annul what you were before you trusted Christ. With the Lord’s help, you can fulfill that calling in a greater way.

Marriage is *a challenge* (vv. 25–40). Paul does not deny the blessings of marriage, but he does remind us of the burdens that marriage brings, especially when the times are tough. Building a Christian home is a great ministry, but nobody should enter into it lightly or carelessly.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 8**

***Life is controlled by conscience.*** Conscience is the judge within that commends us for doing right and condemns us for doing wrong (Rom. 2:14–15). If we sin against conscience, we do terrible damage to the inner person.

***Conscience is strengthened by knowledge.*** As we grow in spiritual understanding, a weak conscience becomes stronger, and we appreciate our freedom in Christ more and more. The weak believer must not run ahead of his conscience, and the strong believer must never force him to do so.

***Knowledge must be balanced by love.*** Your spiritual knowledge can be either a weapon to hurt people or a tool to build people. If your knowledge puffs you up, it will tear others down. Love knows when and how to yield to others without compromising the truth. Review Romans 14–15.

## **1 CORINTHIANS 9**

We do not have the right to give up our freedom, for that was purchased by Christ (Gal. 5:1); *but we do have the freedom to give up our rights*. For the sake of winning the lost (v. 12), Paul gave up his right to receive financial support, and he begged the Corinthians to give up their rights for the sake of the saved.

Christian ministry is like fighting a war, caring for a vineyard, tending a flock, and cultivating a field (vv. 7–11). Meditate on these images, and see what they teach you about serving the Lord.

Ministry is a stewardship (v. 17), and the servant must be faithful (4:2). Ministers of Christ are also like runners who must keep the rules or be disqualified (vv. 24–27).

Verses 19–23 call for courtesy and wisdom in witness, not for compromise. “I have become all things to all men” does not mean Paul had no personal convictions. It means he used his convictions to build bridges, not walls. If he seemed inconsistent, it was only because people did

not look deep enough. *His one great desire was to win the lost*, and that governed his every decision.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>Wiersbe, W. W. 1997, c1991. *With the word Bible commentary* . Thomas Nelson: Nashville