



Foundations: PT III | The Book of 1 Corinthians

Mark Allen | 08.16.26

Overview

This week's sermon introduced the book of 1 Corinthians as a foundational text for the church. The Corinthian church faced serious challenges from the culture surrounding it — sexual immorality, division over human wisdom, and internal scandals — and Paul's letter confronts those issues while also pointing the church toward a Spirit-filled, love-driven life. As the pastor noted, the Corinthian church in many ways mirrors the challenges facing the American church today.

Key Takeaways

- God designed us with a longing that only He can fill. Every person carries that need, and Jesus is the answer.
 - Sanctification is the ongoing process of becoming more like Christ after salvation. We are declared righteous, but we are still being shaped.
 - The church is called to be distinct from the surrounding culture, not shaped by it.
 - What we build our lives on matters eternally. Wood, hay, and stubble will not survive the fire of judgment, but what is built on Christ will last.
 - All the gifts God gives us are meant to be exercised in love. Love is not optional — it is the foundation of everything.
 - The resurrection of Jesus is not a side issue. It is the hinge on which the entire Christian life turns.
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Discussion Questions

Opening Question

Pastor Mark opened with a story about a coach who said he spent years trying to fill a hole in his life with everything except what he truly needed. Take a moment and reflect on your own story.

- Before you came to faith in Christ, what were you trying to fill that hole with? How did that change when you met Jesus?

Section 1: Division and Human Wisdom (1 Corinthians 1-3)

Paul confronted a church that was dividing itself over personalities and human philosophy. People were rallying around Paul, Apollos, or Peter rather than around Christ.

1. Pastor Mark warned that after he is gone, he does not want people to say "it's just not the same without Pastor Mark" — because we follow Christ, not men. Why do you think it is so easy for people to become more attached to a personality than to Jesus Himself? Have you ever experienced this tendency in yourself?
2. Paul asked in 1 Corinthians 1:20 where the wise man and the debater of this age have gone, pointing out that the world did not come to know God through human wisdom. Where do you see the church today tempted to replace the simple message of the gospel with the wisdom of the world?
3. Pastor Mark described two kinds of building materials — gold, silver, and precious stones versus wood, hay, and straw — and said he believes our eternal reward will largely be the people we led to faith in Christ. What are some things you may be building your life around right now that will not last? What would it look like to reorder your priorities around what is eternal??

Section 2: Scandals in the Church (1 Corinthians 5-6)

Paul was not surprised that sin existed. He was troubled that the church was tolerating it without correction.

4. Pastor Mark made the point that you can be a genuine believer and still be living in sin — and that Paul calls the Corinthians saints while also telling them to stop sinning. How does understanding both justification and sanctification help us hold those two realities together without either excusing sin or condemning the person?
5. Paul urged the church to handle conflicts and wrongs internally rather than taking brothers and sisters to court before unbelievers. What principles from this passage could apply to how your group or church handles disagreements and offenses today?

Section 3: Gray Areas and the Law of Love (1 Corinthians 8-10)

Paul addressed the question of meat sacrificed to idols — something that was technically permissible but potentially harmful to a weaker brother.

6. Pastor Mark described two principles for navigating gray areas: the law of love (being mindful of how your freedom affects others) and the law of expediency (choosing to avoid something even if you have freedom to do it, because it simply is not helpful). Can you think of a current example where one of these principles should guide a decision in your own life?
7. Is there an area where you have been exercising your freedom in Christ without considering how it might affect someone around you? What would the loving response look like?

Section 4: Spiritual Gifts and Love (1 Corinthians 12-13)

Paul shifted from correcting carnality to describing what a Spirit-filled life looks like — a body of believers, each part necessary, all operating in love.

8. Pastor said, "God has gifted you as a believer. We need you." Do you know what your spiritual gifts are? If so, are you actively using them to serve the body? If not, what is one step you could take to discover and begin using your gifts?
9. Paul's famous chapter on love in 1 Corinthians 13 sits right in the middle of his teaching on spiritual gifts — not as a separate idea, but as the governing principle for how all gifts are used. The pastor pointed out that meanness and harshness — especially online — is a sign of someone who does not know Christ. How would your relationships, both inside and outside the church, look different if love governed every action, as Paul calls for in 1 Corinthians 16:14?

Section 5: The Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15)

Paul argued that if there is no resurrection, the entire Christian life collapses. The resurrection is not a bonus belief — it is the foundation of everything.

10. Paul stated in 1 Corinthians 15:13-14 that if there is no resurrection, Christ has not been raised, and our faith is worthless. How does the reality of the resurrection change the way you approach your daily life, your suffering, and your priorities?

Practical Applications

Choose one or more of the following to put into practice this week:

- **Examine what you are building.** Take 15 minutes this week to honestly assess what you are spending the most time, energy, and money building. Ask yourself whether those things will survive the fire of eternity. Write down one adjustment you want to make.
- **Identify a gray area.** Think of one area of your life where you have been exercising personal freedom without considering how it affects those around you. Pray about whether the law of love or the law of expediency should guide a change in your behavior.

- **Pursue fellowship intentionally.** The pastor reminded us that we were called into fellowship — both with Christ and with one another. This week, reach out to one person in your church family you have been distant from and take a step toward genuine connection.

- **Confess and repent.** The pastor closed the sermon with an invitation to let the Holy Spirit identify areas in need of repentance. If something came to mind during the sermon, do not let the week pass without bringing it honestly before God and, if appropriate, before a trusted brother or sister in Christ.

- **Consider baptism.** If you have never been baptized, the church is offering a baptism service at the Life Fellowship Retreat Center next Sunday. Baptism is an outward declaration of an inward reality. If you have trusted Christ but have not yet been baptized, consider signing up this week.

Closing Prayer Focus

Close your group time by praying together over these areas:

- That each member would build their life on Christ and on what is eternal

 - That your group would be a place of genuine love, free from division and worldliness

 - That each person would walk in the fullness of the gifts God has given them

 - That the resurrection of Jesus would be the anchor of every member's hope and daily life.
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