

IN LOVE

1 Corinthians 16:1–24

Introduction:

Today we conclude our series on 1 Corinthians called GROW. Paul came into the city beat up and alone Acts 18. He made his way to Corinth where he met a refugee couple named Priscilla and Aquila who shared the same trade and offered him hospitality, taking him in to stay with them. Corinth was a major city in the Roman Empire and it bridges two trade routes. It was multicultural and cosmopolitan. It was also immoral and a city filled with idolatry. Paul followed his regular pattern and reasoned with the in the synagogue every sabbath. Timothy and Silas finally rejoined Paul from Macedonia and Paul increased his efforts preaching until in a dramatic moment he shook out his garments and told them that their blood was to be on their heads. He went next door to the home and Titius Justice and there Crispus the synagogue ruler confessed faith in Jesus. God came to Paul one night in a vision and told him to continue speaking because he was with him and he explained that there were many in the city who were his people. Paul remained in the city for a year and a half.

The church in Corinth had heard the story of Jesus and embraced it with enthusiasm, but over time they stopped growing, and the truth got distorted. The Corinthian church struggled with:

- Divisions
- Immoral behavior
- Incest
- Lawsuits
- Fornication
- Marriage
- Food sacrificed to idols
- Disorderly conduct in public worship
- Abuse of the Lord's supper
- Confusion over spiritual gifts
- Doctrinal issues

Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthian church, but only two have survived. This letter was written because Paul received a troubling report from Chloe's people (1 Corinthians 1:11), he needed to answer the questions that he had been asked by letter (1 Corinthians 7:1), and he needed to correct doctrinal issues particularly about the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:12).

We are no different than the Corinthians. Like the Corinthians, we live in a world filled with ideas and practices that are at odds with the gospel. Every day we hear stories about what it means to be wise and spiritual based on our secular culture which can cause us to distort the gospel for our own purposes. The bible gives us pictures to help us understand the life of faith. People are born again into the kingdom of God, but they must grow. Many in churches today are still infants and toddlers in their faith and their

understanding of God. Paul challenges believers to GROW and offers some practical advice on how to live as Christians in the midst of a culture that pressures believers to compromise.

Paul rebukes the church in Corinth:

“But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.” (1 Corinthians 3:1, ESV)

“Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature.” (1 Corinthians 14:20, ESV)

“When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways.” (1 Corinthians 13:11, ESV)

The final chapter of 1 Corinthians seems almost anticlimactic after the power and clarity of Paul’s defense and teaching on the resurrection. However, if you look closely, you will see practical insights that offer a glimpse of what life was like for this New Testament church.

How To Give

Giving should be planned.

It should be consistent.

Sharing our material prosperity is only one way of demonstrating our

interdependence in the body of Christ.

This chapter also reveals the generous way in which the early church shared its resources in personnel.

Such giving and receiving of ministry between churches in completely different cultures are equally constructive today.

There is still a patronizing attitude amongst many western Christians towards brethren from Africa, Asia and Latin America.

How To Make Plans

Making plans is good.

Opportunities and opposition often go hand in hand.

How To Treat Leaders

Treat leaders well.

When there is a difference of opinion, having stated our views, we must respect the decisions others make, learning to trust God for the outcome.

How To Grow

Pay attention to who and what influence you the most.

Live in a way that is consistent with your faith.

Grow and mature.

Be strong in the Lord.

Let love be the motivation for everything.

Grow.