

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are designed to help you talk about God's word and Pastor Brian's message with friends and family. You of course can use your own questions, but we'd like to give you this tool to encourage Biblical fellowship and discipleship in your circle of relationships. **Enjoy discovering more about Him!**

"CORINTHIAN CHRISTIANITY: A PEOPLE IN PROCESS" | 1 COR 1:1-17 | PASTOR BRIAN BELL

WARM-UP QUESTION:

Would you rather be corrected or confronted by text or by phone call?

"AFFIRMATION OF CALLING" (1 Cor 1: 1-3)

Paul starts his letter with naming the Corinthians "saints", reminding them they are God's people even though he's about to correct many ungodly behaviors. **Why is it good for Christ-followers to be reminded they are saints through Jesus?**

"EXALTATION OF GOD" (1 Cor 1: 4-9)

Paul is thankful for how God is evident in the church despite their flaws: He has saved them for eternity, He has given them spiritual gifts, and in all of it He is faithful. **What are ways God has been faithful in our community?**

"ELEVATION OF HUMAN LEADERS" (1 Cor 1: 10-17)

Paul criticizes the Corinthians for being divided over which leader they followed instead of focusing on the gospel. **What tends to distract you from the message of the gospel today? What helps you re-focus on the message of cross of Christ?**

REFLECTION QUESTION:

Paul must write a letter to correct many wrong behaviors in the Corinthian church, but God's faithfulness gives him confidence the Corinthians will learn and grow and live out their new identity as believers in many different areas of life. **What are strong influences in your life? Are you willing to let God shape how you live? Pray God gives you power to live for Him.**

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

10-15-23

Corinthian Christianity: A People In Process

I. Announce:

- A. Welcome to those Online and *in our Additional Seating in the Learning Center*.
- B. **Slide1 At Risk**: Join us for our next *At Risk* TONIGHT from **3:00-5:00pm** in the Agape Room. This month we will be discussing the link between Foster Care and Human Trafficking. *This is such a crucial topic, so we hope to see you there.*
- C. **Slide2 Demo Day**: Do you own a hard hat? If so, join us on October 27th and 28th from 7am to 4pm. We will have 2 demolition days, you can come to one or both, as we continue to remodel the inside of the sanctuary. If you can help, please go on our **website** and **sign-up** so that we know how many people will be there.
- D. **Slide3 Fostering a Hope Community**: Just a reminder that **our next monthly meeting** is this Wed night, Oct 18 at 7:00 pm in the agape room. We'll be discussing what it means and **how to be 'more present' as we parent our kids**. If you are a **foster parent** or **have adopted kids**, we'd love you to come & check out our support group.
- E. **Slide4 Prayer**:

II. Intro: Corinthian Christianity: A People In Process

[Akai-EE-a]

- A. **Macedonia and Achaia made up Greece**. **Corinth** was the capital of Achaia.
 1. It was the **richest** and **most important city** in Greece. **It was also the most corrupt**. Corinth was a **center for trade**.
- B. Paul *founded* the Corinthian church during his **2nd missionary journey** (Acts 18) and *lead the church* there for a **year and a half** (ad 51,52).
 1. When he left, pastor **Apollos** took over, **but** there was some **serious problems developing** in the church.
 2. He wrote a **stern letter** that was not successful (1 Cor.5:9) [this is really **2nd Cor**]
 3. He heard that the church was **divided** (1:11). **Then** a delegation showed up in **Ephesus** regarding **specific questions** (3 guys, 16:17).
 - a) **1st Corinth** was Paul's response (ad 56).

C. **Slide5 Book Outline:** **1st** Paul defines each of the **5 problems**; **then 2nd** he responds w/the **the gospel** with all 5.

1. Paul helps them to look at **every area of life** (relationships, family, community, work) *through the lens of the gospel!*
2. **Divisions** *sin in the church* (ch's.1-4). **Sex** *guy & step mom, temple prostitutes; marriage/single* [**sexual integrity** is one of the ways we respond to Jesus love and grace. your body is being redeemed by Jesus both now, and in the future. So what you do with your body **matters**] (5-7). **Food** *idolatry* (8-10). **Public Worship** *Lord's supper, Sp gifts, Love* (11-14). **Resurrection** (15). **Final Greeting** *special offerings* (16).
3. We note a repeated phrase, **Now concerning**, which begins most of the next sections. [ch.7,8,11,12,15,16]

D. **Slide6a** How can a church stand in a very pagan society?

1. In 1st Corinthians we have **hope** & a **challenge** for ***A People in Process***, or ... ***A Bride in Rehab!***
2. **The Challenge:** to reflect ***a perfect Savior*** in the way we are living, even though we are ***imperfect***.
3. **The Hope:** that one day our struggles will be over **and** we'll stand ***perfected*** in the presence of our Savior.
 - a) **Slide6b** *Paul had planted a church in the city, but the city had gotten into the church.*¹
 - b) Which explains their/our problems: ***Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect.*** Romans 12:2 *NLT*

E. **Slide7 Maps:** Look at Paul's **1st** Missionary Journey (Turkey trip).

1. **Slide8,9** Paul's **2nd** Missionary Journey (Macedonia call/Europe. Tie in Thes)

¹ Warren Wiersbe, With The Word.

- F. **Slide10 Note Corinth's**: Isthmus (4m wide). Important trade route (explain save 200 mi. of perilous navigation around. **2 options**: small vessel lifted onto carts; large vessels unload & reload cargo to go across isthmus). [Tiberius, Nero tried, 1893]
1. It was thus a **2 port town** making it the chief commerce center of Greece.
 2. In this wealthy city were opportunities for *exotic goods, entertainment, culture, and where sensual pleasures abounded* (Temple of Aphrodite, goddess of *love*, prob why Paul gives here *the greatest ch on Love*).
- G. "A bustling hub of world-wide commerce, degraded culture, & idolatrous religion."²
- H. **Their Reputation**: The Greeks had a verb, Κορινθιάζομαι (Korinthia-zomai), "to play the Corinthian", which was synonymous *to be sexually promiscuous*.
1. The Red Hot Chili Peppers came out w/a song in 1999, **Californication**. A song about the underbelly of American society (deceit, plasticity, and desperation) under *the gilded face* of the American Dream.

III. Slide11a **AFFIRMATION OF CALLING (1-3) Read.** [

2) Exaltation of God 3) Elevation of Human Leaders]

- A. **Before Paul digs into the different issues, he 1st**: Affirms their Calling, Expresses Thanks, Exalts the Faithfulness of God.
- B. **Slide11b Called to be saints** - *called* found in (vs.1,2,9,24,26).
1. They were *not living like saints*, but they were saints.³
 2. **Believers, we are saints** - hagios/holy/pure. *One separated from the world & consecrated to God*. (Easton Bible Dict) **Not just called to be saved, but to be holy**
- C. (2) This side of heaven, wherever you go, we live in *a world tainted by sin*. The work of **sanctification** is *an ongoing daily project*.
1. **Sanctified** - the process of a believer becoming more like Christ in thought and action.
- D. (4) **I give thanks** - thanksgiving was a common feature in ancient letters.

² Ken Boa and Bruce Wilkinson, Talk Through The Bible, 1 Corinthians intro.

³ Wiersbe, W. W. (1992). Wiersbe's expository outlines on the New Testament (p. 418). Victor Books.

1. Despite their immorality, Paul is thankful that they've **come to Christ** and are at least **staying engaged with the Christian community**. This provides the opportunity for God to work **in them and through them**.

IV. Slide12a **EXALTATION OF GOD (4-9)** *Read*

- A. (4) Paul was always *brought to prayer* for those he loved.
- B. Slide12b (7) Paul thanks God for **the gifts** God has given the Corinthian believers. They received **all** the spiritual gifts. CM we're not lacking **any spiritual gift** (stir yours up!)
- C. (8) Paul thanks God for **the guarantee** God gave the Corinthian believers.
 1. **How?** Oh just that **He'll sustain you to the end** - referring to their/our **eternal security** :)
- D. (9) Paul exalts the faithfulness of God. *God is faithful*.
 1. NLT **He has invited you into partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord**.
 2. **We were called into the Fellowship of His Son – Koinonia**, having everything in common w/**Jesus**. We're in partnership w/**Jesus**. [actually, a trinitarian-experience]
 - a) **Your interests are His** – your mind & its **thoughts**, your body & its **purity**, your spirit & its **graciousness**.
 - b) **His interests are yours** - **His glory**, the wonder of **His person**, the majesty & greatness of **His Power**.
- E. Slide12c *Alan Redpath said, **“All He has is at your disposal now. And His desire is that all you have should be at His disposal now ... and always.”**

V. Slide13a **ELEVATION OF HUMAN LEADERS (10-17)** *Read*

- A. Paul addresses **2** of the numerous Problems confronting the Corinthian church in the rest of the chapter, we'll just take **1** of them this morning. They were **elevating human Leaders** (10-17). [next week] They were **elevating human Wisdom** (18-31)
- B. The Corinthian letter exposes the tragedy of **low-level Christian living!** (Redpath)
- C. Slide13b (10) Msg *I'll put it as urgently as I can: You **must get along with each other**. You **must learn to be considerate of one another, cultivating a life in common**.*

- D. (10) **United** - they should be **unified in their purpose and behavior**, **but** the opposite is happening.
- E. (11) **Quarreling among you** - likely based on **personalities rather than theological disputes**.
- F. **So 4 Fan-Clubs started up**: the **Paul-Party**, the **Apollos-Party**, the **Cephas-Party**, and the **Christ-Party**.
1. **Well which man was most important in the church?** **Paul** was the founder. Pastor **Apollos** is incredibly intelligent. **Cephas** is the #1 apostle. **Or Christ?**
 2. Paul is asking ... **are you following the man or the message?**
- G. There always emerges **a group** who swings **too far** the other way in their self-righteousness, of listening to *NO human leadership*.
1. Because of these **3 groups** paying *excessive attention* to an individual leader, it automatically produces a **4th group** who *rights their wrongs* with a strong dose of **anti-authoritarianism** built into them: *'Who needs leaders anyway? Christ is our leader. He is the head of the body. We depend on him alone and we go straight to him. He tells us what to do and, when we wait on him, he lets us know his will.'*⁴
- H. (13) **Is Christ divided** - Paul's rhetorical question challenges the Corinthians regarding the **divisions** within their congregation.
1. Since **Christ** is one with **His body**, the Corinthian church should be **united**.
 2. He also may be critiquing them for ranking **Christ** among **other church leaders**, when Christ actually serves **as head over** the entire body.
- I. Paul was not minimizing **baptism**, **but rather** was putting it into its proper perspective, because the Corinthians were making too much of it.
1. **In Calvary it would sound like this**: I went to church in the Tent - was baptized by pastor Chuck - at Pirates Cove - while wearing *bell-bottoms*.

⁴ Prior, D. (1985). The message of 1 Corinthians: life in the local church (p. 34). InterVarsity Press.

2. Was **Paul** crucified for you? (13a). Were you baptized in the name of **Paul**? (13b) For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to *preach the Gospel*.

- a) Traditional Religion says, *I give God a good record and in response to that ... He blesses me.*
- b) Christianity says, *God gives me a perfect record in Jesus Christ as a free gift. I'm a sinner, I only receive it when I admit I'm a moral failure, and then He gives me this acceptance. And now, I live for Him out of gratitude.*

J. Slide13c (17) Msg *God didn't send me out to collect a following for myself, but to preach the Message of what he has done, collecting a following for him. And he didn't send me to do it with a lot of fancy rhetoric of my own, lest the powerful action at the center - Christ on the Cross - be trivialized into mere words.*

K. Paul's primary charge was to preach the gospel, not with words of eloquent wisdom.

1. *Brilliantly persuasive eloquence* may win a person's mind but not his heart. Whereas *the unadorned words of the gospel*, though seemingly foolish by human standards, are made effective by the Spirit of God.
2. We, like Paul, are under orders to preach the gospel, and so to preach it that in no way do we *detract* from the cross of Christ.
3. So, what do we do? Well we make much of *our Creator, the Architect, the Designer, Our Savior*. We follow the way of the Jesus. Because He is the way of eternal life, the way of Love, the way of forgiveness, and the way of care & kindness. [we give Him preeminence!]

L. Keywords: gospel,