



1 Corinthians: A Congregation in Crisis

Lesson 1: Introduction to 1 Corinthians (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

Introduction: How might you begin a conversation when you're about to share bad news?

THE CITY AND CONGREGATION OF CORINTH



1.) General historical background

2.) Read Luke's account of how the Corinthian congregation was founded.

Acts 18:1-17 After this, Paul left Athens and went to Corinth. ² There he met a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, who had recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had ordered all the Jews to leave Rome. Paul went to see them, ³ and because he was a tentmaker as they were, he stayed and worked with them. ⁴ Every Sabbath he reasoned in the synagogue, trying to persuade Jews and Greeks.

⁵ When Silas and Timothy came from Macedonia, Paul devoted himself exclusively to preaching, testifying to the Jews that Jesus was the Christ. ⁶ But when the Jews opposed Paul and became

abusive, he shook out his clothes in protest and said to them, “Your blood be on your own heads! I am clear of my responsibility. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

⁷ Then Paul left the synagogue and went next door to the house of Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. ⁸ Crispus, the synagogue ruler, and his entire household believed in the Lord; and many of the Corinthians who heard him believed and were baptized.

⁹ One night the Lord spoke to Paul in a vision: “Do not be afraid; keep on speaking, do not be silent. ¹⁰ For I am with you, and no one is going to attack and harm you, because I have many people in this city.” ¹¹ So Paul stayed for a year and a half, teaching them the word of God.

¹² While Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him into court. ¹³ “This man,” they charged, “is persuading the people to worship God in ways contrary to the law.” ¹⁴ Just as Paul was about to speak, Gallio said to the Jews, “If you Jews were making a complaint about some misdemeanor or serious crime, it would be reasonable for me to listen to you. ¹⁵ But since it involves questions about words and names and your own law—settle the matter yourselves. I will not be a judge of such things.” ¹⁶ So he had them ejected from the court.

¹⁷ Then they all turned on Sosthenes the synagogue ruler and beat him in front of the court. But Gallio showed no concern whatever.

3.) Describe the progression of Paul’s ministry in Corinth.

4.) How did Gallio demonstrate a clear understanding of the roles of church and state?

OVERVIEW OF PAUL’S LETTER

1.) Watch the video¹ and note the five main problems Paul addresses in this letter:

- Chapters 1–4: _____
- Chapters 5–7: _____
- Chapters 8–10: _____
- Chapters 11–14: _____
- Chapter 15: _____

2.) What are the two basic steps that Paul follows with each of the problems he needs to address?

¹ This video is also available for download at BibleProject. <https://bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/>

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ²To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: ³Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ⁴I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge— ⁶because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. ⁷Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1.) When and how did Paul become an apostle? (cf. Acts 9)

2.) How did Paul view his apostleship?

1 Corinthians 15:7-10 Then [Christ] appeared to James, then to all the apostles, ⁸and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. ⁹For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. ¹⁰But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect.

Ephesians 3:7-8 I became a servant of this gospel by the gift of God's grace given me through the working of his power. ⁸Although I am less than the least of all God's people, this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

1 Timothy 1:12-16 I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength, that he considered me faithful, appointing me to his service. ¹³Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. ¹⁴The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Here is a trustworthy saying that deserves full acceptance: Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners—of whom I am the worst. ¹⁶But for that very reason I was shown mercy so that in me, the worst of sinners, Christ Jesus might display his unlimited patience as an example for those who would believe on him and receive eternal life.

3.) Flip through Paul's New Testament letters. How often does he refer to his readers as "saints" in his introductory greeting? What is the Biblical definition of the word "saint"?

4.) Agree or disagree: "My identity in Christ is this: I am a perfect and holy child of God, bought with the precious blood of Christ." Be ready to support your answer (1:2-3).

5.) List the reasons why Paul thanked God as he considered the saints in Corinth.

1 Corinthians 1:4-9 I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. ⁵ For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—⁶ because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. ⁷ Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. ⁸ He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. ⁹ God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

6.) How might God keep the Corinthians “strong to the end” (1:8)?

7.) How would you define “fellowship”? When Paul wrote, “God is faithful, who called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord” (1:9 EHV), how does that reflect his relationship with you right now?

CONCLUSION

1.) How did Paul begin his letter, even though it would be filled with bad news?

2.) How can we emulate Paul’s joy and celebrate the fellowship we enjoy in our congregation?