

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians Intro

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**Date:** AD 55, before Pentecost

**Purpose:** To explain that Jesus Christ crucified—who embodies the Gospel—creates the Church’s unity, service, and hope.

**Reading 1 Corinthians:** The cosmopolitan markets at Corinth supplied a diverse population of settlers, travelers, and slaves. The interests and differences between these groups influenced the divisions in the house churches at Roman Corinth. Paul’s Letter provided detailed instructions about these dividing issues and directed the Corinthians to what he taught them before—Christ crucified unites all who believe.

**Luther on 1 Corinthians:** In this epistle St. Paul exhorts the Corinthians to be one in faith and love, and to see to it that they learn well the chief thing, namely, that Christ is our salvation, the thing over which all reason and wisdom stumbles....

[St. Paul] had taught his Corinthians Christian faith and freedom from the law. But then the mad saints came along, and the immature know-it-alls. They broke up the unity of the doctrine and caused division among the believers. One claimed to belong to Paul, the other to Apollos; one to Peter, the other to Christ. One wanted circumcision, the other not; one wanted marriage, the other not; one wanted to eat food offered to idols, the other not. Some wanted to be outwardly free; some of the women wanted to go with uncovered hair, and so on. They went so far that one man abused his liberty and married his father’s wife, some did not believe in the resurrection of the dead, and some thought lightly of the sacrament.

In short, things got so wild and disorderly that everyone wanted to be the expert and do the teaching and make what he pleased of the gospel, the sacrament, and faith. Meanwhile they let the

main thing drop—namely, that Christ is our salvation, righteousness, and redemption—as if they had long since outgrown it. This truth can never remain intact when people begin to imagine they are wise and know it all....

Therefore St. Paul most severely rebukes and condemns this shameful wisdom, and makes these connoisseur [*specialist*] saints out to be fools. He says outright that they know nothing of Christ, or of the Spirit and gifts of God given to us in Christ, and that they had better begin to learn. It takes spiritual folk to understand this.... This clever wisdom and reason can well serve to make for nothing but mad saints and wild Christians. Yet such people can never know our Lord Christ, unless they first become fools again and humbly let themselves be taught and led by the simple word of God. This is what St. Paul deals with in the first four chapters.

In chapter 5 he rebukes the gross unchastity of the man who had married his father’s wife....

In chapter 6 he rebukes contention and disputing in the courts, especially before heathen and unbelievers....

In chapter 7 he gives instruction concerning chastity and married life....

In chapters 8 to 12 he discusses many different ways in which weak consciences are to be guided and regarded in external matters such as eating, drinking, apparel, and receiving the sacrament. Everywhere he forbids the strong to despise the weak, since he himself, even though he is an apostle, has refrained from many things to which he really had a right....

In chapters 12 and 13 he discusses the many different gifts of God, among which love is the best....

In chapter 14 he teaches the preachers, prophets, and singers to use their gifts in an orderly manner; they are to display their preaching, skill, and understanding for edification only, and not in order to gain honor for themselves.

In chapter 15 he takes those to task who had taught and believed wrongly concerning the resurrection of the body.

In the last chapter he exhorts the people to give brotherly assistance to the needy in the form of material aid. (AE 35:380–83)

**Challenges for Readers:** The setting for Paul’s Letter and the issues he addresses present many challenges for interpreters. Here are some of the most important issues:

*Cultural Diversity in Roman Corinth.* The Romans had destroyed Greek Corinth in 146 BC; Julius Caesar then built a Roman colony there in 44 BC. The first settlers were Roman veterans from Caesar’s armies. Freed slaves, merchants, and tradesmen also came to Corinth, including a significant number of Jews (cf Ac 18). Roman Corinth had a prosperous harbor and numerous visitors. As in the earlier Greek city, immorality and prostitution were common. People held a wide variety of superstitious, religious, and philosophical beliefs. The varieties of culture, language, and religion seem to have made Roman Corinth an especially difficult place to plant a Christian church. Throughout 1 Corinthians, Paul addresses problems that culture had raised for the congregation.

*Eschatology.* Paul writes 1 Corinthians in view of Jesus’ promised return and the resurrection of the body. His goal is that the congregation will stand “guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1:8)....

*Passages and Slogans.* Paul frequently quotes statements used by the Corinthians. He is interacting both with a report about the congregation and a letter from the congregation (cf 1:11; 7:1)....

*Rhetoric and Logic.* Though Paul plays down his abilities as a speaker (2:4), he demonstrates skillful use of rabbinic and Greek styles of argument. As you read this Letter, remember

that Paul uses contrasts [*black versus white*], rhetorical questions [*to make a point rather than receive an answer*], logic, hyperbole [*exaggerated statements not meant to be taken literally*], and other methods to make his points....

*Lord’s Supper.* Even Christ’s Supper, intended for uniting the Lord and His people, has become a point of controversy and division in Corinth. Paul carefully describes the Supper’s meaning and use (chs 10–11)...

**Blessings for Readers:** In 1 Corinthians, Paul describes a divided and struggling congregation, not unlike struggling congregations today. As you read and study, consider how the Lord brought the Corinthians through their struggles, using the sound theology and counsel of the apostle Paul, focusing on salvation through the Lord Jesus Christ. History shows that, despite early struggles, the congregation survived and prospered. Just as the Corinthians came to view Israel’s struggles and God’s mercies for them as examples and instruction (10:11), let us receive the things recorded in Paul’s Letter as examples and instruction for today....

**Outline:**

- I. Greeting (1:1–3)
- II. Thanksgiving (1:4–9)
- III. Conflict over Divisions (1:10–4:21)
- IV. Compromise and Conflict in Corinth (chs V.
- V. Response to Questions Raised by the Corinthians (7:1–11:1)
- VI. Freedom and Love in Worship and the Use of Gifts (11:2–14:40)
- VII. The Resurrection of the Dead (ch 15)
- VIII. Final Matters (ch 16)

**ESV Bible 1 Corinthians Introduction:** The city of Corinth was at the heart of an important trade route in the ancient world. Like many cities that thrive on trade, Corinth had a reputation for sexual immorality, religious diversity, and corruption. The church that Paul planted there (Acts 18) floundered under all of those influences and began to divide over various issues....

# New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 1:1-31

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## Greeting: 1:1-3

1. **1** Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and our brother Sosthenes, **2** To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours: **3** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

a. 1 Corinthians is a letter **from**:

- i. Paul: He did not serve because it was his idea; *he was called by God*.
- ii. *Sosthenes*. A Corinthian synagogue ruler (Ac 18:17) beaten by the frustrated crowd at Paul's trial.

b. 1 Corinthians is a letter **to**: The church of God, thus *the believers*, in Corinth. And what can be said about them? They were *sanctified, thus made holy*, by God in Christ, thus through Jesus' work and their God-given faith in Jesus and His work! Those wonderful things happened because they were *called by God* to be *saints, thus holy ones!*



**Summary Statement – 1:4-9:** Paul highlights the strengths of the congregation, strengths God extends to all believers by His grace. We rejoice

in our relationship to God: He has called us and sanctified us, and He will sustain us.

## Thanksgiving: 1:4-9

2. **4** I give thanks to my God always for you because of the grace of God that was given you in Christ Jesus [*that is, God has given you eternal blessings, so I am giving thanks to Him for what He has given to you*], **5** that in every way you were enriched in him in all speech and all knowledge— **6** even as the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you— **7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ, **8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. **9** God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

- a. The riches were not money, *but the things the Corinthians knew and said about Jesus!*
- b. What should believers be doing? Waiting for the return of Christ, and since His return is important to them, they should tell others about His work and coming!
- c. *God is faithful*. Even when we are faithless, God will sustain those who are “called” ...

- i. <sup>ESV</sup> **2 Timothy 2:13** “if we are faithless, he remains faithful...”
- ii. *God is love, and He loves faithfully because it is part of His nature—even if no one should love Him in return.*

## Divisions in the Church: 1:10-17

3. In this section, Paul emphasizes the main point of his Letter. Christian unity depends on faithfulness to Christ, not chasing one's own agendas or ideas: **10** I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all

of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. <sup>11</sup> For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. <sup>12</sup> What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ."

4. Paul wants the Corinthian believers to think about how they are acting: <sup>13</sup> Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? <sup>14</sup> I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, <sup>15</sup> so that no one may say that you were baptized in my name. <sup>16</sup> (I did baptize also the household of Stephanas. Beyond that, I do not know whether I baptized anyone else.) <sup>17</sup> For Christ did not send me to baptize but to preach the gospel, and not with words of eloquent wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.
  - a. To baptize is to *wash with water*.
  - b. Christian baptism is to be *washed with water in the name of the Triune God*; through that washing, God works by the Spirit through the Word to give the forgiveness of sins in Christ and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38)!

**Summary Statement 1:10-17:** Divisions in the Church are a denial of the one Baptism into Christ, who was crucified for all. His faithful servants preach the Gospel and are not to become objects of unhealthy devotion. The triune God alone is the object of our faith and hope.

#### Christ the Wisdom and Power of God: 1:18-31

5. <sup>18</sup> For the word of the cross is folly [*foolishness*] to those who are perishing [*rejecting Christ*], but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. <sup>19</sup> For it is written, "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and the discernment of the discerning I will thwart." That quote speaks against people who "draw near with their mouth and honor Me with their lips, while their hearts are far from Me" (Is 29:13).

6. <sup>20</sup> Where is the one who is wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the debater of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since, in the wisdom of God, the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> For Jews demand signs [*miracles*] and Greeks seek [*human*] wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. <sup>25</sup> For the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.
  - a. **V. 20:** *scribe?... debater*. Jewish scribes and Greek philosophers sought wisdom through debate, but they are "of this age," in contrast to God's timeless wisdom.
  - b. **V. 21:** How does GOD save? Through His Word: <sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 1:23** ...you have been born again, not of perishable seed but of imperishable, through the living and abiding word of God...
  - c. **V. 23:** *Christ crucified*. The Jews expected a Messiah, but did not expect that He should be crucified.
  - d. **V. 25:** *foolishness of God*. God's ways appear foolish to those who do not understand them (cf Is 55:8).
7. <sup>26</sup> For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. <sup>27</sup> But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; <sup>28</sup> God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not [*nobodies*], to bring to nothing things that are, <sup>29</sup> so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. <sup>30</sup> And because of him [*God*] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and sanctification and redemption, <sup>31</sup> so that, as it is written, "Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord." // The Triune God deserves all the credit for our salvation!!! When we were spiritually dead, He made us spiritually alive!

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 2:1 – 3:15

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### Proclaiming Christ Crucified: 2:1-5

1. **2** And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. **2** For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified [so I stuck with the basics and kept the main thing the main thing]. **3** And I was with you in weakness [in my weakness, but in God's power] and in fear and much trembling [which was possibly because of the persecution Paul had experienced there and in other places], **4** and my speech and my message were not in plausible [reasonable] words of wisdom [like 2+2=4], but in demonstration of the Spirit [LJPPKFGS (Gal. 5:22-23)] and of power [miracles], **5** so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. // That power of God is the word of the cross (1:18), which points us to God's love for us in sending His son and Jesus' finished work to remove our sins!

### Wisdom from the Spirit: 2:6-16

2. **6** Yet among the mature [those who know and live God's Word] we do impart wisdom [thus the correct use of knowledge for correct behavior, insight, and understanding], although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age [so it is not a wisdom that makes sense to the people and rulers of this age], who are doomed to pass away. **7** But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory [a wisdom hidden from those who love their sins and/or have their trust in their own goodness]. **8** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. **9** But, as it is written [in Isaiah 64:4], "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him" [thus no one could figure out such things on their own] — [yet]

**10** these things God has revealed to us [believers] through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God [so He is able to make such things known to us].

**11** For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person [thus the mind, the personality of a person], which is in him, [and the Triune God also knows all things (1 Chron. 28:9; Is. 46:10)]? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

**12** Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God [so the Holy Spirit is our very important all-knowing teacher, who enables us to rightly understand and apply the Holy Scriptures]. **13** And we impart this [Scriptural knowledge] in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

3. **14** The natural [unbelieving] person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly [foolishness] to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned [thus for those who are spiritually dead and thus also without the Holy Spirit, they have no ability to understand the things of God]. **15** The spiritual person judges [examines, investigates] all things [both temporal and eternal], but is himself to be judged [examined, investigated spiritually] by no one [who is an unbeliever]. **16** "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we [apostles and teachers] have the mind of Christ [because He is the one who taught us]. // This is Dr. Luther's explanation to the Third Article of the Apostles' Creed, which identifies the total helplessness of an unbeliever, and credits the Holy Spirit with calling us, giving us understanding, making us holy through Jesus, and keeping us in the true faith: "I believe

that I cannot by my own reason or strength believe in Jesus Christ, my Lord, or come to Him; but the Holy Spirit has called me by the Gospel, enlightened me with His gifts, sanctified and kept me in the true faith. In the same way He calls, gathers, enlightens, and sanctifies the whole Christian church on earth, and keeps it with Jesus Christ in the one true faith. In this Christian church He daily and richly forgives all my sins and the sins of all believers. On the Last Day He will raise me and all the dead, and give eternal life to me and all believers in Christ.”

### Divisions in the Church: 3:1-23

1. **3** But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people *[as believers]*, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ *[as people who were in Christ, yet they acted as if they were not]*.  
<sup>2</sup> I fed you with milk *[the basics, like our sin which condemns us and Christ crucified for our salvation]*, not solid food *[like living for Christ, sharing Christ, and dealing with persecution]*, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, <sup>3</sup> for you are still of the flesh *[in how you are living]*. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way *[implying that mature believers are not jealous and live without conflict]*? <sup>4</sup> For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not being merely human? // Once people grow up in Christ; then they understand that all people are tainted with sin and that only the sinless Christ – *the Son of God in human flesh* – is worthy to follow.
2. <sup>5</sup> What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. <sup>6</sup> I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. <sup>7</sup> So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. <sup>8</sup> He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. <sup>9</sup> For we are God’s fellow workers *[members of God’s team]*. You are God’s field, God’s building *[members of the Church]*.

- a. “For without His grace, and if He does not grant the increase, our willing and running, our planting, sowing, and watering (1 Corinthians 3:5–7)—are all nothing” (FC Ep II 6).
  - b. *wages*. The reward for faithful service, not implying that one can earn salvation. God’s favor is unmerited (e.g., Eph 2:8). The joy of success in Christ surpasses any payment. “We teach that rewards have been offered and promised for the works of believers. We teach that good works have merit, not for forgiveness of sins, for grace, or for justification (for these we receive only through faith), but for other rewards, bodily and spiritual, in this life and after this life” (Ap V 73).
3. <sup>10</sup> According to the grace of God given to me *[thus the gifts He gave to me with which to serve]*, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation *[Christ crucified]*, and someone else is building upon it. Let each one take care how he builds upon it. <sup>11</sup> For no one can lay a foundation other than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ *[He, the Son of God, is the foundation and the Scriptures are all about Him]*. <sup>12</sup> Now if anyone builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw—<sup>13</sup> each one’s work will become manifest *[visible]*, for the Day *[of Jesus’ return]* will disclose it, because it will be revealed by fire, and the fire will test what sort of work each one has done. <sup>14</sup> If the work that anyone has built on the foundation survives, he will receive a reward. <sup>15</sup> If anyone’s work is burned up, he will suffer loss, though he himself will be saved, but only as through fire.
    - a. The reward is never eternal life, since that is God’s gift to us through Jesus.
    - b. For those who try to build on Christ, and yet their work is burned up, they will still be saved through Christ.

See the next page for the continuation of this section on ***Divisions in the Church***

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 3:16 – 4:21

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### Divisions in the Church – continued:

4. All of the following references of “you” are plural: <sup>16</sup> Do you not know [you should know] that you are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit dwells in you? <sup>17</sup> If anyone destroys God’s temple [thus God’s Church or the faith of its individual members], God will destroy him. For God’s temple is holy, and you are that temple. // Some think that verse 17 is indicating that a Christian suicide victim condemns himself by ending his life; however, the verse is addressing *spiritual* destruction rather than *physical* destruction.
5. <sup>18</sup> Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you thinks that he is wise in this age [in the eyes of the unbelieving world], let him become a fool [in the eyes of the world through faith in Christ] that he may become wise [by learning, believing, and following God’s ways]. <sup>19</sup> For the wisdom of this world is folly with [to] God. For it is written, “He catches the wise in their craftiness [trickery],” <sup>20</sup> and again, “The Lord knows the thoughts of the wise, that they are futile [useless, worthless].” <sup>21</sup> So let no one boast in men [like a church leader, which takes the focus off of Christ]. For all things are yours, <sup>22</sup> whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, <sup>23</sup> and you are Christ’s, and Christ is God’s.
  - a. *all are yours*. The Corinthians should benefit from all of God’s servants, rather than being exclusively devoted to one.
  - b. *You are Christ’s*. Having been clothed with Him when you were baptized (Gal. 3:27).
  - c. *Christ is God’s*. Our life, inheritance, and authority have their source in Jesus, who has His source in the Father from eternity [“begotten of His Father” Nicene Creed].

**Chapter 3 Summary:** There is no ground for pride in human achievement in Christ’s Church. Such

an attitude undermines the very nature of His gifts of salvation and service. God accomplishes everything, living in us by His Spirit.

### The Ministry of Apostles: 4:1-21

1. **4** This is how one should regard us, as servants of Christ and stewards [“ones entrusted by God with spiritual authority and administration” (Friberg)] of the mysteries [sacraments] of God. <sup>2</sup> Moreover, it is required of stewards that they be found faithful [trustworthy, dependable]. <sup>3</sup> But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by any human court. In fact, I do not even judge myself. <sup>4</sup> For I am not aware of anything against myself, but I am not thereby acquitted. It is the Lord who judges me. <sup>5</sup> Therefore do not pronounce judgment before the time, before the Lord comes, who will bring to light the things now hidden in darkness and will disclose the purposes of the heart. Then each one will receive his commendation from God.
  - a. V. 3:
    - i. *human court*. Lit, “human day,” as opposed to Judgment Day.
    - ii. *do not even judge myself*. Paul is God’s servant, and only his Master’s assessment matters. Cf 1Th. 2:4.
  - b. V. 5: *things now hidden*. All the evidence, such as inner motives, will be heard.
    - i. “Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the LORD weighs the heart” (ESV Prov. 21:2).
    - ii. “...no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account” (Heb. 4:13 ESV).
  - c. *disclose ... commendation*. Until the heart is opened, there is no basis for praise. Cf

3:14–15. Why is that true? \_\_\_\_\_

2. <sup>6</sup> I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another. <sup>7</sup> For who sees anything different in you? What do you have that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?
  - a. When both teachers and students rightly apply God's Word; *then it is good for everyone!*
  - b. *beyond what is written*. God has given us all we need in the Bible for ✦salvation, ✦love for God and neighbor, ✦moral living, ✦etc. Therefore, it is safe and wise to stick with the Bible – *no more, no less* – for all such things.
  - c. We are all different in various ways – *abilities, possessions, etc.*, but whatever we have has been given to us by God, so we should be thankful and not boast.
3. Paul's writing mocked the Corinthians in comparison to himself and those working with him: <sup>8</sup> Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! Without us you have become kings! And would that you did reign, so that we might share the rule with you! <sup>9</sup> For I think that God has exhibited us apostles as last of all, like men sentenced to death, because we have become a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men. <sup>10</sup> We are fools for Christ's sake, but you are wise in Christ. We are weak, but you are strong. You are held in honor, but we in disrepute.
4. These words describe how Paul and those with him suffered for the benefit of the Corinthians and others: <sup>11</sup> To the present hour we hunger and thirst, we are poorly dressed and buffeted and homeless, <sup>12</sup> and we labor, working with our own hands. When reviled, we bless; when persecuted, we endure; <sup>13</sup> when slandered, we entreat. We have become, and are still, like the scum of

the world, the refuse of all things. // *scum ... refuse*. After sweaty exercise, Greeks and Romans would sprinkle themselves with sand, then scrape themselves off with a stick as a means of removing dead skin and filth.

5. <sup>14</sup> I do not write these things to make you ashamed, but to admonish you as my beloved children. // It's easy for us to give *destructive criticism* to others in a way that pushes them down and raises us up, *but doing so is sin!* Paul's writing was *constructive criticism*, meant to caution, warn, instruct, and encourage the Corinthians.
6. <sup>15</sup> For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. <sup>16</sup> I urge you, then, be imitators of me. <sup>17</sup> That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church.
  - a. *guide... father*. A guide is a temporary teacher, while a father has a lifelong commitment.
  - b. *everywhere*. God's truth is the truth for now and for everywhere. Cf John 17:17.
7. <sup>18</sup> Some are arrogant, as though I were not coming to you. <sup>19</sup> But I will come to you soon, if the Lord wills, and I will find out not the talk of these arrogant people but their power. <sup>20</sup> For the kingdom of God does not consist in talk but in power. // Even though the opponents of Paul said otherwise, Paul was planning to come to Corinth – *if the Lord permitted it*. <sup>NAS</sup> **James 4:14-15** Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, *you ought* to say, "If the Lord wills, we shall live and also do this or that."
8. <sup>21</sup> What do you wish? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love in a spirit of gentleness? // Paul wanted to come with love and gentleness, but he knew it was best for him to come with whatever was most beneficial for the Corinthians – even if he came with a rod.

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 5:1 – 6:11

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### Sexual Immorality Defiles the Church: 5:1-13

This section is about excommunication. The BoC has this quote: “Truly Christian excommunication, is this: Open and hard-hearted sinners are not admitted to the Sacrament and other communion of the Church until they amend their lives and avoid sin” (SA III IX).

1. **5** It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. <sup>2</sup>And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.
  - a. The believers in Corinth were permitting the sexual immorality among them.
  - b. A man must have been having sexual relations with his step mother.
  - c. Paul told them to remove / excommunicate that man from the congregation.
2. <sup>3</sup>For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. <sup>4</sup>When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup>you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.
  - a. *present in spirit*. Paul still presides at Corinth. His authority and pastoral concern are undiminished.
  - b. *pronounced judgment*. This is a practical decision about immoral behavior. Only God can condemn the sinner eternally.
  - c. *deliver this man to Satan*. The only “fellowship” outside fellowship with Christ. Excommunication handed the

sinner back to the ruler of this age (cf Col 1:13). This is not simply a ban from the Lord’s Supper or from a leadership position. “But those who refuse to learn are to be told that they are denying Christ and do not belong to Him. They are not to be admitted to the Sacrament, accepted as sponsors at Baptism, or allowed to exercise Christian liberty in any way. They should instead be simply directed back ... to Satan himself” (SC, Preface, p xxxiv).

- d. *spirit may be saved*. The Law and guilt will drive this man to repentance.
3. <sup>6</sup>Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven [*in this context, a little sin*] leavens [*spreads throughout*] the whole lump? <sup>7</sup>Cleanse out the old leaven [*the old sin*] that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened [*sinless in God’s sight through Christ*]. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. <sup>8</sup>Let us therefore celebrate the festival [*the NT Passover, the Lord’s Supper*], not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth [*Morally pure character, brought about by repentance and forgiveness.*].
4. In this section, Paul is making a distinction between *unbelievers who live in sin* and those who call themselves believers and yet live in sin: <sup>9</sup>I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—<sup>10</sup>not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. <sup>11</sup>But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality [*having sex outside of marriage*] or greed [*sinfully taking or desiring what belongs to someone else*], or is an idolater [*not being God-fearing and devout*], reviler [*using abusive*

language], drunkard [excessively drinking an intoxicating beverage], or swindler [robbing from others] —not even to eat with such a one.

- a. Why should we stop associating with people who call themselves believers and yet live in open sin? It's for their own benefit, to help them see the serious nature of their sin, so that God will lead them to repent – to be sorry and receive God's forgiveness in Christ.
  - b. What Paul commanded is similar to the Amish practice of shunning: "Shunning occurs when a member of the church goes against church rules and is therefore considered to be living in a sin. If an Amish community decides to shun an individual, that individual faces some serious repercussions. The shunned person's name is announced publicly to all members of their church. Every community member is expected to shun the person accordingly, and members who do not participate in shunning could face similar consequences."<sup>1</sup>
5. <sup>12</sup> For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? <sup>13</sup> God judges those outside. "Purge the evil person from among you." // For those outside, God will judge; for those inside, the congregation should judge.

### **Lawsuits Against Believers: 6:1-11**

1. **6** When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? <sup>2</sup> Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? <sup>3</sup> Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! <sup>4</sup> So if you have such cases, why do you lay them before those who have no standing in the church? <sup>5</sup> I say this to your shame. Can

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ranker.com/list/facts-about-the-amish-shunning/erin-wisti>

it be that there is no one among you wise enough to settle a dispute between the brothers, <sup>6</sup> but brother goes to law against brother, and that before unbelievers? // In other words, why go to the unbelievers to solve the matter? You should be solving those disputes among yourselves!

2. <sup>7</sup> To have lawsuits at all with one another is already a defeat for you. Why not rather suffer wrong? Why not rather be defrauded? <sup>8</sup> But you yourselves wrong and defraud— even your own brothers!
  - a. *defeat*. One enters into a lawsuit with a view to winning. There are no winners when the congregation is shamed.
  - b. *suffer wrong?... defrauded?* Enduring wrong is more victorious than to put a fellow believer under worldly authority.
3. <sup>9</sup> Or do you not know that the unrighteous [all without Christ] will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals [NAS] <sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor the greedy [covetous], nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. // Paul lists habitual sins, which imply a life choice incompatible with the holiness of God's kingdom.
4. <sup>11</sup> And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God (NAS).
  - a. *such were some of you*. God, in mercy, called the unrighteous into His kingdom.
  - b. *washed ... sanctified ... justified*. Terms of salvation, used interchangeably.

**Summary of 6:1-11:** When the old sinful nature rises to cause grievances between Christians, it also tempts us to seek satisfaction through secular processes. God calls churches to settle grievances through Law and Gospel before matters get out of hand. He has already judged us "not guilty" in view of Jesus' sacrifice, and He has washed us pure in Holy Baptism.

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 6:12 – 7:16

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### Flee Sexual Immorality: 6:12-20

5. These **quoted words may be slogans to which Paul is responding**:
  - a. <sup>12</sup> “All things are lawful for me,” but not all things are helpful.” // Choose carefully!
  - b. “All things are lawful for me,” but I will not be dominated by anything.” // When we make bad choices, those things can begin to control us!
  - c. <sup>13</sup> “Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food”—and God will destroy both one and the other. // Both are temporal; let us focus on spiritual things!
6. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord [*for His use*], and the Lord for the body. <sup>14</sup> And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. // We know God values the body, since He raised the body of Jesus from the dead!
7. <sup>15</sup> Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ [*of the one body of Christ, the Church*]? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? **Never!** // Where one part of our physical body goes, so the other parts of the body; things are similar, though spiritual, with the body of Christ.
8. <sup>16</sup> Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, “The two will become one flesh.” <sup>17</sup> But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. // One in body (Gen. 2:24); one in spirit!
9. <sup>18</sup> Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body [*with mental desires and physical abilities*]. <sup>19</sup> Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, <sup>20</sup> for you were bought with a price. So

glorify God in your body. // For those who conclude that their body is their own, Paul reminds such people that God bought them with a great price – *the sending, living, suffering, and dying of His Son*. Therefore, remembering to whom we belong, *we are called to glorify God in our bodies*. Christians are not free to follow the desires of their sinful nature, but free to follow the will of the one who purchased them, redeemed them, made them holy!

**Summary of 6:12-20:** Because Christ has united us with Him and with one another, immorality has no place among us. Freedom to live in Christ excludes living in opposition to Him. When we fall into sin, we can repent of the disunity we have brought. Jesus Christ will restore and renew us as His very own.

### Principles for Marriage: 7:1-16

1. **7** Now concerning the matters about which you wrote: “It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” // That statement is what they wrote to Paul; now he will address that statement and other topics related to marriage.
2. <sup>2</sup> But because of the temptation to sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband. <sup>3</sup> The husband should give to his wife her conjugal [*marital*] rights, and likewise the wife to her husband. [*Literally: Let the husband pay the debt to the wife, and likewise also the wife to the husband.*] <sup>4</sup> For the wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. Likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does. **Spouses owe love, fidelity [*loyalty*], and physical affection to each other.**
3. <sup>5</sup> Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come

together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

- a. *deprive*. Fidelity carries the responsibility of giving a fulfilled physical relationship.
  - b. *agreement for a limited time*. In Jewish tradition, abstinence for a time (as in fasting) was observed to heighten spiritual devotion. This is a matter for each couple to decide.
4. <sup>6</sup> Now as a concession, not a command, I say this. <sup>7</sup> I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has his own gift from God, one of one kind and one of another. // Paul may have been indicating that he had been given, what we might call, *the gift of singleness*, thus he had no sexual desire. However, he acknowledges that some have that gift, while others have another gift; those without his same gift should marry.
5. When a person is single, either from never getting married or from the death of his/her spouse: <sup>8</sup> To the unmarried and the widows I say that it is good for them to remain single, as I am. <sup>9</sup> But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to burn with passion.
6. When two Christians are married: <sup>10</sup> To the married I give this charge (not I, but the Lord): the wife should not separate from her husband <sup>11</sup> (but if she does, she should remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband), and the husband should not divorce his wife. // *separate ... divorce*. Under Jewish law, only the husband had the right to divorce. Paul's counsel affirms equality in marriage, excluding divorce from the husband as from the wife.
7. When Christians are married to non-Christians: <sup>12</sup> To the rest I say (I, not the Lord) that if any brother has a wife who is an unbeliever, and she consents to live with him, he should not divorce her. <sup>13</sup> If any woman has a husband who is an unbeliever, and he consents to live with her, she should not divorce him. <sup>14</sup> For the unbelieving husband is made holy because of his wife, and the

unbelieving wife is made holy because of her husband. // *made holy*. One is often led to faith through the example and testimony of a faithful spouse; therefore, they are made holy in Christ. Husband and wives should see the following passages:

- a. <sup>ESV</sup> **Ephesians 5:22-33** Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord.... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...
  - b. <sup>ESV</sup> **1 Peter 3:1-7** Likewise, wives, be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives... Likewise, husbands, live with your wives in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered.
8. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. // *your children ... are holy*. Children may be nurtured in faith by the believing parent. An unequal marriage does not automatically corrupt them. Rather, through receiving the Word, they are made saints clothed in Christ's holiness.
9. <sup>15</sup> But if the unbelieving partner separates, let it be so. In such cases the brother or sister is not enslaved. God has called you to peace. // *not enslaved*. Marriage is, of course, a lifelong commitment, but in this case, the bond is broken by the unbelieving partner.
10. <sup>16</sup> For how do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife? // *you will save*. By leading another to faith. In this case, the mixed marriage would become a blessing.

**Summary of 7:1-16:** Marriage brings obligations, but being in Christ forms a new being. Treasure marriage because of the blessings God provides through it. In marriage, Christians can encourage one another, non-Christians may be drawn to belief, and children can be brought up in the faith.

## New Testament Letter: 1 Corinthians 7:17-40

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### Live as You Are Called: 7:17-24

11. <sup>17</sup> Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him, and to which God has called him. *[The new life in Christ does not cancel one's place in society but transforms the way it is viewed and practiced.]* This is my rule in all the churches. // This is what Paul meant:
- <sup>18</sup> Was anyone at the time of his call already circumcised? Let him not seek to remove the marks of circumcision. // How is that possible? The Apocryphal book of 1 Maccabees (1:15) speaks of those who "made themselves uncircumcised," somehow disguising their circumcision as they participated in athletic events unclothed, as was the Greek custom. Paul's expression may imply a wider rejection of Jewish heritage.
  - Was anyone at the time of his call uncircumcised? Let him not seek circumcision. <sup>19</sup> For neither circumcision counts for anything nor uncircumcision, but keeping the commandments of God. // According to our new nature, *we desire to perfectly keep God's commandments; however, only in Christ, are we seen by God as having kept them perfectly.*
  - <sup>20</sup> Each one should remain in the condition in which he was called [*--bondservant or free*]. <sup>21</sup> Were you a bondservant when called? Do not be concerned about it. (But if you can gain your freedom, avail yourself of the opportunity.) <sup>22</sup> For he who was called in the Lord as a bondservant is a freedman of the Lord [*still under obligation in this life, yet free from the condemnation of his sins*]. Likewise he who was free when called is a bondservant of Christ [*thus no longer free to do whatever, but now living under the direction of the Lord*]. <sup>23</sup> You were bought with a price [*with Jesus' holy, precious blood and with His innocent*

*suffering and death*]; do not become bondservants of men. *[In Christ, we are free from bondage to human opinions and esp. to their insistence on a law we cannot keep.]*  
<sup>24</sup> So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God.

**Summary of 7:17-24:** The Lord transforms believers from our previous existence and makes us members of His household. We now live out the new life in the station to which God has appointed us.

### The Unmarried and the Widowed: 7:25-40

12. <sup>25</sup> Now concerning the betrothed, I have no command from the Lord, but I give my judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy.
- my judgment*. Sometimes it is necessary to make judgments where God gives no specific instruction. These matters are known as *adiaphora* [*things neither commanded nor forbidden*], and the conscience, with Scripture in mind, makes its best attempt to discern what pleases God.
  - With the above info in mind, let us also remember these passages:
    - <sup>NIV</sup> **2 Timothy 3:16** All Scripture is God-breathed...
    - <sup>NIV</sup> **2 Peter 1:21** For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.
13. <sup>26</sup> I think that in view of the present distress [*the great persecution being endured by Christians*] it is good for a person to remain as he is [*married or unmarried*]. <sup>27</sup> Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be free. Are you free from a wife? Do not seek a wife. // Paul – by comparing the Holy Scriptures and the

events in the world – may have felt that the current persecution was pointing to Christ returning very soon, so he tried to discourage people from entering into marriage.

14. <sup>28</sup> But if you do marry, you have not sinned, and if a betrothed woman [a woman who is eligible to marry] marries, she has not sinned. Yet those who marry will have worldly troubles [persecution is hard by yourself, even harder for those who are married], and I would spare you that.
15. <sup>29</sup> This is what I mean, brothers: the appointed time [the end of time] has grown very short. From now on, let those who have wives live as though they had none, <sup>30</sup> and those who mourn as though they were not mourning, and those who rejoice as though they were not rejoicing, and those who buy as though they had no goods, <sup>31</sup> and those who deal with the world as though they had no dealings with it. For the present form of this world is passing away. // For many believers, their lives can become thoroughly woven together with the temporal affairs of the world, such as marriage, mourning, rejoicing, buying, and dealing. Since the return of Christ is drawing closer every day, God is urging us through Paul to hold loosely to the things of this temporal life and tightly to the things of the eternal life to come!
16. <sup>32</sup> I want you to be free from anxieties. The unmarried man is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to please the Lord. <sup>33</sup> But the married man is anxious about worldly things, how to please his wife, <sup>34</sup> and his interests are divided. And the unmarried or betrothed woman is anxious about the things of the Lord, how to be holy in body and spirit. But the married woman is anxious about worldly things, how to please her husband. <sup>35</sup> I say this for your own benefit, not to lay any restraint upon you, but to promote good order and to secure your undivided devotion to the Lord.
  - a. When life is simple – one person dealing with the basics of food, clothing, and shelter, life can have less anxiety. For single people, they can focus on pleasing

the Lord. “Neither Christ nor Paul praise virginity because it justifies, but because it is freer and less distracted by domestic occupations in praying, teaching, and serving” (Ap XXIII 40).

- b. When life becomes more complicated – a married couple with children, a larger home, cars, and many responsibilities, life can have more anxiety. For couples + children + many earthly things, their time is divided, so less focus can be placed on pleasing the Lord.
  - c. “It was not until ecumenical meetings of the Catholic Church at the First and Second Lateran councils in 1123 and 1139 that priests were explicitly forbidden from marrying. / The rationale behind such strict policy is that it significantly helps the priests perform well in their religious services... / [The problem:] ...gay men probably make up at least 30 to 40 percent of the American Catholic clergy, according to dozens of estimates from gay priests” (Google).
17. <sup>36</sup> If anyone thinks that he is not behaving properly toward his betrothed, if his passions are strong, and it has to be, let him do as he wishes: let them marry—it is no sin. <sup>37</sup> But whoever is firmly established in his heart, being under no necessity but having his desire under control, and has determined this in his heart, to keep her as his betrothed, he will do well. <sup>38</sup> So then he who marries his betrothed does well, and he who refrains from marriage will do even better. // Singleness is not the lesser of two evils, but the superior of two God-given options under current circumstances at Corinth.
  18. <sup>39</sup> A wife is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to whom she wishes, only in the Lord [so only to another believer]. <sup>40</sup> Yet in my judgment she is happier if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God. // Paul stated his opinion, yet we also remember that he was being moved in his writing by the Holy Spirit.