



Community Group Discussion Guide

I Corinthians Overview

Community Group Leaders: This overview is designed to give you context for your study in the book of 1 Corinthians. Suggested uses:

1. Schedule time during the opening introduction to 1 Corinthians to present this information in a shortened form.
2. Present this as it fits into your Community Group time. For example: When you introduce Paul as the author of the book of 1 Corinthians, give this additional information about him.

Author, Date, Recipient, Setting Context, and Purpose:

Author of I Corinthians: Paul the apostle.

The letter of 1 Corinthians belongs to the section of the New Testament described as the Pauline Letters.

a. Saul is his Hebrew name; Paul is his Greek name. He was from the tribe of Benjamin. Luke, the writer of Acts, switched the names as Paul moved closer to the center of the Roman Empire, providing a Gentile context for the gospel.

b. Paul, son of a prominent tentmaker, was a Jew, but also a Roman citizen since he was born in Tarsus in Asia Minor, near the Lebanese border. As result, Paul spoke both Greek and Aramaic.

c. Paul was taught by Gamaliel--a famous rabbi (Acts 5:33-39; 22:3). Paul became a prominent, highly educated Jewish leader (Pharisee) with a zealous commitment and a strict obedience to the law and its traditions.

d. Paul became known for his persecution of Christians (Acts 7:54-60; 8:1-4; 26:10-11). The Scriptures attest to the depth of Paul's sinful past before his conversion—something Paul disclosed himself (Acts 22:4-5; 26:9-10). This is the Saul we need to see to appreciate the truths of his New Testament letters. He became known as the "apostle of grace."

e. Paul was dramatically converted to Christianity in Acts 9. After his conversion, Paul dominated the rest of Acts. He led the way in taking the gospel to the ends of the earth—particularly to the Gentiles.

g. Paul was sought out for service by Barnabas (Acts 11:19-26, 30). In Acts 9:26-28, after returning to Jerusalem, Paul tried to join the disciples, but they were afraid of him—not believing he was really a disciple. Barnabas vouched for Paul's sincerity and effectiveness in Damascus. Paul's first recorded sermon is in Acts 13:13-41.

h. Paul was imprisoned in Rome during reign of Nero and died in prison (67-68AD)

i. Paul never got over his own gratitude as a recipient of grace (1 Timothy 1:12-17).

Date: Around 55 AD, probably near the end of Paul's long ministry in Ephesus on his third missionary journey (Acts 19). Paul established the Corinthian church on his second missionary journey.

Recipients/Audience: It is believed Paul wrote from Ephesus to the church at Corinth. He wrote for the church in Corinth and for Christians everywhere. Paul's most extensive correspondence with a single church can be found in 1 and 2 Corinthians.

The city of Corinth:

- A large commercial city with Greek roots, it became a Roman colony in 44BC.
- Although the restored city of Corinth of Paul's day was a Roman city, the inhabitants continued to worship Greek gods.
- It was both a religious and immoral city with a number of pagan temples that sanctioned religious prostitution. The most significant pagan cult in Corinth was the cult of Aphrodite.
- An important metropolitan center and a cosmopolitan city composed of people from varying cultural backgrounds. The city benefitted from both land and sea routes as well as two important seaports.
- One of four prominent centers in the New Testament account of the early church. Christianity first arrived in Corinth through Paul's preaching. On his first visit to Corinth, Paul stayed for at least 18 months (Acts 18:1-18).
- Silas, Timothy, Priscilla, Aquila, and Apollos also helped establish the church in Corinth. Members of the church came from both Jewish and pagan backgrounds.

Purpose: 1 Corinthians is a practical letter in which Paul dealt with problems concerning the church as a whole and also with personal problems. Paul wrote to respond to a variety of issues within the church. He wanted the church to change where it needed to change and to be encouraged where it was doing things right. The church was gifted but also immature and unspiritual. Paul wanted to restore the church in its areas of weakness. Paul wrote:

- To identify problems in the Corinthian church and to offer solutions.
- To answer some questions the Corinthians had asked him.
- To emphasize the need for unity in the church.
- To guide the church through divisions that existed within it.
- To instruct the church to not associate with people claiming to be Christian but living immorally.
- To warn the church about tolerating open sexual immorality.
- To address difficulties the Corinthian believers were facing.
- To teach these believers how to live for Christ in a corrupt, pagan society.
- To teach the Corinthians about the Lord's Supper, the Resurrection, and spiritual gifts.

Resources used, compiled from, quoted:

- *Holman Illustrated Bible Handbook, pages 372-377.*
- *Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary, pages 342-347.*
- *Holman New Testament Commentary, I and II Corinthians, pages 1-2.*
- *The NIV Application Commentary, 1 Corinthians, pages 17-27.*
- *Shepherd's Notes, 1 Corinthians, pages 1-6.*