

Summit Woods Baptist Church
First Corinthians Sermon Study Equipping Class

1 Corinthians Overview

As each new semester begins, we will encourage everyone to read all of 1 Corinthians in one sitting, or at least over the course of a couple of days. For those of you who have already been in the Sermon Study Equipping Class, this will be an excellent refresher to start the semester. For those of you who are new to the class, this will be a wonderful opportunity to see the *bigger picture* of Paul's letter to the Corinthians before we deeper into the details.

1 Corinthians takes approximately 1 hour to read straight through. If you need to divide it into smaller sections, we recommend: chapters 1-6, chapters 7-11, and chapters 12-16. As you read, do not stop to try to figure out the parts you do not understand. The goal is to get a big picture of what Paul is saying. *Remember, Paul wrote this as a letter, so the Corinthians would have heard it read to them in one sitting.*

The following questions will help you fix the key ideas in your mind. Look them over before you begin reading. If you have answered them in a previous semester, do not just copy your answers from before, but take the time to answer them afresh. It is always exciting to see how our insight and understanding grows as we spend more time in a book or passage.

Also consider listening to Pastor Bret's overview sermon "Redefining What Is Spiritual" from September 11, 2016. It is available on the church website.

❖ Background Information

First Corinthians was written by the Apostle Paul sometime between AD 53-55. We know that it was not his first letter to the Christians in that city (see 1 Cor 5:9). He wrote this letter while living in Ephesus (see 1 Cor 16:8). Paul initially visited the city of Corinth during the latter half of his second missionary journey, preaching the gospel and establishing a church there (see Acts 18). In 1 Cor 5:10 and 7:1, Paul indicates that he is writing to correct their misunderstandings of his earlier letter and to answer questions in response to a letter they had sent to him.

Corinth was a key social and commercial city in the province of Achaia in Greece. The city had a diverse population and was widely known for the worship of many pagan gods and for wanton sexuality. The pagan religion was integrated into all aspects of social, commercial, and government affairs. Professional orators were some of the main celebrities of the day. People would pay to watch them speak and debate, cheering on favorites and heckling others, much like the fans at a sporting event. As a form of entertainment, the spectacles were all about presentation with much less concern for the truthfulness of the content. This was the societal environment surrounding the church in Corinth.

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❖ Big Picture Questions

1. What key words and ideas does Paul repeat throughout the letter?
2. What are the problems Paul addresses? (Make note of both the *different* tangible/behavioral ways in which they are sinning and the *similar* heart issues revealed in these ways.)
3. What are Paul's stated goals for the Corinthians?
4. Though Paul speaks about several different areas of their life and worship, there is a unified theme to the heart issues Paul is addressing. In 1 or 2 sentences, summarize Paul's big-picture intent for the Corinthians. (If you need a prompt, consider: What does Paul want them to do? What does he want them not to do? How or why?)

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5. Do you think the things Paul addressed with the Christians in Corinth in the first century will be helpful for us as twenty-first-century Christians in America? How so?

6. Summarize some of the key teachings from Pastor Bret's sermons so far.

7. What difference has our time in 1 Corinthians made in your life so far?