

FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS

TMBC Course #11



Leader's Guide

Dear Bible Study Leader,

“Now about the spiritual things, brethren, I do not want you be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and lead astray by mute idols” (1 Corinthians 12:1-2).

Every church has its problems, and the church in first century Corinth had many: division, adultery, alcoholism, jealousy, pride, bad theology, and members fighting and even suing one another in the courts. You name the problem, and the church in Corinth had it. Well, thankfully, we have a divine record of how Paul led this church in problem solving God’s way. And for about the next three months, we will study these two books of 1 and 2 Corinthians and learn many valuable and relevant lessons for our church from this first century church’s mistakes. As we study the problems in Corinth, we will learn they are not so different from those in our churches.

There is also much misunderstanding and even heresy in our churches today from those who do not properly understand and apply what God is teaching us in these two little books of Paul, and that is why I long to help you know Paul’s inspired counsel. We will learn deep spiritual truths and extremely specific solutions for our lives, families, and churches. These two pastoral letters are not like the theological masterpiece we saw in Romans and are easier for us to understand.

I rejoice that we can do this practical devotional survey study of the New Testament together, and specifically that we can study these very relevant books of 1 and 2 Corinthians. We will look at the key problems and solutions they describe. As we study and lead others through these letters of Paul, we want to look for the devotional application of God’s Good News to our lives. As we study and teach others we want to prayerfully be asking and looking for God’s answers to the questions:

- What does this say? (Observation)
- What does it mean? (Interpretation)
- What does this mean to me and to those I am leading? (Application)

My prayer is that these studies will help you and those you will be leading **to get into God’s Word and get God’s Word into you**. When you allow the power of God’s Word through the power of God’s Holy Spirit to rule and reign in your life and in the life of your family and church, you will experience His love and abundant grace. As you study, it is my prayer that you will grow in your knowledge and faith and better know Jesus and the power, promises, and hope you have because of His resurrection.

The grace of our Lord be with you, bless you and guide you as you lead these studies.

Dick Woodward
Pastor and Author of the Mini Bible College

LEADING THE BIBLE STUDY GROUP

The Mini Bible College has prepared this devotionally practical survey of the foundational books of the Bible. Your role as leader is to guide your group through the study sessions and exercises, helping them to understand the truth, discover the eternal principles, and, most importantly, apply them to their lives. This is a survey study that will take about three months and is designed to be more than just a course. This study is part of a strategic plan to provide you with the tools to nurture and grow personally and to help your church grow both spiritually and numerically.

To help you, we have provided the following tools:

- This Leader's Guide
- Report forms
- Audio of the 1-2 Corinthians series (Audio Lessons NT 44-54)
- A study booklet on 1-2 Corinthians
- A set of workbooks for the students

Before class

- Personally start inviting people to come to this spiritual banquet. “Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.’ So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests” (Matthew 22:9-10).
- Prepare yourself in prayer for those who will attend. If possible, pray for them by name. Only God can change the hearts of people, and prayer is the most powerful tool. “Then Jesus told his disciples a parable to show them that they should always pray and not give up” (Luke 18:1).
- Ask for help. Do not try to do everything yourself. Invite one or two people to help with music, singing, greeting, and keeping records.
- Review the lesson and understand the lesson objective.
- Become familiar with the material: listen, read, and study each lesson and memorize the Bible verse before class time.
- Be sure all materials are ready for each class.
- Make sure the meeting area is adequate and comfortable for the class.

During Class

(Remember to try to keep the class time to one hour and a half.)

- Greet everyone as they arrive. Remember how nice it is when you are welcomed? Extend God's welcome to all. Have someone serve as the greeter and introduce people to one another if they are not already acquainted.
- Open with a time of worship and prayer, asking God to help you and each one understand and apply God's Word to your lives.
- Recite the memory verse.
- Listen to the audio lesson.

- Work through the workbook, inviting discussion with a focus on application. We trust the questions will raise interesting discussion and understanding that will lead to application. If the group is large (more than 10), consider dividing it into smaller groups of three or four people to encourage discussion. Be sure to monitor the time and be careful that the conversation does not detract from the focus of the lesson and the study of God's Word.
- Thank all for coming and encourage attendance at the next class.
- Challenge the students to invite others to join the Bible study.
- Encourage the students to memorize the biblical passages of the lessons each week.

After Each Class

- Gather up all materials.
- Restore the meeting room to the proper order. Leave things more orderly than you found them.
- Fill out and file report forms.
- If you are meeting in someone's home, be sure to thank them for their hospitality.

Special Instructions for Teaching Auditory Learners

It is important to remember that those who cannot read and write learn and retain information differently than those of us who are literate. The auditory learners learn from listening and telling what they have heard. Illiteracy was not an obstacle in Jesus' day. It is good to remember and even tell those in your class that most of the disciples and the majority of the people who first shared and spread the Gospel could not read or write.

In many ways, auditory learners have a greater capacity to learn what they hear than we who must write something down to remember it. Take the time, therefore, to allow your students to hear the Scripture and the lessons, pausing the message and even going back to listen again to a portion if it was not understood, and then allow them to respond to questions. When auditory learners can "story back"—tell in their own words what they have heard and learned—it indicates that they have properly grasped the principle. Therefore, use the study questions to guide the study time as they will help in the learning process. Ask the questions out loud and encourage all to participate. This will lead them into a deeper understanding of God's Word and a stronger relationship with His Son, Jesus the Christ.

Correction and Charisma in Corinth

Chapter 1

Audio Lesson: New Testament #44



Objective: To introduce and give an overview of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians and understand its major themes.



You do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful. I appeal to you, brothers, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

—1 Corinthians 1:7-10

The first letter Paul wrote to the Corinthians is typical of the pastoral letters Paul wrote to the churches he founded during his ministry. Like most of his inspired letters, Paul's first letter to the Corinthians was written to a church he knew very well, in order to correct problems and to instruct and encourage believers in their faith and ours.

The first eleven chapters of 1 Corinthians address the specific problems Paul understood to be festering within the church. These were inhibiting their spiritual growth and their witness, individually, and as a church in the city of Corinth. The last four chapters are the constructive section of this letter that offers solutions to the church's problems. By examining these problems and the solutions Paul prescribed, we can gain insight into how to address those same problems when they show up in our churches today.



1. True or **false**? When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he was writing to a church he had never visited.
2. True or **false**? The Corinthian church was one of the few churches in the New Testament that had almost no problems in it.
3. **True** or false? Paul's first letter to the Corinthians has a lot of pastoral concern and advice in it.
4. **True** or false? The kinds of problems we have in churches today are often not much different from the kinds of problems in the Corinthian church.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. What kind of community was the Corinthian church?
 - a. A small group of nonbelievers who were investigating the gospel
 - b. Believers who met regularly in a household**
 - c. A large congregation in a large building
 - d. A local organization with a strong hierarchy of leadership
6. How did Paul know about the issues in the Corinthian church?
 - a. He always listened to as much gossip as people would tell him.
 - b. The Holy Spirit showed him in a vision.
 - c. People from the Corinthian church shared their concerns with him.**
 - d. He saw firsthand because he lived in Corinth.
7. What does it mean to be "sanctified"—the word Paul used to address the Corinthians?
 - a. To be sinless and perfect
 - b. To be more spiritual than average people
 - c. To be set apart for God's special use**
 - d. To have gone through all the rituals of conversion
8. What problems did the Corinthians have? (choose all that apply)
 - a. They were divided into factions.**
 - b. They had too many pastors.
 - c. They were very poor.
 - d. Some of them were openly immoral.**
 - e. They were too harsh in dealing with sin.
 - f. They had legal disputes with each other.**
 - g. They abused the Lord's Supper.**
 - h. They were too modest to claim that they had any spiritual gifts.
 - i. They were proud of spiritual gifts and mishandled them.**

9. What attitude did Paul say was more important than all others in exercising spiritual gifts?
- a. Zeal
 - b. Love**
 - c. Discipline
 - d. Ambition

10. According to Paul, what power can solve problems in the church?
- a. The power of Jesus' resurrection, which enables us to live in a new way**
 - b. The power of positive thinking
 - c. The power of the law God gave us in the Old Testament
 - d. The power of society's legal systems



Which of the Corinthians' spiritual problems can you relate to? How does our relationship with Jesus and His resurrection power help us overcome those problems?



Thank God that His Spirit has given us powerful and practical answers to the deepest needs of our hearts. Ask Him to fill you with His love and resurrection power as you trust Him and seek to follow Him daily. Pray that He would bless your study of His Word as you learn more about 1 and 2 Corinthians.



Going Deeper

1. Explain and apply the way Paul's inspired specific solutions for these problems in the Corinthian church gave us inspired masterpieces to use as a Pastoral Manual, as we address these problems in our churches today. _____

2. In addition to these specific solutions for individual problems, explain and apply the way love, as profiled in chapter 13, is a general solution for all of these problems. _____

3. Define and apply what Paul meant when he classified all of these problems as the carnal things in the Corinthian church, in chapter 12, he announces that he is then going to discuss with them the spiritual things in their church. _____

4. Explain and apply the spiritual things he addresses in this letter that are all part of the inspired general solutions that he prescribes for this church in this inspired pastoral corrective letter. _____

5. Explain and apply how resurrection power is part of the general solution to all of these specific problems. _____

6. After lifting us to the height of inspired eloquence in his discussion of resurrection in chapter 15, is he changing the subject abruptly or is he introducing another spiritual thing when he writes, "Now concerning the collection," in the first verse of chapter 16? Explain. _____

7. Explain and apply the bottom-line dynamic solution to the problem of the weaker brother and the issue of eating meat that had been offered in sacrifice to a pagan idol discussed in chapters 8-11. _____

Is Christ Divided?

Chapter 2: Audio Lesson: New Testament #45



Objective: To understand Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about divisions in the church and about how we can learn spiritual truth.



I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought.

—1 Corinthians 1:10

Who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us.

—1 Corinthians 2:11-12

The first problem Paul addressed in his letter to the Corinthians was the problem of division. The believers were divided over who was the greatest leader in their church. Their evaluation of their leaders was largely based upon who had led them to Christ or who had baptized them. But if Christ lives in the hearts of all believers, then they should agree on the fundamental matters concerning Christ and should know that Christ cannot be divided on those matters. Paul's essential message was that we should follow Christ and not human leaders.

Paul taught that the Spirit of God alone teaches spiritual things to man. We cannot learn spiritual truth simply through our eyes, ears, or heart. We must learn spiritual truth through the Holy Spirit. Those who are spiritual have received the Spirit of God, and this Spirit gives us the capacity to know and understand God's thoughts.



1. **True** or false? The Corinthian congregation was divided among itself and had frequent disagreements.
2. **True** or false? The basis for unity among Christians is that all believers have a relationship with the same Jesus—His Spirit is within those who believe.
3. True or **false**? Paul insisted that he was the true leader of the church and all people should follow him.
4. True or **false**? Paul convinced the Corinthians of truth with his many wise words.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. According to Paul, what is the key to salvation?
 - a. Baptism
 - b. Wisdom
 - c. Unity
 - d. Believing the truth of the gospel**
6. According to Paul, what is the key to spiritual maturity?
 - a. Performing rituals and doing many good works
 - b. Intellectual understanding
 - c. Strong leadership
 - d. Believing the truth of the gospel**
7. How is the gospel communicated best?
 - a. With strong words
 - b. With clear logic
 - c. By a bold and confident person
 - d. In the power of the Holy Spirit**
8. What is the key to understanding God's truth?
 - a. He reveals it to us by His Spirit.**
 - b. Eloquent preachers explain it to us.
 - c. We must study diligently.
 - d. We must become enlightened through meditation.
9. Why is it not possible for human beings naturally to understand spiritual things?
 - a. God only chooses to reveal truth to a few people.
 - b. We are not intelligent enough.
 - c. Only God's Spirit can open the hearts and minds of those who are born again to discern things spiritually.**
 - d. It is possible, but most people do not have the patience or insight to learn.

10. Who is the best teacher we can have?
- a. Paul and his writings
 - b. Our pastor
 - c. The Holy Spirit**
 - d. Our conscience
11. How do we receive the Holy Spirit's teaching?
- a. Through years of education
 - b. By being born again and asking Him**
 - c. Through visions and angelic visitations
 - d. Through deep meditation
12. What kinds of people does Paul describe in 1 Corinthians? (choose all that apply)
- a. Unbelievers**
 - b. Believers**
 - c. Monks and nuns
 - d. Carnal believers**
 - e. Sages



Have you ever asked the Holy Spirit to be your teacher? What specifically, do you need His enlightenment about? How do you think your life would change if you obeyed what He reveals to you each day?



Thank God that His truth is available to all who believe and that He gives us His Spirit so we can understand His Word, His will, and His ways. Pray that the Holy Spirit would open your eyes and teach and guide you as you follow Him in obedience.



Going Deeper

1. As Paul attempts to correct the problem that the Corinthian believers were polarized around their leaders, explain and apply why he primarily addressed his remarks to the group he chose to address. _____

2. Explain and apply the ways in which his question in verse 13 of chapter 1, “Is Christ divided?” is a brilliant spiritual solution to this problem. _____

3. How should we personally apply the way Paul was self-effacing in chapter 1 and the first part of chapter 2, when we plant a church, lead people to Christ, and disciple them in Christ? _____

4. What does he tell them in chapters 1 and 2 about the way the Gospel is preached and believed that should teach them not to polarize around him? _____

5. In chapter 2, Paul writes that he was with them in fear and in much trembling. Of what was he so afraid? _____

6. In this context, summarize and apply what Paul teaches, especially in verses 9-16 of chapter 2, about the way the Holy Spirit teaches us spiritual truth. _____

7. In the context of educational psychology, Paul is writing that we learn through the eye gate, the ear gate, the heart gate, and the gate of the Spirit. Explain and apply what these gates are while we are learning or teaching spiritual truth. _____

The Love that Confronts

Chapter 3

Audio Lesson: New Testament #46



Objective: To understand Paul's instructions to the Corinthians about spiritual leaders, judging others, and how to deal with sin in the church.



Judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.

—1 Corinthians 4:5

Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.

—1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Many of the Corinthians had been judging Paul favorably above the other leaders in their church. But Paul told them that their favorable judgment meant little to him because he did not even feel qualified to judge himself, much less accept the judgment others were rendering about him. Since a man's heart is often deeper than his own knowledge, Paul taught that we are to leave the judgment of men's hearts to God.

The Bible does not teach that we should never judge another person for any reason. Sometimes it is necessary to make judgments about those who persist in their sin. It is our responsibility as a member of the family of God to confront those who are harming themselves or others within the body of Christ. Confronting another brother or sister in the Lord is difficult but essential. Our strategy for their restoration to fellowship with the Lord and the body of Christ should be to help them understand how harmful their actions are to their own lives and to their relationships. Our motive for confronting them must always be love, and with the goal of restoration.



1. True or **false**? Paul began his letter to the Corinthians with general solutions to their problems and then addressed specific problems near the end of the letter.
2. **True** or false? Spiritual gifts are evidence that the Holy Spirit is on us, and love is the evidence that the Spirit is within us.
3. True or **false**? In general, the Corinthians had no difficulty believing in the resurrection of Jesus.
4. True or **false**? The apostles are the source of the Christian faith.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. How should we perceive spiritual leaders?
 - a. As the supreme authorities in our lives
 - b. As servants of God and stewards of His mysteries**
 - c. As people whom God loves more than others
 - d. As people who are more holy and pure than others
6. When Christians polarize around spiritual leaders, what does that indicate about their spiritual maturity?
 - a. They are like spiritual babies—still very immature.**
 - b. They are discerning and mature enough to distinguish between true and false teachers.
 - c. They really have never known Jesus or been filled with His Spirit.
 - d. They are becoming as mature as the leader they follow.
7. How do ministers become effective spiritual leaders?
 - a. By getting the right education
 - b. Through the gifts God has given them**
 - c. By popular opinion
 - d. Through forcing their authority on others
8. In what ways should a Christian judge others?
 - a. We should never judge others under any circumstances.
 - b. We should only judge those who are less righteous than ourselves.
 - c. We should judge sin and not tolerate it in our fellowship, but we should not try to judge the motives of people's hearts.**
 - d. We have the mind of Christ, so we are free to judge anyone for anything we want to.

9. According to Paul's letter to the Corinthians, how should our belief in Jesus affect our moral behavior?

- a. Believing in Jesus changes our hearts but does not affect our morality.
- b. Believing in Jesus makes us want to be righteous but cannot help us live righteously.
- c. Believing in Jesus should change our hearts, our minds, and our moral behavior so that we leave our sin behind us.**
- d. Believing in Jesus makes us so perfect that we never sin again.

10. How should Christians deal with open, intentional sin in the church?

- a. We should care enough to confront those who are persistently immoral and urge them to repent.**
- b. We are not permitted to judge anyone, so there is nothing we can do when other Christians sin.
- c. We should notice when other Christians sin and report their immorality to everyone we know.
- d. We should not even associate with Christians who make minor mistakes or who sin once or twice and then repent.

11. What is the right motivation for confronting someone about sin?

- a. Anger
- b. Jealousy
- c. Self-righteousness
- d. Love**



In what areas of your life do you think you need to mature most as a Christian? How can the Holy Spirit help you in those areas? What area will you ask the Lord to help you in this week?



Thank God for the spiritual leaders He has brought into your life. Ask Him to help you continue to grow into greater maturity in Christ in your mind, your heart, and your actions.



Going Deeper

1. How can we relate to and apply the teaching of Paul in chapter 4 that we are to judge nothing until the Lord comes, and then in chapter 5 he rebuked the Church in Corinth for not judging the immoral man? _____

2. Explain and apply the two specific kinds of judging in chapters 4 and 5. _____

3. What is the Lord going to do when He returns that will make it possible for people like Paul and you and me to be favorably or unfavorably judged? _____

4. Why is it so very important for us to apply the teaching of church discipline, as profiled in chapter 5? _____

5. How can you summarize and apply the specific solution Paul prescribed for the problem that they were suing one another in the courts of Corinth? _____

6. What is the application to the way Paul taught the Corinthian church (in chapters 3 and 4) to regard the role and function of those who had led them to Christ and nurtured them in their journey of faith? _____

7. How are we to personally apply the clear statement by Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:13 that our body was not made for sex but to be a temple of the Lord? _____

The Marriage Manual

Chapter 4

Audio Lesson: New Testament #47



Objective: To understand Paul's teaching on marriage.



Each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that.

—1 Corinthians 7:7

Each one should retain the place in life that the Lord assigned to him and to which God has called him.

—1 Corinthians 7:17

The seventh chapter of 1 Corinthians has come to be known as the marriage chapter of the Bible. It addresses a number of questions the members of the church at Corinth placed before Paul in a letter they wrote him concerning marriage, singleness, divorce, remarriage, and physical relationships within marriage. For many centuries, when church members have approached their pastors with questions about these dimensions of marriage, this chapter has been the pastor's marriage manual. In this chapter, we discover God's plan for marriage and many of the problem situations that can arise in relation to marriage.

This chapter raises some very difficult questions, the most fundamental of which is, "What is a marriage in the sight of God?" It is answered by Matthew 19:6: "What therefore God has joined together, let no man separate." When two believers are joined together in marriage, they commit their lives to one another because they believe God has joined them together. This belief is the basis that gives their marriage stability, not the piece of paper that says the two of them are legally joined. Given the infinite variables of compatibility and possibilities for marriage partners in this world, the decision to marry should be based on divine guidance.



1. **True** or false? Paul's advice about marriage was given during a time in which Christians were under great distress and persecution.
2. True or **false**? Paul was opposed to marriage.
3. **True** or false? Paul was not married at the time he wrote 1 Corinthians.
4. True or **false**? The teaching of Paul contradicts the teaching of Jesus.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. According to Paul, why is celibacy a valuable option for a Christian?
 - a. Sex is unholy, even within marriage, and Christians should remain pure.
 - b. Marriage is simply a human institution people developed for the sake of convenience.
 - c. Single people are always holier and happier than married people.
 - d. Single people are able to focus more intently on serving the Lord.**
6. Why is a healthy sexual relationship between husband and wife important?
 - a. Sexual satisfaction within marriage is the best defense against immorality.**
 - b. God's only purpose for marriage is procreation.
 - c. Men and women must insist that their own needs are met.
 - d. It is not important; rather, it is simply a necessary distraction.
7. What does the Bible say about the permanence of marriage?
 - a. People should remain married only as long as they both want to.
 - b. It is only important for people to remain married for the sake of their children.
 - c. God designed marriage to be a lifelong commitment.**
 - d. Marriage lasts for all of eternity, even in heaven.
8. What does Paul instruct when one spouse is an unbeliever but the other has become a believer?
 - a. The believing spouse should divorce the unbelieving spouse because they are now unequal partners.
 - b. The unbelieving spouse should be required to convert to Christianity.
 - c. The believing spouse should pray for the unbelieving spouse and be faithful, but if the unbeliever chooses to leave, then the believer should allow it.**
 - d. The believing spouse must still behave as he or she did before conversion, so the unbelieving spouse will not be upset.
9. How should the law of God be applied to us?
 - a. Very rigidly—always the same in every case
 - b. Through the lens of love—always seeking the best for each person**
 - c. Very loosely—only in the situations we want to apply it
 - d. Because we are saved by grace through faith, God's rules no longer apply to us. We are free to do whatever we want.

10. Why are marriages and families under so much attack?
- a. **Marriage and families are God's plan and Satan wants to block God's plan.**
 - b. Because people like to fight.
 - c. **Marriage is to picture God's love for His Church and Satan wants to distort, dirty and destroy that picture.**
 - d. **Because God's blessing for His Church and society flow from families, and Satan wants to stop God's blessing.**



What do you believe marriage is meant to be in the sight of God? How do the Bible's standards for marriage differ from your society's standards for marriage?



Thank God both for the gift of marriage and for the gift of celibacy. If you are single, ask Him to guide you in any decisions you will make in the future about marriage, and ask Him to help you serve Him without distraction as long as you are single. If you are married, pray that He would strengthen your marriage and help you serve Him and your spouse with complete faithfulness.



Going Deeper

1. How does the beginning of the seventh chapter reveal a second source that Paul had, through which he knew the issues he should address in this letter? _____

2. As Paul gives inspired solutions regarding marriage problems in this chapter, he is relating to questions they had asked him in a letter they had written to him. By studying his solutions, explain what their questions must have been. _____

3. Why does Paul sometimes write that he has no commandment of the Lord but then he gives his own opinion, and then at other times writes that he is not telling them but the Lord is? (Consider verses 10, 12 and 40) _____

4. In what way is verse 26 a key verse that could explain why Paul places so much value on being single? _____

5. When the marriage is a mixed marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, why is it fair for Paul to give the unbeliever the option about staying in the marriage or leaving? _____

6. Imagine a couple who had multiple marriages and divorces before they heard the Gospel and were saved. How would the passage in verses 17 through 24 apply to them, especially the counsel, repeated three times, that each one should abide or live with the one they were with when they were called or saved? _____

7. In light of what Paul writes about celibacy, should we expect to find people in the body of Christ who are single because they are fulfilled without marriage and want to serve the Lord without distraction? Explain. _____

All Things to All Men

Chapter 5

Audio Lesson: New Testament #48



Objective: To understand Paul's instructions on difficult issues in the church and how he applied principles of Christian liberty to those issues.



Be careful . . . that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak.

—1 Corinthians 8:9

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.

—1 Corinthians 9:24-25

Paul wrote chapters 8-11 to address several issues the Corinthians were dealing with. In each case, whether the issue was an issue outside the church, like eating food sacrificed to idols, or an issue within the church, like how to observe the Lord's Supper, Paul focused on the relationships among brothers and sisters in Christ and how those who are stronger ought to regard those who are weaker in the faith.

In these chapters, we learn three principles of Christian liberty. First, we learn that in all things, our foremost concern must be the glory of God. Second, we learn that our actions should be based on what results in the salvation of others. And third, we learn that the profit of others is more important than our own profit. The issue is not what is right or wrong, or our right to do, or not to do something. The issue is what glorifies God, what leads to the salvation of others, and what profits others. When we reflect on these three principles, we realize they express a concept Paul will spell out for us later in this letter this way: love.



1. **True** or false? Many issues in the Christian faith are not a matter of right and wrong but of love for others.
2. True or **false**? The question of whether a Christian should eat meat sacrificed to idols was extremely important because rules about what to eat and drink are essential to Christianity.
3. True or **false**? The idolatry common in Corinth was very similar to Christianity, so believers simply transferred their old practices to their new faith.
4. **True** or false? Paul supported spiritual freedom for believers and hated legalism.
5. True or **false**? Paul looked down on women and did not believe they were equal to men in God's eyes.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What was Paul's instruction to those who understood that idols are nothing and eating meat offered to idols was meaningless?
 - a. Those who are strong should rebuke those who are weak for their lack of understanding.
 - b. Those who are strong should ignore those who are weak and do whatever they want.
 - c. Those who are strong should set an example for the weak by boldly displaying their freedom.
 - d. Those who are strong should respect the convictions of those who are weaker and not offend them.**
7. Which of the following are important criteria for determining proper behavior? (choose all that apply)
 - a. The glory of God**
 - b. Personal preferences
 - c. Selfish desires
 - d. The salvation of others**
 - e. Personal profit
 - f. The profit or welfare of others**
 - g. Personal rights
 - h. Self-preservation
8. Which of the following words best sums up the philosophy of Christ?
 - a. Earn
 - b. Get
 - c. Give**
 - d. Abstain

9. What did Paul mean when he said he would become all things to all men in order to save some?

- a. That he would do anything, no matter how dangerous, unethical, or immoral, to win people to Christ
- b. That he would change his message to fit the desires of those to whom he preached
- c. That he would disguise himself so no one would know he was a Christian
- d. That he make necessary cultural and social adjustments in order to communicate his message to those who needed to hear it**

10. How did Paul describe himself in his ministry?

- a. As a slave or servant of Jesus Christ**
- b. As a devout Jew
- c. As a former Jew
- d. As the expert on Christianity

11. In what ways did the Corinthians observe communion, or the Lord's Supper, inappropriately? (choose all that apply)

- a. They discriminated against those who were poor and could not bring much food.**
- b. They combined it with idolatrous rituals.
- c. They often drank enough wine to get drunk.**
- d. They came with a selfish attitude.**
- e. They only did it once a year.

12. With whom are we communing when we celebrate the Lord's Supper?

- a. With God only
- b. With other Christians only
- c. With God and other Christians**
- d. With God, other Christians, and even unbelievers



If you were writing to Paul about difficult issues in your church, what would you ask him? How do you think he would apply the "law of love" and principles of Christian liberty to issues in your fellowship?



Thank God for the "law of love" by which we live and the liberty He gives us to serve Him freely. Ask Him to give you wisdom as you apply His principles to your life and to your relationships with other Christians. Ask Him above all to fill you with His love and help you always seek the best for others.



Going Deeper

1. What problems do we have in our churches today to which we could relate and apply Paul's solutions to the problems in Corinth (recorded in chapters 8-11) about the right and wrong of believers eating meat that had been offered as a sacrifice to a pagan idol? _____

2. How do we personally apply Paul's teaching that it is not about right or wrong but about how much we love the weaker brother who thinks it is wrong to eat this meat? (Consider also Romans 14) _____

3. Summarize and apply the profound statement of Paul (recorded in 9: 19-23) that demonstrates the way he personally applied the principles he prescribed for them in chapter 8. _____

4. As we consider chapter 10:31-33 in pastoring God's people , identify and apply three principles that should guide us when we are dealing with what we might call the "gray" issues or issues that are not black and white or clearly right and wrong. _____

5. How are we to summarize and apply what Paul teaches in chapter 11 about the role and function of women in the church? _____

6. How do you apply Paul's great insight into the historical and biographical passages in the Bible, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 10:11? _____

7. Summarize and apply Paul's inspired instructions for communion in chapter 11: 23-33 and his profound advice about overcoming the temptation to sin in chapter 10: 12-14. _____

The Function of the Uncction

Chapter 6

Audio Lesson: New Testament #49



Objective: To understand Paul's teaching on spiritual gifts and how the body of Christ should function in unity.



Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. . . . There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men.

—1 Corinthians 12:1, 4-6

Be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

—1 Corinthians 14:39-40

After the long corrective section of 1 Corinthians, chapter 12 begins the constructive section of Paul's letter. In this chapter, we learn two opposite but complementary principles. First, we learn about the diversity of gifted believers because they have different clusters of spiritual gifts. If two of us are exactly alike, one of us is unnecessary. All the gifted saints in a local church are necessary. All the members are not gifted with the same gift — some are teachers, others are prophets, still others are discerning; some have administrative gifts and some have the gifts of service. A Spirit-filled church will have in its body a wide range of people who are blessed with different spiritual gifts, which are under the control of the Holy Spirit.

Chapter 14 demonstrates what happens when a church elevates one gift above another, specifically the gift of tongues. In Corinth, those who spoke in tongues considered themselves superior to those who did not speak in tongues. They elevated that gift as the evidence of the new birth, rather than as one of many spiritual gifts the Holy Spirit can bestow on a believer. But our spiritual gifts are to be used for the edification of the body of Christ, not its division. They are given to promote unity within the diversity of gifts and ministries.

1. **True** or false? Even though the Corinthians had a lot of problems, Paul considered them to be spiritual people who were set apart to God.
2. **True** or false? The Holy Spirit gives gifts to believers so they can minister and bear fruit.
3. **True** or false? God works in different ways through different people.
4. True or **false**? Speaking in tongues proves that you are a Christian



Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Which of the following are characteristics of a Spirit-filled church? (choose all that apply)
- a. Diversity**
 - b. Unity**
 - c. Uniformity
 - d. Perfection
6. To what does Paul compare a Spirit-filled church operating with a diversity of gifts?
- a. A hand
 - b. A vineyard
 - c. A business
 - d. A body**
7. To whom does the Holy Spirit give gifts?
- a. Every believer**
 - b. To those who ask diligently in prayer
 - c. Mature Christians
 - d. Those who attend church every Sunday and give enough offerings
8. According to Paul, how should those who have spoken in tongues view those who do not?
- a. They should assume that those who have not spoken in tongues are not Christians.
 - b. They should realize that they are more spiritual than those who have not spoken in tongues.
 - c. They should remember that everyone has different gifts, and none are more important than the others.**
 - d. They should realize that speaking in tongues is a sign of immaturity.
9. Which of the following is an appropriate approach to understanding the Holy Spirit's work?
- a. Being ignorant of His work because no one can really know how He functions
 - b. Ignoring His work because it is too controversial
 - c. Searching the scriptures and seeking wisdom about His work**
 - d. Imitating His work just to prove that we are accepted by Him

10. Which spiritual attribute should always accompany our use of spiritual gifts?
- a. Zeal
 - b. Love**
 - c. Pride
 - d. Competition
11. What does Paul mean by doing all things “in order” in the assembly of believers?
- a. Worship services should always follow a very specific plan.
 - b. Church leadership should always be structured in a very clear hierarchy.
 - c. People should never speak in tongues at church because that is disruptive.
 - d. Everything should be done in a way that edifies others.**
12. According to Paul, if someone speaks in tongues in a service, what are the Biblical guidelines?
- a. All should speak at the same time.
 - b. Only one or two should speak**
 - c. There must always be an interpreter**
 - d. It must be orderly and for the edification of the church.**



In what ways have you seen God’s people work together as one body? What gifts do you believe you have to offer to the body?



Thank God for His plan of using all of His people to minister to each other and for giving everyone spiritual gifts to use. Ask Him to help you discover and develop all the gifts He has given you.



Going Deeper

1. Based upon chapter 12, explain and apply the differences between the miracle work of the Holy Spirit within us and His miraculous work upon us. _____

2. According to Galatians 5: 16-23, the evidence of His work in us is what Paul calls “the fruit of the Spirit.” What is the evidence of the work of the Holy Spirit upon us according to chapter 12, and how can we apply that personally? _____

3. Based on the early part of chapter 12, identify and apply five wrong positions about the function of the Holy Spirit as Paul describes it. _____

4. Who are the God-appointed recipients of the Holy Spirit’s blessings of spiritual gifts? Why is the phrase “who have His miracle working within them and upon them” important? _____

5. Does God give spiritual gifts to please the Church, those who receive the gifts, or unbelievers? Explain. _____

6. How can you take your own or another believer’s spiritual gift inventory? _____

7. Explain how you need believers in your Church who have spiritual gifts you do not have, and how they need you. _____

The Core of Charisma

Chapter 7

Audio Lesson: New Testament #50



Objective: To understand the importance of love and why the resurrection is essential to Christian faith.



Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails.

—1 Corinthians 13:4-8

For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that He was buried, that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He appeared to Peter, then to the twelve. After that He appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time.

—1 Corinthians 15:3-6.

Paul offered many solutions to the problems he addressed in 1 Corinthians, but he offered one solution that can be applied to every spiritual problem Christians can face. That solution is love.

There are several Greek words for love. The word Paul uses is *agape*. This word is the one that describe the way God loves us and the way we are to love others when we are bearing the fruit of God's Spirit. It is hard to define this kind of love, but we can describe its qualities. That is what Paul does in chapter 13.

Chapter 15 is the resurrection chapter of the Bible. Although these Corinthian Greeks were believers, their cultural heritage among Greek philosophers continued to impact their thinking, and they doubted the supernatural—especially the resurrection of Christ and of all believers. Paul reminded the Corinthians that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was a vital part of the Gospel he preached and that they had believed. This was the Gospel that saved them and was the foundation of their entire belief system.

1. True or **false**? According to Paul, it is more important to exercise spiritual gifts than to demonstrate love for others.
2. **True** or false? The evidence that the Holy Spirit has come upon us is the gifts of the Spirit.
3. **True** or false? The evidence that the Holy Spirit is within us is love.



4. Which of the following are characteristics of love?

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| Jealousy | Truth |
| Pride | Impatience |
| Hope | Trust |
| Perseverance | Selfishness |
| Protection | Boasting |
| Patience | Accusation |
| Anger | Endurance |
| Kindness | |

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. *Agape* love is _____. (choose all that apply)

- a. **Indestructible**
- b. **Unconditional**
- c. **Inspirational**
- d. **Irresistible**

6. Which of the following describes the difference between *agape* love—God’s kind of love—and human love?

- a. God’s love is based on feelings, but human love is based on intellectual decisions.
- b. **God’s love is unconditional, but human love is conditional.**
- c. God loves only some special people who do many good deeds, but humans apply love to almost anyone.
- d. God’s love changes often, but human love is persistent and durable.

7. In what way do people with *agape* love inspire others to be better?

- a. **They see the best in everyone.**
- b. They criticize until people change their ways.
- c. They demand improvement in others.
- d. They cause people to believe things that are not true about themselves.

8. What does Paul mean when he says that love never fails?
- a. Christians never fail to love others.
 - b. Those with real love never stop feeling strongly for others.
 - c. Real *agape* love is irresistible and indestructible.**
 - d. When we love people, they always love us in return.
9. According to Paul, which is the greatest of the following three spiritual attitudes?
- a. Faith
 - b. Hope
 - c. Love**
 - d. None is greater than the others. They are all equal.
10. What two facts are essential parts of the gospel? (choose two of the following)
- a. Jesus was an important spiritual leader.
 - b. Jesus died for our sins.**
 - c. Jesus was a persuasive teacher.
 - d. Jesus rose from the dead.**
11. How strong is the evidence for Jesus' resurrection?
- a. Very weak—only a few people speculated that He might have been raised, but no one saw Him.
 - b. Somewhat weak—His disciples said they saw Him after He had been raised.
 - c. Somewhat strong—a few people in addition to His disciples said they actually saw Him after He had been raised.
 - d. Very strong—Jesus appeared numerous times to the twelve disciples and many other people, even more than 500 people at one time.**
12. Which Christian belief did the people of Corinth have particular difficulty believing?
- a. The belief that every Christian could receive spiritual gifts.
 - b. The belief that Christians can have wisdom from God.
 - c. The belief that Christians will one day be raised from the dead.**
 - d. The belief that Jesus might return again one day.



Have you ever seen anyone demonstrate *agape* love in his or her relationships? If so, in what ways is it different from other kinds of love? In what ways can you demonstrate that love to someone you know?



Thank God that His love is unconditional, inspirational, indestructible, and irresistible. Pray that you would experience His love more deeply each day. Ask Him to give you opportunities to show *agape* love to others.



Going Deeper

1. According to Paul, what things are not as great as love? _____

2. Why is love greater than faith and hope? _____

3. Why is love greater than spiritual gifts? _____

4. Why is it that if I have all these things, without love I am nothing and everything I do is unprofitable? _____

5. What are the 15 virtues that Paul profiles in verses 4-7 that are an analysis of the love of which he is writing? _____

6. How can you apply those virtues to someone you want to love, such as your children, parents, marriage partner, other believers, unbelievers, people with whom you have an adversarial relationship, and your enemies? _____

7. What is the only dynamic that makes it possible for us to love in these ways? (Consider 1 John 4:16) _____

The Task of the Minister

Chapter 8

Audio Lesson: New Testament #51



Objective: To introduce Paul's second letter to the Corinthians and understand his purposes for writing.



If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.
— 2 Corinthians 5:17-20

Many of the Corinthians received Paul's first letter with acceptance and support. But some people in the church had begun to attack Paul's apostleship, others criticized his speaking abilities, and still others thought he was a bit out of his mind. Many of them were offended that he hadn't come to visit them himself. But these critics never challenged any of the points Paul made in his letter because Paul's logic was irrefutable. Instead, they attacked Paul himself. And when Paul heard these things, he wrote this second letter to the Corinthians.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul defended his credential as an apostle and the nature of his ministry. He explained how suffering for the sake of the gospel, of which Paul had experienced very much, can be used to qualify us to be ministers of God's comfort. He described the task of the ministry as the life of Jesus working within us to change us as a testimony to who Christ is. And he said his whole life and his motivation were centered around Christ, who had given him—and all who believe in Jesus—a ministry of reconciliation to bring people back into fellowship with God.



1. **True** or false? In general, the church at Corinth reacted well to Paul's first letter to them.
2. **True** or false? Some people disliked Paul and thought he was weak, ineffective as a leader, and not a real apostle.
3. True or **false**? Paul never spent much effort defending his own ministry.
4. **True** or false? 2 Corinthians contains a lot of good advice for those who serve God in ministry.
5. **True** or false? Paul used the word "saint" to describe anyone who believes in Jesus.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What is the primary theme of 2 Corinthians?
 - a. Spiritual gifts
 - b. Division in the church
 - c. The credentials and mission of a minister**
 - d. The second coming of Jesus
7. Who does the work of ministry?
 - a. Only pastors
 - b. Only pastors and other church leaders
 - c. Only Christians who have gone through the necessary training
 - d. All Christians**
8. According to Paul, how does God often train us to be ministers?
 - a. Through a rigorous seminary education
 - b. By giving us divine revelation through visions and other supernatural experiences
 - c. By putting us in a position to suffer and experience His comfort so we can comfort others**
 - d. By requiring us to spend a certain number of hours praying, preaching, telling people about Jesus, and reading the Bible
9. What is the essential task of a minister?
 - a. To be the "fragrance" of Christ**
 - b. To tell others how to live
 - c. To impress people with our ministry skills
 - d. To use so many religious words that people will know what we believe
10. What was Paul's entire life centered on?
 - a. Himself
 - b. Jesus**
 - c. His churches
 - d. Suffering

11. What kind of ministry has God given all who believe?

- a. A ministry of preaching and teaching
- b. A ministry of reconciliation between God and lost human beings**
- c. A ministry of leadership
- d. A ministry of health and wealth



What do you think it means to be a minister of reconciliation? In what ways have you been reconciled to God? In what ways can you carry out a ministry of reconciliation in your life today?



Thank God for His comfort and His calling in your life. Ask Him to comfort you in all of your needs and to understand the calling He has given you. Pray that He would teach you and give you opportunities to be a minister of reconciliation among the people He brings into your life.



Going Deeper

1. How can God use suffering to give us a credential that equips us to be ministers? _____

2. Define and apply what Paul describes as a minister of comfort and how we become one. _____

3. How do you respond to and apply Paul's metaphor that we are little clay pots with a great Treasure inside? _____

4. Why does God permit or even direct great pressure to come against that little clay pot? _____

5. According to chapter 5, what has God committed to every believer who has been reconciled to God through Christ? Relate that to this question, "To whom has God committed the work of the ministry?" (Consider Ephesians 4:12) _____

6. Relate to and apply verses 17-18 to Psalm 51:10 and to the Gospel of John 3:3-5. _____

7. Relate to and apply verse 21 to Isaiah 53:6 and 1 Peter 2:24. _____

The Transparency of the Minister

Chapter 9

Audio Lesson: New Testament #52



Objective: To understand the purposes and motivation for Paul's ministry, and to understand our role as ministers.



We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.

—2 Corinthians 4:7-10

Paul's second letter to the Corinthians is all about the ministry God wants every believer to experience. God has called all of us to a ministry of reconciling all people to Him. But in order to bring people to God, our lives must be characterized with an honest transparency. It must be clear to all that everything that is good in our life is because of the Christ who has saved us and lives in us.

In order for Jesus to be seen in us, God will often allow us to experience much pressure and go through various trials. Because the Spirit of God has been placed within us, we can respond rightly to those pressures, storms, and trials, and people will see that we are different. They will notice that though we are earthen vessels, we are filled with a priceless treasure: Jesus Himself.

Paul described our relationship to Christ in three ways: *by* Christ, *in* Christ, and *for* Christ. Jesus gives us everything we have in the way of salvation and spiritual blessings; we are united with Him as the source of everything we need; and we are surrendered to Him as we live for Him and His purposes.

1. True or **false**? The letter of 2 Corinthians is addressed only to ministers who are leaders of the church.
2. **True** or false? Paul believed every Christian is a minister.
3. True or **false**? The church throughout history has effectively practiced Paul's message that every Christian believer is a minister.
4. True or **false**? Most people who have become Christians were led to Christ by professional ministers.



5. True or **false**? Only adult men can have the ministry of reconciliation.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

6. What evidence did Paul present to the Corinthians to prove his apostleship?
- a. **The faith of the Corinthians to whom he had preached**
 - b. The fact that he was a student of the other apostles
 - c. His education as a Jewish scholar
 - d. His miracles
7. What motivated Paul to do his work?
- a. His pride
 - b. His large salary and the prestige of being an apostle
 - c. The pressure of his family and friends
 - d. **His relationship with Jesus—saved by Christ, living in Christ, and serving for Christ**
8. Once we have been reconciled to God by Jesus, how should we respond to Him?
- a. We should strive to keep the Ten Commandments in the Old Testament.
 - b. We should prosper in every way and never show our weaknesses.
 - c. **We should live for Jesus and help others become reconciled to Him.**
 - d. We should prove that we are holier than everyone around us.
9. What illustration did Paul use to describe those who minister?
- a. A treasure hidden in a field
 - b. **A clay pot with a treasure inside**
 - c. An ox pulling a heavy load
 - d. A talking donkey

10. What empowers us to respond to pressures and trials with patience and love? (choose all that apply)

- a. **The Holy Spirit**
- b. Our own strength
- c. Strict religious principles
- d. **The truth and power of God's Word**
- e. **The armor of God's righteousness**
- f. The opinions of other people
- g. **Faith**

11. What does God want us to demonstrate in our lives?

- a. Our own righteousness
- b. Our own wisdom
- c. Our own talents
- d. **Jesus living within us**

12. What purpose do the storms in our life often have?

- a. **They show that the life of Jesus within us is stronger than our storms, and they prove His power to uphold us.**
- b. They show that we are not living in accordance with God's will because He is not protecting us.
- c. They prove that not even our faith in Jesus can overcome the problems of the world.
- d. They do not have any purpose; they are random events.

13. What do people see when we are transparent before them?

- a. That we are no different than anyone else
- b. That our faith is just another religion like all others
- c. **That we have a treasure within us, which is Jesus**
- d. Nothing, because no one really notices us anyway



God asks us not to make Jesus a part of our plans but to become part of His plan. Have you sought to be taken into His plans? In what ways can you become part of God's purpose in your family, in your church and for the world?



Thank God for the treasure He has placed within you—the life of Jesus. Ask Him to help you live honestly before others so they can see the life of Jesus within you. Pray that as people see Jesus clearly in you, they will come to faith in Him.



Going Deeper

1. In addition to the love of Christ, what motivated Paul to accomplish his miraculous ministry, according to 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:2? _____

2. Based on these same verses, what were three absolutes that drove and motivated Paul to be the greatest missionary in the history of the Church of Jesus Christ? (Consider especially vv. 14-15)

3. In this same passage, explain and apply the way Paul uses the expressions, “by Christ,” “in Christ” and “for Christ.” _____

4. Explain and apply how verse 16 in chapter 4 could be a very real blessing to a devout believer who is dying from a malignancy. _____

5. When you read and study the entire fourth chapter, is it biblical to teach that, since the inward man is a greater value than the outward man, inner healing can be a greater miracle than physical healing? Explain. _____

6. How could the 18th verse of chapter 3 revolutionize your pursuit of a personal relationship with Christ? _____

7. How can you personally apply the eternal values of Paul as expressed in the first six chapters of this letter? _____

The Transcendence of the Minister

Chapter 10

Audio Lesson: New Testament #53



Objective: To understand the experiences of Paul and how God reveals Himself to and through His servants.



To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me. Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

—2 Corinthians 12:7-10

It is impossible to understand the life of the Apostle Paul apart from his experiences. In addition to his experiences before he became a Christian, he encountered Jesus on the Damascus road, learned from Jesus in the Arabian desert, and was taken into heaven and given revelations too deep for words. Paul’s experience in heaven left a permanent mark on his life. From then on, it was as though he always had one foot in heaven and one foot on earth. He spoke frequently of his desire to depart from earth to be with Christ, counting his life on earth as less valuable than the glory of being with Christ in heaven. This experience impacted the view of life he shared with others.

Paul told the Corinthians that he was given “a thorn” in his flesh, a messenger from Satan to hurt and bother him. No one knows exactly what this thorn was, but it is clear that God allowed and used it to keep Paul humble and to use Paul’s weakness to show His strength. God likes to demonstrate His adequacy in the showcase of our inadequacy. God will use our limitations to show us and others that our life in Him is not a matter of who or what we are, but a matter of who and what He is. Serving God is never a matter of what we can do but of what He can do through us.

1. True or **false**? Paul boasted in his strengths because he was proud of the gifts God had given him.
2. **True** or false? Paul was commissioned to be an apostle to the Gentiles.
3. **True** or false? Paul encountered the risen Jesus on the Damascus Road and in Arabia.
4. **True** or false? Paul remained in Arabia for three years before entering into public ministry.



Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Who commissioned Paul to be an apostle?
 - a. James
 - b. Peter
 - c. Jesus**
 - d. No one

6. How did Paul get much of his revelation?
 - a. By meditating several hours a day
 - b. From supernatural experiences with the Lord**
 - c. From books written by Peter and James
 - d. By extreme self denial practices

7. According to Paul, when will we be able to live in a heavenly dimension?
 - a. When we discipline ourselves to be righteous enough
 - b. When we have made enough pilgrimages to win favor with God
 - c. Not until we die
 - d. Right now, even while we are living on earth**

8. Why did God not remove Paul's "thorn in the flesh"? (choose all that apply)
 - a. Because Paul had not prayed with sufficient faith
 - b. Because Paul sinned and needed to be disciplined
 - c. To prevent Paul from developing pride from the revelations he had received**
 - d. To demonstrate His own power through Paul's weakness**
 - e. To help Paul live according to the Spirit and not depend on the flesh**

9. What tools does God give us to help us fight our spiritual battles?
 - a. Just the same common sense He gives all human beings
 - b. Powerful spiritual weapons like prayer and faith**
 - c. Secret spells and incantations and mantras
 - d. None, because if we really have faith, we will not have any battles.

10. Which of the following best describes Paul's attitude toward the Corinthians?

- a. **He was very emotional and opened his heart to them.**
- b. He remained detached and did not express any feelings.
- c. He was strictly logical because faith is only an intellectual issue.
- d. He was much too harsh and rejected them completely.

11. Which experience did Paul eventually forget about and grow away from?

- a. His Damascus road experience
- b. His Arabian desert experience
- c. His heavenly experience
- d. **None of the above**



What do you think are some of the weaknesses in your life? In what ways do you think God might show Himself strong in your weakness? How do your weaknesses help you depend on His strength and not on your own flesh?



Thank God that He encounters us and reveals Himself to us in different ways and at different times. Ask Him to continue giving you the experiences you need to become a more effective minister for Him. Thank Him also for your weaknesses and His strength, and offer Him both your strengths and your weaknesses for Him to use however He chooses and to display Himself in you.



Going Deeper

1. According to 2 Corinthians 12: 7-10, why was Paul given his thorn in the flesh? _____

2. Relate to and apply the responses Paul received, “My grace is sufficient for you,” and “My strength is made perfect in (your) weakness,” (verse 9), when God told him why He was not going to remove the thorn. _____

3. What were the physical manifestations Paul lived with every day because of his thorn in the flesh? (Consider 1 Corinthians 2: 1-5; Galatians 4: 13-15) _____

4. How can you personally apply the reality that, when Paul received his third “No” from God, he not only accepted these limitations but gloried in them? (Consider 2 Corinthians 9:8; Romans 5: 2-5) _____

5. How can you relate to and apply the heavenly experience of Paul to the emphasis in his letter to the Ephesians on the expression, “in the heavenly places,” by which he taught that we can be in the heavenly dimension now, while living on earth? (Compare this with the Gospel of John 3: 12-13) _____

6. How do you believe God could use your weaknesses as a showcase in which He can exhibit His strength? _____

7. How can you personally apply this to the great metaphor of Jesus: *as we are branches joined to Him, our Vine*, so that we might be more fruitful, His Father sometimes cuts us back to improve the quality and the quantity of our fruit? _____

The Grace of Giving

Chapter 11

Audio Lesson: New Testament #54



Objective: To understand Paul's teaching about Christian stewardship.



Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.

—2 Corinthians 9:6-8

In 2 Corinthians 8-9, Paul writes about an offering he was collecting for persecuted believers in Jerusalem and asked the Corinthians to contribute. He shares with them about the giving practices of the Philippians, in whose city he was staying at the time he wrote this letter, because they were excellent examples of generosity and faithful stewardship. As Paul describes the faithful stewardship of the Philippians, he gives us a masterpiece on the subject of faithful stewardship.

Paul would never coerce or manipulate people to participate in an offering because he wanted them to give because the Lord was leading them to give. It is important for our gifts to God to be voluntary. We give because we love Him, because we are grateful for what He has done for us, and because we are full of joy and want to give back to Him. God accepts our gifts not based on how large they are—the Philippians gave generously even in their poverty—but on the attitude with which we give them. Paul called giving a “grace” because we are enabled to give by His power and blessings on our lives. And in response to our generosity, God is able to provide for us and make sure that we have all we need.

1. **True** or false? Paul urged Christians to be distinct from unbelievers and to not make binding partnerships with them.
2. **True** or false? Paul tried to comfort the Corinthians because his words in a previous letter had made them feel sorrowful.
3. True or **false**? Money has nothing to do with our spiritual life, and Christians are not supposed to have any regard for it.
4. True or **false**? Paul wrote to the Corinthians about stewardship because he needed to raise money for his own expenses.

Unless otherwise noted, choose one answer for each question.

5. Why did Paul take up a collection from his churches?

- a. **To help Jewish Christians who were suffering in Jerusalem**
- b. To pay off Roman authorities who demanded bribes from Christians
- c. To build a Christian temple in Jerusalem next to the Jewish temple
- d. To fund his writing of much of the New Testament



6. Which church did Paul use as an example of giving with the right attitude?

- a. The Jerusalem church
- b. **The Philippian (or Macedonian) church**
- c. The Roman church
- d. The Galatian church

7. According to Paul, which of the following attitudes and motives are appropriate for giving an offering to God's work? (choose all that apply)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| a. Joy | f. Pressure from others |
| b. Guilt | g. A cheerful heart |
| c. Obligation | h. Earning God's favor |
| d. Love | i. Bribing God to answer a prayer |
| e. Impressing others | j. Gratitude |

8. What did Paul say about those who sow generously?

- a. They will earn a higher place in heaven.
- b. They will be poor throughout their lives.
- c. They will also reap generously.**
- d. They will certainly become wealthy.

9. Which of the following best describes Paul's approach to the subject of stewardship?

- a. Coercing people to give
- b. Making people feel guilty for not giving
- c. Promising a specific blessing to those who give
- d. Explaining the blessings and benefits for those who give with a right motive**

10. According to Paul, who should give to God's work?

- a. Only those who are wealthy
- b. Those who are poor and who want to be wealthy
- c. Those who owe God a sacrifice for their sins
- d. Those who can give with love, gratitude, and a cheerful heart**

11. Which kind of gift does God appreciate most?

- a. Large gifts from wealthy people
- b. Sacrificial gifts given with right motives**
- c. Gifts to support spiritual needs rather than physical needs
- d. Gifts that cost us nothing



When you give an offering to God for His work, what motivates you to do so? Why do you think God wants us to give out of our love and gratitude rather than out of guilt or obligation? Why is it important for gifts to be voluntarily given? In what ways can you expect God to respond to your generous gifts?



Thank God for this study from the church in Corinth. Thank Him that He has given His grace so freely to us and has blessed us with so many blessings. Ask Him to help you give back to Him with a cheerful heart, and ask Him to show you ways to demonstrate your love for Him.



Going Deeper

1. How can you personally apply 2 Corinthians 9:8 that God is able to make all grace abound toward you? _____

2. How many promises does Paul give in this one verse regarding the grace that God can give you personally? _____

3. What is the specific area of work or ministry to which Paul was applying this most superlative verse in the Bible about the grace of God? _____

4. As Paul holds up the giving pattern of the Philippians to challenge the Corinthians, what were the characteristics of the Philippian giving, and how can you apply them? (Consider 2 Corinthians, chapters 8 and 9) _____

5. Explain some of the reasons why Paul did not accept personal support from churches in Corinth, Ephesus and others, but only from the Church in Philippi. _____

6. Explain the reality that God loves a cheerful giver. _____

7. How are you to personally relate the declaration of Paul in chapter 6: 14-18 about unequal yokes with unbelievers to marriage, business partnerships, and other dealings with unbelievers? _____
