

# **1 Corinthians**

When God's People Are Messy

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Published by Q Place

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# 1

## 1 Corinthians 1

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### Christ, the Wisdom and Power of God

**W**ould you rather write to a son who has been expelled from college or to a son who has made the dean's list? Of all Paul's letters, this seems the most difficult to write as he addresses issues damaging the church in Corinth. In this chapter, Paul begins to identify the faults of the Corinthian Christians, his spiritual children. Consider which of these issues Paul would still need to address if he were writing to a typical church today.

#### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-3**

1. How does Paul establish his authority to write to the Corinthian church on difficult issues?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. According to this paragraph, what do all Christians have in common with the Christians at Corinth?

3. What does it mean to ***call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*** (verse 2 and Acts 2:21)?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-9**

4. Why does Paul give thanks to God for these Corinthian Christians?

In what ways—past, present, and future—is God’s grace expressed in their lives?

5. What practical difference do these expressions of grace make in your life?

### **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

6. After his greeting and prayer of thanks, Paul presents one of the main reasons for his letter. What plea does he make in light of what has been happening among the Christians at Corinth?

7. How do Paul's questions in verse 13 point out one problem in the thinking of these Christians?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. If he were writing verse 12 today, what similar divisions among Christians might Paul mention?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. From verses 14-17 and Acts 18:1-18a, what do you understand about Paul's previous ministry in Corinth?

*Note: For ease of reference to one part of a verse, we will use the notation "a" to indicate the beginning of a verse and "b" for the end of a verse.*

10. How can Christians avoid confusion about whom they are following?

How can you determine if your loyalty is to Christ and not to a human spiritual leader?

## Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-25

11. What two attitudes toward Christ's death on the cross are possible?

How do people today express these two attitudes?

What spiritual state is true of those who hold each attitude?

12. Why is the cross the central message of Christianity? See also Mark 10:45 and Romans 3:23-25a.
13. Why may even highly educated people not understand ***the message of the cross*** (verses 18-21)?



14. Why would both Jewish scholars and Greek debaters find the message of the cross so hard to accept?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
15. What is Paul's answer to those who seek a visible expression of God's power, and to those who want a rational understanding of God?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
16. How does Paul remind his readers, Jews and Greeks, that their concept of God is too small?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
17. Where do you look for truth today—in miracles, in philosophical arguments, or in the death of Jesus Christ?

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:26-31**

18. Why has God chosen the Corinthian Christians, rather ordinary people, to know him?

Why doesn't God want us to put our confidence in worldly wisdom, strength, or position?

19. Define each of the four things that Jesus Christ has become to a Christian:

– wisdom

– righteousness

– sanctification

– redemption

20. What impact does understanding what Jesus is to you have on the way you present yourself to other people?

What impact does this have on the way you talk about Jesus?

## SUMMARY

1. Why are the two major issues that Paul addresses in this chapter still important for Christians today?
2. From this chapter, what would help you avoid causing divisions among Christians, or help you heal existing breaches in a Christian group?
3. What can you say right now that would be your own way to **boast in the Lord** (verse 31)?

## PRAYER

*Gracious God, we come to you through your Son, who revealed your power and wisdom in his death for us on the cross. We thank you that what seemed so weak and foolish to Jews and Gentiles is the way we can come into your presence, cleansed and forgiven. Thank you for calling us to know you and for providing in Christ Jesus all the spiritual gifts we need to serve you. Remembering this, we will praise you and not elevate ourselves. We pray in Christ's name, amen.*