**1 Corinthians**

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| **Proper Functioning of the Church** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **Answers a Report**  **from Chloe’s men**  **(1:11; 5:1)** | | | | | **Answers a Letter**  **from the Church**  **(7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1)** | | | | | | |
| **Divisions** | | **Disorders** | | | **Doctrine** | | | | | | |
| **Leadership** | | **Relationships** | | | **Theology** | | | | | | |
| **Pride** | | **Immorality** | | | **Selfishness** | | | | | | |
| **Chapters 1–4** | | **Chapters 5–6** | | | **Chapters 7–16**  -------Corporate Worship------- | | | | | | |
| Greeting & Problem | Misunder-standings | Incest | Lawsuits | Prostitu-tion | Marri-age | Liberty | Head Coverings | Lord’s Supper | Gifts | Resur-rection | Gospel Advance |
| 1:1-17 | 1:18–4:21 | 5 | 6:1-11 | 6:12-20 | 7 | 8:1–11:1 | 11:2-16 | 11:17-34 | 12–14 | 15 | 16 |
| **Ephesus** | | | | | | | | | | | |
| **May 56 (on third missionary journey)** | | | | | | | | | | | |

**Key Word: Sanctification**

**Key Verse:** *“What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? 20For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.”* **(1 Cor 6:19-20).**

**Summary Statement:** Paul explains the *proper functioning of the church* in response to reports about the Corinthians’ divisions, disorders, and doctrinal difficulties to assure that the church makes its *positional sanctification practical.*

**Application:** Does your church look “set apart” for God? Or is it plagued with divisions, disorders, and doctrinal difficulties that make it look the same as non-Christian groups?

**1 Corinthians**

**I. Title**

The earliest title for 1 Corinthians is, (*First to the Corinthians a*). The a was added later to distinguish this epistle from Paul's second letter to the church.

**II. Authorship**

A. External Evidence: Even the most imaginative critics uphold Pauline authorship since the patristic evidence is so early.

1. The early church writers who advocated Paul as author include: Clement of Rome (AD 95; *To the Corinthians* 47), Polycarp (AD 105; *To the Philippians* 11), Irenaeus (AD 185; *Against Heresies* 4, 27, 45), and others, including the 2nd century Muratorian Fragment.

B. Internal Evidence: The book itself argues even more strongly for Paul's authorship as it claims to be written by Paul (1:1).

**III. Circumstances**

A. Date: Paul makes two comments concerning the Corinthians' giving which indicate that 2 Corinthians was written less than a year after 1 Corinthians (2 Cor 8:10; 9:2). His mention of being about to leave Ephesus (1 Cor 16:5-8) indicates that 1 Corinthians was written in May AD 56. The letter of 2 Corinthians followed later that year in fall AD 56.

B. Origin/Recipients: Paul wrote Corinth from Ephesus across the Aegean Sea (see below).

C. Occasion: Paul's establishment of the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey took about eighteen months from AD March 51-September 52 (1 Cor 3:6, 10; 4:15; Acts 18:1-17). Nearly four years later while in Ephesus on his third missionary journey he received bad news about the church from two sources: (1) disturbing reports from the household of Chloe regarding divisions and disorders in the church (1:11), and (2) news of difficulties from the church itself via letter carried by three men (16:17). Therefore, Paul's letter is actually a response to these three issues, answering the problems of (1) divisions, (2) disorders and (3) difficulties raised in the church's questions.

**IV. Characteristics**

A. First Corinthians describes the most problematic church situation in the New Testament. It therefore contains a theology of how God responds graciously but firmly to a carnal church.

B. This letter provides more teaching on these topics than any other New Testament writing: church discipline, lawsuits among believers, marriage, Christian liberty, the role of women, the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts, the nature of love, the gospel, and the resurrection of the body.

C. This letter, though named 1 Corinthians, was not Paul's first letter to Corinth. He had already written a letter before this (1 Cor 5:9) which is now lost and therefore not part of Scripture.

**Argument**

The Book of 1 Corinthians records Paul's response to three concerns from two different sources. Each issue concerns the proper functioning of the church. Paul's first answer responds to a report from Chloe's household regarding divisions in the church that he severely rebukes (1 Cor 1–4). Next, he puts the Corinthian church to shame for various church disorders that he also may have learned from Chloe's household (1 Cor 5–6). The final and largest portion of the epistle answers the questions penned in a letter by the church at large on various difficulties they were experiencing doctrinally and practically (1 Cor 7–16). This church letter requested Paul's opinion on certain issues, each of which Paul answers by introducing with the words “now concerning” (7:1; 8:1; 12:1; 15:1; 16:1). His purpose in writing is to assure that the believers operate effectively for the Lord by making their positional sanctification practical (Lowery, *BKC*, 2:506).

**A Self-Test on Love**

Most Christians know 1 Corinthians 13 as the best description of love in the Bible. However, we often assume that *knowing* is *doing.* To find out how much love really controls your own actions, rank yourself from 1 (weakest) to 10 (strongest) in these descriptions in verses 4-7.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Never Once Rarely Seldom Sometimes Occasionally Usually Often Almost Always Always

**Love is Patient**

I am slow to anger; I bear with trials and people without complaint; I do not give God deadlines.

**Love is Kind**

I am thoughtful, considerate, and generous with praise; I have time for people and build them up.

**Love Does Not Envy**

I am as happy to see others promoted as I am to see this for myself; I am not threatened by others’ gifts and accomplishments and am not critical when I am unnoticed.

**Love Does Not Boast**

I readily acknowledge that I can do nothing for God apart from His grace; I am quick to redirect praise to God; I don’t leave others with a better impression than what is absolutely true.

**Love is Not Proud**

I view myself rightly rather than have an inflated idea of my own importance; I do not have to be coaxed, honoured, or pampered to do my part; I talk about others more than myself.

**Love is Not Rude**

I am not crude, nasty, cutting, sarcastic, or cocky; I am polite, well-mannered, courteous, and gracious with everyone—especially with my closest family members.

**Love is Not Self-Seeking**

I have a greater concern for the well-being of others than for myself; I accept others without expecting them to conform to my expectations and interests; I am not possessive of those I love.

**Love is Not Easily Angered**

I can “keep my cool”; I look at inconveniences as opportunities for growth rather than violations of my personal rights; I do not talk about my rights; I am not touchy or defensive.

**Love Keeps No Record of Wrongs**

I easily forget how others have hurt or inconvenienced me; I reach out to those who are not kind to me rather than feeling that they “owe me one.”

**Love Does Not Delight in Evil But Rejoices in the Truth**

I spend more time reading God’s Word than I do watching television; I am saddened to see evil people come out on top; I am glad when right and justice prevail no matter who gets the credit.

**Love Endures All Things**

I bear with the shortcomings of others; I patiently stand with people whose faults I know well.

**Love Believes All Things**

When I have no evidence, I believe the best; My first response is to believe rather than disbelieve others; I make my decisions based on the honesty of other people.

**Love Hopes All Things**

When the evidence is adverse, I hope the best will come out of it; I anticipate future victory.

**Love Perseveres All Things**

When my hopes are repeatedly disappointed, I courageously wait; I “hang in there” rather than try to escape my difficulties with others.

*Love in Action: For the next seven days, I will do one unselfish act each day for my family and friends—something I wouldn’t ordinarily do—to improve in my weak areas (write them above).*