

1 Corinthians Bible Study Questions and Answers (Free PDF)

Leader's Edition — with Answers

A 10-session walk through 1 Corinthians, from a divided church to the hope of resurrection, with open questions for your own answers. Free to print, no sign-up.

A 10-session study of 1 Corinthians for groups or solo reading.

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

1 Corinthians 1:10 (NIV)

Do you not know that your bodies are temples 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 bodies.

1 Corinthians 6:19-20 (NIV)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NIV)

The study guide

SESSION 1 • 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

Called and Kept

Paul greets a church he loves and thanks God for it before he ever names a problem, calling the Corinthians enriched in Christ and kept by God to the end.

1. What words does Paul use to describe the Corinthian believers in these opening verses?

Paul calls them sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy (1 Corinthians 1:2). He speaks of God's grace given to them in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:4) and says they are enriched in every way, in speech and knowledge (1 Corinthians 1:5). They do not lack any spiritual gift (1 Corinthians 1:7). God will keep them firm to the end, and he has called them into fellowship with his Son (1 Corinthians 1:8-9).

2. Why might Paul thank God for this church before he confronts anything that is wrong in it?

Paul roots their identity in God's grace, not in how well they are doing. That is what makes hard correction bearable later. They are rebuked as people already loved, already called, and already kept by a faithful God (1 Corinthians 1:9).

3. Where do you most need to remember God's grace toward you before you start fixing what is broken?

Leader's note: This question asks us to start with grace before we go looking for what is broken. Paul does not hide the problems, but he begins with what God has done. 1 Corinthians 1:9 says God is faithful. Invite the group to say where they most need to hear that today.

SESSION 2 • 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-4:21

The Cross and the Folly of Division

Paul confronts the factions forming around rival teachers and sets the wisdom of the world against the foolishness of the cross, where God's power is found.

1. What kinds of rivalry and boasting is Paul confronting in the Corinthian church?

Paul names quarrels and rival loyalties. One says, "I follow Paul," another Apollos, another Cephas, another Christ (1 Corinthians 1:12). He also finds jealousy and strife (1 Corinthians 3:3) and boasting about human leaders (1 Corinthians 3:21). In 1 Corinthians 4:7 he asks what they have that they did not receive.

2. Why does Paul keep contrasting human wisdom with the message of the cross?

The message of the cross looks like foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us it is the power of God (1 Corinthians 1:18). God chose the weak and foolish things of the world so that no one may boast before him (1 Corinthians 1:27-29). Pride in human wisdom fuels the factions, and the cross removes every reason to boast except in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31).

3. What would real unity around Christ, rather than around a favorite teacher, look like where you worship?

Leader's note: This question asks the group to picture unity built on Christ, not on a favorite voice. Paul asks, "Is Christ divided?" (1 Corinthians 1:13). Be careful and kind here. Invite people to speak about what they long for, not to name names.

SESSION 3 • 1 CORINTHIANS 5:1-6:20

Holiness and the Body

Paul addresses sexual sin the church had tolerated, lawsuits between believers, and the call to honor God with the body, which belongs to him.

1. What serious sins and conflicts does Paul name in these two chapters?

Paul names a man living in sexual sin with his father's wife, and a church that is proud instead of grieving (1 Corinthians 5:1-2). He also names lawsuits between believers before unbelieving judges (1 Corinthians 6:1-6). He warns that the wrongdoing he lists, sexual sin among it, does not belong in God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

2. Why does Paul tie holiness so closely to the truth that believers belong to Christ?

Paul reminds them that their body is a temple of the Holy Spirit. They are not their own, they were bought at a price, and so they are to honor God with their bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Holiness is not a rule laid on from outside. It flows from belonging to Christ.

3. What is one concrete step toward purity and integrity you could take this week?

Leader's note: This question asks for one small, honest step, not a list of failures. It may touch tender ground, so keep it gentle and private if needed. 1 Corinthians 6:20 says to honor God with our bodies. Invite each person to pray about one step, and to keep it between them and God unless they choose to share.

SESSION 4 • 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-24

Marriage, Singleness, and Calling

Paul answers the church's questions about marriage and singleness, honoring both, and urges each person to live faithfully in the life God has already given them.

1. What questions about marriage and singleness is Paul answering here?

The church has written to Paul, and he begins to answer, "Now for the matters you wrote about" (1 Corinthians 7:1). They are asking whether it is good not to marry, what marriage owes each spouse (1 Corinthians 7:3-5), what to do as the unmarried and widowed (1 Corinthians 7:8), and how to live when a spouse is not a believer (1 Corinthians 7:12-16).

2. How does Paul hold together honest concession, calling, and wholehearted devotion to the Lord?

Paul separates what the Lord has commanded (1 Corinthians 7:10) from his own counsel (1 Corinthians 7:6, 7:12). He says each person has a gift from God, one of this kind and another of that (1 Corinthians 7:7). He calls each one to live faithfully in the life God has assigned (1 Corinthians 7:17), and to remain with God there (1 Corinthians 7:24).

3. How can you serve God faithfully right where you are in your relationships today?

Leader's note: This question is about faithfulness where you are, whether married, single, or somewhere in between. Some in the room may be carrying sorrow or longing, so speak gently. 1 Corinthians 7:24 says each of us can remain with God in the life we are given. Ask the group how to serve well in their present relationships.

SESSION 5 · 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40

Wisdom for Big Decisions

Paul gives careful counsel to the unmarried and those weighing marriage, shaped by devotion to the Lord rather than by pressure or fear.

1. What advice does Paul give about marriage in light of the present circumstances?

Because of the present distress, Paul says it is good for a person to remain as they are (1 Corinthians 7:26). Marriage is not sin (1 Corinthians 7:28), but he warns of trouble in this life, and he says the time is short (1 Corinthians 7:29). He wants them free from anxiety (1 Corinthians 7:32). His counsel is given to the engaged (1 Corinthians 7:36-38) and to widows (1 Corinthians 7:39-40).

2. What principles, not just rules, seem to guide the counsel Paul gives?

Paul wants undivided devotion to the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:35). He says he is not trying to restrict them but to help them live in a right and orderly way (1 Corinthians 7:35). Peace, freedom from anxiety, and devotion guide him more than rules. Faithful readers differ on what exactly the present distress was, but the principles are clear.

3. Where do you need wisdom rather than pressure to shape a major decision in front of you?

Leader's note: This question asks for wisdom, not pressure. Big decisions can feel loud. James 1:5 says that if any of us lacks wisdom, we should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault. Invite the group to name a decision, and to pray for one another to hear God's guidance.

SESSION 6 · 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-11:1

Freedom Governed by Love

Paul takes up food sacrificed to idols and the larger question of Christian freedom, arguing that love for a weaker believer outranks the exercise of a right.

1. What problem does Paul say knowledge creates when it is not governed by love?

Paul says knowledge puffs up, but love builds up (1 Corinthians 8:1). Some believers ate food offered to idols without a second thought, and the conscience of a weaker believer was wounded (1 Corinthians 8:7). Freedom can become a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 8:9), and the one for whom Christ died can be hurt (1 Corinthians 8:11).

2. Why is Paul willing to limit his own freedom for the sake of others?

Paul says that if what he eats causes a brother or sister to fall, he will never eat meat again (1 Corinthians 8:13). He gave up rights for the sake of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:12, 9:19-23). He is following the way of Christ, who laid down his own advantage to serve others.

3. Where might a freedom you have a right to use actually harm someone whose faith is fragile?

Leader's note: This question invites honest thought about a freedom you might use that could trouble someone else. Keep it about love, not about winning arguments. 1 Corinthians 10:24 says no one should seek their own good, but the good of others. Ask what love would choose.

SESSION 7 · 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-34

Worship That Honors Christ's Body

Paul addresses head coverings, order in worship, and the Lord's Supper, rebuking a church that humiliated the poor at the very table meant to unite them.

1. What disorder or misuse does Paul find in the Corinthians' gathered worship?

Paul finds divisions when the church gathers, and he says it is not the Lord's Supper they eat (1 Corinthians 11:18-20). Some eat ahead of others, one goes hungry, and another gets drunk (1 Corinthians 11:21). They humiliate those who have nothing (1 Corinthians 11:22). He also addresses head coverings and order in worship (1 Corinthians 11:2-16), and faithful readers differ on how to apply that passage today.

2. Why does Paul call for such discernment and reverence at the Lord's Supper?

The Supper proclaims the Lord's death until he comes (1 Corinthians 11:26). Eating in an unworthy manner makes a person guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27). So Paul asks each person to examine themselves (1 Corinthians 11:28) and to discern the body (1 Corinthians 11:29). Many read that as honoring both Christ's body given for us and the church, his body on earth.

3. How could the way your church gathers better reflect the unity of Christ's body?

Leader's note: This question asks how your gatherings could better show one body. Paul's answer in 1 Corinthians 11:33 is simple. When you come together to eat, wait for one another. Ask the group where welcome, patience, or care for the overlooked could grow.

SESSION 8 · 1 CORINTHIANS 12:1-14:40

One Body, the Greatest Gift

Paul teaches that the Spirit gives varied gifts to one body, then sets love above every gift in chapter 13, and calls for orderly worship that builds others up.

1. How does Paul describe both the variety and the unity of spiritual gifts in the body?

There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit, different kinds of service, but the same Lord, and different kinds of working, but the same God (1 Corinthians 12:4-6). The body is one and has many parts (1 Corinthians 12:12), and we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body (1 Corinthians 12:13). No part can say to another, "I don't need you" (1 Corinthians 12:21), and if one part suffers, every part suffers with it (1 Corinthians 12:26).

2. Why does Paul insist that love is greater than even the most striking gifts?

Without love, even tongues and great faith come to nothing (1 Corinthians 13:1-3). Gifts pass away, but love never fails (1 Corinthians 13:8). And now these three remain, faith, hope, and love, but the greatest of these is love (1 Corinthians 13:13). Paul also says gifts should build up the church (1 Corinthians 14:12).

3. Which gift or role could you use more intentionally for the good of others, not for status?

Leader's note: This question aims at using our gifts for others, not for status. 1 Corinthians 12:7 says the Spirit gives a gift to each one for the common good. Invite the group to name one gift or role they could use more on purpose, and let others speak what they see in one another.

SESSION 9 · 1 CORINTHIANS 15:1-34

Christ Is Risen

Paul restates the gospel and defends the resurrection against those denying it, showing that everything stands or falls on Christ being raised from the dead.

1. What core facts about the gospel and the resurrection does Paul restate here?

Paul restates the gospel he received. Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried, and was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He appeared to Cephas and the Twelve (1 Corinthians 15:5), then to more than five hundred at once (1 Corinthians 15:6), then to James, all the apostles, and last of all to Paul (1 Corinthians 15:7-8).

2. Why does Paul say that denying the resurrection guts the entire faith?

Paul says that if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is our faith (1 Corinthians 15:14). We would still be in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17), and we would be the most pitiable of all people (1 Corinthians 15:19). But Christ has indeed been raised, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20).

3. How does the hope of resurrection change the way you face obedience and suffering now?

Leader's note: This question asks how resurrection hope reaches into daily obedience and pain. Paul ends the chapter with it. 1 Corinthians 15:58 says our labor in the Lord is not in vain. Invite the group to name where they are tired or hurting, and to pray with that hope.

SESSION 10 • 1 CORINTHIANS 15:35-16:24

Victory, Generosity, and Farewell

Paul describes the resurrection body and death's final defeat, then turns to the collection for believers in need and closes with warm, practical farewells.

1. What future transformation does Paul promise for the bodies of those who belong to Christ?

The body is sown perishable and raised imperishable, sown in dishonor and raised in glory, sown in weakness and raised in power, sown a natural body and raised a spiritual body (1 Corinthians 15:42-44). We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a flash, at the last trumpet (1 Corinthians 15:51-52). The perishable will put on the imperishable (1 Corinthians 15:53).

2. How does the victory over death in chapter 15 shape the instructions Paul gives in chapter 16?

After the great hope, Paul turns straight to the ordinary. Because our work is not in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58), he asks them to set aside gifts for the Lord's people (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). He calls them to stand firm in the faith (1 Corinthians 16:13) and to do everything in love (1 Corinthians 16:14). Resurrection hope makes small, faithful acts matter.

3. What faithful action does the truth that Christ is risen call you to take this week?

Leader's note: This question asks for one faithful act this week. Paul ends with a simple charge, "Do everything in love" (1 Corinthians 16:14). Keep the response small and real. Ask each person to name one act, and to pray for one another to carry it out.