



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

# BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

**1 & 2 CORINTHIANS**

Week 1

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# *Before You Begin Your Journey...*

If God wanted to send us a biblical message about life in a present-day Christian congregation, how would he do it? He would probably select a historical New Testament congregation as a case study—one with many of the same characteristics found in 21st century Christian congregations.

Such a church was located in the ancient city of Corinth. Some 50 miles south of Athens, Corinth was strategically perched on a narrow isthmus separating the Corinthian Gulf on the west from the Aegean Sea on the east. To avoid going hundreds of miles out of their way, ships were either dragged across the isthmus, or had their cargo transported across the isthmus to be loaded onto another ship. This made Corinth a required stop for these vessels and their crews.

Corinth was second only to Rome as the most celebrated city in the empire. It was a major commercial and transportation hub. Like many of today's metropolitan centers of commerce, Corinth was diverse in religion, race and culture. Much of its population was mobile and every vice imaginable was commonplace. The temple of Aphrodite employed over 1,000 prostitutes. The very name *Corinthian* became synonymous with debauchery.

In this morally and physically dangerous neighborhood, Christ-followers begin to meet together. In these two letters we read snapshots of the problems faced by that church—problems that strike us as remarkably 21st century: materialism, doctrinal confusion, immorality and complacency. Other issues are not as negative, but are nonetheless modern: the role of women, marital relations, compensation for Christian workers, image-consciousness, accountability and competition.

Paul compassionately but firmly guides the Corinthian congregation through these issues toward Christ. In doing so, he sets an example for countless pastors to come.

Whether you're a lay member or actively involved in full-time ministry, for better or worse, you will probably recognize familiar territory in Corinth. The letters to the Corinthians are case studies about real people with real problems. As you visit the universal body of Christ at Corinth, may you meet the One who lives in the church today just as He lived among those ancient people.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized "G" and "A".

Greg Albrecht  
President, Plain Truth Ministries

# *How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...*

**1**—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God’s written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don’t be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each “daily” lesson.

**2**—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges .

**3**—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

**4**—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

**5**—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

•**Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

**6**—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

**7**—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. *The CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

•**Abbreviations Used in the CWR Bible Survey**—

|               |      |                 |      |
|---------------|------|-----------------|------|
| Genesis       | Ge   | Nahum           | Na   |
| Exodus        | Ex   | Habakkuk        | Hab  |
| Leviticus     | Lev  | Zephaniah       | Zep  |
| Numbers       | Nu   | Haggai          | Hag  |
| Deuteronomy   | Dt   | Zechariah       | Zec  |
| Joshua        | Jos  | Malachi         | Mal  |
| Judges        | Jdg  | Matthew         | Mt   |
| Ruth          | Ru   | Mark            | Mk   |
| 1 Samuel      | 1Sa  | Luke            | Lk   |
| 2 Samuel      | 2Sa  | John            | Jn   |
| 1 Kings       | 1Ki  | Acts            | Ac   |
| 2 Kings       | 2Ki  | Romans          | Ro   |
| 1 Chronicles  | 1Ch  | 1 Corinthians   | 1Co  |
| 2 Chronicles  | 2Ch  | 2 Corinthians   | 2Co  |
| Ezra          | Ezr  | Galatians       | Gal  |
| Nehemiah      | Ne   | Ephesians       | Eph  |
| Esther        | Est  | Philippians     | Php  |
| Job           | Job  | Colossians      | Col  |
| Psalms        | Ps   | 1 Thessalonians | 1Th  |
| Proverbs      | Pr   | 2 Thessalonians | 2Th  |
| Ecclesiastes  | Ecc  | 1 Timothy       | 1Ti  |
| Song of Songs | SS   | 2 Timothy       | 2Ti  |
| Isaiah        | Isa  | Titus           | Tit  |
| Jeremiah      | Jer  | Philemon        | Phm  |
| Lamentations  | La   | Hebrews         | Heb  |
| Ezekiel       | Eze  | James           | Jas  |
| Daniel        | Da   | 1 Peter         | 1Pe  |
| Hosea         | Hos  | 2 Peter         | 2Pe  |
| Joel          | Joel | 1 John          | 1Jn  |
| Amos          | Am   | 2 John          | 2Jn  |
| Obadiah       | Ob   | 3 John          | 3Jn  |
| Jonah         | Jnh  | Jude            | Jude |
| Micah         | Mic  | Revelation      | Rev  |

# 1 & 2 CORINTHIANS

Steering a  
Lively Church  
Through  
Stormy Waters

# *Introduction to 1 & 2 Corinthians*

**Authorship:** There is strong evidence that these letters were written by Paul. The grammar, style and vocabulary bear his mark. Early Christian writers Clement, Ignatius and Polycarp attest that Paul was the author of 1 Corinthians.

**Setting and purpose:** The book of 1 Corinthians was written from Ephesus, the Roman province of Asia, located in present-day western Turkey. It is clear from Acts that Paul made two visits to Ephesus. The first visit was for a brief time after he had founded the church in Corinth (Ac 18:18-21). His second visit was for a longer period, during his third missionary journey (Acts 19). Since the problems described in 1 Corinthians would have taken some time to develop, it must have been during this second stay at Ephesus that Paul wrote 1 Corinthians, around 55 A.D. The book of 2 Corinthians was written the following year, after Paul had moved from Ephesus to Macedonia.

These events surrounded the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians:

- Before writing 1 Corinthians Paul sent a “previous letter,” mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5:9, which is not preserved for us.
- News came to Paul from various members and in a letter. Timothy was dispatched with Paul’s reply, which we now know as 1 Corinthians.
- Between the writing of 1 and 2 Corinthians it appears that Paul paid a brief “painful visit” to Corinth (2Co 12:14; 13:1-2).
- On returning to Ephesus, he wrote them a “severe letter” (2Co 2:3-4, 9; 7:8) sent by Titus, that has not survived.
- 2 Corinthians was a follow-up letter written out of relief and gratitude, seeking reconciliation and urging the believers not to listen to Paul’s detractors.

**Background:** Corinth was a key port serving the Mediterranean world, located in southern Greece on a narrow isthmus. Its population was estimated at as much as 250,000, with most residents occupying single-room apartments in tenement blocks



cramped within the city walls. Disease epidemics and violent crime were common. Corinth had 12 temples, which were centers of idol worship and religious cultic prostitution.

**Outline of 1 Corinthians.** Capital letters do not necessarily correspond to daily readings.

**I. GREETING AND THANKSGIVING, 1:1-9**

- A. Greetings to the church of God in Corinth, 1:1-3
- B. Thanksgiving for their knowledge and spiritual gifts, 1:4-9

**II. CONCERN OVER DIVISIONS IN THE CHURCH, 1:10-4:21**

- A. Rival groups, each claiming a particular leader, 1:10-17
- B. Misunderstanding the Christian message, 1:18-3:3
- C. Misunderstanding the role of Christ's ministers, 3:4-4:5
- D. Misunderstanding the nature of the Christian life, 4:6-21

**III. MORAL FAILURES REPORTED TO PAUL, 5-6**

- A. Illicit relationship between a man and his father's wife, 5
- B. Believers taking each other to court, 6:1-11
- C. Sexual immorality, 6:12-20

**IV. MARRIAGE PROBLEMS, 7**

- A. Mutual considerations, 7:1-7
- B. Counsel to the married, 7:8-24
- C. Counsel to the unmarried, 7:25-40

**V. CHRISTIAN FREEDOM AND ACCOUNTABILITY, 8:1-11:1**

- A. Regard for the scruples of others, 8:1-13
- B. Being prepared to set aside our rights, 9:1-27
- C. Warnings from Israel's history, 10:1-22
- D. Summary of guiding principles, 10:23-11:1

**VI. CONDUCT IN PUBLIC WORSHIP, 11:2-14:40**

- A. Social conventions and biblical principles, 11:2-16
- B. Participating in the Lord's Supper, 11:17-34
- C. Diverse gifts of the Spirit, 12:1-31
- D. Exercising the gifts in love, 12:31-13:13
- E. Superiority of prophecy over tongues, 14:1-25
- F. Orderly participation in worship, 14:26-40

**V. THE HOPE OF THE RESURRECTION, 15**

- A. The resurrection of Christ is attested, 15:1-11
- B. The resurrection of Christians is assured, 15:12-34
- C. The resurrection body is described, 15:35-58

**VI. CONCLUDING ISSUES, 16**

- A. Principles of giving to the work of God, 16:1-4
- B. Paul's travel plans, 16:5-12
- C. Final greetings, 16:13-24

*“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



Photo by Hal Finch-PTM

# Love Is Not Blind

DAY 1

1 Corinthians 1:1-17

How do you think a first-time visitor would perceive this Corinthian church?

1. How does Paul describe local congregations in verses 1-2—as a community living in isolation from other churches or as part of an ever-growing fellowship?
2. Define the words “grace” and “peace” with the help of the following verses: Eph 2:8-9; Eph 2:14; Ro 5:1. How does grace lead to peace?
3. What specific things does Paul praise the Corinthian believers for? Later we will see that their areas of strength became the source of some of their problems.
4. Why was Paul so concerned about divisions in the body of Christ, and what was the cause of those divisions in Corinth (1:14-16)?
5. How does Paul emphasize the need for unity? What is the basis of that unity (1:10,13,17)?

1. Does Paul’s description of the body of Christ encourage you to expand your own horizons beyond a group of people who congregate in a building? How would you do this?
2. Have you experienced the grace of God as he has met your needs and called you to particular areas of Christian service?
3. Do you have a long-standing disagreement with a brother or sister in Christ? Have you been challenged to forgive?

*“...as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed” (1:7). The followers of Jesus lived in expectation of the Lord’s imminent return.*

## OPENING

up to the Word

## DIGGING

into the Word

## LIVING

out the Word

## WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 2

# Wise and Strong?

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1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

When do you recall first understanding the gospel message that Jesus Christ died on the cross for the forgiveness of your sins?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. What can you learn from this passage about the limitations of human wisdom?
2. What prevented many Jews from believing in Jesus? Why were they so insistent on signs (Mt 16:1-4; Lk 8:11-12; Mt 24:30; Ac 1:6-8)?
3. What needs to happen for the message of Christ crucified to be perceived as the “power” and “wisdom” of God to a person who previously thought the message was nonsense?
4. What kind of people made up this group of Christ-followers in Corinth? Why does God often work from the bottom up rather than from the top down in society?
5. On whom does the preaching and receiving of the gospel depend (2:4, 10-16)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

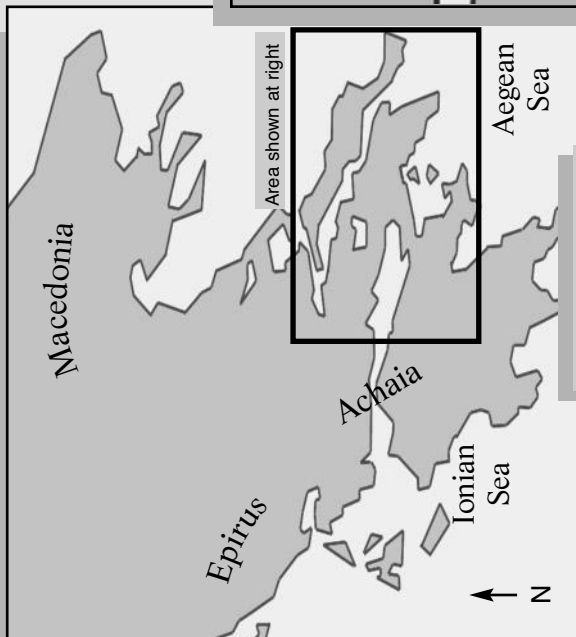
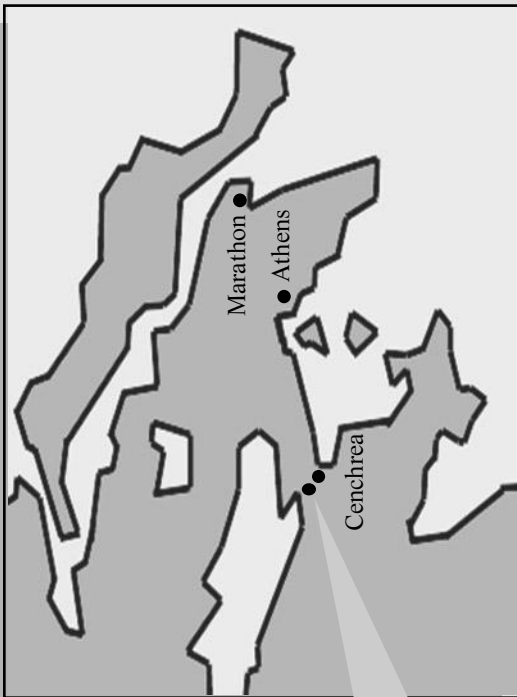
1. How can you continue to grow in understanding the gospel and experiencing its impact on your life?
2. Is there another Christ-follower you have overlooked or avoided because you don't think he or she is very interesting or influential?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*The quotation from Isaiah 29:4 in 1:19 provides a lesson from history: **God's people were not protected through political scheming** or human ingenuity or foreign alliances, but only through trust in God.*

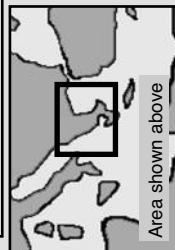
# CORINTH

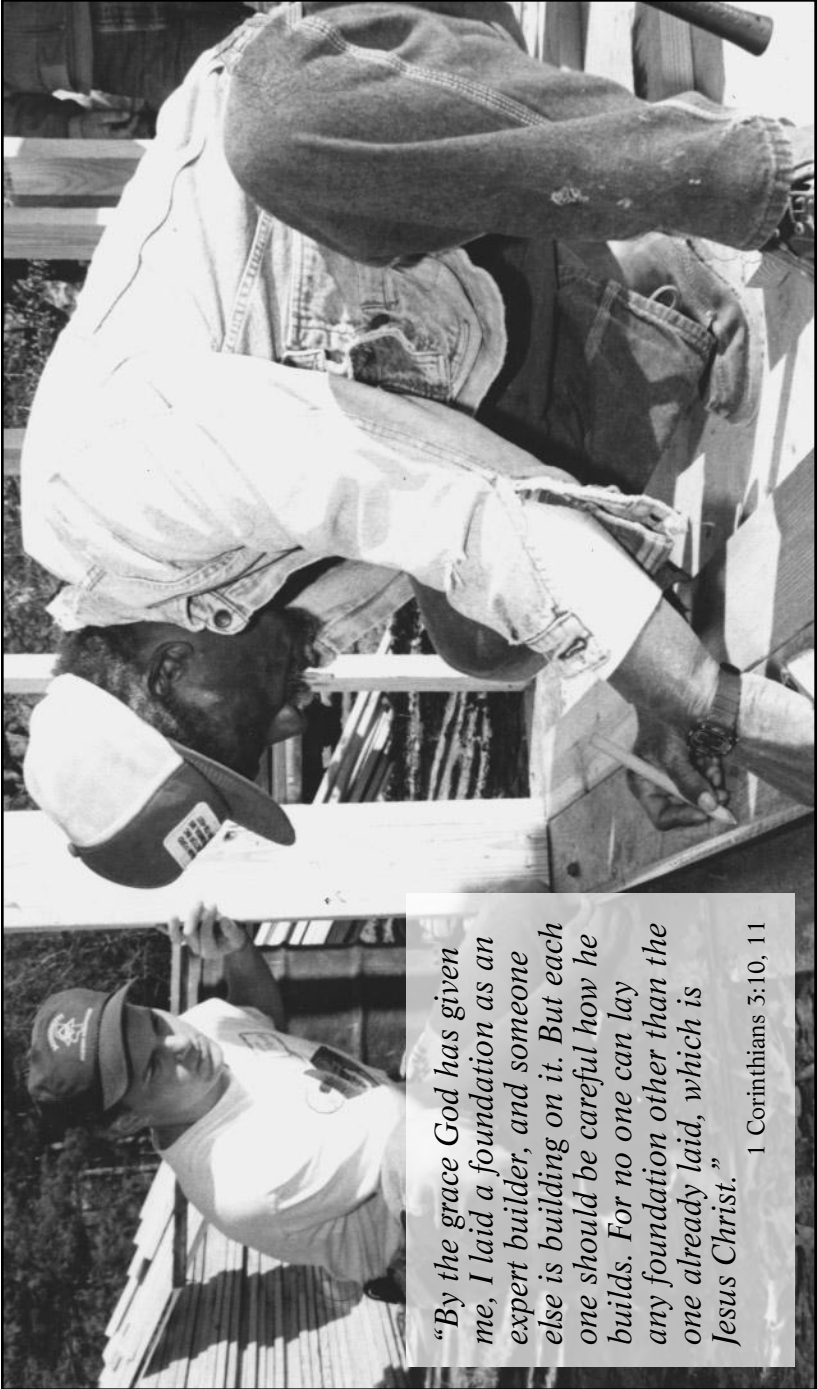
Corinth was one of the most important cities in the Roman Empire, largely because of its strategic location on an isthmus separating the Ionian Sea from the Aegean sea. It was culturally diverse and a center of pagan worship.



## CORINTH

Greece's center of transportation and commerce.





*“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ.”*

1 Corinthians 3:10, 11

# Building on a Firm Foundation

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DAY 3

## 1 Corinthians 3

Have you ever bought a house? Did you inspect it carefully to make sure it stood on a firm foundation, was in good condition and was built to last?

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1. Why are the Corinthians described as spiritual infants? How was Paul forced to treat them (vs. 1-4; Heb 5:11-14)?
  2. What is meant by the “planting” ministry of Paul and the “watering” ministry of Apollos? Why is God’s role so vital in any ministry (vs. 5-6)?
  3. In helping to build up the body of Christ, what does Paul tell us about (a) how we are to build, (b) where we are to build, (c) with what kind of materials we are to build (vs. 10-15)?
  4. What does it mean to describe believers, individually and collectively as “God’s temple” (vs. 16-17)?
  5. How did the Corinthians need to change their thinking in order to be truly wise (vs. 18-22)?
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1. When a baby is weaned from milk to solid food, it begins to feed itself. Do you feed on God’s Word regularly? Do you vary your diet?
  2. What do we need to unlearn in order to become wise in God’s eyes?
- 

*In verse 5 Paul uses “What?” rather than “Who?” regarding himself and Apollos. He does this to draw attention away from himself and Apollos as people and focus on their functions. Nowhere does the New Testament encourage us to follow leaders based on their **charismatic personalities**.*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## DAY 4

# Servant Leaders

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1 Corinthians 4

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Are you now or have you ever been a leader? Have you considered the impact of your leadership?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

1. Paul says he doesn't care what others think of him (v. 3). How would you answer someone who thinks that Paul was saying that he could behave in any way he pleased?
2. What vivid contrast does Paul draw between the Corinthians and the Apostles in verses 8-10? What different attitudes do these two images reveal regarding (a) themselves and (b) the apostles?
3. What does the Kingdom of God consist of, according to verse 20? See also Romans 14:17-18.

**LIVING**  
out the Word

1. Where do Christians find encouragement and accountability? How can a critical attitude make it difficult to find such relationships?
2. Identify an area in your life in which you excel and answer Paul's question, "What makes you different from any one else?"
3. How can you avoid the self-deception that Paul exposes in verses 8-11?
4. Consider praying for Christians in other parts of the world who face suffering and hardship because of their faith in Christ.

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

***"Do not go beyond what is written."** This statement in verse 6 is not a quotation from elsewhere in the Bible. This popular maxim of the time may mean, "Don't go beyond the biblical models of servant leadership." An even better possibility may be a proverb, "Do not rush into making judgments without knowing all the facts," as Eugene H. Peterson interprets the phrase in his New Testament paraphrase, The Message.*



*“Therefore 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



*“Your boasting is not good.  
Don’t you know that a little  
yeast works through the whole  
batch of dough?”*

1 Corinthians 5:6



## Bad Sex

### 1 Corinthians 5

Have you seen any sleazy news items in the headlines recently? After reading this chapter, do you think times have really changed all that much?

**1.** Why do you think the Corinthian church tolerated the sin of incest (Lev 18:8; Dt 22:30)? (a) moral compromise, (b) mistaking liberty in Christ for moral license, (c) lack of courage to deal with the problem because the individual was influential in the church, (d) as gentiles, they were not familiar with Hebrew law.

**2.** How does this passage emphasize the need for church discipline? What guidelines should be followed (see also Mt 18:15-18)?

**3.** How do you think the Old Testament feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread (Ex 12:3-21) illustrated deliverance from bondage to sin? How does Christ fulfill that symbolism in the life of the believer?

**4.** What does it mean for the church to be *in* the world but not *of* the world, and why is it important for believers to do both (see Jn 17:15-19)?

**1.** As you look at Christianity at large today, with all of its problems, are you sometimes tempted to think, "If only we could get back to being the church of the New Testament"? Does this chapter help dispel the myth of "the good old days"?

**2.** Which sins are you most concerned about, and which do you tend to overlook? Notice that verse 11 introduces other issues.

**3.** What is the difference between passing judgment and being judgmental?

*"...hand this man over to Satan...." (v. 5) is a graphic description of the defiantly sinful person being expelled from the fellowship of the church into the pagan world, here regarded as Satan's domain. This was intended as "shock treatment" to help the man face the consequences of his behavior. The purpose of this action was not destructive, but redemptive.*

### OPENING

up to the Word

### DIGGING

into the Word

### LIVING

out the Word

### WINDOW

on the Word

## Bad P.R.

1 Corinthians 6

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Can you think of a time when a brand name or company was publicly discredited because of wrongdoing by employees?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Why was it important for the Christians in Corinth to find ways to settle property disputes among themselves without resorting to the courts? What practical suggestions does Paul offer (vs. 1-8)?

**2.** What kind of issues would it have been appropriate to take to court (Rom 13:3-4)?

**3.** Why could the church be described as a “hospital for sinners”? Why was the church so effective in reaching out to these people (1Co 6:9-10)?

**4.** What challenges did former pagans present within the fellowship of the church, and what changes came about in their lives (vs. 6, 11)?

**5.** How did Paul respond to people who maintained that their sexual practices had no bearing on their spiritual well-being (vs. 13-18)?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

**1.** Is there a Christian brother or sister with whom you need to seek reconciliation? What are the long-term consequences of failing to be reconciled?

**2.** How would you respond to a person who claims that because they know Jesus and have eternal life, they can now live just as they please (v. 12)?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Bearing in mind the Corinthian culture, as well as the general state of the congregation, Paul warns the Corinthians against a rush to **litigation**. Paul contrasts the Corinthians' present behavior with their future role as judges, when, seated with Christ, they will judge the world and angels (Mt 19:28; 2Ti 2:12; Rev 20:4 2Pe 2:4, 9; Jude 6).*

*“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



# Marriage Matters

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1 Corinthians 7

**OPENING**  
up to the Word

Can you think of the last time you saw marriage ridiculed in a TV program, film, novel or talk show?

**DIGGING**  
into the Word

**1.** Do you think that Paul was down on marriage generally, or was his recommendation to the Corinthians governed by local problems that Christians were facing in that city? Compare his teaching in Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19 and 1 Timothy 3:2,12; 5:14.

**2.** What advice does this passage give about mutual consideration in sexual relationships?

**3.** Under what circumstances do you think it would have been advisable for a single person to remain unmarried during the conditions Paul describes (1Co 7:8-9; 25-28)? Would that apply today?

**4.** Why would a Christian seek separation from an unbelieving spouse? Why should a Christ-follower try to maintain the relationship? Under what circumstances might separation be the better course of action?

**5.** Why, in verse 17, does Paul counsel “retain the place in life that the Lord assigned”?

**LIVING**  
out the Word

If you are married, do you as a family include single people in your circle of friends?

**WINDOW**  
on the Word

*Paul's advice has sometimes been interpreted to mean that he was against **marriage**. More likely he gives this counsel in light of conditions that may have involved persecution of Christians in and around the local area of Corinth. These statements of caution need to be balanced by Paul's affirmations of marriage elsewhere (Eph 5:22-33; Col 3:18-19; 1Ti 3:2,12; 4:1-3; 5:14).*

*“The wife’s body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband’s body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.”*

1 Corinthians 7:4

