

Episode: Paul's Letters Series No. 07

Narrator: Sosthenes

Primary Scriptures: First Corinthians 8-16

Story Summary: Paul's first New Testament letter to the church in Corinth

Location: Roman Empire; Greece, Corinth

Time: AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey
AD 56 Paul writes *1 Corinthians*

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1 Corinthians 8:3, 13; 9:22-23; 10:13-14, 23-24, 31; 11:1, 24-26; 12:3, 11; 13:1-13; 14:40; 15:3-8, 17-18

In the second half of *First Corinthians*, Paul goes into detail about how a unified church and its members should behave. The Corinthians' bad behavior provided a backdrop for Paul's teachings that would be very valuable for churches of all time. We must have humility and remember that reading this letter is a bit like listening to one side of a phone conversation: Paul may be addressing questions and situations we do not fully understand.

For instance, Paul starts 1 Corinthians 8 by addressing food sacrificed to idols. While few people face this situation today, the self-sacrificing, self-disciplined principles Paul lays out are invaluable to modern Christians who live in a self-centered, I-want-my-way society. Paul goes on to show how he personally uses those same principles, the principles that help give Christians freedom and liberty.

Much of Paul's instructions about spiritual gifts, behavior in worship gatherings, communion, and orderly worship are found nowhere else in the Bible, so modern Christians benefit by the Corinthians' need for detailed instruction. On the other hand, passages such as 1 Corinthians 11, 12 and 14 are some of the most challenging in the Bible when applying them to modern life.

1 Corinthians 13 is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible. Paul moves from the intricacies of right behavior to the overwhelming, sublime power of love. Throughout his letters, Paul stresses the importance of faith. The early church was motivated by hope. Yet Paul writes, "and these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love."

Paul addresses the subject of resurrection in chapter 15, another subject treated in more detail in this letter than anywhere else in the Bible. Paul's conclusion: since Jesus has victory over death, we should praise and thank God.

Discussion Questions:

1. 1 Corinthians 8 is specifically about food sacrificed to idols. In what ways can the principles of that chapter be applied to modern life?
2. Discuss some ways you have seen 1 Corinthians 10:12-13 happen.
3. Discuss different ways of interpreting 1 Corinthians 11:1-15. What principles of that passage can be applied by modern men and women?
4. How is 1 Corinthians 12:12-31 applicable in your church and in your life? Which “body part” are you in your church? When you don’t attend church services, how does your church have to overcome your absence?
5. Some modern people have a hard time believing in the resurrection. If there were more than 500 witnesses of his resurrection, should that help them believe it? (1 Corinthians 15:6) How important is it for Christians to believe in the resurrection of Jesus? (1 Corinthians 15:17)

Application Questions:

1. In 1 Corinthians 8:1, Paul says that knowledge puffs up while love builds up. How can you apply those words of wisdom to your life? How do you know how much time to spend studying the Bible versus the time spent doing good deeds?
2. In 1 Corinthians 9:22-23, Paul reveals one of his secrets about how to behave around different types of peoples and cultures. How can you apply this to your life?
3. In 1 Corinthians 10:13, Paul says God provides ways “out so that you can endure” temptation. Does that mean God always gives a way to quit being tempted or a way to endure temptation? Are you good at enduring temptation?
4. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul urges the Corinthians to follow his example, as he follows the example of Christ. Are you willing to advise others to follow your example in all things? If not, what would you need to change in order to do so?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Do you think 1 Corinthians 11:14 is applicable to modern life or was it applicable only to the time of Paul? What principle are applicable from modern life in 1 Corinthians 11:1-16?
2. 1 Corinthians 13 is often called the Love Chapter. Does its description of love match up with the description you see portrayed in popular culture? Does it describe some of the ways you want to be loved?
3. 1 Corinthians 15:6 says Jesus appeared to more than 500 people after his resurrection. Does that piece of information affect your belief in Jesus being raised from the dead?
4. How do you fulfill 1 Corinthians 16:14?