



# **A Bible Study of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians**

**1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians contains a “come to Jesus” discussion of the church and the issues that impacted real people in the first century. The Corinthian church was corrupted with sin on a variety of fronts; therefore, Paul dealt with those problems and provided an important model for how the church (today’s church included) should handle the sin problems within the church body.**

**Paul, rather than turn a blind eye toward relational division and all kinds of immorality, addressed the problems directly without blinking an eye. There were no “political correctness” issues that Paul must deal with first before he went head first into every problem he was confronted with. In Paul’s bold call to purity and holiness within the Corinthian church, Paul made it “perfectly clear” that he was willing to risk the opinions of some in order to help cleanse the sin that was soiling and degrading the church.**

*Tough Love is Always the Answer!*

# Session 1: The Introduction

## Paul's Letters to the Corinthian Church-- What's in a name?

### --The Name of God

The second line of "The Lord's Prayer", so familiar to us all, says, "Hallowed be thy name." (Luke 11 v2)

We are also promised that, "Everyone who calls on the name of the LORD will be saved." (Romans 10 v13)

**Jesus...many names or significant titles....**

**Have you looked up your name...and the significance of the name?**

**What about "Corinth"....?**

**Do you want to know something about the city, the people, its history, and why Paul wrote letters to the church at Corinth?**

*Note: To read a letter is like listening to one side of a telephone conversation.*

*When we read the letters of Paul we are often in a difficulty because we do not possess the letter which he was answering (we do not know the circumstances with which he was dealing).*

*Before we can hope to understand fully any letter Paul wrote, we must try to reconstruct the situation which produced it.*

*In the Christian's Bible study, one must understand that the Holy Spirit has a lot to do with our understanding of the Word. However, if the Holy Spirit is to reveal everything to us...would we "study to show ourselves approved"?*

**Corinth....**

**Location:**

- On a narrow neck of land (isthmus) stood Corinth.
- The isthmus was only 4 miles wide....on the southern end of Northern Greece.
- In between Sparta ...and Athens...and all of the Northern Part of Greece.
- All traffic from Athens and north of Greece to Sparta had to be routed through Corinth because it was the only way on land to reach each side...It connected the two parts of Greece...Southern and Northern Greece.

**The Greatness of Corinth....By the World's Standards**

- The position made Corinth one of the greatest trading and commercial centers of the ancient world (400,000 population; 2<sup>nd</sup> only to Rome).  
    Reputation for commercial prosperity.
- Corinth was the Vanity Fair of the ancient world.
- Men called her The Bridge of Greece
- Corinth was the place where the Isthmian Games were held...2<sup>nd</sup> only to the Olympics.

- Greater part of the east and west traffic of the Mediterranean passed through Corinth....by choice.  
Objects of luxury were in the markets visited by every nation in the civilized world.

## The Wickedness of Corinth

- The word “Corinth” was a byword for evil living.
  - ✓ The word *korinthiazesthai* means “to live like a Corinthian.”  
In Greek...it meant...to live with drunken and immoral debauchery.  
If ever a Corinthian was shown upon the stage in a Greek play, he was shown drunk.
  - ✓ The name “Corinth” was synonymous with debauchery.
  - ✓ Above Corinth towered the hill of Acropolis...and on it was the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love.  
To that temple there were attached 1000 priestesses who were temple prostitutes.  
In the evenings, the prostitutes came down to Corinth to sell their trade.
  - ✓ Corinth...was not only wealthy and luxurious...it was a city of filth....

**God becomes Angry when Men flaunt their sin....and Corinth was the Las Vegas of the ancient world!**

## History of Corinth

- Very ancient city where Greek battleships were built.
- Romans conquered the Greeks...and Corinth...and left it in ruins (146 B.C.)
- With excellent geographical location, Julius Caesar rebuilt her 100 years later and it became a Roman colony.
- It eventually was a capital city of Achaea, which included practically all Greece.

**In those days, Corinth's population was mixed:**

- Roman veterans ...Soldiers...retirees of Caesar's army.
- The merchants came back when Corinth was rebuilt.
- Many Jews ....who took advantage of the commercial opportunities.
- People from the East....with their exotic customs.
- This was a colony of people with violent habits, uncouth ways, and selfish, sinful ways. Lived ungodly lives.

**Yet...in this hotbed of vice, in the most unlikely place in the entire Greek world, some of Paul's greatest work was done, and some of the mightiest triumphs of Christianity were won.**

## Paul in Corinth

- Paul stayed longer in Corinth than in any other city, with exception of Ephesus.
- Paul went to Corinth on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey.
- He stayed in Corinth 18 months (all of Paul's 18 months work in Corinth was compressed into 17 verses in Acts 18:1-17).
- Upon arriving in Corinth, Paul took up residence with Prisca and Aquilla.

- He preached in the synagogue with great success. His most noted convert was Crispus, who was ruler of the synagogue.
- The Jews were so stubbornly hostile he had to leave the synagogue.
- He took up residence with Justus who lived next door to the synagogue.
- There were many converts amongst the general public.
- After 18 months, he moved on to Syria.

## The Correspondence with Corinth

- It was when Paul was in Ephesus in the year A.D. 55 that Paul, learning that things were not all well in Corinth, wrote to the church there.
- There evidently was another letter (a previous letter) before 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthian letter.

1 Cor. 5:9 Paul writes, “I wrote you a letter not to associate with immoral men.” Evidently this letter has been lost.

Just remember, however, God’s Word has been preserved distinctly for us...and previous...and future generations. What was in the previous letter was and is not available....

God did not permit its finding to make up His Holy Word today. I don’t have a problem with it....some scholars do.

- Paul’s letter did not do any good....and another visit by Paul did not do any good.
- What we learn from Paul’s letters to the Corinthian church is that churches in the early days were having trouble with temptations...falling into sin again....and just failing to grow and become like Jesus. Paul was frustrated with the Church at Corinth....and worried about them (2 Corinthians 2:13; 7:5-13) until he found out that the brothers and sisters in Corinth were growing in the faith.

## SUMMARY OF THE FIRST FOUR CHAPTERS OF 1 CORINTHIANS:

- *Deals with the divided state of the Church of God at Corinth.*
- *Instead of being in unity in Christ, it was split into sects and parties, who had attached themselves to various leaders and teachers.*
- *The Corinthians thought too much about human wisdom and knowledge and too little about the sheer grace of God.*
- *For all their so-called wisdom, they were really in a state of immaturity.*
- *They think that they are wise men, but really they are no better than babies.*