



1 Corinthians

Integrated Bible Study Guide

How to the get best value out of these studies...

Welcome to a new series of New Testament studies focused on the book of 1 Corinthians.

If you're using these Guides in a Small Group, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

If you're doing these studies individually, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're after good commentaries or resources to complement your looking into the bible, speak to your Small Group Leader or one of the staff, and we'll try to be as helpful as possible. Most people aren't going to spend lots of dollars on theological works, so we're constantly on the look out for good quality titles that will result in money well spent.

Always surround your time looking into God's Word with **prayer**, asking God to change your heart and life so that you – with God's people – might become more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ.

Study 1 – The Seduction of Idolatry | 3

1 Corinthians 10:1 – 11:1

Getting started ...

1. You and a couple of friends decide to try out a new restaurant in Norwood one night. It has a great reputation for authentic Thai cuisine. You are about half way through the main course and you notice a little statue in the corner of the restaurant with some incense smoke coming from the vase. Do you
 - a) Rush over and destroy the idol.
 - b) Call the waiter over and ask 'Who is that dude?'
 - c) Immediately leave (do you pay or not?)
 - d) Discuss in the group if any one else is worried by it
 - e) Ignore it.
 - f) Other?

Taking a closer look at 1 Corinthians 10 ...

2. Read 1 Corinthians 10:1 to 11:1. What are the big issues? What can you pick up about the problems in the Corinthian church from this chapter?

3. What is the content of the idolatry described here in chapter 10?

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4. Does Paul think idols represent real gods? (v9)

YET Paul still doesn't think Christians should link themselves with sacrifices offered to idols – why? (consider the argument of vv16-22)

5. Were the Corinthians free to eat meat that has been sacrificed to idols? (v27) When shouldn't we eat such food? (vv28-30)

Thinking it through

6. Any more thoughts on the introductory examples?

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6. What is the context (life situation) when men are urged not to cover their heads and women are?

7. What are the reasons why a woman should have a 'sign of authority on her head'? (v10).

8. Why does the passage move on to talk about the 'interdependence' of man and woman? (v11).

9. Paul clearly 'rips into' the Corinthians about their meetings (vv17ff) What 'meetings' are on view?

10. In v20 he speaks of the 'Lord's supper'. What is this? (i.e. what does context of Chapter 11 tell you it is?)

11. What is the big problem here? (vv21 ff)

12. What does it mean to eat and drink in an 'unworthy manner'? (v27)

13. What form does the judgement of v29 take?

14. Is there any difference between 'judgement' and 'discipline' (v32)?

Thinking it through

15. Do you think this principle of 'Headship' operates today?

How would you expect it to be expressed in our behaviour?

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16. Do you think the question of length of hair is cultural (ie for Corinthian church then) or normative and lasting? (ie hair length is important for us)

17. In what areas of our life together as God's people would you expect these instructions (vv2 – 16) to have application?

18. What is the problem with the way the Corinthians were eating the Lord's Supper? What could be potential problems for us?

19. What should we be doing at this meal?

Study 3 – **Women, Men, Headship,** | **11** **Authority, Teaching Ministry**

Getting started ...

1. Put together a group list of the issues that arise when Christians start talking about this topic.

Identify the ones that are most relevant for your group. ie the ones your group is keen to explore.

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Taking a closer look ...

2. Quickly read the following passages and summarise some key findings

	Context (ie Church or other)	Instructions for Men	Instructions for Women	Reasons for instructions
1 Cor. 11: 2 – 16				
1 Cor. 14: 34 – 35				
Eph. 5: 21 – 33				
1 Tim. 2: 8 – 15				
1 Pet. 3: 1 – 7				

5. What questions of comprehension (ie what does the passage mean) do you still need to explore? How can you do this?

Thinking it through ...

6. Apart from 1 Peter all of these scriptures are attributed to the Apostle Paul. Some suggest we can therefore dismiss them as a reflection of the cultural sexist bias Paul had. What are arguments for or against this approach.

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9. 'Submission' and 'headship' are words that often leave a nasty taste in our mouths. How does 1 Corinthians 11, Ephesians 5 and Philippians 2 help us rethink the character of Christian submission?

10. Given that many of these passages are written to promote unity and peace (especially 1 Corinthians, Ephesians and 1 Timothy 2) why do you think they have been so divisive in today's church?

Study 4 – **How to measure your Spirituality** | 17

1 Corinthians 12: 1 – 31

Getting started ...

1. Most people have dreamed of being someone else...a sports star, hero or some other famous person.

If you could be any other person in the world (except for yourself) who would you want to be? Why?

Taking a closer look at 1 Corinthians 12 ...

2. Read chapter 12 aloud in your group.

What questions have the Corinthians raised that Paul is trying to answer? (ie when he says 'Now about/concerning spiritual things...')

3. How does 12:3 provide a basic test for determining who is spiritual?

4. What is the point of talking about the diversity of gifts in 12:4 – 7?
 - a) what is the purpose of these gifts?
 - B) who gives the gifts?

5. In 12:8 – 11 a range of gifts are referred to. Is the order they are listed in important? Is this list meant to be a complete or exhaustive summary? (See 1 Corinthians 12:28; Romans 12:6 – 8; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 4:11).

6. Paul does not go into great detail here about the content of these gifts or how they 'work'. How could we work out in more detail what is involved? (e.g. a 'message of wisdom' or a 'word of knowledge' etc.).

7. Read through vv12 – 31. The body image is used in a range of ways in the Bible (cf Ephesians 5, 1 Corinthians 6, Colossians 1).
What is Paul's main reason for using 'body' imagery here?
8. In v13 Paul refers to 'Baptism in the Spirit'. What 'experience' is this?
(cf Galatians 3:26 -28; 4:4 – 7).
9. In vv14 – 20 the issue of the feelings of some is looked at. Some didn't feel a part of the 'body' because of the particular gifts they had.
- a) What had they forgotten? 12:3, 4 – 5.
- b) How does Paul sort out this problem?
- Vv 14 – 16
- Vv 17 – 19
- V 20

10. In the light of the 'body' teaching in this chapter, how would you answer the rhetorical questions in vv29 – 30?

Thinking it through...

11. A Case Study...

You are shopping one day at Mitcham and a person approaches you and explains that they are from a local church and they are doing a survey on what people in Adelaide believe. As the discussion goes on it becomes clear to you that the person is from a local A.R.C. church and they believe you do not have the Spirit of God (and therefore you are not a Christian) unless you speak in tongues.

Using 1 Corinthians 12, how would you respond?

12. Do you ever find yourself feeling envious of others with more public gifts than yours? What antidote does 1 Corinthians 12 provide?

1 Corinthians 13**Getting started**

1. Read through 1 Corinthians 13.

Is this a good passage to be read at a wedding or not? – give answers for and against.

2. Do you think it is possible for unbelievers to 'love' the way Paul speaks of love here in 1 Corinthians 13?

Looking more closely at 1 Corinthians 12:31 – 13:13 ...

3. Why does Paul break into a discussion about gifts in chapters 12 and 14, and talk about love in Chapter 13?

4. Is it possible to do anything of Spiritual value without love? (vv1 – 3)

Thinking it through ...

8. A Case Study ...

You have a Christian friend, Alfredo, who is always making sacrifices for others, giving 50% of his income to the Church, taking meals around to families in need etc. But Alfredo, in a private conversation, tells you that he feels very distant from God and no matter how many extra things he does this doesn't seem to change. Also he is finding himself increasingly angry and frustrated because a lot of Christians are presuming upon his kindness. How could you help Alfredo from 1 Corinthians 13?

9. In Corinth it seems that the gift of tongues tended to dominate the Christian agenda instead of love. If there was a gift (or some gifts) that was in danger of overtaking us here at Trinity, what would it (they) be?

26 | Study 6 – Prophecy, Tongues & Church Growth

1 Corinthians 14

Getting started ...

1. Imagine your employer transfers you overseas to a country where English is not spoken anywhere. Your term of employment is five years. You and your family go along to the local church on Sunday where everything is in the local dialect (Kyzbychkystani). No one in your family understands anything. No one in the church can translate any of it for you.

How would you feel?

2. What about our church? Can you think of any practices, language or customs that make it hard for those coming in 'fresh' to understand?
3. In what way were the Corinthians acting immaturely when it came to their handling of the gift of tongues? (important to back up answers here by reference to chapters 12-14).

9. How were the Corinthians 'thinking like children'; (v20)?
10. vv20-25 contain what are at first difficult and seemingly contradictory verses. ie:
- a) Tongues are not for believers but unbelievers (22). However, in v23 the unbeliever will think Christians are out of their mind if they enter a church where people are speaking in tongues.
 - b) v22 prophecy is for believers, not unbelievers. Yet vv24 - 25 the unbeliever benefits enormously from prophesying.
 - i) Can these be reconciled? (it will help to know the context of Isaiah 28:9 - 13 where the reference is to the foreign language of the Assyrians invading in judgement).
 - ii) Even if you can't fully understand the argument of these verses, what is the point being made about the value of tongues vs prophecy in a church meeting context?

11. Summarise the 'regulations' for tongues and prophecy in church. Why are the Corinthians given these instructions? (particularly v26, 33).

Thinking it through ...

12. Some evangelicals have argued that to have any notion of prophecy where there is revelation today, apart from the Bible, is a threat to the authority of God's Word in the Scriptures..... Discuss....
(it may be helpful to have in mind places in the bible where a broader idea of revelation is used in Matthew 16: 17; Philippians 3:15; Ephesians 3: 14-19).

13. You are on holidays in Melbourne and on the Sunday morning you pop into the local church for their main meeting. During the meeting the pastor explains that they are going to have a few minutes where everyone will be able to speak in tongues as a way of corporately praising God.

While they are doing this, you decide to read 1 Corinthians 14 to see if you think it is appropriate.

What do you conclude?

14. What if the meeting was designed to be evangelistic, and afterward the pastor explained to you that they spoke in tongues as part of their evangelistic outreach (citing 1 Corinthians 14:22).

15. In a 'bigger church like Trinity, how can we encourage the idea that 'everyone' come together with a view to ministering to each other? (v26).

16. Some regard Paul's word about women in vv33 - 35 as being just his words and therefore a product of his own patriarchal mind. Why can't that be the case? (note vv36 - 38).

17. Apart from the presenting problem of how to handle tongues and prophecy, list some general principles (gleaned from 1 Corinthians 14) that we can apply to our main congregational meetings.

1 Corinthians 15

Getting started ...

1. Anthony is a friend of yours who isn't a believer. He is interested in the Christian faith. You begin to do investigative studies with him focussing on the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus.

At one of your catch up times Anthony says (in an enthusiastic 'I want to be part of this' way), " And even if this stuff about Jesus isn't true the Christian way of life is still a great way to live!"

How would you respond?

2. Given that Christians have a sure hope of resurrection from the dead, should we have any fears about death?

Discuss some pro's and con's.

Taking a closer look at 1 Corinthians 15

3. What were the Corinthians denying, that Christ had been raised from the dead or that Christians would not be raised from the dead?
4. If the Corinthians denied the resurrection of Christians, what were they saying about Jesus' resurrection? (consider vv13-19)
5. If we thought that Christians weren't raised, what would that mean for other aspects of our faith? (eg. Forgiveness of sin? V17)
6. Read vv1 – 8. How does the Apostle Paul tie together Facts and Faith?
7. Read vv20-34. What future consequences does Jesus' resurrection have for us? What present consequences does it have?

8. How will our resurrection body be different from our present mortal body? (vv35 – 50)

9. When will we get this new body? (vv51 – 53 compare 1 Thessalonians 4:13 – 17).

Thinking it through

10. Can someone be a Christian if they believe Jesus was the Son of God, was born of the virgin Mary, died so we could be forgiven for our sins BUT don't believe in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead?

11. How does faith in the resurrection of the dead sustain us in our Christian lives in the here and now?

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12. In what way do we have victory over sin and death now? In what way don't we?

13. What attitude should a Christian person have at the funeral of a fellow believer?

14. "Spending time thinking about the coming resurrection of the dead is a waste of time. Christians should get on with living in the here and now". Discuss

15. Some Christians worry about the thought of believers 'sleeping' (v18, v31). Why shouldn't we be concerned at this?

1 Corinthians 16

Getting started ...

1. “In the first century Paul the apostle was involved in planting and establishing many new churches as a Missionary. He then maintained a relationship with them like a ‘Pope’ over a denomination.” Discuss

Looking more closely at 1 Corinthians 16 ...

2. What is the ‘contribution for the saints’ that Paul refers to in 1 Corinthians 16:1? (You might like to also look at Acts 24:17; Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8 – 9)
3. After reading 1 Corinthians 16, what general picture do you get about the ministry of the gospel going on in various parts of the Mediterranean?
4. In v9 Paul talks about the opportunities he was having in Ephesus. You might want to refer back to Acts 19 to get more details on these opportunities. How successful was the ministry there? Acts 19:10.

5. What also came with 'success'? (v9)

What were the sources of the opposition in Ephesus? (Acts 20:17ff)

6. Why is Stephanos singled out and commended? (vv15 – 16). How does this tie in with 1 Corinthians 13?

Thinking it through ...

7. Would you say that we at Trinity had a good 'global view' on gospel work?

How could we continue to develop in this area?

What could your small group do to enhance its global gospel perspective?

8. When Paul wrote he seemed to have a special opportunity at Ephesus. It seems that these windows of opportunity arise for God's people from time to time.
- a) Do you know of a spot somewhere outside of Australia where there are many currently hearing and responding to the gospel?

 - b) What do you think is the best 'window of opportunity' open to Trinity Church right now?
9. What sort of opposition do we face for telling people the gospel? Who are we likely to receive the most opposition from?

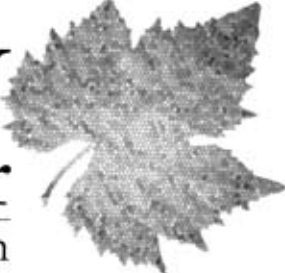
Summary Questions

1. Take a few minutes in your group to reflect on all the material covered in our study of 1 Corinthians 10 – 16. What are some of the key things your group has learnt over this time?

2. Possibly give members the opportunity to share of some particular way they have been impacted by the series.

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