

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 1

Introduction

Paul wrote this letter to the Christians in Corinth around 56AD while he was in Ephesus (1 Cor 16:5-8). The city of Corinth is located in southern Greece, to the west of Athens. It was located on major trade routes during the time of Paul. It was a large and prosperous city that had a reputation for the grossest forms of immorality. Paul established the church several years before, during his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-11). Paul wrote this letter because the Corinthian Christians were not living moral lives. Disputes, factions and sexual immorality were among the problems that Paul hoped to correct. The Corinthian Christians lacked integrity and self-discipline. Many were living disgraceful lives that gratified their sinful desires.

The Grace of God (1:1-9)

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I always thank God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus. For in him you have been enriched in every way—in all your speaking and in all your knowledge—because our testimony about Christ was confirmed in you. Therefore you do not lack any spiritual gift as you eagerly wait for our Lord Jesus Christ to be revealed. He will keep you strong to the end, so that you will be blameless on the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful.

1. Paul begins this letter in a formal manner by reminding the Corinthian Christians that he is an apostle called by God. In this way, he reinforces that what he is about to say comes from a person that has been given special authority by God, to proclaim the gospel, instruct and correct in righteousness. (Gal 1:11-24) *Why do you think Paul does this? What are some ways that God confirmed that Paul is an apostle?*

2. Born-again Christians are made holy through faith in Jesus. Their sins are forgiven, and they are accepted as God’s children. (Jn 1: 10-13) Therefore, they have peace with God. This is completely due to the work and will of God and does not involve human effort. (Eph 2:8-9)
3. Paul uses the title of “Lord Jesus Christ” many times in these opening verses. He reminds them that they are saved to serve Jesus as their Lord. Christians are purchased by the blood of Jesus and are his servants. Christians must seek to know and obey God’s will. This is why it is important to know the Bible, pray and be part of a group of born-again Christians. (1 Cor 6:19-20)
4. Paul says that God had given them knowledge and spiritual gifts that confirmed that they were born-again. This comes from the presence, enlightenment and power of the Holy Spirit, who indwells born-again believers. *What are some spiritual gifts that you have, or that other Christians have (and have) blessed you with?* (1 Cor 12:7-11)
5. Jesus is faithful. He is the source of our righteousness, and he lives forever at the right hand of God the Father to help us. He has called us into a holy relationship that can’t be broken. (Rom 8:28-39; Heb 7:24-25)

Divisions in the Church (1:10-17)

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. My brothers, some from Chole’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, “I follow Paul”; another, “I follow Apollos”; another, “I follow Cephas”; still another, “I follow Christ.” Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul? I am thankful that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, so no one can say that you were baptized into my name. (Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas; beyond that, I don’t remember if I baptized anyone else.) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel—not with words of human wisdom, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

1. God is three persons in perfect unity. Christians are to be like God in holiness and live in unity under the Lordship of Jesus. Christians are to live in harmony, like the parts of the body. Each part of the body contributes to the common good. (Eph

4:9-13)

2. Paul warns against following the teachings of humans such that they blindly identify with them and follow them. He says that this even applies to such revered leaders as Peter. When Christians think too highly of leaders, they begin to separate themselves from other Christians. This is soon followed by ideas that they are better, more mature or more Biblical than others. This feeds pride and personal egos, which leads to conflicts and divisions among Christians. *Can you think of some Christian leaders who have caused such divisions?*
3. Paul says that he is thankful that he did not baptize many people. His purpose is to preach the gospel. Some Christians were putting too much importance on baptism (not only who baptized them but also likely how they were baptized). *How is this true of some denominations of Christians today?*
1. Those who attempt to persuade people to become Christians on the basis of logic, appealing benefits, peer pressure or other methods, are creating false Christians. The power of the gospel comes from the Holy Spirit convicting people of their sin and giving them faith in Jesus as their savior. This comes from accurately teaching what the Bible says about salvation by faith in Jesus and not by other persuasive methods.

God Intercedes for Christians (1:18-31)

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate." Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For since the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to the Jews and foolishness to the Gentiles, but to those of us whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength.

1. There is nothing in the gospel that appeals to pride or logic. The idea that one person could suffer a humiliating death as a sacrifice for the sins of humanity

seems impossible to those who are perishing. However, to those whom God has called and given the gift of faith, it is a precious and wonderous reality. Even angels marvel at the love of God and how he can transform wretched humans into glorious God-like beings. (Heb 2:9; 1 Pet 1:10-12)

2. The wisdom and ways of God are far beyond human comprehension. Yet people question God and scoff at his methods of salvation. Paul says that the wisdom of man is foolishness to God. We have limited lives, abilities and perspective. Paul says that human knowledge and effort will never come close to understanding or reaching a condition comparable to God. *What are some ways that scientists, philosophers and other, so called, wise men have questioned the existence of God? How does thinking according to human wisdom and without faith lead to hostility towards God and Christians?*
3. Critics of Christianity view belief in God as a weakness. They see it as a mental crutch that helps people through the trials of life. Some critics say that they will believe if God performs miracles as evidence that he exists. However, they ignore the miracle of this world, which scientists generally agree shows overwhelming evidence of a creator.
4. God many times takes ordinary people and does extraordinary things. This is to show his power and mercy. It is also a picture of how he does not choose people for salvation based on their knowledge, wealth or status. Indeed, Jesus said that it is hard, but not impossible, for rich people to enter the kingdom of God. (Mt 19:23-24) *What are some reasons why it is harder for a rich, popular or powerful person to be saved?* (Mt 23:11-12)

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 2

Spiritual Truth is Revealed by God (2:1-13)

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and

persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power. We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. No, we speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him"—but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God. We have not received the spirit of the world but the Spirit who is from God, that we may understand what God has freely given us. This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words.

1. Paul says that it was not his appearance, logic or eloquent speaking ability that persuaded them to accept the gospel. There are times when we are afraid to tell others about Jesus because we don't think we have the right words, or that we will not make a good impression, or that we might offend others. Paul reassures us that it is not how good we do but what God does that makes a difference. We are commanded to be witnesses, the results are up to God's power and choice. (Is 55:10-11; Mt 28:18-20)
2. The wisdom of this world is changing as man learns. This wisdom is shown to sometimes be wrong (such as the belief that the world was flat). However, the wisdom of God is perfect and does not change because God knows everything. God is the source of all knowledge and wisdom. The wisdom of wicked rulers and demons will be frustrated by the wisdom of God. They are destined for destruction and their efforts to resist God will come to nothing. Paul uses the example of how these wicked authorities crucified Jesus based on their limited wisdom. If they would have known they were fulfilling God's plan, they would not have done it.
3. The Holy Spirit teaches hidden truths to those who love him. *How has your knowledge and perspective of the world changed since you believed in Jesus? What are some examples of how the wisdom of the world differs from the wisdom of God?*
4. Paul says that the Holy Spirit dwelling within born-again Christians teaches us.

This teaching comes through reading the Bible, prayer and being with other Christians. It also comes from what I call words of knowledge. These are thoughts that the Holy Spirit gives to believers. These are insights that come directly from God. They are like orders or things we now see or must do because of the leadership of God within us. *Can you share some examples?*

The Mind of Christ (1:14-16)

The man without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man's judgment: "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ.

1. The Holy Spirit speaks to men in a language that they don't understand unless he gives them the ability to understand. Humans are spiritually dead to God in their sins. This makes their ears deaf or unable to make sense of what God is saying. It is like people who have no interest in learning a different language. The words are nonsense to them. (Eph 2:1-10; 2 Tim 3:1-9)

Each believer must make judgments about good and evil. God will judge these judgments. We must not follow the teachings of others if they conflict with the Bible. These teachers may seem wise, have a good reputation and seem more mature, but we must not blindly follow them. Paul says we have the mind of Christ! We must tune in to what God wants. The Pharisees are Old Testament examples of leaders who seemed wise but misled people. *Can you think of some examples of seemingly mature Christian leaders who have misled people?* (1 Cor 3:11-16)

Off the Shelf ***Sunday School Lesson*** ***1 Corinthians 3***

Christian Factions (3:1-8)

Brothers, I could not address you as spiritual but as worldly—mere infants in Christ. I

gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” are you not mere men? What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor.

1. Christians, who have recently been born-again through faith in Jesus, must be taught the elementary principles of the faith. These are found in the Nicene Creed. These doctrines are the foundation of Christianity and are like milk to new-born Christians. This milk focuses on them and their relationship to God. It is like the sweet communion of a baby and mother. However, as Christians grow in their faith and knowledge of God, they must focus on serving and living under the Lordship of Jesus.
2. Paul says said that the Corinthian Christians were behaving like immature and worldly believers. They were acting like unsaved people. *What are some of the actions of Christians that make them look like unsaved people?* (Gal 5:19-21)
3. It is natural to be attracted to strong leaders. However, Christians must not blindly follow them. There are many divisions within the Church because Christians define their beliefs based on great theologians such as Augustine, Luther and Calvin. These were great Christians leaders who taught many truths that are correct and fundamental to Christianity. However, they also taught things that are not fundamental truths that caused Christians to separate and even persecute each other. *Can you name some of these differences?*
4. Immature Christians are self-centered. They rightly rejoice in their salvation. However, they seek emotional and intellectual stimulation to make them feel good without taking actions to serve God and others. They tend to go to church to “get something out of it.” Going to church is about worshipping God, so the focus is on him and not on self. It is about giving, not receiving. *Do you know some churches like this?*

Christian Service (3:9-15)

For we are God’s fellow workers; you are God’s field, God’s building. 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. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss, he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames.

1. Christians are told to pray and work for God’s kingdom. Therefore, Christians are called to live for our king and his kingdom. Paul says that the kingdom of God is founded on Jesus. Those who teach must be careful to preach what the Bible says. (Mt 6:9-13; Jas 3:1)
2. Jesus knows every thought, word and deed. He will judge the quality of our service. Those who do good deeds with selfish motives will not receive a reward from Jesus. In fact, Jesus will reject those who do not have faith in him regardless of their good works. (Mt 7:21-23)
3. *What is the “Day” that Paul mentions? How does the judgment of Christians differ from that of unbelievers?* (Rom 2:6-11; 2 Tim 4:1-5; Rev 20:11-15)

Christians and Christ (3:16-23)

Don’t you know that you yourselves are God’s temple and that God’s Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God’s temple, God will destroy him; for God’s temple is sacred, and you are that temple. Do not deceive yourselves. If any one of you thinks he is wise by the standards of this age, he should become a “fool” so that he may become wise. For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God’s sight. As it is written: “He catches the wise in their craftiness”; and again, “The Lord knows that the thoughts of the wise are futile.” So then, no more boasting about men! All things are yours, whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or the present or the future—all are yours, and you are of Christ, and Christ is of God.

1. The Old Testament Temple had an intimate area where the glory of God was present with the ark of the covenant. This holy of holies was off limits to everyone except for the high priest who went into it once per year and always with a blood offering for the sins of the people. (Heb 9:1-10)

2. Paul says that Christians are the new temple of God where the Holy Spirit dwells. This is evidence that the spirit of the born-again Christian is a holy and new creation in the likeness of Jesus. This is the only way that the Holy Spirit of God can dwell within people, who are otherwise sinful and corrupt. (2 Cor 5:17-21)
3. *Why are people, who rely on the wisdom of the world to explain everything, foolish in God's view? How are those who are proud of their knowledge and accomplishments less likely to repent and be humbled by the wisdom of God?* (Prov 3:5-6, 15:33, 22:4)
4. Jesus is the source of our salvation, sanctification, resurrection and glorification. He is the only one whom we should look to for knowledge, strength and endurance. Paul says that believers in Jesus have assurance of his steadfast love and blessings. We should not form divisions or allegiances within the Church based on identifying with Christian leaders. This can lead to blindly following men and not the Holy Spirit. *Do you know some false teachers who have led Christians astray?*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 4

Jesus is Judge and Teacher (4:1-7)

So then, men ought to regard us as servants of Christ and as those entrusted with the secrets of God. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful. I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. 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. Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did

receive it, why do you boast as though you did not?

1. Paul says that every Christian is a servant of God and so we share a common status. However, the apostles and some church leaders, who are led by the Holy Spirit, have been given knowledge about the mysteries of God. This is a source of tension and temptation to put these leaders on a pedestal. Some Christian leaders have fallen into sin because they became popular, influential, and full of pride.
2. Christians must be faithful in serving God and others. God will judge us by our devotion to him and his will regardless of how popular or successful we become. Those who seek the praise of men are in danger of displeasing God. (Is 55:8-9)
3. *What does Paul mean when he says that his conscience is clear but that does not make him innocent? Can a person accurately see himself and his sins like God does?*
4. Paul warns that it is dangerous to listen to those who teach things beyond what the Bible says. This is what the Pharisees did. It is important to study the Bible, so that we do not stray from what God says. Paul warns against being proud about being a member of a group that follows a particular Christian leader. *Can you name some popular Christian denominations that take pride in following a particular leader?*
5. Paul concludes by saying that Christian leaders have been given their knowledge and talents from God. Therefore, they should serve humbly and not value popularity, power, wealth and other human values as measures of their success.

Follow the Apostles (4:8-21)

Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have become kings—and that without us! How I wish that you really had become kings so that we might be kings with you! For it seems to me that God has put us apostles on display at the end of the procession, like men condemned to die in the arena. We have been made a spectacle to the whole universe, to angels as well as to men. We are fools for Christ, but you are so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you are strong! You are honored, we are dishonored! To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the

scum of the earth, the refuse of the world. I am not writing this to shame you, but to warn you, as my dear children. Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. For this reason, I am sending to you Timothy, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord. He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus, which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. Some of you have become arrogant, as if I were not coming to you. But I will come to you very soon, if the Lord is willing, and then I will find out not only how these arrogant people are talking, but what power they have. For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power. What do you prefer? Shall I come to you with a whip, or in love and with a gentle spirit?

1. The Corinthian Christians thought highly of themselves. They were self-sufficient and lived in comfort. They acted like kings instead of humble servants of Jesus. Paul contrasts this with persecution and hardships suffered by the apostles. Paul says this is not to shame them but to warn them. *What danger does Paul warn them about? What dangers do wealthy Christians face?*
2. *What does Paul mean when he says that he is their father in the gospel? How does this differ from some Christian denominations who call their pastors “father?”*
3. Paul is sending Timothy to them to correct them. Paul says that some of them may not receive Timothy’s corrective teachings because they are full of pride. Therefore, Paul says that he hopes to come and correct those who refuse to change. He questions the source of the power that these rebellious people have in misleading them. Paul threatens disciplinary action but prefers to come to them in love. *What happens to a church when its’ members fail to stress the importance of humility and unity with each other? Christians must be willing to forgive each other for minor offenses and not let their pride damage relationships.*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 5

Church Discipline (5:1-13)

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that

does not occur even among pagans: A man has his father's wife. And you are proud! Shouldn't you rather have been filled with grief and have put out of your fellowship the man who did this? Even though I am not physically present, I am with you in spirit. And I have already passed judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present. When you are assembled in the name of our Lord Jesus and I am with you in spirit, and the power of our Lord Jesus is present, hand this man over to Satan, so that the sinful nature may be destroyed, and his spirit saved on the day of the Lord. Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast—as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Therefore, let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth. I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people—not at all meaning people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. Expel the wicked man from among you.

1. Paul is shocked that the Corinthian Christians did not take action regarding someone in their church who was having sexual relations with his mother. This was so evil that even the pagans did not do this. *What are some reasons that churches do not take disciplinary action against members who are sinning in obvious ways?*
2. Paul says that the Corinthian Christians were proud and boasted about their loving acceptance of the member who is having a sexual relationship with his mother. *How does pride lead churches to disregard the Bible? Are there churches today who also do this?*
3. Paul says that the sexually immoral person should be cast out of the church in the hope that he will repent and want to return. The elders of the church must be responsible to confront members who are sinning. This is to be done privately at first, with the hope of avoiding public disgrace. (Mt 18:15-17)
4. Paul warns that, if sin is tolerated or even excused in the church, that it will infect the members and grow like yeast in bread. *How does yeast change the nature and appearance of bread? How is this like the way sin changes the*

church?

5. Paul clarifies that he does not expect Christians to separate from pagan sinners to the extent that they isolate themselves. Christians must not have fellowship or participate with those who sin. However, we are to be among sinners but not engage in their sins. This is what it means to be salt and light, being examples of Godly living. (Mt 5:14-16; 9:10-13)
6. Paul concludes by saying that Christians are not to judge pagans. God will judge them for their sins. We are to love sinners but hate their sins. Christians are to stand against sinful customs, laws and practices. This must be done with respect for those who are lost and do not share God's views as stated in the Bible. (1 Pet 3:13-17)
7. Christians are attacked by secular people who say that they are intolerant, unloving, prejudiced and racist because they oppose abortion and other practices promoted by the world. *How should we respond?* Many Christians choose to avoid talking about sinful things to avoid persecution. *What is wrong with this approach?*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 6

Lawsuits Among Christians (6:1-8)

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And (it) you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? But instead, one brother goes to law against another—and this in front of unbelievers! The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means you have been completely defeated already. Why not rather be wronged? Why not rather be cheated? Instead, you yourselves cheat and do

wrong, and you do this to your brothers.

1. Paul says that disputes among Christians should be settled with a spirit of respect, love and forgiveness. Christians are to live in a way that honors God and promotes a good reputation among unbelievers. Settling grievances in a public court makes problems known that should be settled privately. *What are some types of problems that should be settled in this manner? What are some types of problems that must be settled in a public court of law?* (1 Pet 2:9-17)
2. Christians should live such that they would rather be wronged by a fellow Christian than to do them wrong. This is the sacrificial love that Jesus taught that Christians should extend to unbelievers. Much more, this should apply to believers! (Mt 5:38-42)
3. In spiritual and practical matters, Christians must strive to know the mind of Christ. Jesus is faithful and will provide the wisdom and knowledge we need if we patiently and persistently seek it in prayer. Christians are to be a people of prayer who rely on the Holy Spirit to guide them in every matter. (Rom 12:12; 1 Cor 2:16; 1 Th 5:17)

Sexual Purity (6:9-20)

“Everything is permissible for me”—but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible for me”—but I will not be mastered by anything. “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food”—but God will destroy them both. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will raise us also. Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ himself? Shall I then take the members of Christ and unite them with a prostitute? Never! Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.” But he who unites himself with the Lord is one with him in spirit. Flee from sexual immorality. All other sins a man commits are outside his body, but he who sins sexually sins against his own body. 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. Paul says that, although he considers every kind of food and drink

permissible, he will limit what he eats and drinks. He will not indulge himself to excess. He will maintain self-control. This is because Paul is aware that God is ever-present, and God will judge every thought and action. Next time you are tempted to sin, ask God to share your thoughts and watch your actions. This awareness can help you to avoid sinful ways.

2. Christians will one day have resurrected bodies that are holy and like Jesus. This is because Jesus took on our sinful identities, so that we can share in his identity. Jesus is the first of a new race of humans who have been infused by the Holy Spirit and who will live in perfect unity with him. This unity is like the parts of a body such that Paul says that we are parts of Jesus. (1 Jn 3:1-3)
3. Because we are part of the body of Jesus, we must not join in sinful acts even if they are pleasurable and acceptable customs of unbelievers. Christians are commanded to glorify God and seek to advance his kingdom on earth. These should be the motivating forces that drive our thoughts and actions. *What is wrong with the statement: "Love God and do what you like?"*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 7

Marital Responsibilities (7:1-16)

Now for the matters you wrote about: It is good for a man not to marry. But since there is so much immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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. Do not deprive each other except by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all men were as I am. But each man has his own gift from God; one has this gift, another has that. Now to the unmarried and the widows I say: It is good for them to stay unmarried, as I am. But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion. To the rest, I say this (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain

unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife. To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord): If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified by his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise, your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, whether you will save your wife?

1. Paul answers questions written by the Corinthian Christians. He says that it is better to remain single because this allows greater freedom to focus on serving the Lord. However, he recognizes that not everyone can or should do this if they have strong sexual desires. These sexual desires are to be fulfilled only within the bond of marriage. Movies and television portray marriage as something desirable but it rarely lasts a lifetime. *Do you agree? How does this affect the thinking of people about commitments to others?*
2. Marriage is not entirely about fulfilling personal needs. It is not about getting what I want when I want it. The spouse is not to be treated as a servant or sex object. The husband and wife have responsibilities to fulfill the sexual and emotional needs of their partner. (Eph 5:22-33)
3. Marriage is based on holy vows made to God: to love, serve and protect each other until death. Paul says that when a man and woman are joined physically, they become one flesh. Indeed, Paul says that the body of the wife belongs to the husband and visa versa. Marriage is the most intimate of relationships. It is meant to train the partners in learning unity. Married people are to respect, cherish and help each other to grow emotionally and spiritually. Marriage is not about fulfilling selfish desires. It is about serving each other and changing and growing together in the Lord.
4. If a person is born-again through faith in Jesus after being married, they should not leave their unbelieving spouse. Paul says that remaining together is a witness to the unbeliever and may result in their salvation. However, the unbelieving spouse is free to break the marriage bond, if they wish. Paul is not approving of marriages between believers and non-believers. (2 Cor 6:14-17)

Live in Peace (7:17-24)

Nevertheless, each one should retain the place in life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. This is the rule I lay down in all the churches. Was a man already circumcised when he was called? He should not become uncircumcised. Was a man uncircumcised when he was called? He should not be circumcised. Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts. Each one should remain in the situation which he was when God called him. Were you a slave when you were called? Don't let it trouble you—although if you can gain your freedom, do so. For he was a slave when he was called is Christ's slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. Brothers, each man, is responsible to God, should remain in the situation God called him to.

1. Paul says that Christians are servants of Jesus. Christians are called to live in unity, love and peace. Many Christians in the early church were converted Jews. Paul uses the example of circumcision to say that former religious customs are not to become requirements. Christians are to live to serve Jesus and advance his kingdom according to what the Bible says. (2 Cor 5:16-21; Gal 6:14-17)
2. Christians are to be forward looking people, who long for the day when we are resurrected and like Jesus. We are not to be bound by past regrets and guilt. We must focus on how we can please Jesus. (Phil 3:13-14; Heb 12:1-2, 14-15)
3. Humans are created to serve. Everyone is a slave to either sin and death or to Jesus. Paul does not defend slavery. He points out that Jesus has freed Christians from the slavery to sin and death. This is a source of joy and freedom that should produce contentment no matter whether we are rich or poor or whether we are slaves. Christians are pilgrims in this world looking forward to a better life. (Jn 8:42-44; Rom 6:11-18; 1 Pet 2:9-12)
4. Paul said that a slave should take the opportunity to be freed if he can buy it or if his master sets him free. Meanwhile, the slave should serve as though he were serving Jesus. *How could a slave in Paul's time have a powerful witness for Jesus?* (Eph 6:7-8; Gal 5:22-26)

Advice for Single and Married People (7:25-40)

Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I give a judgment as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. Because of the present crisis, I think that it is good for you to remain as you are. Are you married? Do not seek a divorce. Are you unmarried? Do not look for a wife. But if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But those who marry will face many troubles in this life, and I want to spare you this. What I mean, brothers, is that the time is short. From now on those who have wives should live as if they had none; those who mourn, as if they did not; those who are happy, as if they were not; those who buy something, as if it were not theirs to keep; those who use the things of the world, as if not engrossed in them. For this world in its present form is passing away. I would like you to be free from concern. An unmarried man is concerned about the Lord's affairs—how he can please the Lord. But a married man is concerned about the affairs of this world—how he can please his wife—and his interests are divided. An unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the Lord's affairs: Her aim is to be devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit. But a married woman is concerned about the affairs of this world—how she can please her husband. I am saying this for your own good, not to restrict you, but that you may live in a right way in undivided devotion to the Lord. If anyone thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, and if she is getting along in years and he feels he ought to marry, he should do as he wants. He is not sinning. They should get married. But the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will, and who has made up his mind not to marry the virgin—this man also does the right thing. So then, he who marries the virgin does right, but he who does not marry her does even better. A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord. In my judgment, she is happier if she stays as she is—and I think that I too have the Spirit of God.

1. Life is full of trials, temptations and troubles, so it is better to remain single since you only have to deal with your own problems. However, those who are married must remain so and not seek a divorce. They have made a marriage vow to God. *What are some problems that married people have in serving the Lord that single people do not have? Are there some advantages to being married in serving the Lord?* (Heb 13:4-5)
2. Paul warns that the pleasures and things of this world can distract us from serving God. They should not become the focus of our living. They are to be used but they must not replace God as what we most desire. *What are some examples of*

- pleasures, things, places or other distractions that can take us away from loving God? What does it mean to love God with all your heart, mind and strength? (Mk 12:28-31)*
3. The Bible teaches that Christians must only marry Christians. *What are some additional problems that come in marriages where one is a believer, and the other is not? (2 Cor 6:14-18)*
 4. Paul says that, not only are Christians to only marry Christians, but that marriage is only to be consummated after praying to make sure that this is the will of God. (Rom 12:2; 1 Jn 1:7)

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 8

Limits of Liberty (8:1-13)

Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God. So then, about eating food sacrificed to idols: We know that an idol is nothing at all in the world and that there is no God but one. For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords), yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom all things came and for whom we live; and there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom all things came and through whom we live. But not everyone knows this. Some people are still so accustomed to idols that when they eat such food they think of it as having been sacrificed to an idol, and since their conscience is weak, it is defiled. But food does not bring us near to God; we are no worse if we do not eat, and no better if we do. Be careful, however, that the exercise of your freedom does not become a stumbling block to the weak. For if anyone with a weak conscience sees you who have this knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, won’t he be emboldened to eat what has been sacrificed to idols? So this weak brother, for whom Christ died, is destroyed by your knowledge. When you sin against your brothers in this way and would their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause

him to fall.

1. Paul uses the example of food sacrificed to idols to make the point that Christians need to apply what the Bible says with love. The Holy Spirit changes us as we gain knowledge about the Bible. Not everyone is at the same stage of spiritual growth. Therefore, we should be sensitive to the conscience of others as long as this does not conflict with what the Bible says. *Can you think of some current examples of how this applies to differences in beliefs among Christians?*
2. Paul says that there are many false beliefs, but Christians know that there is only one God and one savior Jesus Christ. We are to take a firm stand on the gospel and what the Bible says. However, there is room for differences of opinion in disputable matters among Christians. *How does being insensitive to a Christian brother, in a disputable matter, damage his relationship with Jesus?*
3. Paul is saying that Christians are to seek to live in peace and unity with other Christians. Diversity in beliefs about minor matters is part of Christian liberty. We have this liberty, as long as we are living to love and serve Jesus, according to our understanding of the Bible. Paul says that imposing our views on other Christians in these minor matters is sin. *How does this damage relationships among Christians? How does it bring dishonor to Jesus and his church?*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 9

Self-Sacrifice For the Gospel (9:1-18)

Am I not free? Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord? Are you not the result of my work in the Lord? Even though I may not be an apostle to others, surely I am to you! For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. This is my defense to those who sit in judgment on me. Don't we have the right to food and drink? Don't we have the right to take a believing wife along with us, as do the other apostles and the Lord's brothers and Cephas? Or is it only I and Barnabas who must work for a living? Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk? Do I say this merely from a human point of view? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? For it is written in the

Law of Moses: “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain.” Is it about oxen that God is concerned? Surely he says this for us, doesn’t he? Yes, this was written for us, because when the plowman plows and the thresher threshes, they ought to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn’t we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don’t you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel. But I have not used any of these rights. And I am not writing this in the hope that you will do such things for me. I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of this boast. Yet when I preach the gospel, I cannot boast, for I am compelled to preach. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! If I preach voluntarily, I am simply discharging the trust committed to me. What then is my reward? Just this: that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make use of my rights in preaching it.

1. The term “apostle” is equivalent to missionary or messenger. The first apostles were the faithful eleven chosen by Jesus, Matthias who replaced Judas, and Paul. These men were given power to perform miracles to verify that God was speaking through them. The apostles had seen the risen Lord Jesus. (1 Cor 15:3-9; 2 Cor 12:12; 1 Tim 2:5-7) *In what ways is Jesus an apostle?* (Heb 3:1)
2. Paul says that those who preach the gospel have a right to be supported by those who believe in Jesus. There are many churches that struggle with finances because their members do not give generously to support the ministries and needs of their church. This is shameful and dishonors our Lord Jesus.
3. Paul states that Cephas, who is Peter, takes his wife with him when he travels to proclaim the gospel. The brothers of Jesus also do this. This is a reference to the fact that Jesus had brothers and sisters. The epistle of James was written by one of the brothers of Jesus. (Mt 12:46-50; Gal 1:18-19)
4. Paul was not like most apostles in that he worked to support himself and did not ask for support, even though it was his right to do so. He does this not to boast but simply because he is compelled by the Holy Spirit. He does not consider himself to be exceptional. He is merely doing what God has commanded him to do. This is the attitude of humility that every Christian should have. Christians

are not to desire power and success as measured by the things of this world. Success is achieved by quietly and patiently persisting in doing what the Holy Spirit commands.

Relationships and the Gospel (9:19-27)

Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible. To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. To those under the law I became like one under the law (though I myself am not under the law), so as to win those under the law. To those not having the law I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law), so as to win those not having the law. To the weak I became weak, to win the weak. I have become all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I might share in its blessings. Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get the crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.

1. Understanding the customs and beliefs of others is important in how we share the gospel. Jesus modeled this when he talked to the Samaritan women by the well. He patiently answered her questions and concerns before proclaiming himself to be the Messiah. Peter says we are to share the gospel with gentleness and respect. This requires being relational with others by loving them and trying to serve their needs. It is not about obtaining rewards for yourself through "soul winning." God does the winning, we do the sowing. (Jn 4:9-26; 1 Pet 3:15)
2. Christians have liberty to live free from religious rules but not from God's commands. *What is the difference?*
3. Paul was willing to adapt to the customs of others as long as this did not conflict with the commands of God. He did this to gain the ability to preach the gospel to them. Sometimes people reject the gospel because they are afraid that they would have to give up something. Paul strove to eliminate these barriers.
4. Paul was willing to sacrifice some liberties for the sake of preaching the gospel. He said that he was like an athlete, who gives up some pleasures in order to gain a

prize. What is the prize that Paul was striving for? What have you given up to honor Jesus and advance his kingdom?

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 10

Learn from the History of Israel (10:1-15)

For I do not want you to be ignorant of the fact, brothers, that our forefathers were all under the cloud and that they all passed through the sea. They were all baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea. They all ate the same spiritual food and drank the same spiritual drink; for they drank from the spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that rock was Christ. Nevertheless, God was not pleased with most of them; their bodies were scattered over the desert. Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did. Do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written: “The people sat down to eat and drink and got up to indulge in pagan revelry.” We should not commit sexual immorality, as some of them did—and in one day twenty-three thousand of them died. We should not test the Lord, as some of them did—and were killed by snakes. And do not grumble, as some of them did—and were killed by the destroying angel. These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the fulfillment of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you do not fall! No temptation has seized you except that which is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it. Therefore, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I speak to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say.

- I. The Old Testament story of the exodus of the Israelites from slavery in Egypt is like that of Christians. Discuss how this is true. (Ex 7-17)
 - A. The Israelites and Christians are chosen by God who have a special relationship with him.
 - B. God frees his chosen people through miraculous means.

- C. The passage of his chosen people through water symbolizes their passage from slavery to a new life.
 - D. God leads his people and reassures them of his presence in their journey.
 - E. God sustains them and nourishes them through spiritual food and miracles.
 - F. God's people continue to rebel and sin despite God's presence and provisions.
2. God commands his chosen people to be holy like him and obey him. However, his people disobey by pursuing things contrary to God's commands. These are idols that come from sinful pleasures and desires to possess things and power. *What are some common temptations that cause Christians to sin? How does what happened to the Israelites serve as warnings to Christians?* (Ex 32:1-6; Num 21:4-7, 25:1-3)
 3. The Bible teaches that human nature is sinful and that mankind has not evolved to some higher and better state, despite gaining in knowledge. The temptations that plagued the Israelites still plague us today. However, God is faithful and has provided a new way for Christians to overcome sinful temptations, through the presence of the Holy Spirit. *How does the Holy Spirit help us to escape from sinful temptations?* (Rom 12:1-2)

Live in Faith and Good Conscience (10:16-33)

Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf. Consider the people of Israel: Do not those who eat the sacrifice participate in the altar? Do I mean then that a sacrifice offered to an idol is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but the sacrifices of pagans are offered to demons, not to God, and I do not want you to be participants with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too; you cannot have a part in both the Lord's table and the table of demons. Are we trying to arouse the Lord's jealousy? Are we stronger than he? "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible"—but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. Eat anything sold in the meat market without raising questions of conscience, for, "The earth is the Lord's, and everything in it." If some unbeliever invites you to a meal and you want to go, eat whatever is put before you without raising questions of conscience. But if anyone says to you, "This has been offered in sacrifice," then do not eat it, both for the sake of the man who told you and for conscience sake—the other man's conscience, I mean not yours. For why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? If I take part in the meal with thankfulness, why am I denounced because of something I thank God for? So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone

to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God—even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

1. The sacrament of Communion is an intimate union with Jesus and other Christians. When we partake of the bread and wine we acknowledge our being in and with Jesus. The breaking and eating of the bread is a picture of our unity in Christ. We are parts of one loaf of bread. The living bread who is Jesus. (Jn 6:30-35)
2. Paul says that the Israelites celebrated their unity with God and each other through the sacrifices made on the temple altar. The sacrifices made to pagan gods are made to demons. Christians must stay away from participating in anything that is evil. Today, this includes seances, fortune-telling, horoscopes, tattoos, haunted houses and spirits, and satanic music. *Can you think of some other examples?*
3. Paul is not saying that he is free to do whatever he wishes. He is saying that we must live not for ourselves, but seek to live without raising barriers with others over things that do not go against God's commands. This applies to such things as dress, food and drink and entertainment.
4. Paul was willing to adapt to the customs of others, as long as this did not conflict with the commands of God. He did this to gain the ability to preach the gospel to them. Sometimes people reject the gospel because they are afraid that they would have to give up something. Paul strove to eliminate these barriers.
5. The guiding principles for Christian living are:
 - A. *Does the behavior glorify God?*
 - B. *Does it follow his commands?*
 - C. *Does it demonstrate love and the welfare of others?*

Off the Shelf
Sunday School Lesson
1 Corinthians 11

Christian Order (11:1-16)

Follow my example as I follow the example of Christ. I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. Now I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of the man. For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head. In the Lord, however, woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God. Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

1. While Christians have liberty in many ways, they must submit to God. Paul praises the Corinthian Christians for responding to his teachings about their freedoms in Christ. However, this must not be taken too far. God views men and women as equals and joint heirs in his kingdom. However, this does not mean that there are no differences between the sexes. *In what ways does the world blur the differences between the sexes (,) that are offensive to God?*
2. Christians are not to abandon appropriate behavior and clothing, because that could send wrong signals about their sexuality. Christians are to error on the side of modesty, so that they do not give offense or be provocative. In everything, Christians must seek to bring honor to Jesus.
3. God has delegated authority to men to be leaders and for women to be their helpers. This means that God will judge men for their leadership and women for their stewardship or service. Men are to cherish their wives and seek to promote their development. Women are to honor, advise and help men, provided that it does not conflict with God's commands. (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:22-33)

The Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not! For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying: "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further instructions.

1. God is three persons living in perfect harmony and love. Christians are to follow this example. We are to seek to have peaceful, positive and loving relationships with other Christians. Christians come to church to worship God and affirm our love for each other, not to argue and form factions. (Rom 12:17-18; 1 Jn 4:19-20)
2. Paul rebukes the Corinthian Christians for treating the Lord's Supper as an ordinary meal. He warns that failure to discern the spiritual significance of the bread and wine, as representing the sacrifice of Jesus, is sin. Those who do this grieve the Holy Spirit and become spiritually weak. This weakness is insensitivity to God and can lead to a sleep like unconsciousness towards him. This is like observing religious ceremonies that have no personal meaning.

3. The Lord's Supper is an intimate communion with God and his people. This is meant to strengthen Christians. It requires a humble and reverent spirit that appreciates the sacrifice of Jesus. It requires each person to make sure that they only partake of it if they have repented of any known sins. To refuse to do this is to decide that the sin is more important than the relationship with Jesus. This is why we must pray and allow the Holy Spirit to reveal sins and convict us so that we repent and can be cleansed of our sins. (1 Jn 1:6-10)

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 12

Spiritual Gifts (12:1-11)

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant. You know that when you were pagans, somehow or other you were influenced and led astray to mute idols. Therefore I tell you that no one who is speaking by the Spirit of God says, "Jesus be cursed," and no one can say, "Jesus is Lord," except by the Holy Spirit. There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, but the same God works all of them in all men. Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good. To one there is given through the Spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one Spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of tongues, and to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines.

1. There were Corinthian Christians who were under the influence of evil spirits associated with false gods. Paul says that they must stay away from false gods and practices. He offers a test to determine whether spiritual manifestations and influences are from God or demons. He says that those controlled by evil spirits curse Jesus, and they cannot say that Jesus is Lord.
2. Spiritual gifts are given to each born again Christian. These gifts are not for self-promotion but are for the benefit of other Christians. Therefore, they are to be humbly used, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, to bring glory to Jesus and advance his kingdom.

3. Wisdom is the correct application of knowledge. The Holy Spirit speaks to Christians through thoughts, that are words of knowledge, revealing his will or means to accomplish his purposes. *What are some words of knowledge that the Holy Spirit has spoken to you?* This can be as simple as promptings to pray for certain people or things.
4. Prophecy can be about future events or someone who accurately teaches the Bible. (Lk 1:67-79; Acts 11:27-28; 15:32; Eph 2:19-22)
5. Spiritual gifts are mentioned in various places of the Bible. It is important that each Christian discover and use their gifts. These gifts are to accomplish the good works which God has assigned to each Christian. *Do you know your spiritual gifts? How are you using them?* (Rom 12:6-8; 1 Cor 12:28-30; Eph 2:10, 4:11-13)

Christians are the Lord's Body (12:12-31)

The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body—whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free—and we were all given one Spirit to drink. Now the body is not made up of one part but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” it would not for that reason cease to be part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would the sense of hearing be? If the whole body were an ear, where would the sense of smell be? But in fact God has arranged the parts of the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they all were one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, “I don’t need you!” And the head cannot say to the feet, “I don’t need you!” On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues. Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? Do all have gifts of healing? Do all speak in tongues? Do all interpret? But eagerly desire the greater gifts. And now I

will show you the most excellent way.

1. The nature and likeness of Jesus are merged with those who put their faith in him. Christians bear the name of Jesus Christ and we are expressions of him. This is why Paul says that Christians are the body of Jesus. Just as there are various members of a physical body, there are differences among Christians.
2. Different talents, gifts, appearance, customs, etc. among Christians are necessary, just as the various parts of a body are needed. We are designed to function in harmony and interdependence. Those who teach that all must be like one part of the body of Jesus are in error. Not everyone is meant to be an apostle. Not everyone is able to teach. Not everyone sings well. Not everyone is expected to speak in tongues.
3. *What are some ways that spiritual gifts have been misused to divide Christians? How can spiritual gifts become a source of pride?*
4. Popular Christian leaders and pastors face many trials and temptations that can lead them and those who follow them astray. *What are some of these? What are some ways to keep this from happening?*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 13

Love is the Greatest Spiritual Gift (13:1-12)

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with

the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.

1. Paul says that love is the foundation upon which all spiritual gifts depend. Love is what motivated Jesus to come to earth, become like us and offer himself as a sacrifice for our sins. The knowledge, life and miracles of Jesus were based on his love for those who he would redeem and bring into a glorious relationship. (Jn 3:16-18)
2. Love is what draws people to Jesus. Christians are to be known by their love for others. (Jn 13:34-35; Rom 13:8-10; Gal 5:13-14; 1 Jn 3:23-24)
3. *Why do Christians fail to love others as they are loved by Jesus? Why do we tend to think more about having spiritual gifts rather than loving others? Why do we think of love as something emotional for ourselves and not something based on serving the needs of others?*
4. Love and spiritual gifts are for serving others, bringing honor to Jesus and for the benefit of others. Pride and envy corrupt spiritual gifts.
5. In this life, we will always be like children no matter how much we learn and what influence or success we have. This is especially true of spiritual things. We will become much greater beings, with much greater knowledge in heaven. However, we still will be limited compared to God.
6. Living for Jesus, a life of consuming passion for him, is the love he commands and expects. He wants our thoughts, motivations and actions to be driven by our love relationship with him. Spiritual gifts are given by God to accomplish this. Therefore, spiritual gifts are tools used to glorify God and advance his kingdom. They are not to be sought for personal reasons. (Jos 22:5; Mt 22:36-40)

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1. The nature and likeness of Jesus are merged with those who put their faith in him. Christians bear the name of Jesus Christ and we are expressions of him. This is why Paul says that Christians are the body of Jesus. Just as there are various members of a physical body, there are differences among Christians.
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3. *What are some ways that spiritual gifts have been misused to divide Christians? How can spiritual gifts become a source of pride?*
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Off the Shelf
Sunday School Lesson
1 Corinthians 14

Prophecy is Better than Tongues (14:1-9)

Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy. For anyone who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God. Indeed, no one understands him; he utters mysteries with his spirit. But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement, and comfort. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I would like every one of you to speak in tongues, but I would rather have you prophesy. He who prophesies is greater than one who speaks in tongues, unless he interprets, so that the church may be edified. Now, brothers, if I come to you and speak in tongues, what good will I be to you, unless I bring you some revelation or word of instruction? Even in the case of lifeless things that make sounds, such as the flute or harp, how will anyone know what tune is being played unless there is a distinction in the notes? Again, if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you. Unless you speak intelligible words with your tongue, how will anyone know what you are saying? You will just be speaking into the air.

1. Paul repeats his teaching that spiritual gifts are desirable for serving others in love. He says that teaching or imparting spiritual knowledge is a greater gift than tongues. This is because those who teach gain knowledge and pass it to others, so that the church might be strengthened in faith and guided into correct practices.
2. Paul says that those who speak in tongues speak to God. Therefore, this must not be done in church. This does not benefit the church unless the person speaking in tongues interprets or there is an interpreter. If the tongue spoken is a foreign language, the person must not speak unless he knows there is an interpreter present.
3. Paul stresses that worship must be orderly and not chaotic and meaningless. This is why speaking in tongues in worship or in the presence of gathered Christians is discouraged. Apparently, speaking in tongues was something that many in the Corinthian Church desired. Their worship services were becoming chaotic, as many people were simultaneously speaking in tongues. Paul likens this to a discordant orchestra, without meaning or purpose.

The Gift of Tongues (14:10-22)

Undoubtedly there are all sorts of languages in the world, yet none of them is without meaning. If then I do not grasp the meaning of what someone is saying, I am a foreigner to the speaker, and he is a foreigner to me. So it is with you. Since you are eager to have spiritual gifts, try to excel in gifts that build up the church. For this reason anyone who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret what he says. For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my mind is unfruitful. So what shall I do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will also pray with my mind; I will sing with my spirit, but I will also (sing) sign with my mind. If you are praising God with your spirit, how can one who finds himself among those who do not understand say “Amen” to your thanksgiving, since he does not know what you are saying? You may be giving thanks well enough, but the other man is not edified. I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. But (But) in the church I would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue. Brothers, stop thinking like children. In regard to evil be infants, but in your thinking be adults. In the Law it is written: “Through men of strange tongues and through the lips of foreigners I will speak to this people, but even then they will not listen to me.” Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers; prophecy, however, is for believers, not for unbelievers.

1. There are three possibilities regarding the meaning of the gift of tongues. First, this gift is the ability to be understood in multiple languages. This happened at Pentecost when the apostles spoke to a diverse crowd. (Acts 2:1-12)
2. Second, this gift is a human language that the assembled people in the church are not familiar with. For example, a person may be speaking French to an English-speaking congregation. *Why would this happen?* It could be for the benefit of a visitor who speaks French. The rest of the congregation would also be instructed by the member of the church who is given the ability to speak French and interpret it.
3. Third, this gift is an ecstatic form of speaking to God. In this case, it is for private edification and meaning only. This must not be done in public. Paul says that this form of speaking in tongues may not have any meaning to the one speaking. This is why Paul says the person should pray for understanding of what he is saying.
4. *How are tongues a miraculous sign given to confirm the gospel to unbelievers?*

How is prophecy for believers and not for unbelievers?

Rules for Speaking in Tongues (14:23-40)

So if the whole church comes together and everyone speaks in tongues, and some who do not understand or some unbelievers come in, will they not say that you are out of your mind? But if an unbeliever or someone who does not understand come in while everybody is prophesying, he will be convinced by all that he is a sinner and will be judged by all, and the secrets of his heart will be laid bare. So he will fall down and worship God, exclaiming “God is really among you!” What then shall we say, brothers? When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church. If anyone speaks in a tongue, two—or at most three—should speak, one at a time, and someone must interpret. If there is no interpreter, the speaker should keep quiet in the church and speak to himself and God. Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of the prophets. For God is not a God of disorder but of peace. As in all the congregations of the saints, women should not be allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the Law says. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. Did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached? If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command. If he ignores this, he himself will be ignored. Therefore, my brothers, be eager to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

1. Paul makes a distinction between unbelievers who witness a miracle, such as the speaking of tongues at Pentecost, and those who come to a church service. The latter case, the visitor will not hear anything that makes sense, if there is disorder caused by many people simultaneously speaking in tongues. He will think the Christians are crazy.
2. Unbelievers who come to church must hear teaching that convicts them of their sins and convinces them that the gospel is the cure. Paul says that the entire service including music and teaching must be done in an orderly

manner.

3. Those who speak in tongues must only do so if they know that there is an interpreter. Otherwise, they must remain silent in church. The spontaneous speaking in tongues and prophesying that Paul discusses, seems to require a designated time in the order of worship. Otherwise, there will be disorder and chaos.
4. Women are not allowed to teach or speak in tongues during the worship service. *How does this conflict with the practices of some churches today? How do these churches justify such practices?*

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 15

The Importance of the Resurrection (15:1-19)

Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me also, as to one abnormally born. For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was in me. Whether, then, it was I or they, this is what we preach, and this is what you believed. But if it has been preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we

have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men.

1. False teachings about Jesus were corrupting the church and misleading Christians. One popular false teaching in Paul's time was Gnosticism, which denied the physical death and resurrection of Jesus. Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that there is only one gospel that can save them from their sins. This gospel requires faith in the death and resurrection of Jesus. Jesus had to die to take the punishment of sins. He had to rise from the dead to prove he is God and that we too would one day have resurrected bodies. *Are there some churches today that have corrupted the gospel? How have they changed it?*
2. Paul is not teaching that a person can lose their salvation but rather that false teachings mislead those who are saved and keep others from being saved. The Bible teaches eternal security for those who are born-again. (Isa 43:11-13; Jn 10:27-30; 2 Cor 5:17; Eph 2:8-10)
3. Paul was one of over five hundred people who saw the resurrected Jesus. If Jesus did not rise from the dead, Paul would be a liar. Even worse, Christians would be fools to be pitied because their hope for eternal life would depend upon a dead man. The Bible teaches that Jesus is the first of a holy and resurrected race of humans, who are also like God having the identity of Jesus. (Rom 8:20-23; Col 1:15-23; 1 Pet 2:9-10)

The Timing of the Resurrection (15:20-34)

But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the first fruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day—I mean that, brothers—just as surely as I glory over you in

Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, “Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die.” Do not be misled: “Bad company corrupts good character.” Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God—I say this to your shame.

1. Adam failed to obey God and became sinful. Death is the punishment for sin. Mankind became subject to death. Jesus took the punishment for those who have faith in him. Born-again Christians have new life through the work of the Holy Spirit. They have overcome spiritual death and they will one day overcome physical death when the resurrection happens.
2. Paul is not teaching that everyone will be saved. He says that only those “in Christ” will be saved and have glorious bodies at the resurrection. The Bible teaches that those who are unsaved will also have a resurrection, but this will be part of their eternal misery in hell. (Rev 20:11-15)
3. Apparently, some Corinthian Christians were concerned for the salvation of those who died before they could be baptized. They had the false idea that baptism was necessary to ensure their future resurrection. *Are there churches today that teach that baptism is necessary for salvation? What are some reasons that make this false teaching appealing?*
4. Paul endured many hardships. He was frequently threatened with death and bodily harm because of the gospel. He says that, if there is no future resurrection, then he is foolish. He should give up preaching the gospel and try to get as much enjoyment out of life as he can. *Are there people today who reject the gospel because they are afraid they will have to give up their pleasures? What have you given up after you became a Christian?*
5. Paul says that false teachers will corrupt Christians. This is why it is important to study the Bible. It is important to fellowship with other Christians. We are made stronger in our faith and living for Christ, by making friends with like-minded people. This does not mean that we can’t have friends who are unbelievers. It does mean that we should not follow the ways of those who do evil, for the sake of friendship.

Resurrection Bodies (15:35-58)

But someone may ask, “How are the dead raised?” With what kind of body will

they come? How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection from the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being;" the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed—in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.

1. Paul answers two questions about the resurrection: *how does it happen and what will our bodies be like?* Paul says that our current bodies are like seed that will become a mature plant when the resurrection happens. The DNA of the seed and plant are the same, but the transformation is a mysterious process. What is obvious is that the seed looks nothing like the plant. It must die or change completely in appearance.
2. The Bible teaches that born again Christians will have the likeness of Jesus.

There will be an obvious family resemblance. However, we will not look identical. We will be able to recognize each other as individuals, so there will be differences.

3. The resurrected bodies of Christians will be glorious, holy and perfect. Like Jesus, we will have much greater knowledge and power. We will have physical bodies but also be able to walk through walls like Jesus did. This indicates the ability to change from material to spiritual at will. Time and space will no longer be limitations to where we can go. We will be able to travel the universe at the speed of thought. (Jn 20:19-20)
4. Paul reveals something that has not been previously known: those Christians alive at the time of the resurrection will not die but be instantly changed. This will happen immediately after the dead in Christ are raised. (1 Th 4:13-18)
5. The consequence of sin is death. Death derives its power from transgressing the laws of God. Jesus overcame death by fulfilling the laws of God and unjustly suffering the penalty of sins of those who have faith in him. (Rom 6:19-23; 2 Cor 5:21)
6. Christians are to hold fast to the teachings of the Bible and not be influenced by false ideas. We are to be dedicated to acting on what the Bible says, with the knowledge that such living will be rewarded in heaven. (Lk 6:20-23)

Off the Shelf

Sunday School Lesson

1 Corinthians 16

Instructions (16:1-18)

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collection will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me. After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the

winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, because a great door for effective work has opened for me, and there are many who oppose me. If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers. Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity. Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love. You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

1. The believers in Jerusalem were in need, perhaps because they were being persecuted for their conversion from Judaism. There might have been a famine as mentioned in Acts 11:28-30. Whatever the reason, the idea is that Christians should support other Christians in need.
2. The Corinthian Christians were gathering for worship on Sunday. This practice in the early church is also shown in Acts 20:7. *What major event of vital importance to Christians happened on Sunday, that would cause Christians to worship on Sunday?*
3. Paul talks about his plans but adds that they are subject to the Lord's will. Christians honor Jesus by saying that they plan to do this or that if Jesus permits it. This recognizes that Jesus provides for our every breath and heartbeat. Also, this proclaims our commitment and desire to depend upon God's will and the leadership of the Holy Spirit in everything.
4. Paul says that there are many that oppose him. *What are some of the daily sources of opposition that Paul faced? How do these compare with the kinds of opposition we face today, in proclaiming the gospel of Jesus?*
5. Paul warns them to be alert or discerning of evil attacks, and to be strong and courageous in their faith. Most important is that love for God and others be the motive and foundation for everything we do. *How does studying the Bible help us to discern evil and to be strong in our faith? Why is love so important as the foundation of being a holy people who are salt and light in the world?*
6. *What are some ways that Christians refresh, encourage and strengthen others? Why is it important to show gratitude and recognize the ministry of such Christians?*

Greetings (16:19-24)

The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. I, Paul write this greeting in my own hand. If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be upon him. Come, O Lord! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.

1. Christians in the early church met in homes. *What are the advantages of meeting in homes? Are there any disadvantages?*
2. In Paul's time, it was customary for men to greet each other with a kiss. *Are there some countries today where this is a common sign of friendship? Why would this not be appropriate for men and women? How do Christians respectfully show friendship today when greeting each other?*
3. Paul typically dictated his letters. In this letter, he wrote the ending himself. *Why do you think he did this?*
4. Paul is not cursing those who do not love Jesus. He is saying that the curse of sin and death is upon everyone who does not believe in Jesus. (Jn 3:14-18)
5. Paul longs for the return of Jesus. Every born-again Christian shares this desire. *Why is this?*