

# A CHURCH IN DIVIDED DAYS

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-17 · APRIL 7, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

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*"To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours." (1 Corinthians 1:2)*

## Background on Corinth and the Corinthian Church

- Paul's ministry there (Acts 18)
- The setting of Corinth
- The letter of 1 Corinthians
- The opportunity to focus on discipleship

## The Centrality of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

- In Paul and his ministry
- In all those who call on Jesus' name
- In the Corinthians and their faith

## The Challenges of Disunity in the Church (1 Corinthians 1:10-12)

- Interpersonal disunity
- Partisan disunity

## The Calling Toward Unity in Christ (1 Corinthians 1:13-17)

- The essential unity of Christ
- The practical unity of Christ's people
- The underlying message of the Gospel

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. When have you experienced unity in a way that has been powerful in your life or seen it in the lives of others?
2. This week we begin a new preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church: 1 Corinthians" by looking at 1 Corinthians 1:1-17. Whether you are on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. What stands out to you about the way Paul begins his letter to the Corinthians in verses 1-3?
4. Why might Paul want to help the Corinthians remember they are part of a larger

Christian community in verse 2?

5. Read Acts 18:1-17 to gain understanding of the backstory on the Corinthian church. What do you notice about how in-depth Paul's ministry was in Corinth?
6. In verses 4-9, what does Paul say about Jesus Christ? What does he say about the Corinthian believers?
7. What is one aspect of life with Christ described in verses 4-7 that is personally meaningful to you?
8. As you read verses 10-17, how would you describe the situation of the Corinthian church?
9. Why do you think this sort of disunity arises within Christian communities? Have you ever experienced it?
10. What is the heart of Paul's message according to verse 17?
11. What is God speaking to you through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone during the next few days.

## DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- The New Testament epistles were often read at church gatherings all at once. Consider reading 1 Corinthians in one sitting by yourself or with others. What stands out to you as you read the entire book at once?
- Read Acts 18:1-28 for further background on the ministry of Paul in Corinth.
- Consider reading these books:
  - Gordon D. Fee, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians, Revised Edition*
  - Clement of Rome's first epistle to the Corinthians, written in the first century and one of the earliest Christian documents not contained in the New Testament: [ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.ii.i.html](http://ccel.org/ccel/schaff/anf01/anf01.ii.i.html)
- Explore these video resources by the Bible Project:
  - "1 Corinthians": [bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/](https://www.bibleproject.com/explore/video/1-corinthians/)
  - "New Testament Letters: Historical Context": [bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context/](https://www.bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-epistles-historical-context/)
  - "New Testament Letters: Literary Context": [bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-literary-context/](https://www.bibleproject.com/explore/video/new-testament-letters-literary-context/)