

1 Corinthians

Who, When, Where

Written by Paulus (Paul). Paulus was originally a fanatical Pharisee, persecuting, imprisoning, and even killing Christians for teaching what he thought was heresy, that Yeshua was the Anointed, (The Jewish Messiah). After meeting Yeshua in a miraculous way on the road to Damascus, Paulus became not just a Christian but one of Christianity's most fervent preachers and teachers. He spent most of his life as an itinerant missionary, with all the perils that that brought with it, to the towns and cities which lay along the route between Jerusalem and Rome. Paulus died in Rome somewhere in the 60'sAD, and wrote most of the letters which we have in the New Testament.

In Acts 18 we read about Paulus' arrival in Corinth, (around AD51), where he stayed for a year and a half. And we presume he wrote the letter some time, but not too long, after that visit. So probably somewhere between AD53-57.

1 Corinthians 5:9 also refers to a previous letter that Paulus wrote to the Corinthians. We don't have a copy of that.

After Paulus left he went to Jerusalem, and then lived in Ephesus for 3 years. So most likely he wrote this letter from Ephesus.

Summary

This is basically a letter about unity over uniformity. Explaining that it's true, we're not all the same. In fact we are all deliberately designed to be different, with different backgrounds, talents, and even gifts from God.

But that it is essential that we all work together in unity as different parts of one body for the glory of Yeshua.

How would you rate the modern church on this? Out of ten?

How about your specific local church? How is it doing?

How about you. Personally?

What can you do to make all those scores go up by 1?

Before You Read

What drives you? What motivates you to do the things you do?

How selfish do you think you are?

How much time do you spend thinking about the needs of others and what you personally can do to help them?

How divided is your church?

What about the global church? What's the deal with all these denominations?

Are they just "different expressions of God's love"? Or is something wrong?

What things would you ever not do?

Are they the same as the things you think I should not do?

How do you decide?

Key Verses

1 Corinthians 1:10

And I entreat you brothers, through the name of our lord Yeshua the Anointed, that you should all say the same thing, and that there might not be any divisions among you, and you might be restored to the same mind, and to the same opinion.

One of the big issues at Corinth was division. The church dividing into factions, each following a different leader.

Paulus tried to address it. And while he made progress with this church, we sadly went downhill from there and the church today is so badly divided some of us won't even accept that others are even Christian.

1 Corinthians 2:4-5

My message, and my proclamation, weren't in persuasive human wisdom, but with messages in a demonstration of spirit and power, so your faith wouldn't be in the wisdom of people, but in the power of God.

Worth remembering when you have opportunity to explain the good news of Yeshua to someone. Let the Holy Spirit do it, and don't just rely on your own wisdom and understanding. He'll do it better than you, and it will give the other person a more solid foundation on which to build their faith.

1 Corinthians 3:6-8

I planted. Apollos watered. But God made it grow. So that neither the one who plants is anything, nor the one who waters, but God who made it grow. But the one who plants, and the one who waters are one, and each will receive his own reward according to their own labour.

This theme is just everywhere in this letter. We are parts of a whole, parts of a team, and while we will be rewarded for our own labour, we cannot achieve anything on our own. I have a role. You have a role. We both need to do them.

1 Corinthians 7:9

For it's better to marry than to be on fire.

This is part of a very interesting section on marriage. Basically Paulus is recommending that we don't get married. Not because marriage is too difficult, and he's certainly not saying it's wrong, but more because unmarried people are able to sacrifice themselves more wholeheartedly to the work of the kingdom.

1 Corinthians 10:23

All things are permitted to me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are permitted to me, but not all things build up.

Again, we're permitted to do anything we want. That's the point of not living under Law. But we're required to make wise choices.

Will this thing that you want to do build you up? Or tear you down? What about others?

Will it build them up?

If it won't, then why do you want to do it at all?

1 Corinthians 6:12

All things are permitted to me, but not all things are beneficial. All things are permitted to me, but I won't be brought under the authority of anything.

Christians are allowed to do anything. We're under grace, not law. But some of those things aren't beneficial. We should still choose, (wisely), not to do them. Paulus' example here is things that control us, things we get addicted to, like alcohol, drugs, tobacco, TV, computer games, pornography, ...

1 Corinthians 10:31

Therefore, whether you eat, whether you drink, whether you do anything, do all things for the glory of God.

1 Corinthians 12:27

But you're the body of the Anointed, and body parts as apportioned.

This whole chapter is emphasising again the importance of unity. Not just as a goal, but as an intrinsic design. The church is designed to be a body, the body of Yeshua, working together, each doing its part for the benefit of the whole body.

1 Corinthians 13:1

Even if I speak with the tongues of people, and of the messengers, but I don't have love, then I've become a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.

Paulus has been talking about spiritual gifts, and how they should be used to build the church up. But now he has this whole section about love. About how having love for others is so much more important than any spiritual gift.

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient and kind. Love isn't envious. Love isn't boastful, isn't puffed up, doesn't behave badly, isn't self-seeking, isn't provoked, doesn't account evil, doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices together with the truth. It protects all things, trusts all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Quite a definition! Someone once showed me that you can put your name here wherever you see the word love. Read it like that and see if it's true.

1 Corinthians 15:13-14

Love is patient and kind. Love isn't envious. Love isn't boastful, isn't puffed up, doesn't behave badly, isn't self-seeking, isn't provoked, doesn't account evil, doesn't rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices together with the truth. It protects all things, trusts all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

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1 Corinthians 15:13-14

If there's no resurrection of the dead, then the Anointed hasn't been raised either. And if the Anointed hasn't been raised, then our proclamation is empty, and so is your faith.

What is your hope in Yeshua? That he'll make life easier for you in these 70 odd years you have here? Or that he'll welcome you into eternal life with him as part of his family?

If you don't believe in the resurrection, then you may as well walk away now. Your faith is pointless.

1 Corinthians 15:32

If the dead aren't raised, let's eat and let's drink, for tomorrow we die.

Paulus is basically saying that being a Christian isn't easy. Especially in his day, but even now, especially in some countries.

Over the next few years I think it's going to get more difficult everywhere as the world sinks into rebellion, godlessness and selfishness.

But seriously, if there's no resurrection, then let's just enjoy ourselves here and party. If we're all going to die and then cease to exist - there's just no point making this life any harder than it needs to be.

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

Paulus showed throughout the letter that God's plan is that we work together, united, each using the individual gifts he has given us for the common good.

That we should actively work against division in the church and learn to get along.

How would your church react to a message like that? Does it need to hear it? Or do they have their act together on that one?

How is your own balance between love and works?

Are spiritual gifts more important to you than loving others?

Is your status?

Or "Biblical truth"?

When is it OK not to love a fellow Christian?

What should you do if that happens?