

1 CORINTHIANS Bible Reading Schedule

3 Weeks

WEEK 1

Paul's letters to the Corinthians are especially relevant to many aspects of modern Christianity. I am looking forward to our six-week journey in 1 & 2 COR. It is hard to believe that we haven't read either of these letters together since I launched our most recent Bible Reading emphasis. This is sure to shape our understanding of practical Christian living.

"First Corinthians is an inexhaustible mine of Christian thought and life. Nowhere else in the NT is there a more many-sided embodiment of the imperishable principles and instincts which should inspire each member of the body of Christ for all time." (A. Robertson, A Dictionary of the Bible)

We are sure to catch a fascinating glimpse of what life was like in the early church. The Apostle Paul addresses problems they faced in a pagan environment and how they were to deal with them. We are faced with similar problems in an increasingly pagan culture surrounding us.

DAY 1 – 1 Corinthians 1

As I was reading this chapter the names Crispus and Gaius caught my eye from Acts 18:1-17 when Paul was in Corinth as well as Paul mentioning Gaius in Romans 16:23. I might suggest reading chapter 18 in Acts for a view of the history of believers in Corinth along with God's message to Paul for him to stay there for 18 months because "many people in this city belong to me." Paul, no doubt, felt like leaving since the reception in Corinth was far from warm. But he stayed as God directed and a church was birthed. However, the problems among believers in Corinth were real. We will read about some very significant challenges contrary to God's ways. But isn't it interesting to read verses 4 to 9 as Paul affirms the Corinthian believers and displays a confidence that God will be faithful to them no matter what? "He will keep you strong to the end..." (v8). At the same time, the believers portrayed a celebrity mentality. They had their favorites which led to division (Verses 10-17). We live in a celebrity world and the church is not exempt. We can easily put pastors, leaders, and authors on a pedestal. Disunity in the church can make the church seem no different than the ways of the world. Paul points them to godly wisdom which is not the wisdom of the world. I like James' definition in James 3:17, "Wisdom from above is first of all pure. It is also peace-loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and the fruit of good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere." You can see how such wisdom would lead to unity. Beginning in verse 26, Paul talks about how many believers aren't elevated in the world's eyes but broken, weak, and simple people see their need for Christ more readily. So, that is the nature of Christ's church as God helps the weak to become strong. Isn't this first chapter packed with thoughtful ideas and stimulating truth? What did you notice? How might God be speaking to you through these words?

DAY 2 – 1 Corinthians 2

Why would Paul make such a big deal about not speaking eloquently? He told them, in so many words, that he did not possess a dynamic personality. Well, the Corinthians seem to be drawn to worldly persuasion and charismatic preaching. His comparison about the glamor of this world has nothing that matches the glory of God to come, pointing to verse 9, one of my favorites: “No eye has seen, no ear has heard, and no mind has imagined what God has prepared for those who love him.” I am particularly drawn to what Paul says about the work of the Spirit in verses 10 - 12. He continues the same theme to the end of the chapter but what he says in the first paragraph means the most to me: “And we have received God’s Spirit, so we can know the wonderful things God has freely given us.” Jesus tells his disciples so much about the Spirit in John 14 to 16. He told them that the Spirit would be in them and he would guide them to all truth. If you choose to read John 14:16-18 and 16:13-14, you will see what I mean. This has to be one of the most incredible aspects of Christianity compared to any other religion, God takes up residency in our hearts by His Spirit when we place of faith in Jesus. How else could we have the mind of Christ? (V16) After teaching an Institute class on the Holy Spirit twice, I am more convinced than ever that few believers are tapping into the immeasurable wisdom that is available through God’s Spirit. Listen to Romans 8:27, “And the Father who knows all hearts knows what the Spirit is saying, for the Spirit pleads (intercedes) for us believers in harmony with God’s own will.” The Spirit is praying for us and at the same time lives in us. Could we possibly “eavesdrop?” The Holy Spirit will be a dominant theme in our reading from 1 Corinthians. What aspect of the Holy Spirit do you appreciate most? What does it mean to you to have the Spirit dwelling in you?

DAY 3 – 1 Corinthians 3

There’s no question that the Apostle Paul sheds light on a very important topic. Too often, people perceive the path to heaven is found by good works. But I think verses 10 to 15 clarify the role of good works in the believer’s life. I have enjoyed teaching this section because it says it so clearly, at least for me. If I participate in the good works that God has prepared for me in advance (Ephesians 2:10), I will be rewarded as verse 14 announces. Going to heaven is a matter of faith in Christ without works being the determining factor (Ephesians 2:8-9). I think verse 15 is the key, “But if the work is burned up (wood, hay, or straw), the builder (the believer) will suffer great loss. The builder will be **SAVED**, but like someone barely escaping through a wall of flames.” It reminds me of 2 Corinthians 5:10, “For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ (believers), so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good (useful) or bad (useless).” (NIV) We are saved by faith and faith alone but we are rewarded according to works done for the glory of God. Not everything I define as good is meant because I might do good works so others will notice me or like me. That would be wood, hay, or straw because I did it solely for my benefit rather than for God. Secondly, after preparing a message on the Tabernacle from Exodus, I appreciate Paul’s words in verses 16 & 17. The Tabernacle is a forerunner to the Temple and now Paul teaches that we, the Body of Christ, are God’s temple. We are the home of God’s Spirit in us collectively. This is meant to make us conscientious about how we treat each other with Paul’s concern about jealousy, quarreling, and divisions in the body of believers. (Verses 3:3-4) All in all, I find this chapter very illuminating. What truth are you noticing that caught your eye? How might you build on the foundation of Christ with gold, silver, and jewels?

DAY 4 – 1 Corinthians 4

This chapter is very personal as Paul affirms his role in their lives and challenges their thinking about their own significance. The arrogance of these Corinthian believers was a problem. It distorted their perspective and came off as judgmental. A statement that stood out to me was about internal motives: “For he (God) will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives.” (V5) Obviously, the Lord knows every hidden thought and selfish ambition we possess. This can be especially sobering because we all have errant thoughts. But Paul includes another sentence in the same verse, “Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.” Here’s my take on the meaning: when we stand before the Lord on that day, we will stand before him righteous because of Christ and our faith in him. But we will only be rewarded for the deeds done that glorify God and are empowered by his Spirit. Do you remember the verses from yesterday about gold, silver, and jewels compared to wood, hay, and straw? We will only be praised/rewarded for those things that we did in step with the Spirit. God is our judge and he knows everything. Selfishness and sin have been punished already in Christ and will be burned up so that only Christ’s righteousness prevails which will reveal what we did to the glory of God. Does that make sense? How does that shape your ambition in life? The other thought-provoking sentence in the reading is this simple directive, “I urge you to imitate me.” (V16) Could I say that to the people I lead; to the family I live in; to the workplace I serve; to the neighbors around me? It is a challenging thought, don’t you think?! Paul was not boasting but embracing his call as a leader and an influencer of others for the sake of Christ. We do well to follow his example by living in such a way that others will be inspired to do the same. How have Paul’s personal words in this chapter impacted you?

DAY 5 – 1 Corinthians 5

The Apostle Paul confronts a specific situation as unacceptable and then presents a principle to live by. The sexual immorality that is being practiced by a member of the church is being ignored even though fellow believers know about it. The people might think that confronting the believer is playing the role of God who is the judge. But Paul makes it clear that this man must be confronted and even judged for his behavior as a believer. The summary that Paul gives is quite clear in verse 12, “It isn’t my responsibility to judge outsiders, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the church who are sinning.” The hope behind the confrontation is that he will repent and be rescued from his life of sin. Jesus spoke to this topic in Matthew 18:15-17; you are probably familiar with what he taught. We are to confront a fellow believer who you know is sinning because their sin has hurt you and/or others. It could be that the Corinthians are proud of their church because it is growing and people are so enthusiastic in their faith. But there is evidence that their faith and maturity are rather shallow. Tolerance is a big deal in our society as well. Every individual should be able to make their own choices without criticism or confrontation. This may be how we respond to our culture because most people do not have a relationship with Christ to direct their own morality. But the concern for fellow believers is something we cannot overlook. In fact, out of love, we are not to associate with believers who indulge in sexual sin, greed, slander, drunkenness, idolatry... (V11). Church discipline is often thought of as especially negative. But Hebrews 12:5f clearly tells us that God disciplines us because he loves us. How might God want to use you in the life of a fellow believer who is succumbing to sin? What did you learn from this challenging chapter?

WEEK 2

DAY 6 – 1 Corinthians 6

I find both of these topics in this chapter as relevant now as when they were first written. Sometimes we refer to our society as “sue happy.” People are looking to make some money through the judicial system by taking people or companies to court. What do you think about the directive Paul gives to not sue a fellow believer? That kind of restriction is not always affirmed by contemporary believers because we have our rights. But Paul gives up his rights as we will read about in chapter 9. What instruction do you read concerning suing believers in verses 1 to 8? I have mentioned this in some of our membership classes telling new members that we will not sue a fellow member without first asking the leadership of our church for guidance and help. Is that how you read these verses? Obviously, I want to obey this instruction so that serious disagreements are addressed according to God’s Word. The leadership of our church will seek the guidance of God’s Spirit which a secular court wouldn’t necessarily possess. That’s the first topic. But the second is even more prevalent. Access to sexually explicit material is one of our greatest stains as a culture. We are often called a “hedonistic” people which means that the pursuit of pleasure is the most important thing in life. Sexual sin often sits at the top of a hedonistic world. “Flee (run from) sexual immorality...” (V18). Most temptations are to be resisted but sexual temptation is to be run from. Paul writes that sexual sin stains our body and damages our soul in a way that is especially harmful to our relationship with God. The reason for this pertains to the fact that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. That means God lives in us. To allow something so unholy to enter your life has devastating results. Too often believers ignore these warnings from God’s Word. How might God be speaking to you about holiness and sexual purity in this chapter? Sexual activity outside of marriage is forbidden in God’s Word. This is a timeless principle.

DAY 7 – 1 Corinthians 7

It seems to me that the last statement in chapter 6 spills into Paul’s teaching in chapter 7: “For God bought you with a high price. So, you must honor God with your body.” Jesus said that we must deny ourselves and take up our cross. These words are recorded in Matthew, Mark, and Luke as the cost of discipleship. How does a surrendered life to Christ affect marriage, divorce, and singleness? These three topics are the primary focus of our reading today. As a young pastor, I serve single adults for five years. The group ranged in age from young adults in their 20s to older single adults in their 50s. The idea was that each season of life as a single varied. But what I noticed is that some singles embraced the opportunity to especially serve God with freedom and wholehearted dedication. These single adults were an inspiration to me as a 30-year-old pastor. Verse 7 gets at what I am saying, “But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. Yet each person has a special gift from God, of one kind or another.” Even Jesus referred to the idea of singleness as a gift from God in Matthew 19:12. Along with Paul’s affirmation to those who are serving God as single adults, he also elevates the importance of marriage and the call to remain married even if the relationship is difficult. Except for Paul’s statement in verse 15, he challenges the believing spouse to stick it out for the chance to lead the unbelieving mate to Christ as well as to sanctify the home and your children. I can vouch for the fact that many believing spouses have been used by God to bring their mate to faith. The topic of divorce is more challenging but Paul gives a scenario that makes sense. If your spouse abandons you, you are no longer bound to the marriage

because God has called you to live in peace (V15). Jesus also addressed the issue of unfaithfulness or adultery in Matthew 19:1-12. I have found myself in situations that concern abuse which are, first of all, against the law and secondly completely contrary to God's design for marriage. But overall, the Bible has a high view of marriage that calls for wholehearted commitment and selfless sacrifice. How do you respond to the issues addressed by Paul in this chapter? Did you learn anything new? If you are married, give it your all. If you are single, let your devotion to Christ shine!

DAY 8 – 1 Corinthians 8

This chapter is definitely short enough to read twice and let me suggest you use two different translations. The first thing I notice is that the NLT indents verse 6 in a format like a poem or a creed. The idea of a creed makes sense to me because it is something that the Corinthians know and hopefully believe. Idols are not really gods at all which the Corinthians also know. Many of the Corinthian believers, having grown up in the pagan world, viewed eating such meat as an expression of devotion to the god to whom the meat was sacrificed. Paul says more about this topic in chapter 10 as he will distinguish the difference between eating at a temple dinner and eating meat bought in the marketplace. The topic of making a weaker believer stumble will also surface in chapter 10 along with Paul's letter to the Romans in chapter 14. The mature believer will give up their freedom to eat sacrificed meat for the good of the weaker brother. Believers show their depth and maturity when they give up their rights for the sake of others. Also, Paul presents a principle that he will utilize again in the love chapter of 1 COR 13. "Knowledge puffs up while love builds up." (V1) Too often, the Corinthians exhibited a sense of pride for knowledge but were shallow in regard to love. Love supersedes knowledge. Their emphasis on the gifts of Spirit had a similar sense of pride as well. Pride keeps us unaware of the needs of others around us. Believers are meant to be thoughtful, kind, and discerning in situations that could cause a weaker believer to stumble. In chapter 6 we read about suing a fellow believer. The principle I am contemplating after reading chapter 8 is highlighted in 6:7, "Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated?" I think that idea is just as difficult for American Christians as it was for the Corinthians. Genuine Christian love (agape) is sacrificial at the core. There are these kinds of problems in the Corinthian Church because they were weak in love. How might you apply the teaching of this chapter to your life?

DAY 9 – 1 Corinthians 9

The first half of this chapter pertains to something I have lived with for 46 years. My compensation has come from serving the Lord in ministry. Since 1978 I have been in occupational ministry. In 1986, I was ordained as a pastor in the Christian & Missionary Alliance. The generosity of believers has allowed me to serve full-time and also take care of my living expenses for me and my family. Paul wrote that he chose not to receive their gifts. But he clearly teaches that he had every right to do so. However, he didn't want anything to get in the way of the Gospel. He becomes an example of giving up something he had a right to receive. He felt led of God to respond in this way. The last two paragraphs of this chapter are especially interesting to me with finding common ground for connection and witnessing. Along with that, the analogy of running a race in verses 24 to 27 makes sense to me. I have thought of the importance of finding common ground time and again. It seems essential to me to win the right to be

heard and to understand before being understood. These are timeless principles that lead us on a path of potential fruitful ministry. Our willingness to adjust and put others first makes perfect sense to me. People are often skeptical of the Christian message and it is often because they have been hurt by other Christians. Our kindness shown and our respect offered might lead to the softening of a person's heart. "I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything to save some." (V23) I always resonate with athletic examples used as spiritual analogies. I have participated in triathlons and even a few marathons, so I can identify with running a race. Corinth hosted one of the biggest athletic events in those days. They were called the Isthmian games. These athletes endured months of rigorous training before completing. Paul compares their effort for an earthly prize to the effort of believers who receive a heavenly prize. Obeying Christ and loving others for the sake of the Gospel is the most important endeavor we have as believers. I think this chapter has several stop points for us to contemplate. Where has the Spirit led you to stop and contemplate in chapter 9?

DAY 10 – 1 Corinthians 10

Do you find it fascinating that Paul uses the situation in Exodus as his main example of disobedience? The disobedience of the Israelites is meant to be "a warning to us so that we would not crave evil things as they did." (V6) In verse 8, the historical event pertains to Israelite men having sexual relations with Moabite women in Numbers 25 "causing 23,000 of them to die in one day." Paul begins this chapter by using words that could be translated, as "they should have known better." They personally witnessed the power of God parting the sea and the presence of God guiding them every step of the way by the cloud of his glory. They were fed in the wilderness with heavenly food and drank from the rock, "that rock was Christ." (V4) From verses 12 on, Paul turns back to the specific question of eating meat sacrificed to idols. He compares the meal the Lord instituted in the Upper Room with his disciples to how the people of that society had religious meals also. The Lord's Supper unites us with Christ; the pagan religious meals united them with the gods they worship. (VV19-21) The meals of the pagans were actually ceremonies that offered sacrifices to demons, not to God. Those who share in their religious meals are thereby uniting themselves with demons. This is never appropriate for a believer. I understand that through the Gospel there is freedom in Christ. But we don't use our freedom to feed our fleshly nature. So, Paul recites a motto of his day: "I am allowed to do anything..." but then he says that not everything is beneficial. Our heartfelt concern for others might direct us to give up our freedom in certain circumstances. This leads to a summary statement in verse 31, "So whatever you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God." That says it all. One more thing, take a look at verse 13; it is especially hopeful and illuminating. I have appreciated the insertion of "test" for the word "tempted." How does that change the meaning for you?

WEEK 3

DAY 11 – 1 Corinthians 11

There is no other place in Scripture where the Lord's Supper is explained more thoroughly than in this chapter. In fact, many churches repeat these very words when participating in the Lord's Table. But let's not skip head coverings for women, right?! Apparently, some in Corinth were rejecting head coverings based on freedom in Christ. Paul's argument in favor of the custom is based on traditional social conventions, the Genesis account of Creation, and the watchful eye of angels. This cultural practice may seem biased against women as less than men. But the affirmation of women engaging in public praying and prophesying is the backdrop of this stipulation. You might have heard that women should remain silent in church but not according to this passage. There is a clear sense of how women can exhort fellow members as the church is gathered. This is very significant, in my opinion. Often a head covering identified a woman as married so that submission and respect for authority would be visibly honored in church. This also was connected to modesty and humility as important Christian virtues. Verse 16 points to the idea of a cultural norm rather than a timeless principle. Most interpreters take this topic to mean that the custom was connected to how people viewed head coverings at that time and in that place rather than for all times and all places. This leads to the significance of the Lord's Supper and how to practice "Communion" in a God-honoring way. Verses 23 to 26 outline the meaning of the meal and the words that elevate its importance. This is clearly taken from the Upper Room when Jesus shared the Passover with his disciples before he was betrayed. These words correspond to what Jesus said in Matthew, Mark, and Luke at that time. Paul helps us to realize that this is not just another meal but there's a serious and special significance to partaking. It is even possible to participate in an unworthy manner. Verses 28 to 31 give us a warning about doing so. The key principle tells us to examine ourselves before partaking. This concerns our sins and the health of our relationship with Christ. Paul also includes the idea of the negative consequences of partaking in an unworthy manner. What have you learned about "head coverings" in this chapter? What point of application do you glean from the teaching of the Lord's Supper?

DAY 12 – 1 Corinthians 12

What an illuminating chapter about the Spirit's gifts to believers and the importance of our interconnection! In these verses, we read about the source of spiritual gifts when it clearly says, "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all." (V4) The unity of the gifts points to the reality that all believers are gifted and the purpose is for the common good of all. We help each other and we need each other. If for some reason you don't like your gift(s) then you would be blaming the Spirit because "It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have." (V11) I think Paul's analogy of the human body is so profound. A body needs all of its parts and so does the Body of Christ. Each one is essential to the health of the whole. After giving a thorough explanation of the value of each body part (gift), Paul makes another insightful conclusion about the parts of the body that are unseen which does not make them less significant; maybe even more so. (Verses 22-26) Some aspects of the body need special attention and deserve appropriate respect. Thus, elevating the unnoticed parts as equally significant in God's plan for his church reminds us to appreciate the less noticed ones serving among us. Aren't you impressed with

the idea of the church as a dynamic body giving equal value to the noticeable gifts as well as the ones unseen? The Apostle Paul emphasizes the ministry of the Spirit as essential for the church to operate effectively with divine participation. Guided by the Spirit, every believer was to use their spiritual gifts for the benefit of the church. Paul wanted believers to be sensitive to the empowering work of the Spirit in all that they did. Sidenote – sometimes the church has overemphasized the spiritual gift of tongues by saying everyone should speak in tongues and at other times, the church has eliminated it with the conclusion that it was only for then and not for now. But, in my opinion, God would not include it so clearly in his Word if it had ceased. Paul's final words in this chapter tell us that tongues are for those who have that gift from the Holy Spirit but "do we all have the ability to speak in tongues?" (V30) The answer is a strong "no." That obviously means that not all are purposed to speak in tongues. How does this chapter help you understand spiritual gifts? How does this help you appreciate the Body of believers at New Harvest?

DAY 13 – 1 Corinthians 13

There is hardly any argument about this chapter giving us the most insightful definition of love ever written. Love is mentioned over 800 times in the Bible but none of these references speak more clearly or more profoundly about love than this chapter. The definition of love is overflowing in verses 4 to 8, but the comparisons found in verses 1 to 3 elevate love above gifts, generosity, and even sacrifice, though love is sacrificial. In fact, some of the most noble endeavors are worthless if done minus love. The only proper motivation for ministry is love. No relationship has much depth without love. The qualities of kindness, forgiveness, humility, and compassion are bound together by love. Which phrase in verses 4 to 8 gets your attention? How would you summarize love? What might be one word you would use to define love? The Corinthians emphasized the importance of spiritual gifts. Paul makes these gifts worthless if they are not used in love. Love is truly a reflection of maturity. Verse 11 points to a childish approach to life but if one matures spiritually, the aspect of life that will be seen is love. In this life, love will be dimmed and the reflection will lack clarity. But when the perfect appears, love will be manifested completely. That is how I understand verse 12 and I believe it points to heaven. When the end comes and Christ establishes his eternal kingdom, "we will see everything with perfect clarity, (literally, face to face)". Verse 13 brings this chapter to a close with a crescendo. Faith, hope, and love all possess an eternal quality that when embraced now and shared with others, we are experiencing something that lasts... yes, lasts forever. I have inserted God's name for every time that the word love is mentioned in verses 4 to 8. Try that! The Bible often addresses the immensity of our God and his character. But I think you would agree that love is the quintessential nature of God himself. The exchange of life that God offers to those who place their faith in His Son is essentially a deposit of love in our souls so that we might know it for ourselves and share it with others. How do you respond to this truth? How has God spoken to you through this chapter?

DAY 14 – 1 Corinthians 14

Having emphasized the supreme importance of love in our reading yesterday, Paul returns to the subject of spiritual gifts. Their relative value is defined by the benefit they give to others, which is the characteristic of love. In this chapter, Paul contrasts the over-valued gift of tongues with the more beneficial gift of prophecy. The comparison is obvious in that tongues are focused on self-edification and

prophecy clearly benefits others as a word from God that strengthens, encourages, and comforts those who hear it (V3). Tongues have value for the believer as he/she may sense a deeper connection in prayer with the Lord. But Paul actually tells believers to earnestly desire the gift of prophecy because nothing strengthens other believers more than a Spirit-led message that illuminates the truth of God's Word for the church or for an individual believer. This had to be a negative subject for the Corinthian Church because tongues were over-emphasized and implemented in a disorderly fashion. The first 25 verses in this chapter are about the proper perspective concerning the least beneficial gift to the most beneficial gift to the body of Christ. However, Paul mentions his affirmation about tongues in verse 5, plus, his admission to being blessed to speak in tongues himself, "I thank God that I speak in tongues more than any of you." (V18) The Corinthian Church reflected a "free for all" approach to their church gatherings. Paul called for order and gave specific instructions about using spiritual gifts in public worship. One of the more confusing statements from Paul is about women remaining silent in verses 34 & 35. But Paul already wrote 11:5, "But a woman dishonors her head if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head..." This tells us that women were allowed to engage in public praying and prophesying in the church. But what if they were doing it in a disorderly way and ignoring the authority of the church? The Apostle Paul admonishes Christian women in 1 Timothy 2 to be modest and submissive as they utilize the gift of prophecy in the church. How does this chapter strike you? How might you apply the instruction given?

DAY 15 – 1 Corinthians 15

You have just read the longest chapter in 1 COR. But the subject is worth every word, of course. The resurrection of Christ and our own resurrection as followers of Christ rise to the top of our MVP list – the most valuable principle! This is the only place we read about a summary of those who saw the resurrected Christ with their own eyes. (Verses 5 to 8) Some have suggested that the 500 were gathered when Jesus gave his great commission in Matthew 28:18-20. "When they saw him (seems like more than just his disciples), they worshiped him—but some of them doubted." (MT 28:17) I do not believe that any of the disciples doubted Jesus at this point. But a large group might have some dissenters. This introduction to the resurrection is meant to validate the certainty of it. Some must have doubted the resurrection in Corinth. I am especially drawn to Paul's conclusion that without the resurrection our faith is futile (V17, ESV). The resurrection is absolutely the crux of our faith because without it we remain under the guilt of our sins (V18). Then, the Apostle Paul highlights the hope we have of new bodies that will last forever, "For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies." (V53) I have often thought of this like Jesus when he met Mary in John 20:11f. Mary did not recognize him and other accounts tell us he would appear suddenly as it says in Luke 24:37, "But the whole group was startled and frightened, thinking they were seeing a ghost." There's no doubt that the resurrected body of Jesus appeared to be different which makes sense. And, Jesus' resurrected body points to our eternal bodies. The Apostle Paul wrote, "Since we have been united with him in his death, we will also be raised (resurrection) to life as he was." (Romans 6:5) Paul uses the same assurance in verse 23 of our chapter, "But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest, then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back." Like the resurrected body of Jesus, our resurrected bodies will be glorious, strong, immortal, and spiritual. Our limitations and failings will be discarded and our new freedom and life in

heaven will last forever and cause us to be filled with continuous joy! How does this chapter on the resurrection encourage you?

DAY 16 – 1 Corinthians 16

I realize there is not as much in this chapter to examine for our own spiritual growth but Paul's connection to people always impresses. The Apostle Paul is not thought of as a highly relational person but I actually think he partnered with people very well. His determination and boldness are obvious, but his love for people is also very real. There is a principle pronounced by Paul concerning generous giving. It is proportionate giving. "On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned" (V2) so that you can share it generously and freely. Most Bible scholars suggest that people were paid every day in the 1st century for their labor. If a person waited too long to recognize the blessing of God, they might neglect the principle of proportionate giving which is meant to honor God with a tithe and express gratitude for God's provision. In Paul's next letter, he will give greater detail to this ministry of giving in 2 COR 8 & 9. But 2 COR 9:7 says it best, "You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don't give reluctantly or in response to pressure. For the Lord loves a person who gives cheerfully." Of all the people mentioned in Paul's conclusion, I am aware of Aquilla and Priscilla. Paul's relationship with them is introduced in Acts 18:1-3. That means that Paul first met them in Corinth so maybe those receiving this letter were already familiar with them. "Paul lived and worked with them, for they were tentmakers just as he was." (18:3) Later in the chapter we learn that Priscilla and Aquilla moved with Paul to Ephesus. (Acts 18:18) In Acts 18:26, God used them to correct and direct Apollos who became a powerful evangelist and Christian teacher. Priscilla and Aquilla opened their home to the church in Ephesus. They used their lives and resources to bless the Body of Christ. Priscilla and Aquilla are examples of genuine believers in the early Church who, in the course of their daily lives, were bold in bearing witness for Christ and actively serving his people. The fact that Priscilla's name usually occurs first might say something about the strong role she played in the couple's witness and ministry which was unusual for the 1st century. I find their testimony to be quite inspiring. God loves to use ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Amen!