

Worksheet 2: 1 Corinthians 1:1–2:5

Note on lesson format: First Corinthians is one of Paul's longer epistles, and in it he addresses a number of relevant issues. Due to the length of 1 Corinthians, we do not have space to include the text of each passage on the weekly worksheet. Instead, we encourage you to use this worksheet along with your own Bible to study the passage during the week.

Our study through this book will be at an accelerated pace. Over the course of the next twelve weeks, we'll be discussing the major themes of Paul's first letter to the Corinthian church.

On the attached page, you'll find an outline of the entire book of 1 Corinthians. On each week's worksheet, you'll find an abbreviated version of this same outline to help you place the current passage within the broader context of the book. You may find it helpful to keep the complete outline in your Bible or at the front of your study notes for easy reference.

To get the most benefit from this study, you should include readings from 1 Corinthians in your regular Bible study time and do your best to answer as many of the study questions on your own as possible.

Introduction: After Paul's opening greeting and prayer, he begins to address problems that he has heard about from Chloe's people (1:11). The first problem Paul addresses is the development of competing factions within the leadership of the Corinthian church (1:10–4:21). In this week's passage, Paul begins by pointing out that their infighting contradicts the gospel message (1:10–17). That message seems to be foolishness to most people (1:18–25), and God, in His wisdom, had chosen to save weak and unimpressive people (1:26–31). Unlike the factionalists at Corinth, Paul conducted himself in a manner that fit with the shameful message of the cross (2:1–5). Through this method, Paul was confident that the faith which he preached was not the result of human wisdom, but of God's divine power (2:5).

Abbreviated Outline (current passage in bold):

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)**
 - A. Salutation (1:1-3)**
 - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:4-9)**
- II. Response to Oral Reports (1:10-6:20)**
 - A. A Proper Perspective on Christian Ministers and Ministry (1:10-4:21)**
 - 1. The Problem of Disunity (1:10-17)**
 - 2. The Sin of Dependence on Personal Abilities (1:18-25)**
 - 3. The Sin of Personal Boasting (1:26-31)**
 - 4. Paul, a Model of Dependence on God (2:1-5)**
 - [...]
 - B. Immorality in the Church (5:1-13)**
 - C. Disputes Between Believers (6:1-11)**
 - D. Limitations on Freedom in Christ (6:12-20)**
- III. Responses to a Letter from the Corinthians (7:1-16:4)**
- IV. Conclusion (16:5-24)**

Interpretation: *Read through the passage, and then review and make notes under the questions below.*

1. Paul mentions several people by name. What can you find out about these people elsewhere in Scripture?
Sosthenes (1:1)
Apollos (1:12)
Crispus (1:14)
Gaius (1:14)
Stephanus (1:16)
2. What do we learn about the church at Corinth and about God in 1:4–9?
3. What is the problem with the divisions at the church of Corinth, according to 1:13? Why would Paul be thankful that he had baptized so few of the Corinthian believers (1:14–17)?
4. How can Paul say that “the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing” (1:18)? What elements of the gospel message cause it to appear to be foolish?
5. Paul notes that the message of a crucified Christ was “a stumbling block” to Jews and “foolishness” to Greeks (1:23), but that for “those who are called” Christ is both “the power” and “wisdom” of God (1:24). How does the true meaning of the cross counter Jewish and Greek objections?
6. What is the reason that Paul gives for God’s choice of “the foolish/weak/base things” for salvation (1:28–31)?
7. When Paul says that he did not come to the Corinthians “with excellence of speech or of wisdom” (2:1) what does that tell us about his preaching? How does his presentation support his message?

Application: *Take time to reflect on the implications of this passage for your own life today.*

8. What does this passage mean for your walk with the Lord?
9. How does this passage challenge the way you think about situations in daily life? What should you do about that?

Outline of 1 Corinthians¹

- I. Introduction (1:1-9)
 - A. Salutation (1:1-3)
 - B. Prayer of Thanksgiving (1:4-9)
- II. Response to Oral Reports (1:10-6:20)
 - A. A Proper Perspective on Christian Ministers and Ministry (1:10-4:21)
 - 1. The Problem of Disunity (1:10-17)
 - 2. The Sin of Dependence on Personal Abilities (1:18-25)
 - 3. The Sin of Personal Boasting (1:26-31)
 - 4. Paul, a Model of Dependence on God (2:1-5)
 - 5. Spiritual Wisdom versus Worldly Wisdom (2:6-16)
 - 6. The Immaturity of the Corinthians (3:1-9)
 - 7. God's Evaluation of Christian Ministry (3:10-17)
 - 8. Final Argument Against Human Boasting (3:18-23)
 - 9. Paul's Example of Christian Ministry (4:1-21)
 - B. Immorality in the Church (5:1-13)
 - C. Disputes Between Believers (6:1-11)
 - D. Limitations on Freedom in Christ (6:12-20)
- III. Responses to a Letter from the Corinthians (7:1-16:4)
 - A. Matters related to Sex and Marriage (7:1-40)
 - 1. To the Married (7:1-7)
 - 2. To Singles and Widows (7:8-9)
 - 3. To Those in Difficult Marriages (7:10-24)
 - 4. To Virgins (7:25-38)
 - 5. To Widows (7:39-40)
 - B. Matters related to Idol Feasts (8:1-11:1)
 - 1. Food Offered to Idols (8:1-13)
 - 2. Paul Foregoes Rights of Apostle (9:1-27)
 - 3. Food Offered to Idols (continued; 10:1-11:1)
 - C. Matters related to Christian Worship (11:2-34)
 - 1. Gender Distinctions in Worship (11:2-16)
 - 2. Behavior During the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
 - D. Matters related to Spiritual Gifts (12:1-14:40)
 - 1. Diversity of Gifts, Unity in the Body (12:1-31)
 - 2. The Supremacy of Love (13:1-13)
 - 3. Prophecy and Tongues (14:1-40)
 - E. Matters related to the Resurrection (15:1-58)
 - F. Matters related to the Relief Offering (16:1-4)
- IV. Conclusion (16:5-24)
 - A. Paul's Travel Plans (16:5-12)
 - B. Final Exhortations (16:13-18)
 - C. Closing (16:19-24)

¹ Adapted from Andreas J. Köstenberger, L. Scott Kellum, and Charles L. Quarles, *The Cradle, The Cross, and The Crown: An Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville, Tenn: B & H Academic, 2009), 482-483.