

Reflection Questions on I Corinthians

Chapter One:

1. Paul seems to be writing to the church at Corinth because they are fighting among themselves, perhaps about who is the originator or authentic follower of Christ. Have you been through a church fight? What was it about? How have denominations been explained to you?
2. Why is Christ's crucifixion a stumbling block to Jews? Why is Christ's crucifixion foolishness to Gentiles?
3. Intellect, power, and pedigree seem to be the important qualities in Greek society. What are the most valued assets in our culture today?

Chapter Two:

4. What does Paul mean by spiritual discernment? How have you known what is right and wrong, beyond using human rules or standards?

Chapter Three:

5. In what way have you seen a community be God's temple and God's Spirit dwelling in that community?
6. How do leaders shape a community, for good or for ill?

Chapter Four:

7. In what ways is Paul's admonition not to judge helpful? When could it be harmful?
8. Should the pastor of a church live a richer or poor standard of living compared to his/her congregation? What would Paul say?

Chapter Five:

9. Paul seems to have written an earlier letter about not spending time in the world with the sexually immoral, thieves, or greedy or drunk persons, but also not judging them. He is surprised that the community is allowing a man behaving immorally to belong to the community. With whom did Jesus hang out? Are Paul's standards different?
10. Think of a current social issue on which Christians disagree. How would you answer those who say that our communities should not allow LGBTQ folks, the mentally ill, or illegal immigrants? What about convicted sexual offenders? Is there a difference between social morality and Christian morality?

Chapter Six:

11. Why does Paul believe that it is wrong for a member of the Christian community to sue another member of the Christian community?

12. Paul writes “do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, which you have from God?” As a Christian what should we teach teenagers about sex before marriage? What about young adults?

Chapter Seven:

13. Paul is convinced that Jesus is returning and the kingdom of God will be ushered in in his own lifetime. How does this influence his views on marriage and slavery?
14. How have Paul’s instructions to the church at Corinth influenced Christian rules on divorce? the Roman Catholic Church’s restrictions on married clergy? The arguments over whether a Christian can be a slave or slave owner?

Chapter Eight:

15. Here Paul offers an argument to help us make moral decisions in our own context and dependent on individual knowledge and judgement. Use his argument to articulate your view of a current issue that Christians disagree on: gambling, pornography, substance abuse, sexual activity, violent video games, books, movies, etc.

Chapter Nine:

16. Paul seems to be defending himself against criticism that he doesn’t have the right to tell the Corinthians how to live. Why does Paul preach the gospel? Why doesn’t he accept payment for his work?
17. “I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some.” How does this argument help with current ethical judgements? What is the danger of this idea?

Chapter Ten:

18. “No testing has overtaken you that is not common to everyone. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tested beyond your strength, but with the testing he will also provide the way out so that you may be able to endure it.” This verse may have led to the phrase “God does give us more than we can handle.” In your experience, is this true?
19. What is Paul’s advice to the Corinthians who live and work with people who worship and sacrifice to idols (most meat sold in the marketplace was offered sacrificed on pagan altars and then sold)? What relevance does this have to current moral issues (inhumanely raised animals, “blood” diamonds, child labor etc...)

Chapter Eleven:

20. Why is it important to Paul that the Corinthians maintain cultural norms for men and women?
21. Notice that Paul is concerned that social divisions are obscuring the meaning of the community meal. In verse 23 we have the earliest description of what becomes the Eucharist. In Episcopal, Orthodox, and Roman Catholic tradition these words must be repeated as part of the consecration of bread and wine.

Chapter Twelve:

22. What does the metaphor of the body of Christ mean to you?
23. What are your particular spiritual gifts?

Chapter Thirteen:

24. Imagine you are at a wedding. What does this passage have to do with marriage? Who is this passage directed towards?

Chapter Fourteen:

25. Have you ever witnessed or participated in “speaking in tongues”? What was your experience of it? What does Paul have to say about this spiritual gift?
26. “Tongues, then, are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is not for unbelievers but for believers.” What does Paul mean by this?
27. Was Paul a Pentecostal, and Evangelical, or an Episcopalian?

Chapter Fifteen:

28. The first verses are Paul’s elevator speech for Christianity! What is your elevator speech as a Christian?
29. Jews at the time of Jesus disagreed about life after death and the possibility of resurrection. Clearly early Christians did also! What is Paul’s belief about the resurrection of the dead?
30. Listen to Handel’s messiah for a beautiful rendition of verses 51-57.

Chapter Sixteen:

31. Paul clearly expects the Corinthians to help support the church in Jerusalem; in the same way we, as a church, pledge and send money to our Bishop each year. What other current practices do you see preserved from the practices of this infant Christian community?