



VINTAGE**CHURCH**

Live 2017

Discussion Guides

January 8 – March 19, 2017

INTRO

Live 2017 Introduction

Vintage Church's mission is to make disciples who know the gospel, live the gospel, and advance the gospel. Live 2017 is the second year in a three year series based on that mission. Last year through Know 2016 we focused on knowing the gospel more fully as a church. We look back on 2016 as a year of understanding the absolute totality of Jesus' work on our behalf, and we look ahead to 2017 as a year of learning to walk according to that reality.

Throughout the year we will be studying 1 and 2 Corinthians. Paul wrote these letters to a church struggling to know how to live the Christian life. Paul urged believers in Corinth to stop following Jesus as only a part of their life and to make following Jesus their overarching life narrative. Our prayer is that this series would do that for us as a church and that throughout 2017 we would learn to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which [we] have been called." (Ephesians 4:1)

Introduction to 1 Corinthians

Paul's primary theme in 1 Corinthians is for the church at Corinth to conquer divisions in the church resulting from pride, specifically caused by the arrogance of more elite church members. Paul urges them to drop their divisive one-upmanship to assist in advancing the Gospel in Corinth.

Corinth was a large, metropolitan city lying at the crossroads of multiple land and sea trade routes at the head of the Greek Peloponnese. It was a place where dozens of religions and cultures intermingled. Corinth was a thoroughly Roman city (though it's real roots were culturally Greek), which ascribed to a diverse pantheon and recognized the gods of Rome at government and civic affairs alike. It was a locus of art, a melting pot for ideas, and a powerful force in the realm of social rhetoric. In fact, rhetoricians (professional public speakers) traveled to Corinth to perform their orations for its residents.

Corinth was a city of the powerful, the rich, and the social elite; thus its citizens praised social advancement. It was also a city marked by wanton sexual immorality, due in part to liberal Greco-Roman beliefs about



social propriety, with the contributing factor of Corinth being a port city. Any cosmopolitan, pluralistic city in America today is incredibly comparable to the ancient city of Corinth.

These aspects of the city directly correlated with the struggles experienced by the church in Corinth, which Paul addresses in his letters. One of the main things eating away at the church was the division caused by pride over social class or ability. The socially superior and highly talented members of the church lorded themselves over lower, every-day members, to ill effect both for the church and the advancement of the gospel in their city.

The Corinthians were simply reflecting the culture around them back into the church, and in turn experiencing spiritual and relational unrest. Paul implores the Corinthians to reflect Jesus and his teachings inside the church and out into the city around them, that they might boast in the finished work of Christ rather than themselves.



1. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:1-9

January 15, 2017

His divine power has given us all things that pertain to life and godliness. – 2 Peter 1:3

In this introduction, Paul is greeting the Corinthians, explaining why he is thankful for them, and introducing some elements of the rest of his letter. He mentions speech, knowledge, and other spiritual gifts, which were points of pride for many of the Corinthians. Despite their pride, which Paul will address in subsequent chapters, Paul calls these things what they are: good gifts from God. Paul directly connects these gifts with being enriched, confirmed, and sustained by Christ, all of which are elements of the Christian life.

When it comes to living according to the gospel, two things from this section stand out in summary: God has given you everything you need to live as a Christian, and God is faithful no matter what.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9**
- **Live 2017 is starting pretty soon. What do we as a church mean when we say we want to "live the gospel"?**
- **What are the gifts Paul is talking about in verse 7?**
- **According to this passage, what is God doing to us or for us?**

Evaluating

- **How have you seen God enrich, confirm, or sustain you?**
- **Why is God's faithfulness necessary for us to live according to the gospel?**
- **How do verse 8 and 9 comfort you as you strive for obedience?**

Applying

- **How do God's gifts help us tell others about Jesus?**



2. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:10-17

January 22, 2017

In this section Paul begins addressing one of the primary reasons for his letter: he's heard about divisions within the church. Apparently a specific division had arisen between different kinds of Apostle groupies. Some church members said they were followers of Paul or Peter, others said they followed Apollos, another big name in the early church. The overachiever Christians said they didn't follow anyone but Christ himself.

To be sure, Paul wasn't splitting hairs over whether or not the Corinthians were big fans of a specific speaker. The Corinthians were inhibiting the proclamation of the gospel due to their prideful factions and, furthermore, were looking to Christian speakers instead of Christ as the source of their identity. Looking at the Church today, we might not get into arguments over who's a Tim Keller or R.C. Sproul fan, but we still find plenty of prideful ways to divide the body of Christ. Further still, we continuously find things to define our identity other than Christ.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17**
- **Why do you think the Corinthians were arguing about whom they followed?**
- **What did this divide have to do with the way the Corinthians were finding their identity?**
- **How does Paul address this problem?**

Evaluating

- **What kinds of things do you try to find your identity in other than Jesus?**
- **How does finding your identity in something other than Jesus negatively affect you?**

Applying

- **In light of this passage, how can we address those things we try to find our identity in?**
- **How do we guard against divisions over identity in our church family?**



3. 1 CORINTHIANS 1:18-31

January 29, 2017

In verse 17 Paul brings up the Corinthian fascination with rhetorical skill ("eloquent words of wisdom"). The Corinthian believers had so valued earthly "wisdom" that Paul had to remind them how foolish a crucified savior appeared. Underneath their fascination though, the Corinthians were simply prideful. Many of them were puffed up over their own rhetorical abilities and self-esteem and were finding their worth in themselves rather than in Christ.

In 2017 we experience a similar pressure to conform to the wisdom of the world around us. It's often unpopular to hold orthodox Christian beliefs, and some of our favorite people (in the media, our workplace, or in our own families) have smart-sounding opinions that clash with central aspects of the gospel. We're also pressured to find our self-worth in our abilities, which similarly clashes with the gospel. Paul's exhortation to the Corinthians to value God's wisdom above man's, and to find our worth not in our minuscule abilities but in the surpassing worth of Christ, is as applicable today as it was in the first century.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 1:18-31**
- **How were the Corinthians being led away from Jesus?**
- **In what ways might being a Christian appear foolish to the world around us?**

Evaluating

- **What do verses 26-29 tell us about ourselves?**
- **Why would God want to pick the weak and the lowly?**
- **How do you feel when you're confronted with your weaknesses?**

Applying

- **How can the reality of this section give us hope and assurance?**
- **How might this section inform the way we tell others about Jesus?**



4. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:1-5

February 5, 2017

Few of us have the same fascination with rhetoric that the Corinthians did (unless maybe you're a TED Talks junky). But we all lean away from trusting in the power of God in favor of something else. Maybe that thing for you is being popular, attractive, successful, or smart. Maybe it's having kids (or not having kids), or getting married, or retiring early. In essence we say to ourselves that trusting in God alone isn't enough to satisfy our souls, that we also need another thing to be happy. Inevitably we prioritize that additional thing over trusting in God because, like Jesus said, you can't have two masters. (Matt. 6:24)

If we mix up this additive approach with Christian ministry, pretty soon we decide the gospel of Jesus isn't enough to be a Christian; in addition you need another thing such as praying enough, being generous enough, or even having specific spiritual gifts. This implies that Jesus dying on the cross was insufficient for your salvation, that you also need another thing, which empties the cross of its power. (1 Cor. 1:17) Paul would urge us to reject the things that persuade us away from trusting in God for our satisfaction and our salvation, and urge us onwards towards the power of God.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:1-5**
- **What does Paul mean here by "lofty speech" and the "wisdom of men"?**
- **How might their fascination with "lofty speech or wisdom" have been leading the Corinthians away from Jesus?**
- **What did the Corinthians' desire for eloquence reveal about the kind of people they wanted to be?**

Evaluating

- **Which of your desires for yourself or your life don't actually lead you to Jesus?**
- **What was Paul's solution for the Corinthians' problem?**

Applying

- **How can we tackle the desires for our lives that don't lead us to Jesus?**
- **What would change in your life if you knew "nothing...except Christ and him crucified"?**



5. 1 CORINTHIANS 2:6-16

February 12, 2017

In their fascination with rhetoric and wisdom, the Corinthians had relocated their dependence upon God to their dependence upon "wise" orators. Paul, in his ongoing criticism of the Corinthians' wandering allegiance, points out that the things of God can only be communicated by God himself. Paul is calling for humility among the Corinthian leadership, imploring them to humbly admit that they have no insight into spirituality save what is given them by the Spirit of God.

This serves as a template for the Christian life. Paul is simply telling the Corinthians a basic gospel truth: without God, we would have no access to him or knowledge about him. Through the Holy Spirit, God has special presence in our individual lives, communicates his revelation to us by helping us understand his word, and enables us to communicate his revelation to others. Reliance upon the Spirit is the lifeblood of believers who seek the Lord and submit to him. However, just like the Corinthians we all have competing allegiances over whom to turn to for truth, whether spiritual or otherwise.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16**
- **What is Paul saying about the role of the Holy Spirit in this passage?**
- **Why does God give us his Spirit?**
- **Why do we need the Spirit to understand spiritual truths?**

Evaluating

- **What kind of interaction with the Holy Spirit do you have in your daily life?**
- **When is it hard for you to trust or understand the activity of the Spirit?**

Applying

- **According to this passage, how does the Spirit enable ministry and evangelism?**
- **How can you better trust the spirit when it comes to sharing the gospel with others?**



6. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:1-3

February 19, 2017

Nobody likes being disciplined. You feel like a scolded child, revealed and chastised, or just ashamed for not being what you wish you were. Though discipline can take many forms, not all of them beneficial, discipline done rightly is good. Discipline reveals areas in our lives that need growth and helps (at least for the moment) tear down our self-righteousness.

In this section Paul reminds the Corinthians that they aren't as spiritually sophisticated as they think, and his words probably stung a bit. When we learn about areas in our life that lack maturity, and especially when others make them known to us, it can sting. However, like a good parent the Lord disciplines the one he loves through his word, the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the input of fellow believers. "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it." Hebrews 12:11

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-3**
- **What does Paul mean by calling the Corinthians "people of the flesh" and "infants in Christ"?**
- **Why might Paul think jealousy and strife were indicative of spiritual immaturity?**
- **What are some other key indicators of spiritual immaturity in the life of a believer?**

Evaluating

- **When you see things like this in your own life, how do you react?**
- **What are some areas of immaturity that you're aware of in your life?**

Applying

- **How could you go about maturing in those areas?**
- **How are we called to react to spiritual immaturity in the lives of others?**



7.1 CORINTHIANS 3:5-9

February 26, 2017

Paul brings his argument back around to a topic he began addressing in 1:12: divisions in the church over specific leaders. You may recall from week 2 that the Corinthians were split into camps over whom they followed; "What I mean is that each one of you says, 'I follow Paul,' or 'I follow Apollos!'" (1 Cor. 1:12) Throughout chapter 2 and 3 Paul has been systematically dismantling the false beliefs held by the Corinthians that led to divisions over specific teachers. He explains that God is responsible for spiritual growth in his people, not the leaders.

Notably, Paul leads the way in humbling himself. In verse 7 he says, "So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything." He gives all the credit for spiritual growth to God, and sets an example for the Corinthians to do likewise. The real cause for the divisions in Corinth were based in pride, and Paul urges the Corinthians by his words and example to humble themselves before the Lord for their spiritual growth and for unity among the church.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:5-9**
- **What does Paul mean when he says "I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth"?**
- **What is Paul saying about himself when he says "neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything"?**
- **By talking low about himself, what beliefs do you think Paul was challenging in the Corinthians?**

Evaluating

- **In what ways do you struggle with wanting to be thought highly of or important?**
- **How do those desires negatively affect your relationship with God and with others?**

Applying

- **What are ways that we can practice humility in our lives?**
- **How might humility make you better at evangelism?**



8. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:10-15

March 5, 2017

We see this metaphor in several of Paul's letters: the people of God as a building. Here Paul addresses the act of building and leads the Corinthians to ask, "Are we building something that will last?" For us the metaphor might be a little obscure and hard to parse; we might spend time trying to figure out what counts as hay, or wood, or stone. But defining what counts and what doesn't isn't the point of this section.

Instead, Paul's main directive is for us to take care how we build, because what we build will be "revealed by fire." What does that mean? While there's no longer condemnation for those in Jesus (Romans 8:1), there's still an aspect of assessment and reward in the coming Day of Judgment in which Jesus will look at our faithful works and reward us accordingly. While that might not please our Western egalitarian tendencies, nevertheless we can still take the directive and run with it so that we build ourselves and others up in lasting spiritual maturity.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:10-15**
- **What is Paul talking about with his building metaphor?**
- **What does Paul mean in his section about a refining fire?**
- **Why would you want to be built with "materials" that could survive this fire?**

Evaluating

- **How do you usually go about building yourself up spiritually?**
- **What stands in the way of you exercising discipline in your spiritual formation?**
- **Look at verse 11. How does Paul's comment about our foundation in Jesus bring you hope?**

Applying

- **If you were to start working on one area of your spiritual life tomorrow, what would it be? How would you get started?**



9. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:16-17

March 12, 2017

These two verses seem like a non sequitur, sandwiched as they are between Paul's comments about building on a foundation in verses 10-15 and his rebuke to self-proclaimed wisdom in verses 18-23. Additionally, these verses are frequently taken out of context to vilify things like tattoos and piercings, or to claim that people who commit suicide are condemned to hell (both of which are a grave misreading of the text). However, the whole of chapters 3 and 4 are addressed towards the divisions in the church. He's talking about how the effort of believers goes towards building up or tearing down the church, and Paul is very serious about the work of the church.

As we read this, it's incredibly important to note that the 'you' in this passage is plural. Feel free to read it as, "y'all are the temple." Paul is telling the Corinthians that the Church as a whole is the temple of God. Paul presents them with the gravity of discipleship and implores them to take the work of building up their church seriously because it is the dwelling place of God on Earth. The command for us today is to work in such a way that edifies, unifies, and supports the Church and our local body.

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17**
- **The 'you' in this section is plural. How does that help you understand this section?**
- **Based on these two verses, how do you think God feels about his Church?**

Evaluating

- **How does verse 17 make you feel about the work of the local church?**
- **How does this section make you feel about your part in the church?**

Applying

- **How can you personally help build up the church?**
- **Back in 1 Corinthians 1:10 Paul started addressing divisions in the church. How does disunity destroy the church?**
- **How can you personally strive for unity in the church?**



10. 1 CORINTHIANS 3:18-21

March 19, 2017

This is the last week of our Live 2017 series. Next week will begin our Easter series in 1 Corinthians 15.

This week we finish our series in 1 Corinthians by wrapping up Paul's section on divisions in the church. Think of verses 18-21 as less of a summary of Paul's arguments and more of a final point on the overall topic, that topic being that the Corinthians have produced divisions in the church due to their pride. We see Paul land a solid blow to the Corinthians' self-assertion in verse 18 by telling them anyone who thinks he's wise has deceived himself. Furthermore, the Greek word for deceiving in verse 18 has undertones of cheating to it. To think of yourself as wise is to deceive yourself and, in a way, to cheat yourself out of the fullness of the Christian life.

Typically we see humility as a state of less-ness. It's life lived like prison rations: bland and too little. Humility is the proper state of the Christian life, but in our heart of hearts we don't expect it to be thrilling or fruitful. What Paul is getting at in this passage is that humbling oneself before the Lord, specifically when it comes to wisdom, is rewarding. In verse 18 Paul says, "Let him become a fool that he may become wise." (emphasis added) If you want true insight and wisdom, to be truly prepared for the day to come, humble yourself before the Lord. This calls to mind the ancient wisdom of Solomon: the fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge. (Proverbs 1:7)

Understanding

- **Read 1 Corinthians 3:18-21**
- **What does it mean to deceive oneself in this passage?**
- **Look at verse 18. How is pride a type of self-deception?**
- **Why is it important for us to know that our "wisdom" is folly to God?**

Evaluating

- **When do you tend to take pride in your thoughts, ideas, or way of doing things?**
- **How does pride in these areas negatively affect your relationship with God?**
- **How does Jesus embody humility for us?**

Applying

- **How does faithful humility better prepare you for day-to-day life?**

