

1 Corinthians – chapter 1

BIG IDEA – It is only through the message of the cross that we are saved, and as a result we must be united as Christians.

1 Corinthians is a letter written by the apostle Paul to the newly formed church in Corinth. Because the church in Corinth was quite new, it was hard for the Christians there not to act like their neighbours, and as a result the church was having quite a few problems. Paul writes his letter primarily to help the Corinthians understand their errors, and to provide them with teaching on the ways in which they should be living as God's people.

- 1) Think about (and share) one way in which your life has been changed since you became a Christian.

Just an intro question to get them thinking...

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1 – 9

- 2) Identify the five things that Paul lists in verses 4-9 that he (and us as Christians) can give thanks to God for.

- *The grace we have been given in Jesus (v4)*
- *The ways in which Jesus has enriched our lives (v5-6)*
- *Spiritual gifts we have been given (v7)*
- *He will keep us strong, that we may be blameless at the end (v8)*
- *God is faithful in all these things (v9)*

Read 1:10 – 17

- 3) What does Paul identify as a key problem that the church at Corinth faces?

There is division amongst them as to who they follow as their 'leader'. (v10)

- 4) According to the passage, why is it wrong to think and act in this way?

It is wrong because as Christians we are all spiritually baptised into Christ, regardless of whom it was that brought us the message of the gospel. Paul was not crucified to save the Corinthians – Jesus was. Christ is not divided – he does not have his own group of followers, whilst other Christians are lead by someone else – all are ultimately lead by Christ.

- 5) In what ways might we find ourselves acting in the same way today?

*We 'follow' our Christian leaders (youth leaders, Rob, Steve etc). Note that it is good to model our lives on theirs **so long as theirs is modelled on Jesus**. We need to follow Jesus, not other Christians.*

Read 1:18 – 2:5

6) Re-write verse 18 in your own words, so that it is clear to understand.

*To help the kids understand what is being said. Something along the lines of:
“The message of the gospel makes no sense to ‘worldly wisdom’, but for those of us who are Christians, it is a powerful message that enables us to have salvation.”*

7) What does this section teach us about how salvation is achieved?

- God’s role –
God’s ‘foolishness’ is greater than the greatest of man’s ‘wisdom’ (v20-21, 25). It is God who calls us (v24). It is because of Him that we can even be a Christian (v30)
- Jesus’ role –
The ‘message of the cross’ (v18) is all about Jesus. Jesus is our righteousness, holiness and redemption (v30).
- Holy Spirit’s role –
Spirit enables this ‘message of the cross’ to be shared with one another (2:4). Gives us the strength, courage and words we need.
- Role of other Christians –
*Whilst other people bring us the gospel, it is **only through God’s power** that we are saved, and as a result **we must boast in God only** (v31, 2:5)*
- Our role –
*Bit harder – Essentially it is nothing we can **do**. We understand the gospel because God has called us (v26), however we still need to make the right response. This is why Paul preached “not with wise and persuasive words” (2:4) – he wanted to give people the plain facts so that they could make a decision for themselves.*

8) In thinking about the whole passage, why is it so important that we are “perfectly united in mind and thought” (v10)?

A summary question. Also to tie all three sections together – We all have salvation through the same message regardless of how it was brought to us. As such we need to all follow Christ (and not other Christians). We also need to be careful when we share the gospel, that we don’t build ourselves up, which diminishes an understanding of God’s power in achieving the things listed in verses 4-9.

9) In what ways do we frequently fail to do this?

Some practical application. To get them thinking about ways in which they are united with other Christians. What about people from other schools, kids who are hard to get along with etc etc...

10) What effect does this have on Christian community?

It breaks it down, and it means that we are not ‘one in Christ’. It is not in line with a biblical image of how we should be living our lives.