



## Session 1

1:1-31

### 1. Paul in Corinth

Paul visited Corinth before he wrote 1 Corinthians. We can learn about his time there in Acts 18.

Read Acts 18:1-17.

**Where did Paul start his ministry in Corinth? What made him switch to preaching to the Gentiles?**

Paul faced opposition while he was in Corinth. Even so, verse 11 tells us he stayed there for a year and a half. **What stands out to you about Paul's ministry in Corinth? Why do you think he chose to persist even when people opposed him?**

**When have you chosen to persist where you were and obey God? What did you learn through that experience?**

We learn from these verses that there were both Jewish and Gentile Christians in the church at Corinth. We also know that Paul stayed there for some time—he developed relationships with these people. **In what ways does knowing the background of the Corinthian church inform the way you approach the book?**

This week take some time to read back through 1 Corinthians 1 with Acts 18 in mind.

### 2. God's Grace to His People

Paul spends time at the beginning of his letter to the Corinthians reminding them of God's grace.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:4-9.

**Looking through these verses, what does he say the Corinthians have received as a result of God's grace?**

We talk about grace all the time in church circles, but it's always good to refresh ourselves on what grace is. **How would you define grace? What has God done to show us grace?**

God's given us much more than we deserve—we're part of his family, we have the Holy Spirit in us, we will live with God for eternity. **What are some examples of God's grace in your life?**

God's grace affects our entire life and it all begins with Jesus—his life, death, and resurrection. That's why Paul mentions Jesus nine times in just nine verses. And it's why Paul always talks about Jesus combined with the word "Christ." The word "Christ" is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word "Messiah," which means "anointed one."

When Paul writes "Christ," he's alluding to Jesus's ministry—his death and resurrection, and the salvation that comes through him. It's everything Jesus, the anointed one, did. Jesus—all that he's done and all of who he is—is evidence of God's grace in our lives. **What difference does it make in your life to recognize the grace you've received through and because of Jesus?**

Take a couple of minutes to write out a prayer of thanks to God—look at the one Paul wrote in verses 4-9 if you need inspiration. Thank him for his grace in your life. Thank him for Jesus.

### **3. Paul, Apollos, and Cephas**

One of the reasons Paul's writing to the Corinthians is to rebuke some of their behavior. We learn about one of the ways they're acting poorly in chapter 1.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:11-12.

### **What are the Corinthians fighting about?**

The Corinthians were dividing over their favorite leaders. Some followed Paul, others Apollos, Cephas (or Peter), and Jesus. They're playing a church version of, "My dad's stronger than your dad." It's causing division, and Paul's not happy about it. But who were these leaders? Let's take some time to learn more about them.

Read Acts 9:1-22; 18:24-28; Matthew 4:18-20.

### **What do these verses tell you about Paul, Apollos, and Peter? What are their backgrounds? What's appealing about them as leaders?**

Each of these leaders brought a lot to the table from radical conversions to knowing Jesus personally to being able to draw a crowd. But while leaders can help grow the church, people in Corinth have divided over which person they follow. **What are some practical ways we can fight against this kind of division in the church?**

Division of any kind can poison the church; it did in Corinth. We should be on the lookout for disunity and work against it. We are at our best when we're unified. **This week, what's one way you can pray for unity in your local church?**

## **4. Peek at the Greek: The "Folly" of the Cross**

Read 1 Corinthians 1:18.

### **What's Paul saying about how Christians and non-Christians view the cross?**

It might shock us to read that the cross is "folly" in this verse. Paul uses the word *moria*, which means foolishness, folly, or silliness. In this verse, however, it's important to note that *moria* is directly related to "those who are perishing." In other words, the people who are perishing (those who do not know Jesus) think that the cross makes no sense—it's foolish.

It's common for non-Christians to be confused by the story of Jesus's death and resurrection. **When have you seen nonbelievers perplexed at the cross? What confused them?**

Paul also talks about the power of the cross to believers. **In what ways does the cross demonstrate the power of God?**

The story of the cross and resurrection changes our lives. Because of Jesus's sacrifice we can be members of God's family, which impacts our lives today and into eternity. **What could you do this week to remind yourself of the power of the cross?**