

FIRST CORINTHIANS

FIRST CORINTHIANS 1

A Letter from the Apostle Paul

This letter is from Paul — chosen by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, and from Sosthenes, “the Brother”.

2 I am writing to the Christians in Corinth, to you who, by God’s calling, are saints — His own holy people. He made you holy by means of Christ Jesus, just as he does for all people everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours.

3 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace [Christ’s life within you] and peace [that results from alignment with Him].

Proof of the Authenticity of My Message

4 I thank my God all the time for you and for the gracious gifts he has given you, now that you belong to Christ Jesus. 5 Through him, God has enriched you in every way—in both your speaking and your understanding. 6 This confirms that what I told you about Christ is true. 7 Now you have every spiritual gift you need as you eagerly wait for the return of our Lord Jesus Christ. 8 He will keep you strong to the end so that you will be free from all blame on the day when our Lord Jesus Christ returns. 9 God will do this, for he is faithful to do what he says, and he has invited you into an eternal partnership with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

No Divisions in Christ

10 I appeal to you, dear brothers and sisters, by the authority of our Lord Jesus Christ, to live in harmony with each other. Let there be no divisions among you. Rather, be of one mind, united in vision and purpose. 11 For some members of Chloe's household have told me about your quarrels, my dear brothers and sisters. 12 Some of you are saying, "I am a follower of Paul." Others are saying, "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Peter," or "I follow only Christ."

13 Has Christ been divided into factions? Was I, Paul, crucified for you? Were any of you baptized in the name of Paul? Of course not! 14 [I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 for now no one can say they were baptized in *my* name. 16 (Oh yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas, but I don't remember baptizing anyone else.)] 17 For Christ didn't send me to baptize, but to proclaim the Good News—and not with clever speech, for fear that the simple gospel would lose its effectiveness.

Christ is God's Powerful Plan

18 The message of the cross is foolishness to those who are headed for destruction! But we who have entered into Christ's salvation know it is the very power of God. 19 As the Scriptures say,

"I will destroy man's wisdom
and disregard his most brilliant ideas."

Christ is Rejected by the World

20 So where does this leave the philosophers, the scholars, and the world's brilliant debaters? God has made the wisdom of this world look foolish. 21 Since God

in his wisdom saw to it that the world would never know him through human wisdom, he has used our simple, 'foolish' preaching to save those who believe it. 22 It is unconvincing foolishness to the Jews, who always want supernatural signs from heaven. And it is foolishness to the Greeks, who place great emphasis on the speaker's appearance, style and intellect, and discard anything supernatural. 23 So when we humbly proclaim that God in the flesh, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was crucified as the atonement for our sins, and then resurrected, the Jews are offended [because they are the ones who crucified Him] and the Gentiles say it's all nonsense because it is an idea that would never have entered their minds.

Christ is God's Power and Wisdom

24 But to those called by God to salvation, whether Jews or Gentiles, Christ is the power of God [that the Jews are looking for] and the wisdom of God [that the Gentiles place value on]. 25 This 'foolish' plan of God is wiser than the wisest of human plans, and God's weakness is stronger than the greatest of human strength.

God's Ways are not Our Ways

26 Remember, dear brothers and sisters, that few of you were wise in the world's eyes, or powerful, or wealthy, when God called you to be saved. 27 Instead, God chooses things the world considers foolish in order to shame those who think they are wise. And he chooses things that are powerless to shame those who are powerful. 28 God chooses things despised by the world, things counted as nothing at all, and uses them to bring

to nothing what the world considers important. 29 As a result, no one can ever boast in the presence of God.

[NOTE: God's simple message of salvation appeals to the common folk.]

We Boast Only of Christ

30 God has united you with Christ Jesus. For our benefit God made him to be wisdom personified. And in his wisdom, Jesus did it all: He made us right with God; he made us pure and holy, and he bought us back from satan. 31 Therefore, as the Scriptures say, "If you want to brag on anybody, brag on Jesus."

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Magnifying Only Christ

When I first came to you, dear brothers and sisters, I didn't use lofty words and impressive wisdom to tell you God's plan of salvation that has largely been a secret since Creation. 2 For I decided that while I was with you I would focus entirely on Jesus Christ and the effects and benefits for us of His crucifixion. 3 I came to you in much human weakness—timid and trembling. 4 And my message and my style of preaching were very plain. Rather than using clever and persuasive speeches, I relied only on the power of the Holy Spirit. 5 I did this so you would trust not in human wisdom - my speech and presentation, but in the power - the evident working in your heart and mind - of God.

A Hidden Plan

6 Yet when I am among spiritually mature Christians, I do teach deep spiritual wisdom and truth, but not the kind of wisdom that belongs to this world or to the rulers of this world, who are soon forgotten. 7 No, the wisdom I teach are the mysteries of God—of his plan that was previously hidden, even though he made it for our ultimate glory before the world began. 8 But the rulers of this world were unable to understand this plan; if they had been able to understand it, they would not have crucified our glorious Lord. 9 That is what the Scriptures mean when they say,

“No eye can see, no ear can hear,
and no mind can imagine
the amazing things God has devised
for those who love him.”

Spiritual Revelation

10 But God has revealed these things to us by his Spirit. For his Spirit knows everything and reveals to us God’s wonderful secrets. 11 No one can know a person’s thoughts except that person’s own spirit, and no one can know God’s thoughts except God’s own Spirit. 12 And, incredibly, we were given God’s Spirit (not the world’s spirit) at salvation, so we are able to receive and understand the many wonderful things God has freely given us by His grace!

Spiritual Receptivity

13 So, when we teach you these things, we are not teaching you things that come from, or necessarily agree with, human reasoning and human wisdom. Instead, we pass on to you things given to us by the Spirit, letting the Spirit work through us to explain these spiritual truths to

you. 14 But people who have no spiritual life are unable to receive these truths from God's Spirit. They all sound foolish to them, and they have no spiritual receptors to receive or understand them, for only those who have spiritual life can receive and understand truths revealed by the Spirit. 15 Those who have spiritual life and who see things from God's perspective are able to evaluate and understand all things, though they themselves are under-valued and misunderstood by the unsaved.

16 For,

"Who can know the Lord's thoughts?
Who knows enough to teach *him*?"

But we understand God's wonderful mysteries and truths, for, being in Christ, we have the mind of Christ.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 3
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Spiritual Babies

My dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

When I was with you I couldn't talk with you as to mature Christians walking in the Spirit. I had to talk to you as though you were unsaved or as though you were babies in Christ. 2 I had to bottle-feed you. I couldn't give you solid food, because you couldn't handle anything stronger than milk. And you still can't, 3 for you are still controlled by your sinful nature. *[As long as we are controlled by our sinful nature, we have no interest in mature spiritual food. We can't handle it, and we don't even want it!]* You are separating from each other and bickering with each other, which is amply proof that you are controlled by your sinful nature. *[Divisiveness and*

bickering do not come from the Holy Spirit.] You are behaving like unsaved people. 4 When one of you says, "I am a follower of Paul," [*"I follow Joel Osteen."*] and another says, "I follow Apollos," [*"I follow Dr. Jeremiah."*] you are acting just like the unsaved people around you.

It's About The Product, Not the Workers

5 After all, who is Apollos? Who is Paul? We are only God's servants through whom you believed the Good News. Each of us did the work the Lord gave us. 6 I planted the seed in your hearts, and Apollos watered it, but it was God who made it grow. 7 And it's not important who does the planting, or who does the watering. What's important is that God makes the seed *grow*; that the final result is a good crop. 8 The one who plants and the one who waters work together with the same purpose. And both will be rewarded for their own hard work. 9 For each of us - though we are different people with different methods and styles - are both God's workers. But *you* are God's *field*; you are God's *building*.

There is Only One Foundation - Christ

10 By His grace God gave me the privilege of laying the foundation of the good news of His grace in your lives. I have been careful to do the job right, like an expert builder. Now others - like Apollos - are building on it. But whoever is building on this foundation must be very careful how he builds. 11 For, first of all, there is no other foundation for your life other than the one we already have laid—Jesus Christ.

Not All Building Materials are Equal

12 But, secondly, there is a variety of materials that can be used to build on this foundation—gold, silver, jewels,

wood, hay, or straw. Some of these materials are worthless.

Our “Christianity” Will be Tested By Fire

13 But on the judgment day, fire will reveal what kind of material each person has used to build his Christian life. The fire will show if a person’s “Christianity” has any value - whether it’s just “a truckload of hay or a handful of diamonds” (Adrian Rogers). 14 If the person’s life-work — his superstructure — survives, that builder will receive a reward. 15 But if his life-work is burned up, it will be a great loss to the builder — his entire life’s work will go up in smoke. The person will survive, but with absolutely nothing to show for the time he spent in Christ. *[Some Christians will find that their entire lives reveal no spiritual growth, at all — nothing of eternal value.]*

A Holy Temple

16 Don’t you realize that all of you together — the Body of Christ — are the temple of God and that the Holy Spirit dwells in you? 17 God will destroy anyone who destroys this temple. *[Prophecy: satan will, one day, be destroyed; so will the muslims.]* For God’s temple is characterized by only one thing: holiness; and since you are His temple, that applies to *you: the only thing about your life that will not ultimately be “burned up” will be whatever is holy; whatever is totally approved by God.*

A Foolish World

18 Stop fooling yourselves. If you are using this world’s standards to measure how wise you, then you will need to become a fool by this world’s standards in order to be truly wise. 19 For this world always turns every spiritual

truth upside down, with the result that the wisdom of this world ends up being utter foolishness to God. As the Scriptures say,

“God has designed that those who reject His wisdom will be snared by their own cleverness.”

20 And again,

“The Lord knows all about the thoughts of the wise; and He knows they are worthless!”

In Christ, It's All Yours!

21 So, in conclusion, don't be so immature or think so small as to be boasting about following any particular Christian teacher. For everything in the universe belongs to you— 22 every Christian teacher - no matter who they are [*They all have something good to give to the Body of Christ.*], the whole world [You use whatever portion God has entrusted to you, but it's *all yours!*], life [and everything in it is a gift from God] and death [is a wonderful gift from God], the present and the future. Everything belongs to you, 23 because you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God, [*and everything belongs to God*].

FIRST CORINTHIANS 4

Stewards of the Mysteries of God

So look at Apollos and me as mere servants of Christ who have been put in charge of explaining God's mysteries. 2 Now, a person who is put in charge as a manager - a steward - must be faithful. 3 As for me, it matters very little how I might be evaluated by you or by any human

authority. I don't even trust my own judgment on this point. 4 My conscience is clear, but that doesn't prove I'm right. [*A clear conscience is not the final authority.*] It is the Lord himself who will examine me and decide.

Only God is Qualified to Judge Anyone

5 So don't make judgments about anyone ahead of time—before the Lord returns. For he will bring our darkest secrets to light and will reveal our private motives. [*A very sobering thought!*] Then God will give to each one whatever praise is due.

Every Christian Leader is a Gift from God

6 Dear brothers and sisters, I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I've been saying. If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures, you won't be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. 7 For what gives you the right to make such a judgment? What do you have that God hasn't given you? And if everything you have is from God, why boast as though it were not a gift?

Humility vs. Superiority

8 You think you already have everything you need. You think you are already rich. You have begun to reign in God's kingdom without us! I wish you really were reigning already, for then we would be reigning with you. 9 Instead, I sometimes think God has put us apostles on display, like prisoners of war at the end of a victor's parade, condemned to die. We have become a spectacle to the entire world—to people and angels alike.

10 Our dedication to Christ makes us look like fools, but you claim to be so wise in Christ! We are weak, but you

are so powerful! You are honored, but we are ridiculed. 11 Even now we go hungry and thirsty, and we don't have enough clothes to keep warm. We are often beaten and have no home. 12 We work wearily with our own hands to earn our living. We bless those who curse us. We are patient with those who abuse us. 13 We appeal gently when evil things are said about us. Yet we are treated like the world's garbage, like everybody's trash—right up to the present moment.

14 I am not writing these things to shame you, but to warn you as my beloved children. 15 For even if you had ten thousand others to teach you about Christ, you have only one spiritual father. For I became your father in Christ Jesus when I preached the Good News to you. 16 So I urge you to imitate me.

17 That's why I have sent Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord. He will remind you of how I follow Christ Jesus, just as I teach in all the churches wherever I go.

Real Christianity is Having Christ's Life

18 Some of you have become arrogant, thinking I will not visit you again. 19 But I will come—and soon—if the Lord lets me, and then I'll find out whether these arrogant people just give pretentious speeches or whether they really have God's power. 20 For authentic Christianity is not just a lot of talk; it is living by God's power. 21 Which do you choose? Should I come with a rod to punish you, or should I come with love and a gentle spirit?

FIRST CORINTHIANS 5

Terrible Sin in the Local Body

I can hardly believe the report about the sexual immorality going on among you—something that even pagans don't do. I am told that a man in your church is living in sin with his stepmother. 2 Instead of being so proud of yourselves, you should be mourning in sorrow and shame! And you should remove this man from your fellowship.

Dealing with Sin in the Local Body

3 Even though I am not with you in person, I am with you in the Spirit. And as though I were there, I have already passed judgment on this man 4 in the name of the Lord Jesus. You must call a meeting of the church. I will be present with you in spirit, and so will the power of our Lord Jesus. 5 Then you must throw this man out and hand him over to satan to punish him now, driving him to repentance and salvation so that he himself will be saved on the day the Lord returns.

The Effect of Sin in the Local Body

6 Your boasting about this is terrible. Don't you realize that this sin is like a little yeast that spreads through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old "yeast" by removing this wicked person from among you. Then you will be like a fresh batch of dough made without yeast, which is what you really are. Christ, our Passover Lamb, has been sacrificed for us. 8 So let us celebrate the festival, not with the old bread of wickedness and evil, but with the new bread of sincerity and truth.

***Biblical* "Separation" is from Sin in the Local Body**

9 When I wrote to you before, I told you not to associate with people who indulge in sexual sin. 10 But I wasn't

talking about unbelievers who indulge in sexual sin, or are greedy, or cheat people, or worship idols. You would have to leave this world to avoid people like that. 11 I meant that you are not to associate with anyone who claims to be a *believer* yet indulges in sexual sin, or is greedy, or worships idols, or is abusive, or is a drunkard, or cheats people. Don't even allow such people to take part in your weekly home church meal.

12 It isn't my responsibility to judge unbelievers, but it certainly is your responsibility to judge those inside the home church who are sinning. 13 God will judge the unsaved; but as the Scriptures say, "You must remove the sinner from among you."

FIRST CORINTHIANS 6

Christians Do Not Take Christians To Court

When one of you has a dispute with another believer, how dare you file a lawsuit and ask a secular court to decide the matter instead of taking it to other believers! 2 Don't you realize that someday we believers will judge the world? And since you are going to judge the world, can't you decide even these little things among yourselves? 3 Don't you realize that we will judge angels? So you should surely be able to resolve ordinary disputes in this life. 4 If you have legal disputes about such matters, why go to outside judges who are not respected by the church? 5 I am saying this to shame you. Isn't there anyone in all the church who is wise enough to decide these issues? 6 But instead, one believer sues another—right in front of unbelievers!

7 Even to have such lawsuits with one another is a defeat for you. Why not just accept the injustice and leave it at that? Why not let yourselves be cheated? 8 Instead, you yourselves are the ones who do wrong and cheat even your fellow believers.

Authentic Christianity Means Holy Living

9 Don't you realize that those who do wrong will not inherit the Kingdom of God? Don't fool yourselves. Those who indulge in sexual sin, or who worship idols, or commit adultery, or are male prostitutes, or practice homosexuality, 10 or are thieves, or greedy people, or drunkards, or are abusive, or cheat people—none of these will inherit the Kingdom of God. 11 Some of you were once like that. But you were cleansed; you were made holy; you were made right with God by calling on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

Our Bodies Belong to God

12 You say, "I am allowed to do anything"—but not everything is good for you. And even though "I am allowed to do anything," I must not become a slave to anything. 13 You say, "Food was made for the stomach, and the stomach for food." (This is true, though someday God will do away with both of them.) But you can't say that our bodies were made for sexual immorality. They were made for the Lord, and the Lord cares about our bodies. 14 And God will raise us from the dead by his power, just as he raised our Lord from the dead.

15 Don't you realize that your bodies are actually parts of Christ? Should a man take his body, which is part of Christ, and join it to a prostitute? Never! 16 And don't

you realize that if a man joins himself to a prostitute, he becomes one body with her? For the Scriptures say, "The two are united into one." 17 But the person who is joined to the Lord is one spirit with him.

18 Run from sexual sin! No other sin so clearly affects the body as this one does. For sexual immorality is a sin against your own body. 19 Don't you realize that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, 20 for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 7

Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter.

Concerning Married Believers

Yes, I agree: it would be best not to get married in such dangerous times as these. 2 But because sexual immorality is so prevalent in our society and is so easy to fall into, it still makes good sense for each Christian man to have his own wife, and each Christian woman to have her own husband.

3 God designed and intends a healthy sex-life in married couples. A godly husband fulfills his wife's sexual needs, and a godly wife fulfills her husband's needs. 4 Each partner willingly gives their body to their spouse.

5 The only reason for married couples to refrain from sexual relations is if they both agree that, for a specified

time, they are going to fast and pray about something important. When this time is up, they should resume sexual intimacy to prevent satan from causing either of them to fall into immorality.

6 It is my personal opinion - not a command from God, 7 that it would be best if believers remained single, just as I am. But I understand that God has not given everyone this particular ability.

8 So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's easier for you to serve the Lord if you stay unmarried, just as I am. 9 But if you can't control your natural desires toward the opposite sex, you should go ahead and marry. In such a case, you will be better able to serve the Lord married than continually distracted by natural physical desires.

10 But for those who are married, I have a command that comes not from me, but from the Lord. A wife must not leave her husband to serve the Lord. 11 But if she does leave him to better serve the Lord, let her remain single or else be reconciled to him. And the husband must not leave his wife to serve the Lord.

12 Now, I will speak to the rest of you - though I do not have a direct command from the Lord.

If a dedicated Christian man has a wife who is not a believer but she is happy to continue living with him in peace and harmony, he must not leave her. 13 And if a Christian woman, dedicated to honoring the Lord, has a husband who is not a believer and he is happy to continue living with her in peace and harmony, she must not leave him. 14 For the Christian wife brings Christ into

her marriage and family, and the Christian husband brings Christ into his marriage and family. Separation or divorce would be destructive to their children. But by maintaining a peaceful, godly relationship, the children remain blessed.

15 But if the unsaved husband or wife resents and resists alignment with God in the marriage, and insists on leaving, let them go. In such cases the Christian husband or wife is no longer bound to the other and can get a divorce; for God has called us to live in peace, not turmoil and friction.

16 But don't forget that your unsaved spouses who are happy to remain harmoniously united with you in marriage may eventually get saved as they see Christ in you.

Concerning Pre-saved Circumstances

17 There are no rituals to keep or to undo, once you become saved. Each of you should continue to live in whatever situation the Lord has placed you, and remain as you were when God first called you. This is my rule for all the home groups. 18 For instance, a man who was circumcised before he became a believer should not try to reverse it. And the man who was uncircumcised when he became a believer should not be circumcised now. 19 For it makes no difference to God whether or not a man has been circumcised in keeping with man's laws. The important thing for all of us, believers, is to keep God's laws.

20 Yes, each of you should remain as you were when God called you. 21 Are you a slave? Don't let that worry you—but if you get a chance to be free, you are free to take it. 22 And remember, even if you were a slave when the

Lord called you, you are now free in the Lord, and if you were free when the Lord called you, you are now a slave of Christ. 23 God paid a high price for you, so don't remain a slave of this ungodly world system. 24 Each of you, dear brothers and sisters, are free to remain as you were when God first called you.

Concerning Single Young Men and Women

25 Now regarding your question about the young women who are not yet married. I do not have a command from the Lord for them. But the Lord in his mercy has given me wisdom that can be trusted, and I will share it with you. 26 Because of the present crisis, I think it is best for them to remain single.

27 If you have a wife, do not seek to end the marriage. If you do not have a wife, do not seek to get married. 28 But if you marry, it is not a sin. And if a young woman marries, it is not a sin. However, those who get married at this time will have troubles, and I am trying to spare you those problems.

29 But let me say this, dear brothers and sisters: Jesus is coming, soon! So, in the brief time remaining, those with wives should not focus only on their marriage. 30 Those who weep or who rejoice or who buy things should not be absorbed by their weeping or their joy or their possessions. 31 Those who use the things of the world should not become attached to them. For this world as we know it will soon pass away.

32 *I want you to be free from the concerns of this life, and focused on serving the Lord.* An unmarried man can spend his time doing the Lord's work and thinking how to

please Him. 33 But a married man has to think about his earthly responsibilities and how to please his wife. 34 His interests are divided. In the same way, a woman who is no longer married or has never been married can be devoted to the Lord and separated unto Him in body and in spirit. But a married woman has to think about her earthly responsibilities and how to please her husband. 35 I am saying this for your benefit, not to place restrictions on you. I want you to do whatever will help you serve the Lord best, with as few distractions as possible.

36 But if a man thinks that he's treating the young woman who loves him improperly and that they are in danger of inevitably giving in to their passion, let them marry, if they so desire. It is not a sin. 37 But if he has decided firmly not to marry, and there is no urgency from her, and he is able to control his passion, he does well not to marry. 38 So those who marry the one they love do well, and those who are able to remain unmarried do even better.

39 Once married, a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. If they have divorced, or her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, as long as her new husband truly loves the Lord. 40 But in my opinion, due to the perilous times in which we now live, in most cases it would be better for her to remain unmarried, and I think I am giving you counsel from God's Spirit when I say this.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 8

Now regarding your question about whether it's right to eat food that has been offered to idols. It doesn't matter that we think we know all about this issue. We like to build ourselves up by thinking that we know all the answers, but it is our love, not our 'knowledge', that builds up the Body of Christ. 2 The fact is that none of us has all the answers. 3 But our 'knowledge' doesn't matter very much to God. What matters to God is our love — for Him and for each other.

4 So, what about eating meat that has been offered to idols? Well, it may be obvious to us that that an idol is not really a god, and that there is really only one God, so, meat that has been offered to idols is no different than any other meat. 5 To the unsaved, there are many so-called 'gods' - both heavenly and earthly, and some of these people worship many gods and many lords. 6 But for us, Christians,

There is one God, the Father,
by whom all things were created,
and for whom we live.
And there is one Lord, Jesus Christ,
through whom all things were created,
and through whom we live.

7 However, not all believers fully understand this. Some are accustomed to thinking of idols as being real, so when they eat food that has been offered to idols, they think of the meat as having been dedicated to real gods, and it violates their weak consciences to eat it. 8 We know that we neither gain nor lose God's approval by what we eat.

9 But we must be careful that the freedom we have through our knowledge does not cause others with a weaker conscience to stumble. 10 If other believers see you—with your “superior knowledge”—eating in the temple of an idol, they may be encouraged to violate their conscience by eating food that has been offered to an idol. 11 So because of your superior knowledge, a weak believer for whom Christ died will be led away from Christ - possibly far from Him. 12 And when you sin against other believers by encouraging them to do something they believe is wrong, you are sinning against Christ. 13 So if eating meat offered to idols causes another believer to sin, I will never eat that kind of meat again as long as I live—for I don’t want to cause another believer to stumble.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 9

Am I not as free as anyone else? Am I not an apostle? Haven’t I seen Jesus our Lord with my own eyes? Isn’t it because of my work that you belong to the Lord? 2 Even if others think I am not an apostle, I certainly am to you. You yourselves are proof that I am the Lord’s apostle.

3 This is my answer to those who question my authority. 4 Don’t we have the right to live in your homes and share your meals? 5 Don’t we have the right to bring a believing wife with us as the other apostles and the Lord’s brothers do, and as Peter does? 6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have to work to support ourselves?

7 What soldier has to pay his own expenses? What farmer plants a vineyard and doesn’t have the right to eat some of its fruit? What shepherd cares for a flock of sheep and isn’t allowed to drink some of the milk? 8 Am I

expressing merely a human opinion, or does the law say the same thing? 9 For the law of Moses says, "You must not muzzle an ox to keep it from eating as it treads out the grain." Was God thinking only about oxen when he said this? 10 Wasn't he actually speaking to us? Yes, it was written for us, so that the one who plows and the one who threshes the grain might both expect a share of the harvest.

11 Since we have planted spiritual seed among you, aren't we entitled to a harvest of physical food and drink? 12 If you support others who preach to you, shouldn't we have an even greater right to be supported? But we have never used this right. We would rather put up with anything than be an obstacle to the Good News about Christ.

13 Don't you realize that those who work in the temple get their meals from the offerings brought to the temple? And those who serve at the altar get a share of the sacrificial offerings. 14 In the same way, the Lord ordered that those who preach the Good News should be supported by those who benefit from it. 15 Yet I have never used any of these rights. And I am not writing this to suggest that I want to start now. In fact, I would rather die than lose my right to boast about preaching without charge. 16 Yet preaching the Good News is not something I can boast about. I am compelled by God to do it. How terrible for me if I didn't preach the Good News!

17 If I were doing this on my own initiative, I would deserve payment. But I have no choice, for God has given me this sacred trust. 18 What then is my pay? It is

the opportunity to preach the Good News without charging anyone. That's why I never demand my rights when I preach the Good News.

*THERE IS NO, ONE, CORRECT "CHRISTIANITY"
ADAPTING TO EVERY CULTURE TO WIN FOLK TO CHRIST
PAUL'S MODEL FOR MINISTRY*

19 Even though I am a free man with no master, I have become a slave to all people to bring many to Christ. 20 When I was with the Judaeans, I lived like a Judaeans Jew to bring the Jews to Christ. When I was with those who follow the Mosaic law, I too lived under that law. Even though I am not subject to the Mosaic law, I did this so I could bring to Christ those who are under the Mosaic law. 21 When I am with the Gentiles who do not follow the Jewish law, I too live apart from that law so I can bring them to Christ. But I do not ignore the law of God; I obey the law of Christ.

22 When I am with those who are weak, I share their weakness, for I want to bring the weak to Christ. Yes, I try to find common ground with everyone, doing everything I can to save some. 23 I do everything to spread the Good News and share in its blessings.

24 Don't you realize that in a race everyone runs, but only one person gets the prize? So run to win! 25 All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize. 26 So I run with purpose in every step. I am not just shadowboxing. 27 I discipline my body like an athlete, training it to do what it should. Otherwise, I fear

that after preaching to others I myself might be disqualified.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 10

Unity by Association

Let us not forget, dear brothers and sisters, about our ancestors in the wilderness long ago. **All of them were guided by a cloud** that moved ahead of them, and **all of them walked through the sea** on dry ground. 2 In the cloud and in the sea, **all of them were baptized as followers of Moses**. 3 **All of them ate the same spiritual food**, 4 and **all of them drank the same spiritual water**. For they drank from the spiritual rock that traveled with them, and that rock was Christ.

5 [Yet God was not pleased with most of them, and their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. 6 These things happened as a warning to us, so that we would not **crave evil things** as they did, 7 or **worship idols** as some of them did. As the Scriptures say, "The people celebrated with feasting and drinking, and they indulged in pagan revelry." 8 And we must not engage in **sexual immorality** as some of them did, causing 23,000 of them to die in one day. 9 Nor should we **put Christ to the test**, as some of them did and then died from snakebites. 10 And don't **grumble** as some of them did, and then were destroyed by the angel of death. 11 These things happened to them as examples for us. They were written down to warn us who live at the end of the age. 12 If you think you are standing strong, be careful not to fall. 13 The temptations in your life are no different from what others experience. And God is faithful. He will not allow the temptation to be more than you can withstand.

When you are tempted, he will show you a way out so that you can endure.]

14 So, my dear friends, carefully avoid worshipping idols by association! 15 You are reasonable people. Decide for yourselves if what I am saying is true. 16 When we bless the cup at the Lord's Table, aren't we **uniting in the blood of Christ**? And when we break the bread, aren't we **uniting in the body of Christ**? 17 And though we are many, **we all eat from one loaf of bread**, showing that we are **one body**. 18 Think about the people of Israel. Weren't they **united by eating the sacrifices at the altar**?

19 What am I trying to say? Am I saying that food offered to idols has some significance, or that idols are real gods? 20 No, not at all. But I am saying that these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God, and I don't want you to **be united with demons by association**. 21 You cannot drink from the cup of the Lord and from the cup of demons, too. You cannot eat at the Lord's Table and at the table of demons, too. 22 What? Do we dare to rouse the Lord's jealousy? Do you think we are stronger than he is?

23 You say, "As a Christian under grace, I am no longer under the Old Testament Jewish Law: I am allowed to disregard the Jewish laws"— True, but not everything you *can* do is good for you. You say, "I am allowed to do anything I believe honors the Lord"—True, but not everything that edifies you is beneficial to others. 24 Don't be concerned only for your own good but also for the good of others.

Matters of Conscience

25 So you may eat any meat that is sold in the marketplace without raising questions of conscience. 26 For “the earth is the Lord’s, and everything in it.” — there are no other gods.

27 If someone who isn’t a believer asks you home for dinner, you are free to accept the invitation if you want to. And you are free to eat whatever is offered to you, without raising questions of conscience.

28 (Unless another believer is concerned about it and tells you, “This meat was offered to an idol.” In that case, don’t eat it — out of consideration for the conscience of the one who told you. 29 It might not be a matter of conscience for you, but it is for the other person.)

For my freedom is not limited by what someone else thinks. 30 If I can thank God for the food and enjoy it, there is nothing wrong with my eating it.

31 But, whether we eat or drink, or whatever we do, we do it all for the glory of God. 32 We avoid giving offense to anybody, whether Jews, Gentiles, or the Body of Christ. 33 I follow this principle, myself: I try to avoid offending everyone in everything I do. I don’t just put my personal desires and principles first; I’m always careful not to offend others, so that I can lead as many people as possible to Christ.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 11

1 And you should imitate me, just as I imitate Christ.

God’s Order of Authority

2 I am so glad that you always keep me in your thoughts, and that you are following the teachings I passed on to you. 3 Here is a very important matter I want you to understand: There is a divine order of authority. The head of woman is man, the head of every man is Christ, and the head of Christ is God. 4 A man dishonors Christ, his authority, if he covers his head while praying or prophesying. 5 But a woman dishonors man, her authority, if she prays or prophesies without a covering on her head, for this is the same as having no authority, no covering, at all. She might as well cut her hair like a man. 6 Yes, if she refuses to wear a head covering, showing that she is a woman under authority of man, she should cut off all her hair like a man! But since it is shameful for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off like a man, she should wear a covering.

7 A man should not wear anything on his head when worshiping, for man is made in God's image and is a reflection of God's glory, whereas woman reflects man's glory. 8 For the first man didn't come from woman, but the first woman came from man. 9 And man was not made for woman, but woman was made for man. 10 For this reason, and because fallen angels are watching to take advantage, a woman should wear a covering on her head to show she is under man's authority.

11 But in the Body of Christ, women and men are not in two distinct categories. 12 For although the first woman came from man, every subsequent man was born from a woman, and, actually, both men and women - and everything else in the universe - comes from God, making us all equal under Him, and making Him the final Authority over all.

13 Use your own judgment. Is it right for a woman to take the man's place and authority? 14 Isn't it obvious that it's disgraceful for a man to act or dress like a woman? 15 And isn't it obvious that long hair is the pride and joy of women for the very reason that it has been given to them as a beautiful covering? 16 But if anyone wants to argue about this, I can only say that this is our policy in all the other Home Groups.

The Weekly Fellowship Meal

17 But in the next matter, I cannot praise you. For it sounds as if more harm than good is done when you meet together. 18 First, I hear that you are squabbling during your weekly Home Church assemblies, and to some extent I believe it. 19 But, of course, there will be divisions among you as long as those of you who think you are right insist on having things your way!

20 During your weekly get-together, you have forgotten the most important thing: the remembrance of the Lord's Supper. 21 You are more interested in your bellies than in anything or anybody else! You are not waiting for each other, to eat all together in a loving, family fashion. Some of you are thinking only of yourselves. As a result, some members of the group are going hungry while others are gorging and getting drunk. 22 This is disgraceful! You have your own homes for eating and drinking all you please! Do not disgrace the weekly Home Church meal, nor treat the poor among you so shamefully! What am I supposed to say about this kind of behavior? Do you expect me to praise you? Well, I certainly will not praise you for this!

23 For I have passed on to you what I received from the Lord himself. On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took a lump of bread 24 and gave thanks to God for it. Then he broke it in pieces and said, "This is a symbol of my body, which was broken for you. Break the bread, like this, in remembrance of me." 25 Again, as an example, he took a single large cup of wine after supper, saying, "This cup of wine represents the new covenant between God and his people—an agreement confirmed with my blood. When you pass the cup of wine at your weekly Home Church meetings, do it in remembrance of me." 26 So, by eating the bread and drinking the cup in this way each week, we celebrate the sufficiency of the Lord's death for our Salvation, until he comes again.

27 So anyone who treats this weekly ritual in an unworthy manner is just as guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord as those who crucified Him! 28 That is why you should be careful to have the right attitude toward Christ before eating the bread and drinking the cup. 29 For if you eat the bread or drink the cup in a way that dishonors the body of Christ, you are eating and drinking God's judgment upon yourself. 30 It is for this very reason — dishonoring Christ — that many of you are weak and sick and some have even died.

31 But if we will carefully honor Christ, ourselves, we will not have to experience God's discipline. 32 When God disciplines us, He does it so we will not bring upon ourselves the same consequences that the unsaved who do not honor Him suffer.

33 So, my dear brothers and sisters, when you gather each week for the Fellowship Meal and to celebrate the

Lord's Supper, wait for each other. 34 If you are really hungry, eat at home before or after the meeting so you won't bring judgment upon yourselves when you meet together. I'll give you instructions about the other matters you asked about, after I arrive.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 12

Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don't want you to misunderstand this.

2 You now know that before you became Christians, you had no spiritual discernment, so you were led astray and followed the crowd in worshiping many false gods. 3 But you don't need to worry about being so easily deceived into following false gods and false leaders, now. Their view of Jesus is the litmus test. No one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one will be apt to say that Jesus is Lord, unless yielded to the Holy Spirit.

4 Now, there are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. 5 There are different ways to serve the Lord, but we all serve the same Lord. 6 God may work in different ways in and through each of us, but it is the same God who is doing the work.

7 The Holy Spirit gives each of us in the Body of Christ at least one spiritual gift so we can help build each other up in the Body of Christ.

8 To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. 9 The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift

of healing. 10 He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. 11 It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

12 The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. 13 Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into the one body by the one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

14 Yes, the body is made up of many very different parts, not just one part. 15 If the foot says, "I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand," that does not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "I am not part of the body because I am not an eye," would that make it any less a part of the body? 17 If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

18 But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. 19 How strange a body would be if it had only one part! 20 Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. 21 The eye can never say to the hand, "I don't need you." The head can't say to the feet, "I don't need you."

22 In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. 23 And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, 24 while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. 25 This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. 26 If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

27 All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. 28 Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.

29 Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? 30 Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! 31 The purpose of every part is to best help the body. So you should earnestly desire the gifts that will enable you to be most helpful to the Body of Christ.

But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 13

It doesn't matter if I can speak all the languages of the world: if I don't love others, I am only making empty noise. 2 It doesn't matter if I am a gifted speaker, or if I know everything there is to know about the Bible and life, or if I have so much faith that I can move mountains: if I don't love people, I am a nobody. 3 It doesn't matter if I give away everything I own to feed the poor or even sacrifice my body: if I don't love others, it is all a waste of time.

4 Love is long-suffering and remains kind while it is suffering. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud 5 or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. 6 It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. 7 Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

8 Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! 9 Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! 10 But when the time of perfection comes, these partial things will become useless.

11 When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. 12 Now we see things imperfectly, like looking through distorted glass, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. What I know about God, at this time,

is partial and incomplete, but then I will know Him completely, just as He knows me completely.

13 Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 14

So, make love your highest goal! But you should also desire the special abilities the Spirit gives—especially the ability to testify. 2 For if you have the ability to speak in unknown languages, you will be talking only to God, since others around you won't be able to understand you. You will be speaking by the power of the Spirit, but it will all be unintelligible to the rest of the Home Church. 3 But one who testifies strengthens others, encourages them, and comforts them. 4 A person who speaks in unknown languages may be edified personally, but one who shares a word of testimony strengthens the entire church.

5 I wish you could all speak in other languages so you could reach more people with the gospel, but even more I wish you could all share your testimony in the Body. For testifying is greater than speaking in foreign languages, unless someone interprets what you are saying so that the whole church will be built up.

6 Dear brothers and sisters, if I should come to you speaking in a foreign language, how would that help you? But if I bring you a revelation or some special knowledge or prophecy or teaching, that will be helpful. 7 Even lifeless instruments like the flute or the harp must play the notes clearly, or no one will recognize the

melody. 8 And if the bugler doesn't sound a clear call, how will the soldiers know they are being called to battle?

9 It's the same for you. If you speak to people in words they don't understand, how will they know what you are saying? You might as well be talking into empty space.

10 There are many different languages in the world, and every language has meaning. 11 But if I don't understand a language, I will be a foreigner to someone who speaks it, and the one who speaks it will be a foreigner to me. 12 And the same is true for you. Since you are so eager to have the special abilities the Spirit gives, seek those that will strengthen the whole church.

13 So anyone who speaks in a foreign language should pray also for the ability to interpret what has been said. 14 For if I pray in a language that is foreign to me, my spirit is praying, but I don't understand what I am saying.

15 Well then, what shall I do? If I pray in a foreign language, I will also pray in words I understand. If I sing in a foreign language, I will also sing in words I understand. 16 For if you praise God only in a foreign language, how can those who don't understand you praise God along with you? How can they join you in giving thanks when they don't understand what you are saying? 17 You will be giving thanks very well, but it won't strengthen the people who hear you.

18 It so happens - praise the Lord - that I happen to be fluent in more foreign languages than any of you. 19 But in a Home Church meeting I would rather speak five

understandable words to help others than ten thousand words in an unknown language.

20 Dear brothers and sisters, don't be childish in your understanding of these things. Be innocent as babies when it comes to evil, but be mature in understanding matters of this kind. 21 It is written in the Scriptures:

"I will speak to my own people
through strange languages
and through the lips of foreigners.
But even then, they will not listen to me,"
says the Lord.

22 So you see that speaking in foreign languages is a sign, not for believers, but for unbelievers. Testifying, however, is for the benefit of believers, not unbelievers. 23 Even so, if unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your church meeting and hear everyone speaking in foreign languages, they will think you are crazy. 24 But if all of you are giving testimonies of the good things you are learning and receiving from God, and unbelievers or people who don't understand these things come into your meeting, they will be convicted of sin and judged by what you say. 25 As they listen, their secret needs and questions will be exposed, and they will fall to their knees and worship God, declaring, "God is truly here among you."

26 Well, my brothers and sisters, let's summarize. When you meet together, one will sing, another will teach, another will tell some special revelation God has given, a foreigner among you will speak in a foreign language,

and another will interpret what is said. But everything that is done must strengthen all of you.

27 In your weekly Home Church meetings, no more than two or three should speak in foreign languages. They must speak one at a time, and someone must interpret what they say. 28 But if no one is present who can interpret, they must be silent in your church meeting and speak to God privately.

29 Let two or three people testify, and let the others evaluate what is said. 30 But if someone is testifying and another person receives a revelation from the Lord, the one who is speaking must stop. 31 In this way, all who testify will have a turn to speak, one after the other, so that everyone will learn and be encouraged. 32 Remember that people who testify are in control of their spirit and can take turns. 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace, as in all the meetings of God's holy people.

34 Women should control themselves during the Home Church meetings. It is not proper for them to do all, or even most, of the talking. They should let the men lead, just as the Bible teaches. 35 If they have questions, they should discuss them with their husbands at home, for it is improper and counter-productive to the health of the Body for women to dominate in Home Church meetings.

36 Do not argue with me about these things. God's revelation didn't originate with you Corinthians! You are not the only ones who have been given the gospel! 37 If any of you claim to be a prophet or think you are spiritual, you will recognize that what I am saying comes

right from the Lord himself. 38 But if you can not see this, it shows you are not as spiritually mature as you may think.

39 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be eager to testify, and don't forbid foreigners in your group to testify in their own languages. 40 But be sure that everything is done to build up the Body and in an orderly fashion.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 15

Let me now remind you, dear brothers and sisters, of the Good News I preached to you before. You welcomed it then, and you still stand firm in it. 2 It is this Good News that saves you if you continue to believe the message I told you—unless, of course, you believed something that was never true in the first place.

3 I passed on to you what was most important and what had also been passed on to me. Christ died for our sins, just as the Scriptures said. 4 He was buried, and he was raised from the dead on the third day, just as the Scriptures said. 5 He was seen by Peter and then by the Twelve. 6 After that, he was seen by more than 500 of his followers at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have died. 7 Then he was seen by James and later by all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as though I had been born at the wrong time, I also saw him. 9 For I am the least of all the apostles. In fact, I'm not even worthy to be called an apostle after the way I persecuted God's church.

10 But whatever I am now, it is all because God poured out his special favor [His grace] on me—and not without

results. For I have worked harder than any of the other apostles; yet it was not I but God who was working through me by his grace. 11 So it makes no difference whether I preach or they preach, for we all proclaim the same message you have already believed.

12 But tell me this—since the message we proclaim is based on the fact that Christ rose from the dead, why are some of you saying there will be no resurrection of the dead? 13 For if there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised either. 14 And if Christ has not been raised, then all our preaching is false, and your faith in our message about Christ is worthless. 15 And, also, we apostles would all be lying about God—for we have said that God raised Christ from the grave. But that can't be true if there is no such thing as a resurrection of the dead. 16 If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised. 17 And if Christ has not been raised, then your faith in Christ is worthless and you are still under condemnation for all your sins. 18 If Christ did not pay for our sins and rise from the dead as proof that His payment was accepted by God, all who have died believing in Christ as their Savior are lost! 19 And if our hope in Christ is only for this life [because there is no afterlife], we are worse off than the rest of the world! [because, at least, they are free to live as they please, and they are not persecuted for what they believe.]

20 But in fact, Christ has been raised from the dead. He is the first of a great harvest that will include all who have died believing in Him.

21 So you see, just as death came into the world through a man, now the resurrection from the dead has begun through another man. 22 Just as everyone dies because we all belong to Adam, everyone who belongs to Christ will be given new life. 23 But there is an order to this resurrection: Christ was raised as the first of the harvest; then all who belong to Christ will be raised when he comes back.

24 After that the end will come, when he will turn the Kingdom over to God the Father, having destroyed every ruler and authority and power. 25 For Christ must reign until he humbles all his enemies beneath his feet. 26 And the last enemy to be destroyed is death. 27 For the Scriptures say, "God has put all things under his authority." (Of course, when it says "all things are under his authority," that does not include God the Father, himself, who gave Christ his authority.) 28 Then, when all things are under his authority, the Son will put himself under God the Father's authority, so that God the Father, who gave his Son authority over all things, will be utterly supreme over everything everywhere.

29 If the dead will not be raised, what point is there in people being baptized for those who are dead? Why do it unless the dead will someday rise again?

30 And why should we ourselves risk our lives hour by hour? 31 For I swear, dear brothers and sisters, that I face death daily. This is as certain as my pride in what Christ Jesus our Lord has done in you. 32 And what value was there in fighting wild beasts in the arena of Ephesus —if there will be no resurrection from the dead? If there is no resurrection, "Let's feast and drink while we can, for

tomorrow we die!" 33 Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character." 34 Think carefully about what is right, and stop sinning. For to your shame I say that some of you don't know God at all.

35 But someone may ask, "How will people who have died come to life again? How can they have a body now that it has all decayed?" 36 What foolish questions! When you put a seed into the ground, it doesn't grow into a plant unless it dies first. 37 And what you put in the ground is not the plant that will grow, but only a bare seed of wheat or whatever you are planting. 38 Then God gives it the new body he wants it to have. A different plant grows from each kind of seed. 39 Similarly there are different kinds of flesh—one kind for humans, another for animals, another for birds, and another for fish.

40 There are also bodies in the heavens and bodies on the earth. The glory of the heavenly bodies is different from the glory of the earthly bodies. 41 The sun has one kind of glory, while the moon and stars each have another kind. And even the stars differ from each other in their glory.

42 It is the same way with the resurrection of the dead. Our earthly bodies are planted in the ground when we die, but they will be raised to live forever. 43 Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. 44 They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

45 The Scriptures tell us, "The first man, Adam, became a living person." But the last Adam—that is, Christ—is a life-giving Spirit. 46 What comes first is the natural body, then the spiritual body comes later. 47 Adam, the first man, was made from the dust of the earth, while Christ, the second man, came from heaven. 48 Earthly people are like the earthly man, and heavenly people are like the heavenly man. 49 Just as we are now like the earthly man, we will someday be like the heavenly man.

50 What I am saying, dear brothers and sisters, is that our physical bodies cannot inherit the spiritual Kingdom of God. These dying bodies cannot inherit what will last forever.

51 But let me reveal to you a wonderful secret! Not all believers will have to die to be transformed! 52 A day is coming when the transformation of living believers will happen in a moment, in the blink of an eye, at "the last trump". For when the trumpet sounds, those who have died will be transformed and raised to live forever. And we who are living will also be transformed. 53 For our dying bodies must be transformed into bodies that will never die; our mortal bodies must be transformed into immortal bodies.

54 Then, when our dying bodies have been transformed into bodies that will never die, this Scripture will be fulfilled:

"Death is swallowed up in victory.
55 O death, where is your victory?
O death, where is your sting?"

56 For sin is the sting that results in death, and the law gives sin its power. 57 But thank God! He gives us victory over both sin and death through our Lord Jesus Christ!

58 So, my dear brothers and sisters, be strong and immovable in your faith. Always serve the Lord enthusiastically, for you know that nothing you do in the Lord is wasted.

FIRST CORINTHIANS 16

Now regarding your question about the money being collected for God's people in Jerusalem. You should follow the same procedure I gave to the churches in Galatia. 2 When you meet together as a Home Church each Sunday, set aside a portion of the money collected. Don't wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once. 3 When I come, I will write letters of recommendation for the messengers you choose to deliver your gift to Jerusalem. 4 And if it seems appropriate for me to go along, they can travel with me.

5 I am coming to visit you after I have been to Macedonia, for I am planning to travel through Macedonia. 6 Perhaps I will stay awhile with you, possibly all winter, and then you can send me on my way to my next destination. 7 This time I don't want to make just a short visit and then go right on. I want to come and stay awhile, if the Lord will let me. 8 In the meantime, I will be staying here at Ephesus until the Festival of Pentecost. 9 There is a wide-open door for a great work here, although many oppose me.

10 When Timothy comes, please make him feel welcome. He is doing the Lord's work, just as I am. 11 Don't let anyone treat him with contempt. Send him on his way with your blessing when he returns to me. I expect him to come with the other believers.

12 Now about our brother Apollos—I urged him to visit you with the other believers, but he was not willing to go right now. He will see you later when he has the opportunity.

13 Be on guard. Stand firm in the faith. Be courageous. Be strong. 14 And do everything with love.

15 You know that Stephanas and his household were the first of the harvest of believers in Greece, and they are spending their lives in service to God's people. I urge you, dear brothers and sisters, 16 to submit to them and others like them who serve with such devotion. 17 I am very glad that Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus have come here. They have been providing the help you weren't here to give me. 18 They have been a wonderful encouragement to me, as they have been to you. You must show your appreciation to all who serve so well.

19 The Home Churches here in the province of Asia send greetings in the Lord, as do Aquila and Priscilla and all the others who gather in their home for church meetings. 20 All the brothers and sisters here send greetings to you. Greet each other with a loving hug.

21 HERE IS MY SALUTATION IN MY OWN HANDWRITING
—PAUL.

22 If anyone does not love the Lord, that person is cursed. May our Lord come, soon!

23 May the grace of the Lord Jesus be with you.

24 My love to all of you, in Christ Jesus.