



**one body.**

**Daily Devotions in  
— 1 Corinthians**

## How to use this book

- This series of devotionals is designed to take you through 1 Corinthians over 54 days. This is manageable!
- This study has been written by number of people from across our church community, aimed at giving you a broad and balanced perspective of the book.
  - Our aim is to help you create a daily rhythm for study, prayer, and encounter. So each week Monday -Thursday are study and prayer days, Friday is a day to reflect and encounter God, Saturday is a rest (it is the Sabbath after all!) and Sunday is an opportunity to encounter God as we gather for our meetings.
- We suggest setting aside a regular time to study each day. You will need 10-15 minutes per day to study effectively and at least 20 minutes to reflect each Friday.
- Begin every study session with a prayer. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you as you read. He guides us in truth (John 16:13) and we need his help when studying his Word.
- Aim to stick with one Bible translation. We recommend any of the following: NIV, ESV, NLT, CET or NRSV. Read the passage listed for each day before reading the daily reflection.
- Complete you time of study in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to guide you.

## About 1 Corinthians

'Imagine a church racked by divisions. Powerful leaders promote themselves against each other, each with his band of loyal followers. One of them is having an affair with his stepmother, and, instead of disciplining him, many in the church boast of his freedom in Christ to behave in such a way. Believers sue each other in secular courts; some like to visit prostitutes. As a backlash against this rampant immorality, another faction in the church is promoting celibacy—complete sexual abstinence for all believers—as the Christian ideal. Still other debates rage about how decisively new Christians should break from their pagan past. Disagreements about men's and women's roles in the church add to the confusion. As if all this were not enough, alleged prophecies and speaking in tongues occur regularly, but not always in constructive fashion. A significant number of these immature Christians do not even believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ!'<sup>1</sup>

Welcome to the world of Corinth! Whilst this doesn't sound like our church, many of the issues this church faced are issues we continue to face today. How do we celebrate our diversity as a church? What should we believe about sex and sexuality? What should we make of prophecy and speaking in tongues? What roles should men and women have? Paul's letter written around 51-53 CE seeks to address the issues the Corinthian church faced and helps us answer the questions we face today.

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1. Craig L. Bloomberg, 1 CORINTHIANS THE NIV APPLICATION COMMENTARY (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), pg. 9.

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## Monday 20<sup>th</sup> March – Day 1 – 1:1-17 – A call to unity

Paul begins his first letter to the church in Corinth with his usual greetings. He is writing to a group of Christians who have encountered the grace of God (v4), the work and gifts of the Spirit (v7) and who are walking in faithfulness with Jesus (v8,9). Yet, in the midst of this, there is deep division within the church. As we will see, this is a church divided across many lines. Paul appeals for unity and he doesn't do this on the basis of his authority as an apostle but on the work of Jesus (v17). We can only walk in unity with one another as Christians when we live out of what Jesus has done for us in uniting us to himself. This all leaves you with some questions to consider. Is your life self-centred or Christ-centred? Are you living in unity with every member of our church family? Do you need to take steps towards reconciliation with anyone? Do you need to forgive or seek forgiveness?

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## Tuesday 21<sup>st</sup> March – Day 2 – 1:18-31 – Wisdom from above

By any of the world's standards the gospel message appears stupid - how can a man dying on a cross defeat death itself and place me in right standing with God? Logically this makes no sense. But this is the hope and joy of all Christians: at the cross God defeated the powers of this world and paid the penalty for our sin with his blood (Col. 2:10-15). Therefore, we find two groups of people in this world. Those who reject, refuse or ignore the gospel and those who accept its message. There is no in between. Those who reject the gospel find it to be a stumbling block which they will continue to trip over (v23). But those who accept the message find that Christ is a cornerstone on which they can build their life (1 Peter 2:7). As you approach today, consider how you are building your life on the truth of the gospel. Are your foundations shaky or are they steadfast?

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**Wednesday 22<sup>nd</sup> March – Day 3 – 2: 1-10 –  
Keep sharing your faith!**

When sharing the good news about Jesus, we sometimes walk away wishing we had explained it better, and regretting the bits we missed out. Paul says here that he came to the Corinthians in “weakness and fear”. His message wasn’t with persuasive words BUT it was with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power. We are not called to be salespeople, with persuasive tactics. God calls us to share the good news and trust his Spirit to be at work in the hearts of the people we speak to. Our reading today talks about God’s “mysterious and hidden wisdom” which will sound strange to the people of today, unless it is revealed to them by His Spirit. Thank God for revealing his plan of salvation to you. Who could you share the good news with today, trusting the Holy Spirit to be at work.

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**Thursday 23<sup>rd</sup> March – Day 4 – 2: 11-16 –  
Knowing God’s wisdom**

Although many clever people today understand nothing of the gospel, God gives ordinary people, most of them “nobodies”, the ability to recognise and trust Jesus Christ. Not only that, but God wants to share his thoughts with us. How amazing is that? We won’t know what someone is thinking unless they tell us. In the same way, God has to share with us what is on His mind, through the Holy Spirit, whom He has sent to live within us. He teaches us what God has freely given to us. To non-believers it may seem nonsense, but we can talk about new birth, and the joy of God’s presence in our lives. People without the Holy Spirit might not have the foggiest idea what we’re talking about, but we know the reality of it for ourselves! Thank God for his Holy Spirit who is living within you. Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal more about God to you, your friends and family.

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## Friday 24<sup>h</sup> March – Day 5 - Reflection

This week, we've been looking at the Corinthian church who had encountered the grace of God but were still deeply divided. Paul was appealing for unity on the basis of their union with Jesus. Paul also talks about God's wisdom which seems foolish by the world's standards, but is revealed to us by the Holy Spirit.

### Praying the Bible: 1 Corinthians 1:18-31

- Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.
- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Think about what that word or phrase means to you.
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.

### Take action:

- Why not talk to someone at church outside of your usual family/friendship group?
- Is there someone you struggle with either at church, or in your family? Pray that God will bless them.
- Could you share the good news with someone about Jesus – or invite them to Alpha?

### Praise:

Thank the Holy Spirit for revealing God's plan of salvation to you.

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## Monday 27<sup>th</sup> March – Day 8 – 3:1-9 – Time to grow up

The believers were acting like small children, squabbling among themselves about who was the better leader! Paul reprimands them, saying they are behaving like others in the world, i.e. those who don't follow Jesus. He says they cannot be 'fed' with the spiritual knowledge and insight which they should be receiving, as they are acting like babies who can only take in milk for their nourishment.

The important thing for them to recognise is that all the leaders have different roles to play. One leader 'plants' the church, initiating new things; another leader 'waters' by developing the new thing that has been planted. But Jesus is the Head of the Church and He is the one who brings each place into being and causes it to grow.

How do you respond to leadership? Do you put one leader above another? Do you speak well of some, but ill of others? Or do you honour the leadership, recognising their different gifts, and only speaking well of them?

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## Tuesday 28<sup>th</sup> March – Day 9 – 3:10-22 – Building on a firm foundation

Jesus is the only foundation for the building up of the church. It must all revolve around him. In other Scriptures (Isaiah 28.16, Ephesians 2.20) Jesus is referred to as the 'cornerstone'. This was traditionally the first stone laid for a structure, and is the rock on which the weight of the whole building rests, and is the basis for the rest of the foundation.

Paul knew that, by the grace of God, he was building on Jesus as the foundation. That Jesus was first in everything. But it was evident that other believers were not building wisely depending on God's wisdom, but on their own. They were not following God's plan, and their work was classified as 'wood, hay and straw'. It would not stand the test of fire and would count for nothing in eternity.

He goes on to say that we are God's temple, his building. He dwells in us, and we need to put aside human wisdom – even if it might look foolish at times.

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## Wednesday 29<sup>th</sup> March – Day 10 – 4:1-7 – Servants or superstars

Today as in Paul's day Christ gives apostles to the church to build up the body. Apostles are servants of Christ, not superstars, they are master builders, helping church leaderships to build wisely. They are spiritual fathers, not CEOs!

However, in Corinth there was 'a problem at mill'. Some so-called 'super' apostles (v5) were puffed up with self-importance, intent on making a name for themselves, and sadly, some church members were being drawn into their fan clubs. Paul addresses the heart issue - that of assessing and judging others. We can all fall into this trap!

Paul reminds them that only God knows the true motivation for ministry, even that of apostles. He himself concedes that although he thinks he is working from pure motives, it will be the Lord who finally reveals the intents of the heart on that great day – sober stuff indeed!

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## Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March – Day 11 – 4:8-21 – Characteristics of an apostle

Paul could legitimately call the Corinthian believers his 'spiritual children' because he had spiritually fathered them by planting the Corinthian church. True parenting is costly, involving long hours working, protecting, going without and setting a godly example to one's children. Likewise the authentic apostolic gift works through relationship and serving others. It's not about great speeches (v19) or being put on a pedestal, although apostles should be welcomed and esteemed.

Paul sent his spiritual son Timothy to them to model how to follow Jesus (v17), not as an organisational delegate. Timothy's name means "honouring God" or "precious to God." These two designations proved to be true in the life of this disciple.

Apostles may need to address unresolved damaging issues within a church, with tenderness (v13) which seeks to bring clarity and wholeness - a great gift indeed from the ascended Lord Jesus to the church.



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## Friday 31<sup>st</sup> March – Day 12 - Reflection

### Serving one another

Paul's message to the Corinthians is that the apostles are servants. Whilst we are not all called to be apostles - we are all encouraged to serve one another (Gal. 5:13).

When you are at church on Sundays, at a Life Group or with others from church do you wait to be served, or do you look for opportunities to serve others?

Spend time praying for those who serve across the church. This may include those serving across the many teams each Sunday, mid-week group leaders or those serving on ministries like Alpha and ESOL, and our parent and toddler group.

### Praying the Bible: 1 Corinthians 3:10-23

- Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.
- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.

### Take action:

- Take a moment to think about your motivation for serving the Lord? Are you serving for his glory and to bless his people or to get recognition/standing within the church?
- Mentoring: is there someone you could spend time with to encourage their spiritual growth? Can you pass on what God has taught you to others?

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## Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> April – Day 15 – 5:1-5 – Sin has consequences

Paul turns to a serious issue in the Corinthian church. A man is openly sleeping with his step-mother, and instead of being cautioned against his sin, the Corinthians are celebrating the relationship. Our sin not only affects us, it damages the body of the church. In instructing that the church 'hand this man over to Satan' (v5), Paul is saying he should be expelled from the community (v2) and given over to his sinful life pattern and his judgment protects the church. What are we to learn from this? Sin is serious and we need to be proactive in living in holiness and encourage one another to do the same. Is there a sin or sinful pattern of behaviour that you are walking in that you need to turn away from?

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## Tuesday 4<sup>th</sup> April – Day 16 – 5: 6-13 – Walking in purity

We are saved by grace! However, living in grace doesn't mean we continue to sin, but walk towards holiness. Like yeast working through dough, our sins impact the lives of others in the church. When Christ returns, he is coming for a pure and radiant bride - that's you and I, the Church! We must continue to walk in purity with single minded focus on Jesus, recognising that how we behave and who we chose to spend time with matters (v11). As Gateway Church we love the grace of God but we also take sin seriously. How we behave speaks to the world around us, demonstrating our faith and the God we worship. It is vitally important that we encourage one another to live lives of godliness.

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## Wednesday 5<sup>th</sup> April – Day 17 – 6: 1-8 – Dealing with disputes

Disputes happen even among believers; the question is how should we handle them? In these verses Paul challenges the Corinthian believers who were so quick to run to the courts, saying, “I say this to your shame” (6:5). Why? (Note: Paul is not talking about criminal cases where the law has been broken).

1. What kind of witness is it when brothers and sisters, who are part of the new community in Christ cannot resolve matters among themselves?
2. If saints will judge the world and angels, then surely they are able to deal with the affairs of this life (6:2; 3).
3. If not, it is a defeat for them (6:7). It's saying we don't have God's grace and wisdom to resolve the matter.
4. If the dispute can't be resolved, it is more Christlike to accept being wronged than to pursue retaliation through the courts (6:7). To do otherwise undermines the power of Christ in the community.

How do you respond to that?

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## Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> April – Day 18 – 6: 9-20 – Dealing with disputes

Paul continues to be concerned that God's people are not demonstrating kingdom values. This is shown by the fact that they are looking to obtain judgments from those who have a totally different set of values and will not inherit the kingdom (6:9)! He then says, such were some of you, “BUT...” They have been washed, sanctified and justified (6:11). In other words, everything has changed in Christ.

To expand on his point Paul returns to his discussion on sexual immorality. Some believed it didn't matter what you did with your body because your spirit was the real thing. Paul makes it very clear that this is wrong thinking. God is creator of the body as well as the spirit and our body is part of Christ's (6:15) and the temple of the Holy Spirit (6:19). Therefore they were to glorify God with their whole being. What about you?

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## Friday 7<sup>th</sup> April – Day 19 - Reflection

As we have seen this week our sin before God is serious. And here we are on Good Friday reflecting on the work of Jesus to free us from our sin. We worship him in confidence knowing that he went to the cross for us, a perfect sacrifice, to take the punishment of our sin on himself. Because of Jesus we now stand as free sons and daughters of God! And we are called into a lifestyle of growing more like Jesus in holiness and obedience to the Father.

As we come to the cross today – Is there a sinful pattern of behaviour that you need to turn away from? Confess it to the Lord and ask for his forgiveness. Consider speaking to a trusted friend or church leader who will pray for you and support you.

Are you aware of somebody else struggling in an area of their life? Could you pray for them and encourage them?

Do you have a difference of opinion with someone? Ask the Lord how he wants you to resolve it.

### **Praying the Bible: 1 Peter 1:13-21**

Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.

- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Think about what that word or phrase means to you.
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.

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## **Monday 10<sup>th</sup> April – Day 22 – 7: 1-16 – Singleness & marriage**

This topic is guaranteed to create questions for many Christians.

Paul manages, in just a few verses to cover sex inside and outside of marriage, how to put others' needs above your own, prayer, temptation, lust, divorce, how to live with an unbeliever and celibacy. It's a masterpiece, but all too easy to skim over it, taking offence as you go.

If you are a wise believer however, you will read it carefully, asking the Holy Spirit to highlight what He is saying to you. Are you dissatisfied with your life, whether you're single or married? Are you looking for a way out of your marriage or putting your life on hold until God sends you a husband/wife?

We're all called to 'live by the Spirit and not gratify the desires of the sinful flesh' and that's true both in marriage and in singleness.

Resolve today to live by the Spirit and do only what pleases Him, whatever your circumstances.

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## **Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> April – Day 23 – 7: 17-40 – Serving Jesus, whatever your situation**

When we first become Christians, everything feels brand new; sins gone, washed clean, life dedicated to God, burning desire to share the gospel. All that newness can make us restless and eager to clear out other things - our jobs, marriages, families; to leave and be a missionary.

Paul warns us here not to do that. God found you and saved you in

your present circumstances and He has plans for you to be the light of the world and the salt of the earth in those places. Work colleagues, family members, spouses and children are the ones who are going to be watching this transformation in your life. Paul is saying in effect, don't rob them of the chance to respond to the gospel through you; this is your first mission field. Of course, as you walk with the Spirit and listen to His guidance, there may be new jobs in the future or indeed that missionary calling. The question is, do you still have that 'first love' fervour and desire to share the gospel?

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## Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> April – Day 24 – 8: 1-8 – Knowledge & love

Paul introduces the issue of food, sacrificed to idols. In this context, some meat from an animal was offered in the temple to be burned on the altar, while the rest was sold in the marketplace as food to eat. Paul identifies that people are aware of this knowledge and it has led to some kind of 'superior thinking,' causing arguments rather than looking for the way of love. Paul reminds us (v 4-6) that there is only one God and therefore other gods do not have any real power or authority. He further reminds us (v.7-8) that food itself has no ability to draw us closer to God, so there is no need for guilt, but rather freedom for all.

In our culture today we continually face this challenge. However creating rules of what is or isn't socially acceptable does not necessarily reflect God's loving nature. We must always be careful to follow God's ways; we need to discern if our response is more to do with an incorrect fear or critical judgement rather than being aligned to God's word.

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## Thursday 13<sup>th</sup> April – Day 25 – 8: 9-13 – Exercising freedom

This passage is Paul's clarion call to live lives which glorify God and point to Jesus. Paul reminds us that our lives are on display and observed. He places the responsibility for discipleship of new believers clearly with those who are more mature in their faith. We are called to be sensitive to the needs of others. There is no need to 'show off' the freedom you have experienced, but in love, disciple others to experience the same freedom.

In my first car, I had some fluffy dice hanging from the mirror; I thought they were just a bit of fun. However, I remember a new believer getting upset with me. I was unaware he was a recovering gambling addict and the dice were an unhelpful reminder to him. His response as a new Christian was immature, but the right response at that moment was to remove the dice, which I gladly did. I didn't need to help my brother stumble. Ask the Holy Spirit to prompt you at times where you need to exercise sensitivity in order to disciple well.

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## Friday 14<sup>th</sup> April – Day 26 - Reflection

The readings this week have all been about how to live a life of love – first loving the Lord in whatever situation we find ourselves, and then loving one another. Paul is realistic about the fact that differences of opinion will arise, but gives practical advice on how to deal with them in a way that honours the Lord and maintains the unity of the Spirit.

Is there any attitude or action that you need to change?

Do you need to forgo “being right” or “having the last word” if that’s coming between you and someone else?

God says we are a family, but the temptation is to stick with the people who are “like us”. Why not break the mould! If you are single – include married couples in your friendships? If you are a married couple, what about including single people when inviting friends around for a coffee or evening out?

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## Monday 17<sup>th</sup> April – Day 29 – 9: 1-18 – Rights of an Apostle

A pastor in a little village turned up every morning and evening to visit a member of his church who was admitted to hospital. After a period of visits, the doctor at the hospital inquired if the preacher was a relative. On learning, to his surprise, that he was a pastor at the man's church located 4 miles away from town, he asked who paid the preacher's travel costs. This is exactly Paul's point here. The Corinthians have a problem with recognising Paul as an apostle of God over them. Paul writes (v14) that he has the right to be supported by the churches he founded and cared for, but chooses not to exercise that right so as not to be a burden. The rights of an apostle were not defined in terms of privileges or material possessions, but rather in spreading the gospel and building up the Church. But, Paul argues, they should certainly be remunerated from this work.

Lord, help me to be a channel of support to your church and to see your church grow and blossom in Jesus' name.

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## Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> April – Day 30 – 9: 19-27 – Attitude of an Apostle

An apostle has a call of God on them with a sole charge to win souls for Christ. Their job description comprises many attributes, such as being a good listener, kind, sensitive to issues of culture, people and prejudice and so much more. That is why Paul said 'I have become all things to all men, so that by all means, I might save some. I do all this for the sake of the gospel, that I may share in its blessings (v19).

Being "all things to all men" does not mean compromising our faith in Jesus, in order to fit in with the standards of the world. Rather it means to forgo our traditions, pleasure and comfort in order to reach an audience for Christ.

Paul demonstrated this in diverse ways. In Athens he first related with the Greek culture and later told them about Christ.(Acts 17:22-24). All Christians must reflect the same attitude.

Lord, help me to be a true apostle of your Word who declares your Word without compromise.



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## Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> April – Day 31 – 10: 1-13 – Warnings from history

It's often tempting to turn our noses up at the Israelites and the ways in which they erred, thinking "If I had experienced God in the way they did, I'd never turn away and worship an idol". In this passage Paul warned the Corinthian Christians against idol worship, reminding them of the consequences faced by the Israelites when they turned to false gods instead of the one true God. We may not bow before graven images or offer sacrifices at heathen altars today but it's worth thinking deeply about the things to which we give our hearts, hopes and health. Are we trying to fill the God-space in our hearts with things, opinions, pleasures, people, jobs, money? These things may be neither good nor bad in themselves, but do we in a moment of choice, chose that thing, hold that opinion, pursue that pleasure, prefer that person...above God? Let's resolve to lay down everything in our lives that competes for our affection and attention and choose to have hearts that are totally devoted to our one true God.

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## Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> April – Day 32 – 10: 14-33 – Our freedom

One of the greatest gifts of salvation is the freedom we experience in Christ. In John 8 Jesus declares, "He who the Son sets free is free indeed". What a joyous truth - to know that we are free in Christ from religious rules, rigid expectations, and a never-ending list of do's and don'ts. The love that bought this freedom for us compels us to respond by loving God and loving one another (2 Cor 5:14). So, as Paul writes in this passage, we should be concerned for the good of others even if that sometimes means putting aside our tastes, preferences and what we are familiar with to embrace new things, new experiences (and maybe new cuisine!) Imagine how pleased our Father is when we are open and kind to others, mindful of their needs, tolerant of differences and sacrificial in love. Living this way, we bring him glory with our lives and draw others to him.

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## Friday 21<sup>st</sup> April – Day 33 - Reflection

This week, we have been looking at our motivation for serving the Lord and how our attitude can either win others for Jesus – or drive them away! We have been given freedom in Christ, but should use this freedom to love God and each other.

### Praying the Bible - Read 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

- Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.
- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Think about what that word or phrase means to you.
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.

Think about what your “go to” is for comfort? Are you trying to fill the God-space in your heart with things, opinions, pleasures, people, jobs, money? These things may be neither good nor bad in themselves, but do you in a moment of choice, chose that thing, hold that opinion, pursue that pleasure, prefer that person...above God.

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## Monday 24<sup>th</sup> April – Day 36 – 11:1-16 – Covered

This is one of the most controversial and most contested passages in the New Testament. It is important to remember Paul was writing in a specific context; however it is possible to draw some general principles.

Paul is writing about what was considered to be appropriate head-covering for these believers, both women and men. The culture in his day needed help to understand how their physical appearance (both men and women) reflected Christ. Paul is stating the church in Corinth is a called-out distinct community and there should be no room for confusion when unbelievers observe their practices. This is the same call we have as a called-out, distinct community; our practices need to point people to Jesus.

Although Paul discusses male headship and refers to the created order in Genesis 2, he also balances this by reminding us that though woman came from man, man is born of women and everything comes from God (v 12).

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## Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> April – Day 37 – 11:17-34 – The Lord's Supper

Paul is challenging the hypocrisy that has become evident in the Corinthian Church, particularly in the area of taking communion. Communion was instituted by Jesus, and is the Christian equivalent of the Jewish passover (1 Cor. 5:7). This meal is powerful and Jesus told us to take it 'in remembrance of him'. Paul says the Corinthians are taking it far too lightly, and their failure to take it without considering its implications is to invite judgement on themselves (v.29).

Taking communion is an opportunity to look back at what Jesus has done, to look forwards as we anticipate the coming of Christ (v.26). It is also possible to look inwards at our relationship with Jesus and with one another as well as looking outwards, because when we take part in this meal together it is witness to those who do not yet know Jesus.

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## Wednesday 26<sup>th</sup> April – Day 38 – 12: 1-11 – Spiritual Gifts

Paul didn't want the Corinthians' past paganism to influence their thinking as believers. He wanted no confusion about who they belong to now - idols or Jesus. So he reminds them of the fact that their ability to say, 'Jesus is Lord' is proof that the Holy Spirit is within them. But the Holy Spirit is not passive. He comes with gifts for each believer so that we can walk in supernatural power and authority. No believer has all the gifts; they are distributed as the Holy Spirit decides so that we each have some but need each other for the rest. The gifts are given as and when we need them so I might bring a message of wisdom, you have faith for healing and someone else interprets a tongue. It's the body in action, each part open to the Holy Spirit, being led and equipped by him. Open your hands and your heart to the Holy Spirit today, ask him to fill you afresh and expect to use the gifts he has for you today.

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## Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> April – Day 39 – 12: 12-31 – One body, many parts

This is a powerful picture of our life 'in Christ'. We belong to Jesus, we are a part of his body, the church. It makes as much sense for a Christian to say 'I don't need to join a church' as it does for a foot to go off and live alone. We together, are how God is seen and experienced in the world; don't be the part of the body that is missing.

In Christ's body there is no place for pride, self-promotion or ego. And equally, no place for false humility, self-loathing or hiding in corners. He has picked out a place for you in his body which suits you perfectly. He wants you to embrace how he's made you and never wish you were someone else. The body works and is beautiful when each part loves and honours the other parts. Ask God for a love for his Church and the people in it and ask yourself whether you are eagerly desiring the gifts he has for you.

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## Friday 28<sup>th</sup> April – Day 40 - Reflection

This week, we have been focusing on being a distinctive community that points people to Jesus, using the gifts he has given us for the common good, and playing our part in his body.

- Do you love God's church and the people in it? What more could you be doing to show that?
- Do you know what part he has called you to play? If not, why not ask the Holy Spirit to show you the gifts he has placed within you.
- What about encouraging someone whose gift has been a blessing to you?

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## Monday 1<sup>st</sup> May – Day 43 – 13: 1-8a – The most excellent way

This is one of the most well-known passages in the Bible, frequently read out at weddings. However, the love outlined here is not romantic love (eros) but agapē love. God's unconditional sacrificial love, demonstrated in Jesus dying on the cross for us, is a love of choice and commitment.

Chapter 13 is sandwiched between Chapters 12 and 14 which both teach about spiritual gifts. The context, therefore, is about having the right attitude to spiritual gifts and ministering to others. It is easy to have wrong attitudes concerning spiritual gifts (pride, comparison, competitiveness etc.) which is why Paul devotes a whole chapter to expounding on love. An attitude of love must underpin our pursuit and exercise of gifts. God's love is the highest model of love we can aspire to. His supernatural love can dwell in us because of the Holy Spirit living in us. Amazing! What another great reason to continue asking to be refilled with the Spirit? Why don't you ask him to fill you today?

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## Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May – Day 44 – 13: 8b-13 – Love never fails

Paul reminds us here that Jesus will return. Our imperfect world will pass away and be replaced by the eternal one. Love 'never fails' and will continue in heaven forever whereas gifts such as prophecy, tongues and knowledge will no longer be needed.

Paul highlights a huge contrast between what we can know in this imperfect world and what we will know when finally with God. 'For now we see in a mirror dimly but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.' (v. 12) It will be like the difference between simple childish thoughts and fully mature understanding; between darkness and glorious light.

In the meantime, we have faith, hope and love: 'Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly. And the best of the three is love.' (v. 13 The Message translation) Pray that God will help you to keep growing in these and to show you ways to demonstrate His love to those around you.

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## Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> May – Day 45 – 14: 1-25 – Tongues & Prophecy

We have already read in chapter 12:7 that God has given the gifts of the Spirit for us to help each other. Paul now expands on two gifts that were in common use in the Corinthian gatherings. He highlights the gift of prophecy over tongues so that people can be encouraged and built up in the body and not only that, but so that unbelievers will hear, fear God and worship. Paul isn't dismissing tongues. In fact, he says in verse 18 that he uses that gift more than any of them! But tongues without interpretation doesn't build up the church, just the individual. The Church is a body, a gathering, God's community. So, as we desire more of God's presence and His gifts we should desire to speak in tongues, to be built up, but even more we should ask God for gifts that will build up the body.

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## Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> May – Day 46 – 14: 26-39 – Listening to one another

Large family gatherings can be loud, chaotic and fun. But if we want to really hear someone's heart, to listen to someone's voice, there has to be a quieting, a submission to one another so that someone can be heard. This is not what is happening in the church in Corinth. Everyone is exercising their spiritual gifts but over the top of one another! Paul has been emphasising that God gives gifts to build up the body, to make himself known to unbelievers. But how can anyone receive if they can't hear? Paul's lesson here is the same as that of 1 Corinthians 12 & 13. Build up the body in love. Listen to one another and be willing to hear. Think about the people who are receiving, not how much you want to exercise your gift. And if God is giving you something, speak up, so that we can all receive what God has for us as a body.

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## Friday 5<sup>th</sup> May – Day 47 - Reflection

'Build up the body' in love. We are all important and have a role to play in the church. God has uniquely gifted you and placed you in this church family. Are there natural or spiritual gifts that you need to begin putting in practice in our church community? For example perhaps it's the gift of prophecy or the gift of hospitality that you could use to bless others. How could you develop your gifts further? Are there any particular gifts that you would like to receive?

### Praying the Bible - Re read 1 Corinthians 13

- Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.
- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Think about what that word or phrase means to you.
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.



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## Monday 8<sup>th</sup> May – Day 50 – 15:1-34 – Hope beyond the grave

Paul reminds us of the precious gospel that we have received and on which we stand. The barrage of lies that is being thrown at us by the world today, tries to rock our confidence in what God has said. It was the Father of Lies' tactic at the beginning with Eve, and it remains his tactic today to cast doubt upon the resurrection. How much more should we be those who stand fast on truth? For (v19) 'if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied' but our hope goes beyond and Jesus proved that true through His resurrection and what will be ours too. The hymn by Fanny Crosby says:

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!  
Oh, what a foretaste of glory divine!  
Heir of salvation, purchase of God  
Born of his Spirit, washed in His blood  
This is my story, this is my song...

For those whose hope is firm in Christ Jesus - this is our story as a body.

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## Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> May – Day 51 – 15:35-58 – We shall all be changed!

What a precious hope of glory and transformation awaits those whose hope rests firm in Christ Jesus. Though our earthly frame may wither and perish here and now, what a mystery and victory awaits us! As it says in v 51, "Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed".

Job 19v25-27 says, "For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another".

Blessed assurance once again. This is the truth upon which we stand - our bodies will be transformed into the likeness of Christ's body. That is what awaits us. Praise God.

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## Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> May – Day 52 – 16: 1-9 – Committed to one another

In verses 1-4, Paul talks about setting aside a sum of money for God's people, in keeping with our income. He suggests setting aside the money each week on the first day of the week. This is in keeping with Exodus 34:26 giving the "first fruits" to God before we do anything else; "Bring the best of the first fruits of your soil to the house of the LORD your God." Giving to God and His work is included in our worship to Him.

Paul goes on to say how much he would like to stay with the Corinthians, even to spend the winter with some of them. He very much wanted to spend time with them and build relationships.

How can we support God's people financially? How can we encourage them with our company?

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## Thursday 11<sup>th</sup> May – Day 53 – 16: 10-24 – Final instructions

In these last verses, Paul says to stand firm and be on your guard. He commands them to do good and be rich in good deeds and be willing and generous to share. Being rich in this world is very different from being rich towards God and his people. Wealth is uncertain whereas God is certain.

As Christians we are always in danger, so we should be constantly on the watch, fixing our eyes on Jesus and never giving up. By this faith alone we will be able to stand our ground when tempted. We can have the love of God reigning in our hearts but also shining in our lives for others to see.

How can we be strong in the Lord when we feel weak? The church family is our strength and where 2 or 3 are gathered, a church is empowered.

## All eyes on the prize.

As Paul begins drawing his letter to a close he returns to the central matter of our faith - the good news that Jesus has died, has risen and will come again. Do you live with this hope and expectancy? As you walk each day is your prayer 'marantha' (Come Lord Jesus - 1 Cor. 16:22)? How can you refocus your life again on Jesus?

Reflect back on the devotional. What has God done in your life in the last 8 weeks? What areas do you now need to focus on to continue pursuing Jesus with your whole life?

## Praying the Bible - Read 1 Corinthians 15:20-28

- Read the passage, slowly, a couple of times.
- Is God drawing your attention to a word or phrase? Does something stand out to you?
- Think about what that word or phrase means to you.
- Respond to God with praise and prayer.
- Sit still and rest in God's loving presence for a few minutes. Connect with him.



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