

Studies in 1 Corinthians and Ephesians

INDUCTIVE LESSON ONE

1 Corinthians 1

Division in the Body

Paul's traveling companion Luke was known as a great physician; however, when it came to diagnosing and treating spiritual sickness in the body of Christ, none was better than the Apostle Paul himself. In this chapter, we see Paul taking the pulse of the church at Corinth and finding it feeble due to divisions within the body. It is a simple fact of mathematics that division and multiplication are polar opposites and cannot co-exist. To fulfill the great commission given by Jesus in Matthew 28:19, believers must be about the process of multiplication in the church and not division. Far too often, the divide-and-conquer strategy has proven to be effective in the spiritual battles believers face.

The cause of these divisions in the Corinthian church was boasting (the word for *boasts* is rendered "glories" in the NKJV). As men we all have a natural inclination to competition. This competitive nature can be seen on the athletic field, in the workplace, or on the freeway. We seem to carry the need to compete on our Y chromosome. While the drive to excel can be a positive influence, it can also be very harmful when it leads to boasting within the church.

Once Paul has diagnosed the problem, he goes about prescribing a cure. Paul's cure for boasting is to compare the wisdom and power of man to the absolute wisdom and power of God. When we consider the absolute perfection of the Lord it should open our eyes, humble our hearts, and fill our mouths with praise.

Prayer

Start by praying over the passage and asking the Holy Spirit to give you wisdom in understanding it, and then read through the entire section two or three times.

Study Text / Worksheet

Write down your observations, comments, or questions directly on the text as you go over it.

1 Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother, 2 To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours: 3 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 4 I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus, 5 that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge, 6 even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the

end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. 9 God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. 10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. 11 For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. 12 Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ." 13 Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? 14 I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, 15 lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name. 16 Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other. 17 For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect. 18 For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. 19 For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, And bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent." 20 Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world? 21 For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe. 22 For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom; 23 but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, 24 but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. 25 Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men. 26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called. 27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; 28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, 29 that no flesh should glory in His presence. 30 But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God—and righteousness and sanctification and redemption—31 that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." (NKJV)

Observation

1. My Observations: In the left column write down observations you make directly from the text. Inductive tips (things to look for): a) What are the promises? b) What are the commands?
c) What are the sources of conflict? d) What are the cause/effect relationships? e) What are the repeated words and ideas? g) What do we know about who is speaking and who is receiving the message? h) What comparisons and contrasts can you identify and what do they illustrate?
i) Do you have unanswered questions on part of the passage? (Share them with your group.)
2. Digging Deeper: In the right column write down any additional observations you can add from other sources such as: a) other scriptures that apply (cross references) b) dictionaries for specific words (English or Greek dictionary) c) Bible dictionaries for historical information
d) Commentaries. See the Tool Box at the end of the study for suggested sources.

1 Corinthians 1:1–9 (Opening Remarks)

My Observations

Digging Deeper

1 Corinthians 1:10–17 (Divisions in the Body)

1 Corinthians 1:18–31 (Paul’s Cure for Boasting in the Body)

Interpretation

Webster tells us that *interpret* means “to explain the meaning or make understandable.” What is the spiritual truth or lesson that God is trying to teach in this passage? Don’t isolate the passage but read into it and read out of it. Look for commands, imperatives, promises, or warnings. What is God saying to those people at that time? (You will share what God is saying to you in the next section.) State the spiritual truth or lesson in a single sentence.

Application

This is where you purpose to do what God has taught you in your time with Him. It is through applying the Word that God changes lives. Application does not happen by osmosis but by intent. God enlightens us with His Word, we apply what we’ve learned with our wills, and the Holy Spirit empowers us to carry out these choices. The goal of all application is to glorify God by becoming more like Jesus. 2 Timothy 3:18 says, “All scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for...”

- Teaching: What did I learn?
- Reproof: Where do I fall short? Why do I fall short?
- Correction: What will I do about it?
- Training in righteousness: How can I make this principle a consistent part of my life?

1 Corinthians 1:1–9:

Interpretation: _____

Application: _____

1 Corinthians 1:10–17:

Interpretation: _____

Application: _____

1 Corinthians 1:18–31:

Interpretation: _____

Application: _____

Take Away / Summary

If one of your friends at work or a neighbor were to ask you what you did last night, you would tell them you went to a Bible Study. The next question would likely be, “What did you learn?” We often summarize an entire athletic contest or a movie in a few brief sentences and easily convey the essence of the event. Now apply these same skills to give a summary of the passage in a sentence or two. Then, in an additional sentence or two describe what impact this passage will have on how you live.

Memory Verse

“For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.” 1 Corinthians 1:18

Key Words / Phrases

Write out the definition of these key words. You can use a regular dictionary or go to one of the Greek sources listed in the Tool Box at the end of the study. The first two terms have

survived from the Greek to form words used in English today. You may also use a concordance to see where else and how the word is used in the Bible.

Divisions (v.4):

Wisdom (v. 17):

Glories (v. 31):

Tool Box

Step 1: The Bible. Read passage in a couple of different versions. If you are having trouble understanding a passage, choosing a version for the list below might be helpful.

Word for Word Translations

NASB – New American Standard Version <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-American-Standard-Bible-NASB/>

AMP – Amplified Bible <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Amplified-Bible-AMP/>

ESV – English Standard Version <http://www.esvstudybible.org/>

KJV – King James Version <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/King-James-Version-KJV-Bible/>

NKJV – New King James Version <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/New-King-James-Version-NKJV-Bible/>

Thought for thought

NLT – New Living Translation <http://newlivingtranslation.com/>

The Message <http://www.biblegateway.com/versions/Message-MSG-Bible/>

Step 2: Study Tools. Use these to help you dig deeper.

Background Information: 1) Unger’s Bible Dictionary 2) Bible Dictionaries online at biblestudytools.com and blueletterbible.com

