

1 CORINTHIANS 1–7

CA. SPRING AD 57

Paul discusses more doctrinal gems in this epistle than any other. They coincide with many taught in the Book of Mormon—notably, the spirit of revelation, authority, spiritual gifts, atonement, and resurrection. We also find approximately 1,100 citations from the Pauline Epistles within the Prophet Joseph Smith’s recorded sermons, publications, and written letters (including four Articles of Faith). Joseph knew and loved Paul’s writings.

Purpose

To correct dissensions, false teachers, and to notify the saints of his visit.

Audience

Male and female disciples in Corinth. Some poor, some slaves, and many who were swayed by divisions, disorder, and their immoral society. About half the names of the people mentioned in Corinth in the New Testament are Greek, and half are Latin names.

Paul and Corinth¹

Paul opened the city of Corinth and stayed for eighteen months to establish Christianity during his second-

apostolic mission (Acts 18:1–11). Paul had a vision instructing him to remain in Corinth, despite the persecution: “Be not afraid, but speak, and hold not thy peace: For I am with thee . . . I have much people in this city” (Acts 18:9–10).

Paul kept in touch with the saints in Corinth after his departure (1 Corinthians 1:11; 5:9; 7:1; 16:10–11, 17). He wrote 1 Corinthians a few years later on his next mission (probably in Ephesus during the spring of AD 57, 1 Corinthians 16:8).² It appears that he wrote to Corinth more than any other place—as there are traces of seven letters. What we refer to as “First Corinthians” was not the first.



Ancient Corinth by Ronny Siegel

CORINTH

Archeologists estimate the area had been settled for thousands of years before the Romans conquered it in 146 BC. In 44 BC Julius Caesar made it a Roman colony. In AD 27 it became the capital of the Roman province of Achaia (southern Greece). The area also enjoyed fertile soil. It became an international magnet for rich and poor peoples, including Romans, Greeks, Asians, Egyptians, and Jews. (Archeologists found a synagogue.)

Geographically, Corinth lies northwest of Athens, Greece at the strategic four-mile wide isthmus between northern and southern Greece. It was narrow enough that anciently sailors unloaded small ships and dragged them across the land, rather than sail around Greece. Nero attempted to dig a canal through the rock (but the project was not successfully finished until 1893). Romans built a citadel on Acrocorinth, which stood 1,850 feet high to defend and dominate the isthmus.

With two adjacent seaports, it had a double portion of all the vices of a port city. Their temple to the Roman goddess Venus housed one thousand priestesses who served as prostitutes to the goddess of love. Corinth also boasted a double portion of promiscuity as words and phrases developed such as:

- “to live like a Corinthian,” was to live a dissolute life.
- “to play the Corinthian,” was to visit a house of prostitution.
- “to fornicate” was to *korinthiazomai*.
- “a Corinthian girl,” meant a prostitute.
- “Corinth” became a metaphor for fertility.

When Paul visited the 200-year-old Roman city, it was a worldly boomtown in need of Christianity.

Outline of 1 Corinthians³

In the first half of the letter (1 Corinthians 1–6), Paul deals with disturbing reports that he had heard from trusted local saints—especially one sister Chloe whose home was used as their “house church” for their worship services. In the second half (1 Corinthians 7–16), Paul answers their questions. Both halves include lots of corrections, almost like verbal spankings.

FIRST HALF		SECOND HALF	
ADDRESSING DISTURBING REPORT		ANSWERS TO CORINTHIANS’ QUESTIONS	
1:1–9	Introduction	7:1–11	Value of Marriage and Intimacy
1:10–4:21	Division vs. Unity Among Members	7:12–16	Marriage with Believer vs. Unbelievers
1:10–17	Dissensions at Corinth	7:17–24	Obedience vs. Status
1:18–30	The Wisdom of the world	7:25–40	Advice on When to Marry
2:1–3:8	The Wisdom of God and His Spirit	8:1–11:1	Idol Sacrifices
3:9–23	Ye Are the Temple of God	11:2–15:58	Divine Worship, New Covenant
4:1–21	False Teachers	11:2–16	Women wearing Veils in Prayer
5:1–6	The Severity of Sexual Sins	11:17–34	The Lord’s Supper
5:7–13	Jesus as the Symbol of Passover	12–14	Spiritual Gifts
6:1–8	Lawsuits and Courts	15	Resurrection
6:9–20	Immorality	16	Conclusions: Exhortations and Salutation

1 CORINTHIANS 1

Paul's Greeting

1 Corinthians 1:1-3

1 Corinthians 1:1 “Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ” In Greek, *apostello* means, “a messenger, one sent on a mission.” Paul was sent as a representative of Jesus the Christ, but we are not told if he were a member of the Twelve or another type of apostle.⁴ Paul also mentions Sosthenes, who probably acted as his scribe (1 Corinthians 16:21). In Acts 18:17, a Jewish man in the same town, with the same name was “the chief ruler of the synagogue,” and was beaten in Ephesus. If it is the same person, then Paul knew him, and the two worked together in Ephesus.

1 Corinthians 1:2 “to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people” (NIV) or “saints” (KJV). Learning of these titles in Greek can open new importance to their meanings. The “saints” represent the Lord’s holy people who are sanctified or purified by repenting and calling on their Redeemer for the cleansing power of His atoning sacrifice for forgiveness of their sins. The saints join all disciples, apostles, and missionaries in that sanctification to take on the name of the Lord as His messengers.⁵ Paul uses it as a unifying title for purified believers.

1 Corinthians 1:3 “Grace and peace” (BSB) Greek speakers used the standard salutation, “Grace/*charis*,” as a noun. The Hebrew speakers used, “peace/*shalom*.” Paul combined these two greetings into one, “Grace and Peace” to use for both the Gentiles and Jewish converts. The greeting summarized the gospel message of Jesus’ at-one-ment.

Thanksgiving

1 Corinthians 1:4-9

1 Corinthians 1: 4-7 I always thank my God for you because of his grace given you in Christ Jesus” (NIV) Paul begins with a heart full of thanksgiving. But unlike his earlier letter to the Thessalonians, Paul does not

Christ and the Twelve Apostles by Taddeo di Bartolo, ca. 1400. Image via the Met Museum.



mention the Corinthian saints' fruits of faith, love, and righteousness. This audience had not enjoyed that level of spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 1:8 “in the day of our Lord” Paul used “day” to mean the “time of Salvation.” In this sense, it can refer to the Second Coming of our Savior.

1 Corinthians 1:9 “God is faithful, who has called you into fellowship with his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (NIV) Paul mentions the name Christ nine times in this introduction! This emphasis becomes a prelude to the later discussion on the need for unity, not factions among those who are baptized in His name.

Church Divided over Leaders

1 Corinthians 1:10–1:17a

1 Corinthians 1:10 “I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord . . . that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly united in mind and thought” (NIV). Paul starts off with an urgent plea (just slightly less than a command) for unity. Though the KJV uses “brethren,” Paul’s regular use implied that he includes sisters. Paul calls on the authority of “the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,” as the voice of the letter (Remember, “Christ” is the Greek for Messiah, meaning, “anointed”).⁶ This is the tenth reference to Messiah/Christ so far in the epistle.

1 Corinthians 1:11 “My brothers and sisters, some from Chloe’s household have informed me that there are quarrels among you” (NIV) Paul must have known that her “house-church” had a trusted reputation among the saints to have acknowledged the source of his delicate and negative information. Paul has probably developed respect for Chloe and her household during his eighteen-month-long stay in Corinth on his second mission. We learn that she was trustworthy as a respected source of information, that her home could house several members for worship, and that she could afford parchment (or something for letters) and servants to carry messages to Paul.

1 Corinthians 1:12–13 “. . . every one of you saith, I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ” All of Paul’s epistles mention the ideal of unity. A divided church violates Christ’s will (John 17:11, 18, 20–21). These divisions may have been within, or between, multiple house-churches in Corinth. Cephas refers



to the Apostle Peter (rock). We are introduced to Apollos, the Alexandrian Jew, “an eloquent man,” who was well versed in the scriptures in Acts 18:24–26. When he came to Ephesus, he “taught diligently” in the Jewish synagogue “the things of the Lord, knowing only the baptism of John.” But the dynamic missionary couple, Aquila and Priscilla, taught him, and then sent him to Corinth on a mission. There Apollos exhorted, “mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, shewing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ” (Acts 18:27–28). Apollos’ labor at Corinth helps us date this letter. Later in Titus 3:13, Apollos continues his faithful work in the church.

1 Corinthians 1:14–17a “I thank God that I baptized none of you, but Crispus and Gaius . . . also the household of Stephanas . . . Christ sent me not to baptize, but to preach the gospel” Paul is not reducing the importance of *baptism*, but only *who* baptized them (see 1 Corinthians 12:13; 16; 18). It sounds as if the Corinthians may have claimed prominence or possibly promoted factions depending on who baptized them. Paul clarifies that he spent most of his time preaching—and only occasionally baptized. He remembers especially three baptisms—each of whom was mentioned again in the New Testament: 1) “Crispus,” a leader of the local synagogue in Corinth (Acts 18:8), 2) “Gaius,” (Acts 19:29; 20:4; Ro 16:23; 3 John 1:1) and 3) Stephanas and his household (1 Corinthians 16:15, 17).

Christ Crucified is God’s Power and Wisdom

1 Corinthians 1:17b–19

1 Corinthians 1:17b “. . . preach the gospel: not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect” Coming from a capital of elocution, the city of Tarsus, Paul knew the difference between eloquent philosophy and the Spirit of God that penetrated hearts. He chose to only teach with the latter as he taught the doctrine of our Redeemer. Preaching the cross testified that Jesus was the Son of God and unjustly killed. Then as part of God’s plan, God rose Him up on the third day. Likewise, we can defeat the terror of the world. To the secular mind, death is the greatest power over morality, but God is mightier than death. God raised his Son from the grave, and moreover, will raise all life from the dead.

1 Corinthians 1:18 “message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God” As a missionary in Corinth, Paul had to deal with the Greek philosophy that taught: “it was impossible for the divinity to be overcome by weak and fallible men. A divine being could not suffer as men do, and therefore it was unthinkable that a Son of God, a being with divine characteristics, could endure death like a criminal.”⁷ Consequently, the claim that the Son of God was tortured and died through crucifixion as a common crook was “foolishness.” Notwithstanding, it was still the most crucial message in the universes. Paul testifies that God’s power and Spirit would bless those who receive this saving message.

1 Corinthians 1:19 “I will destroy the wisdom of the wise, and will bring to nothing the understanding of the prudent” Paul cites Isaiah 29:14 from the Greek Septuagint. (Paul probably did not have his own private

set of scripture scrolls, but as a wealthy man, perhaps he had one or two favorite scripture scrolls/books.) He and other biblical writers either used a copy from the synagogue or more likely, quoted it from memory (like most well educated Jewish boys did).

Isaiah prophesied that God would humble those who claimed to be wise—or use only their mind (“prudent”). Paul emphasizes the word, “wise/*sophos*,” which shares roots in “philosophy,” because it was valued so highly in that culture. In the last phrase, “prudent” means, “the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate” (NIV), or “the cleverness of the clever I will set aside” (NASB). This warning against false teachers sounds similar to 2 Nephi 28:9, “there shall be many which shall teach after this manner, false and vain and foolish doctrines, and shall be puffed up in their hearts, and shall seek deep to hide their counsels from the Lord; and their works shall be in the dark.”

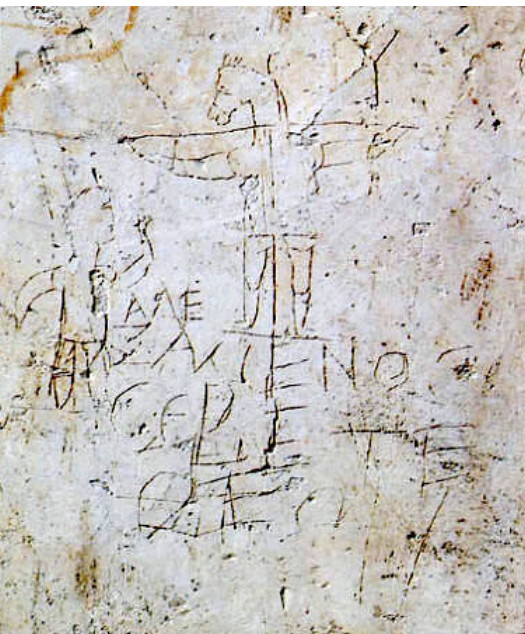
The Septuagint (LXX) was the translation of the Law, Prophets, Writings, and Apocrypha into Greek. It was used extensively at the time of the New Testament. The process began in Alexandria in the third century BC by seventy-two elders (six from each of the twelve tribes, according to Philo of Alexandria) and finished in 132 BC.

The Foolish to Shame the Wise

1 Corinthians 1:20-1:31

1 Corinthians 1:20–23 “the world through its wisdom did not know . . . God” (BSB) Although it may seem foolishness to the learning of the world—Jews wanted a political sign of their conquering Messiah, Gentiles wanted “wisdom/*sophie*/philosophy”—but Paul boldly proclaimed that God will save those that believe in Jesus as their Savior. In the overall context, Paul asked his audience to go beyond human reasoning and secularism to seek spiritual teaching and learning. “Preaching” can also be translated as, “the proclamation” (AB) or “*what we preach*” (RSV).

The Jews expected a conquering Messiah who would reveal Himself by signs in the sky and on the earth and inaugurate a glorious kingdom, powerfully sweeping away all wicked who opposed God. To proclaim that their promised King had come as a poor builder who broke their laws and traditions, was crucified, and died, was offensive to the Jews and Gentiles. In the Roman parlance of the day, crucifixion was “the slave’s punishment,” which labeled Jesus in the lowest social class.⁸ The Judeo-Greco-Roman world rationalized that “Jesus could not have been God’s promised agent since he was maltreated, scorned, and put to death as a lawbreaker.”⁹ The worldly expectations sought a more superior god than Jesus of Nazareth. But Paul denounces their philosophical expectations and calls for humility to accept what they had called, “foolishness.” To join the saints and come unto Christ requires meekness. That “unity requires humility.”¹⁰



The Alexamenos Graffiti, ca. AD 200. This inscription highlights how the Greco-Roman world disparaged death by crucifixion, and mocked Christians for their belief in a crucified God. The graffiti depicts a man, presumably Alexamenos, standing next to a crucified donkey in worship. This inscription reads something to the effect of “Alexamenos worships [his] God.” Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons.

1 Corinthians 1:24–25 “To those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ [is] the power of God . . . wiser than human wisdom, and . . . stronger than human strength” (NIV) Those who are called by God and build faith in Jesus as their Savior will prove to have more power and strength through the cleansing of the atonement, the gifts of the Spirit, the sanctification of Christ.

1 Corinthians 1:26 Brothers and sisters, think . . . [how] God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (NIV) The highly educated, powerfully privileged, prosperous businessmen, and government officials rarely accept the gospel. In our world, “reason knows little of the eternal dimension.”¹¹

1 Corinthians 1:27–30 “God chose the lowly things . . . so that no one may boast before him . . . that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption” (NIV) These verses answer the questions: “Why does God use the weak to confound the wise? Why do only the humble (KJV, “base”) turn to God?” God wants to teach humility so people can see their need for redemption. God blesses the humble with holiness. The Book of Mormon also teaches that “there is opposition in all things” (2 Nephi 2:11). To all good, Satan finds a counterfeit to detour and distract mortals from recognizing truth, and eventually from recognizing God.

1 Corinthians 1:31 “Let the one who boasts boast in the Lord” (NIV) The KJV verb, “glory,” is also understood figuratively, as to live with God-given confidence. That confidence is built on charity, humility, and trust. It offers the perspective that all in life will turn our thanks to our Savior.

1 CORINTHIANS 2

The Wisdom of God

1 Corinthians 2:1–9

1 Corinthians 2:1–6 “so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom . . .” (NIV) Paul continues to build on his previous message by sharing his own personal experience. Paul has the perspective of knowing both the world’s wisdom and God’s power.

“so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God’s power” (NIV). Paul’s example allowed the Corinthian saints (and we readers) to see what he means by “God’s wisdom.” He explains his meaning of the gospel as the demonstration of God’s wisdom and power and elaborates on it in the next three sections.

1 Corinthians 2:7 “which God foreordained before the ages for our glory” (BSB). The gospel plan was in place before time came to the earth. We get a feel for the translators’ understanding of God by the way they translate this verse: “God ordained” (KJV), or “God destined” (NIV), or “God predestined” (NASB), or “God had planned” (GWT). The Greek word, *“proorizó,”* can represent all of these meanings. This is why modern revelation is so valuable to understand the forethought and liberality of God who does not coerce or force human action; “. . . prepared from the foundation of the world according to the foreknowledge of God, on account of their exceeding faith and good works; in the first place being left to choose good or evil” (Alma 13:3; also 16:14–15). We believe that all are called but only those who choose to follow honor their foreordained calling to demonstrate God’s power through His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:9 “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him” This beautiful, motivating promise, is actually a mosaic of several phrases from Old Testament scriptures (i.e. Isaiah 64:4; 52:15; 65:17; and Jeremiah 3:16). The early church father, Origen stated that Paul’s quote came from the “Apocalypse of Elijah” (1st century).¹²

The Spirit of Revelation

1 Corinthians 2:10–3:3

1 Corinthians 2:10 “God hath revealed *them* unto us by his Spirit” The source of divine revelation and truth is God’s Spirit. Paul does not want anyone to be confused with philosophy or the Gnostics (who claimed they alone knew deep things). God alone can reveal even deeper things through His Spirit.

1 Corinthians 2:11–12 “no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God . . . [to] understand what God has freely given us” (BSB) Paul defines the human spirit in contrast to God’s Spirit. Humans cannot receive revelation without a connection with God. Our Heavenly Father wants us to understand the “mysteries” or His eternal nature and plan. This learning can only come from the Spirit witnessing to us either personally, or by prophets (living or recorded in scriptures). Paul reviews the power of the Holy Spirit in the next half of the chapter.

1 Corinthians 2:13 “we speak . . . in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words” (BSB) The Spirit’s language is Truth. It can sometimes be heard through “spiritual words,” but more often than not, in thoughts and feelings. Learning that language requires asking, seeking, humility, and regular repentance. We who seek to have the constant companionship of the Spirit to receive heavenly learning and direction, must

act like a blind person holding onto the leash of a seeing eye dog. As we are blind to heaven, it requires that we never let go of that leash to heaven. We cannot offend the Spirit through unholy thoughts or disobedience and must follow where the Spirit leads us.

1 Corinthians 2:14–15 “**the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit**” Tyndale and KJV use, “Natural man” and the RSV, “unspiritual.” The prophet Joseph Smith used this biblical couplet when he translated Mosiah 3:19, “the natural man is an enemy to God” (also see Alma 26:21).¹³

1 Corinthians 2:16 “**who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ**” Paul uses this same quote later when he wrote (or dictated) Romans 11:34. Both paraphrased Isaiah 40:13, from the LXX. Having “the mind of Christ” requires that disciples follow Him in their thoughts and desires. In this case, it also witnessed that Paul, as an apostle, had directed the church as Christ had wanted.

1 CORINTHIANS 3

1 Corinthians 3:1–3 “**Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people who live by the Spirit but as people who are still worldly—mere infants in Christ. I gave you milk, not solid food**” (NIV) Paul claims that he only taught the saints in Corinth with spiritual “milk” because they were babes in their understanding of Christ. He denounces their worldly attitudes of jealousy, envy, quarreling, and strife. Paul used the same metaphor of milk as baby food in the book of Hebrews when he wrote: “such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat . . . But strong meat belongeth to them . . . [who] discern both good and evil” (Hebrews 5:12, 14).

Building the Church on Jesus’ Foundation

1 Corinthians 3:4–15

1 Corinthians 3:4–5 “**Who then is Apollos? And . . . Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord has given to each**” (BLB) Paul brings up the problem of divisions again with the reminder that missionaries, leaders, and saints are merely ambassadors of Christ. When we choose to join the Lord’s church, we covenant to become His “servants” or “ministers” (KJV). When we do so, God “assigned to each his task” (NIV).

1 Corinthians 3:6–9a “**I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase**” Paul uses the metaphor of agriculture to describe the church’s growth when the saints work in conjunction with the Lord’s principles.

1 Corinthians 3:9b–13 “**foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ**” Paul compares the church to a building with the foundation stones as Jesus the Christ. Each member represents a different type of building material, starting with the most precious stones down to stubble (which will burn easily).

Image by Johannes Plenio via Pixabay.

1 Corinthians 3:14–15 “If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. [But] if any man’s work shall be burned . . . he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire” Paul uses fire either with a refining message (“refined us like silver” Psalms 66:10), or with an eschatological tone, possibly referring to the fire burning at the last day as described in Revelation 8:7 (which Paul thought was eminent).



Ye Are Temples Of God

1 Corinthians 3:16–21

1 Corinthians 3:16–17 “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” Paul moves his analogy one step further. He identifies the building that the saints had been building as God’s House or Temple. In the Old Testament, when the tabernacle and Temple were received as God’s house they were filled with His Spirit as represented as a cloud

Picture of the Sapporo Temple of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints by Tomoyuki Miyauchi.
Image via Wikimedia Commons.



by day and pillar by night (Numbers 14:14; Isaiah 4:5) Think about what the Temple meant to the Jews—it was the holiest place on earth, the means of fulfilling the law which brought them salvation. The Temple was the House of God, a place where God’s Spirit was found.

Paul explains that the saints also had that potential. If their hearts and minds housed the Spirit, they could become a temple of God. As the saints worked on building the kingdom, they were actually working on becoming more Christlike and worthy of the companionship of the Spirit. God’s Spirit can dwell in our houses/bodies, if we keep them undefiled. Paul turns that around to talk about the worth of a soul. But he returns to elaborate on the temple theme in 1 Corinthians 6:19.

1 Corinthians 3:19–21 “Let no one deceive himself . . . Therefore stop boasting in men. All things are yours” (BSB) Paul attempts to teach that things of this world are not worth fighting or living for—but blessings of God are greater all those other things. Between these two warnings, Paul quotes two more Old Testament scriptures: “He catches the wise in their craftiness” (Job 5:13), and “The LORD knows the thoughts of man, that they are futile” (Psalm 94:11).

1 Corinthians 3:23 “Ye are Christ’s; and Christ is God’s” As Jesus is the One who bought us back from death and damnation, He is our Redeemer, and we are His. Whether or not we fully understand our dependence on Him in mortality, when we take a cosmic view of the plan, we are His. It is beautiful to think of the price He paid for our immortality. He also promises us even more if we will align our allegiance to serve Him, thus becoming like Him. As Paul describes the Godhead in these verses as three unified individuals, so He challenges the saints to become unified under their names to join them.

1 CORINTHIANS 4

Christ’s Servants

1 Corinthians 4:1–5

1 Corinthians 4:1 “. . . regard us as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God” (BSB) The word “*ministers*” (KJV) is “servants,” and emphasizes the relationship between Paul, Apollos, Peter, and Jesus. God has asked them as His servants to teach the gospel and explain the mysteries. With so many slave-servants in the Roman Empire (one-third of the population), I presume his audience understood the ramifications of servitude better than we do.

Jesus entrusted the apostles with the administration of the “mysteries of God.” In Strong’s Concordance, “*mystery/mysterion*” represents “a secret, of which initiation is necessary.”¹⁴ The mysteries may have included tem-

ple ordinances. In this Epistle, Paul refers to special prayers where women must veil their faces, eternal marriages where couples are joint heirs, and baptisms that are efficacious for the dead (1 Corinthians in 11:2–11; 15:29). All these would be included as necessary initiations, or saving ordinances in the restored church. In other letters, we also find evidence of washing, anointing, clothing, and receiving new names (Ephesians 6:11–15; Hebrews 1:9, 14; 5:1–6; 7:1–10:22; 1 John 20:27; Revelation 3:12; etc.).

1 Corinthians 4:2–5 “It is required of stewards that they be found faithful”

A “*steward*” was an entrusted servant who administered his master’s business or property. The steward devoted his time, ability, and energy to his master’s interests, not to

his own. To serve as one of Christ’s stewards, faithfulness is required. The Lord knows the integrity of His stewards and is their judge (not by the Saints or the world). There are constant judgments made by the Holy Spirit and Christ’s final judgment on judgment day (John 5:22; 8:16; 9:39; etc.). As Paul pleads for less criticism of the leaders, it sounds like the prophet Job’s lament, “my conscience agrees that I am innocent” (Job 27:6, CEV). Only the Lord has the authority to judge Paul because he is Paul’s master.

1 Corinthians 4:5 “expose the motives of the heart” (NIV) In the ancient world it was thought that people’s “understanding” and “will” belonging to the “*heart*.” So, God will disclose the purposes of each person’s thoughts, and most important the sincere desires of the heart, on His judgment day.

Do Not be So Proud and Judgmental

1 Corinthians 4:6–13

1 Corinthians 4:6 “you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other” (NIV)

Paul harkens back to 1 Corinthians 1:12 (“I follow Paul . . . Apollos . . . Cephas” ESV) and says not to feel so proud of one leader that it comes at the expense of another. He asks the Corinthians not to feel “**puffed up**” or “inflated” with an attitude of “pride” rather than charity, cooperation, mutual respect, and forgiveness.



The first mural fresco in the Villa of the Mysteries in Pompeii. It is thought these frescoes depict the initiation of a young woman into a Greco-Roman mystery religion. This fresco depicts the reading of the rituals. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

Paul enjoyed a friendly relationship with Apollos and Peter; he was not criticizing them (only his argumentative audience). He asked the Corinthians to “not think above that which is written” nor to live according to the scriptures (meaning books of the Old Testament).

1 Corinthians 4:7 “**who makes you so superior? What do you have that you did not receive?**” (BSB) Paul asks if they felt so superior that they could criticize their leaders and claim that one was better than another? He also refers to the fact that they received their strengths and weaknesses as gifts from God. So, even in their strengths they should not boast, but receive them humbly to do God’s work.

1 Corinthians 4:8–9 “**Already you have all you want! Already you have become rich! You have begun to reign—and that without us!**” (NIV) Paul speaks ironically. He asks if they really thought that they did not need guidance from the apostles. Or, if they had been raised to be kings in God’s kingdom without the probationary testing and persecutions that Paul had endured. As the church leaders endured much persecution, Paul compares himself (and possibly Peter and Apollos) to “*men sentenced to death*,” like condemned criminals at a spectacle.

1 Corinthians 4:10 “. . . *we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised . . .*” Paul sets up an inverse relationship between himself and the Corinthian Christians. In their prideful state, the Corinthians are looking down upon the leader’s advice as foolish and weak. (Do you see that today?)

1 Corinthians 4:11–12a “**Even unto this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are buffeted**” Paul reminds them that he was still living as a hungry homeless man while serving God as a missionary. His reference to working with his own hands referred to tent or leather working (see 9:15–18; 2 Corinthians 11:7–11; 12:13–15; 1Thessalonians 2:9; Acts 20:34; etc.).

1 Corinthians 4:12b–13 “**When we are cursed, we bless; when we are persecuted, we endure it; when we are slandered, we answer kindly**” (NIV) Paul paraphrases Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:39–45). This suggests that Jesus’ sayings had been recorded and were already circulating before the Gospels were written. “Defamed” or slandered by the Judaizers (Jewish-Christians who wanted all converts to live the Law of Moses).

Paul’s Warning

1 Corinthians 4:14–21

1 Corinthians 4:14–16 “**I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children**” (NIV) Paul stops teasing and warns the Corinthians of their faulty ideas. He asks them to remember his role as their spiritual “father.” The KJV “followers of me” is more often translated, “imitate me/*mimétés*,” meaning to follow his example. Interpreting this in Paul’s immediate context gives evidence that Paul does not intend to usurp Jesus’ role, but as their missionary, or spiritual father figure, he sets an example for them (1 Corinthians 3:4–15; 4:1; etc.).

1 Corinthians 4:17–21 “I have sent you Timothy . . . But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord is willing” (BSB) Paul sent Timothy previously to help restore order in the Corinthian church, and Paul hopes to come himself. But he wonders, if he goes, will they need a spanking? Or, will they have repented by then?

1 CORINTHIANS 5

The Severity of Sexual Sins

1 Corinthians 5:1–6

1 Corinthians 5:1 “It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you” It is not surprising to find in a city like Corinth that was known for its sexual lewdness, that new church members had challenges in this area. The KJV translates “fornication,” but the Greek word, “*porneia*,” included all illicit sexual behavior. A stipulation against sexual immorality was also one of the four areas that the Jerusalem Council wanted all Gentile-Christians to adopt from the Law of Moses (Acts 15:20). The text sounds like the Corinthian saints were so tolerant and excepting that they did not draw the line at serious immoral offenses denounced by God.

1 Corinthians 5:2–6 “I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did this, just as if I were present . . .” (BSB) Paul feels inspired to condemn the sin of incest even at a distance (Leviticus 18:6–8, 29). He advocates for excommunication for those who broke serious moral laws so that the sinners could begin repenting. It is actually better for the sinner’s eternal good to pay the consequences and repent in hopes of regaining the companionship of the Spirit again. The image of leaven in the bread was used by Jews for pride, puffing up. Forgiveness is so glorious, that it is worth the cost of repentance.

Jesus as the Symbol of Passover

1 Corinthians 5:7–13

1 Corinthians 5:7 “For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed” (NIV) Paul connects this wonderful paschal lamb symbol to Jesus as the fulfillment of the Passover bones (Lev 23:5–8). The Law of Moses designated first born, male lambs as the vicarious recipients of the sins of the offerors and of Israel (Leviticus 5:15–16). The Passover lambs were also unblemished with no broken bones (Exodus 12:5). The animal offerings typified Jesus’ passion—from Gethsemane to Golgotha. Sin-offerings “point[ed] to the great and last sacrifice . . . the Son of God, yea, infinite and eternal” (Alma 34:14).

The night following the Passover Seder, the Children of Israel began their week long Feast of Unleavened Bread. Paul builds on that image of the leaven representing pride/sin and asks them to “Get rid of the old yeast.” Everything with leaven was removed from their homes (Exodus 12:15). That practice represented the absence of corruption and pride connected with the unblemished lamb.

1 Corinthians 5:8 “Keep the feast, not with old . . . but with . . . sincerity and truth” The “feast” may have meant more than the Passover; it may have also been the weekly Lord’s Supper. The early Christians renewed their covenants and remembered the Savior’s Passion and Resurrection during their weekly remembrance of the Lord’s Last Supper (sacrament).

1 Corinthians 5:9–11 “I wrote unto you in an epistle . . . but now I have written . . .” This is one of the evidences mentioned at the beginning of Paul’s multiple letters that are no longer available nor canonized.

1 Corinthians 5:12–13 “God judgeth” Paul clarifies that he did not judge non-Christians in their sexual life, but only those who had made baptismal covenants. Within the church, Paul calls for regulation and keeping a standard of moral integrity. He also encourages the saints to not allow sinners to partake of the ordinance, so they will not be held accountable. Later in this letter Paul builds on this warning that a sinner who partakes “*unworthily* is guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord (1 Corinthians 11:27, 29).

1 CORINTHIANS 6

Settle Lawsuits Among Believers

1 Corinthians 6:1–8

1 Corinthians 6:1–8 “The very fact that you have lawsuits among you means . . . you yourselves cheat and do wrong, even against your own brothers!” (BSB) Paul asks the Corinthian saints to suffer wrongs rather than go to the Gentles to settle disputes between their fellow saints. He is exasperated that they cannot work out their disputes, especially because he knows they think that in the future they will be called on to judge angels and the world (1 Corinthians 6:2–3; Daniel 7:22). Elder Joseph F. Smith explained how this will be possible:

Because the resurrected, righteous man[kind] has progressed beyond the pre-existent or disembodied spirits, and has risen above them, having both spirit and body as Christ has, having gained the victory over death and the grace, and having power over sin and Satan... He possesses keys of power, dominion and glory that the angel does not possess. . . . [until] passing through the same ordeals and proving equally faithful.¹⁵

Sexual Immorality

In the next several verses of chapters six and seven, Paul addresses two groups who had opposite ideas regarding sexuality. It appears that he first addresses the Libertines who felt everything was permissible, particularly in sexuality (1 Corinthians 6:9–13). Then Paul answers the ascetics’ questions. They depreciated all sexual relations of every kind (1 Corinthians 7:1–11). Their extreme ideas may have developed in reaction to the Libertines.

Repent

1 Corinthians 6:9-13

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 “the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God . . . But you were washed, you were sanctified” (BSB) Paul’s list of sins that disqualify one from heaven is similar to the lists found in D&C 76. Yet, with the Redemption of the Son of God, even these sinners can be cleansed, justified, and sanctified. God prepared His Son’s atoning sacrifice for repentant seekers, and the Spirit executes that cleansing on an individual basis offering forgiveness to each returning prodigal.

1 Corinthians 6:12-13 “Some of you say . . .” (CEV) Paul turns to a few statements—like a question answer—to correct the false ideas expressed by members of the Corinth congregations. He answers each one with a warning.

- “We can do anything we want to.’ But I tell you not everything is good for us” (CEV)
- “Foods for the belly and the belly for foods,” but God will destroy both (BLB)

The Scandal of Fornication

1 Corinthians 6:14-20

1 Corinthians 6:14 “the body is not intended for sexual immorality, but for the Lord” (BSB) Since sexual immorality was rampant within the Corinthian culture, many of the issues Paul deals with had something to do with this problem. Paul returns to his attack against sexual sins—this time in the context of agency or freedom. “Freedom does not mean license to do what one wants without any regard for one’s obligations”¹⁶ The body that Christ paid so high a price for, should be used for His work, to honor and help Him.

1 Corinthians 6:15-18 “Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then . . . unite them with a prostitute? Never!” (BSB) Paul pleads with the saints to “flee from fornication.” Sexual immorality



hurts the person's own body—physically, emotionally, and spiritually. He reminds the Corinthian Christians that Christ bought them back, He carried their sins on His body, thus the saints are to become one with Him: “The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him” (1 Corinthians 6:17, NASB). Certainly, our God-given bodies should not be prostituted with a perverted counterfeit or harlot.

In light of the restored Gospel, the ability to unite to create life is a God-given gift that may carry on into the next life for those who desire it with all their hearts. This is one of God's greatest gifts. Yet, sadly, in our culture as it was in Corinth, that is not appreciated, and in fact, it is profaned in the worst ways. Sexual immorality is one of those principles that Satan works the hardest at debasing and abusing because God holds it in the highest regard. The devil has counterfeited and corrupted it to the degree that chastity is no longer recognizable as one of God's most precious gifts.

1 Corinthians 6:19 “**Know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost *which* is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?**” This is another detrimental outcome of breaking the law of chastity—the Spirit will leave. Those who had been baptized, confirmed, and washed clean through the Savior's body and then turned to sexual sin have cheapened the gift, and lost the Holy Spirit.

1 Corinthians 6:20 “**For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body**” We are not our own—someone else has paid a high price for our lives. The ransoming of humanity by Jesus was that price. Those who adulterate their covenants and prostitute their bodies do demean His gift. Our bodies should be used to enter God's service, not Satan's. This is Paul's sternest chapter against immorality, while at the same time, one of his most generous about repentance. Christ's invitation is to come unto Him to be cleansed; the invitation “is not condemnation but change.”¹⁷

CHAPTER 7

BEGINS SECOND HALF OF EPISTLE: ANSWERS TO CORINTHIANS' QUESTIONS

Paul next turns to answer the questions he received from the Corinthian saints. It appears that Paul received a letter or had some communication from church members in Corinth with several questions. When he addresses other questions, he often begins, “*now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me.*” Six of the questions start with, “*now concerning*” or “*now touching.*”

- 7:1 Marriage and divorce
- 7:25 Virginity
- 8:1 Food offered to idols
- 12:1 Spiritual gifts
- 16:1 Collection of donations for Jerusalem
- 16:12 Apollos next visit to Corinth

The context also suggests that Paul answered other questions without that identical introductory phrase:

- 7:17 What about church callings and status?
- 9:1 What is apostolic authority?
- 11:2 Why do women have to veil their heads?
- 15:1–53 Was Jesus’ body resurrected as well as His spirit?

Questions About Marriage

Corinthians 7:1–9

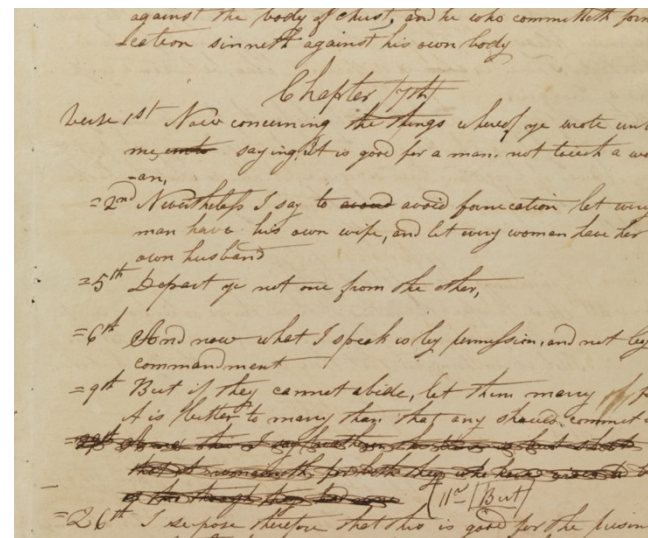
Joseph Smith taught that chapter 7 was incomplete, and written for a special circumstance of missionary work. Note the JST in the following picture, most of which are included in our LDS footnotes for chapter 7 in verses 1, 2, 5, 9, 29–33, 36, and 38.¹⁸

Text

1 Corinthians 7:1 “Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me, saying . . .” (JST) The prophet Joseph’s inspired change—which explained that 1 Corinthians 7:1 was a quotation

from the Corinthians’ letter to Paul—is consistent with many modern translations and a statement from the early church father, Origen (ca. 184–253).¹⁹ We do not have the full dialogue here, only a portion of their question. However, Joseph taught that the key to understanding the Bible is to look at the question that brought on the message. So knowing that their question was, “It is good for a man not to touch [or “have sexual relations” NIV] with a woman?” helps understand Paul’s response. It gave evidence that he disagreed strongly with their question, and other “anti-physical” agendas.

1 Corinthians 7:2 “Nevertheless, I say, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband” (JST) As mentioned earlier, “fornication/pornea” in Greek referred to all forms of immorality. We need to read this in context of all things we know about Paul. In the New Testament, he speaks positively of marriage throughout his letters. By studying it all we get a better picture of his viewpoint



(see Romans 13:9; 1 Corinthians 6:9; 11:11; Ephesians 5:21–6:4; Colossians 3:18–21; 1 Timothy 2:15). As a strict Pharisee (Acts 26:5), Paul would have valued marriage and his marriage would have been arranged and performed at around age 18 (girls were younger, age 13–15).²⁰ Rabbis at the time taught, “a man who does not marry by the age of twenty has sinned.”²¹ If a Roman man were still single by age twenty-five, or a woman by age twenty, they had to pay an extra state tax.²² The early Church Father, Clement of Alexandria (ca. AD 150–215), claimed that Paul was married to the “yolk fellow” of Philippians 4:2. Furthermore, as an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul knew the plan of Salvation, and the eternal importance of marriage (1 Corinthians 11:11).²³

1 Corinthians 7:3–4 “Husbands and wives should be fair with each other about having sex” (CEV) The KJV word “benevolence” is also translated, “conjugal rights” (RSV) and “his marital duty” (NIV).²⁴ Paul is candidly positive about intimate relations in marriage. Later he counters the ascetics and teaches that marriage is not a sin (7:28).

1 Corinthians 7:5–6 “Depart not one from the other, except it be with consent from a time . . .” (JST) Paul is still talking about the importance of sexual intimacy in marriage. Other translations read: “do not refuse” (RSV, JB), or “do not deprive” (NIV). Paul gives his own opinion on making an exception of abstinence for a season, “for fasting and prayer.” A period of abstinence was also allowed in the Jewish Mishnah between one week and a month. The prophet at Joseph Smith thought Paul answers a question specifically about missionaries here.

“that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency” the KJV word “*incontinency*” is usually translated, “lack of self-control.”

1 Corinthians 7:7 “each of you has your own gift from God” (NIV) He speaks of each having a “proper gift of God,” and shortly thereafter addresses callings in the church (1 Corinthians 7:17–24). Could Paul’s personal ideas on abstinence be directed specifically to those with callings of missionary service? Paul speaks from his own views, “I myself,” as at that time he served as a missionary and special witness of the Lord. The Corinthians knew what Paul’s marital stance was at the time, but sadly, we do not.

1 Corinthians 7:8 “Now to the unmarried and widows . . . as I am” (BSB) Most writers on this verse assume that Paul was a widow, or living apart from his wife while on this mission. In either case, at this time, he lived a celibate life.

1 Corinthians 7:9 “But if they cannot *abide*, let them marry: for it is better to marry than *that any should commit sin*” (JST) The JST and the Greek text change the KJV “contain” to “abide” or self-control. The KJV “burn” specifically infers sexual “passion” (NIV, RSV). Jews taught that if one fell into “fornication”/*pornea* (also meant adultery, pornography, etc.), they would burn in Gehenna/hell. Some Jews at the time of the NT put



extreme restraints around the law of chastity, like: “whosoever multiplies conversation with a woman . . . will in the end inherit Gehenna” As a rabbi walked along a road and saw a woman and said, “Hurry up and get in front of Gehenna’ (i.e. get in front of that woman so that out of sight, she may also be out of mind.)”²⁵ Paul’s example was just the opposite. He, like Jesus, interacted with women regularly and honored them.

Divorce

1 Corinthians 7:10–11

1 Corinthians 7:10–11 **A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife**” (NIV) Paul changes his own opinion, to quote Jesus’ commandment against divorce (Mark 10:2–10). In the ideal situation, if a wife or husband divorced, the next best thing was to remain single or else go back to their spouse. This is not protocol for our day. Latter-day prophets allow divorced people who are faithful to their covenants to re-marry anyone they choose in the temple.

Mixed Marriages

1 Corinthians 7:12–16

1 Corinthians 7:12–13 **“If a brother has a wife . . . [or] a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him”** (NIV) Again Paul returns to his personal counsel (not a commandment from the Lord). This discussion probably stemmed from a question that the Corinthian saints asked him, about marriages when only one spouse converts to Christianity. He encourages them to bless each other by remaining married, and hopefully the good example of the believer would help the unbelieving spouse.

1 Corinthians 7:14 **“ . . . sanctified by the [believing] wife, and . . . husband: else were your children unclean; but now are they holy”** On January 25, 1832, as Joseph Smith “translated” the New Testament, he asked the Lord about this verse, and received a revelation known as D&C 74. We learn that the underlying question dealt with a Jewish parent wanting his or her son circumcised, while a Christian parent wanted that tradition “done away” as little children are “holy being sanctified through the atonement of Jesus Christ” (D&C 74:7). This restored truth was also important at the turn of the nineteenth century for American Christians, as original sin and the depravity of man pervaded their view of children as born sinful.

1 Corinthians 7:15–16 **“if the unbeliever leaves, let him go. The believing brother or sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace”** Jesus gave one exception to avoiding divorce (Matthew 19:9; if adultery were involved). Paul also gives one exception—if a saint were married to someone that did not share their religious values, and they left the marriage, then the saint could be at “peace.” Peace is one of the fruits of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22), and a sign of the Lord’s affirmation and witness in inspiration (D&C 6:23). Thus, the apostle teaches, if your companion leaves you over your religion, you can feel at peace and maintain God’s Spirit.

1 Corinthians 7:16 **“what knowest thou, O [Christian] wife, whether thou shalt save *thy* husband? or how knowest thou, O [Christian] man, whether thou shalt save *thy* wife?”** To help understand verse 16, I add “Christian” to the wife and man.

Church Callings and Status

1 Corinthians 7:17-24

1 Corinthians 7:17 “**The Lord hath called every one, so let him walk**” We seem to have a change of subject even without Paul’s standard transition to a different question (“now concerning”). It sounds like Paul begins to address the issue of Christians who are called to the faith, or perhaps called to serve in the church (church callings come up again in verse 20). It appears that when a man became a Christian, they questioned whether or not they should be circumcised. Perhaps some Christians made a distinction between members who were circumcised and non-circumcised?

1 Corinthians 7:18 “**Is any called in uncircumcision? let him not be circumcised**” In addition to the surgery to circumcise a male, there was also a surgery to disguise a circumcision. Paul says, don’t go through with either surgery (the surgery had a very high fatality rate in adult men). This verse may also have to do with the D&C 74 discussion.

1 Corinthians 7:19 “**For neither circumcision counts for anything, nor uncircumcision**” (RSV) The emphasis in Christianity was not the sign of circumcision, but the action of keeping God’s commandments.

1 Corinthians 7:20 “**Each person should remain in the situation they were in when God called them**” (NIV) Some have thought that Paul refers to “calls” as missionary callings, but I think it can be generally received as good advice: Magnify your “calling/*klesis*” wherever you serve. In Greek, *klesis*, can have a broader meaning as a call to discipleship or, “the divine invitation to embrace salvation in the kingdom of God.”

1 Corinthians 7:21 “**Were you a slave when you were called? Do not let it concern you, but if you can gain your freedom, take the opportunity**” (BSB) Broader than one’s church callings, Paul addresses our positions in life, too. He basically says, whatever station of life you are in when you become a Christian, make the most of it and be content.

As mentioned earlier, servitude saturated the Roman Empire, it was more like a Feudal system, and usually slaves had a release date.²⁶ Modern Christians may ask, why didn’t the Lord and his Apostles denounce slavery? The answer I feel is that Jesus turned the culture upside down. He valued servitude, He himself came to “minister/serve” (Mark 10:45, KJV, NIV). Instead of getting rid of servants, Jesus taught masters how to serve. Yet Paul is clear, if you are a slave, gain your freedom if possible.

1 Corinthians 7:22 “**the one who was free when called is Christ’s slave**” (NIV) or “**bondservant**” (ESV) Once Christians have joined forces with their Savior, they sign up to serve Christ. Yet, when we serve God, He blesses us with greater liberty. And if we are “free” before conversion we should realize that we need to serve the Lord.

1 Corinthians 7:23–24 “**you are bought with a price . . . abide with God**” Paul repeats 1 Corinthians 6:20 probably for emphasis. God paid the price for us through the atonement of Christ.

Advice for Virgins

1 Corinthians 7:25–38

1 Corinthians 7:25 “**Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord . . .**” or “**unmarried**” (RSV) Once again, Paul begins a section with his standard transition, to address another of the Corinthians’ questions. Even though he had not learned anything from revelation on this topic, Paul mentions our “present crisis” or impending distress (RSV). This may have related to the early church’s thought that the Second Coming would be soon, or more likely that the apostasy, a war, or persecution was imminent. Paul felt with all the immanent destructions just around the corner; this was no time for marriage. With this as his paradigm, he thought that young women and young men should focus on serving missions and preparing the kingdom instead of marriage.

1 Corinthians 7:26–29 “. . . *for a man so to remain that he may do greater good . . . For I spare you not. But I speak unto you who are called unto the ministry. For this I say, brethren, the time that remaineth is but short, that ye shall be sent forth unto the ministry. Even they who have wives, shall be as though they had none for ye are called and chosen to do the Lord’s work*” (JST) Joseph’s inspired changes may address the need for missionary service to maintain truth and hold off the apostasy. As marriages were arranged often a year or more before the event, this may have addressed engaged couples, too. In that case, the question may have been, should engaged youth who are called on a mission marry first, or serve single? And, if they were already married, should they divorce before such service?

Paul answers that whatever marital status you are in, you can serve (though he admits it is harder to serve full-time with family responsibilities). Interestingly, looking back on the history of Christianity, Catholic priests married until the 11th Century. Celibacy was encouraged in some areas from AD 400. But it was not a requirement until almost a thousand years afterward. Some see that the change came from a desire to keep the land in the hands of the church, and not be passed on through a wife or family lines. Hence, they stopped priests’ marriages. This attitude has changed the way most Christians interpret these verses.

1 Corinthians 7:31–33 “. . . **magnify your calling . . .**” Paul calls on the saints to work without extraneous cares, or “free from anxious care” (NEB). He felt that it was hard to focus on missionary work while married, “therefore there is a difference for he is hindered.” These verses have so many JST changes that a comparison is helpful.

JST 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29–33

But I speak *unto you who are called unto the ministry. For this I say*, brethren, the time that *remaineth is but short, that ye shall be sent forth unto the ministry. Even they who have wives, shall be as though they had none; for ye are called and chosen to do the Lord's work.*

30 And *it shall be with them who weep*, as though they wept not; and *them who rejoice*, as though they rejoiced not, and *them who buy*, as though they possessed not;

31 And them who use this world, as not *using* it; for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would, *brethren, that ye magnify your calling. I would have you without carefulness. For he who is unmarried*, careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord; *therefore he prevaieth.*

33 But he *who is married*, careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife; *therefore there is a difference, for he is hindered.*

KJV 1 CORINTHIANS 7:29–33

But this I say, brethren, the time is short: it remaineth, that both they that have wives be as though they had none

30 And they that weep, as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;

31 And they that use this world, as not abusing it: for the fashion of this world passeth away.

32 But I would have you without carefulness. He that is unmarried careth for the things that belong to the Lord, how he may please the Lord:

33 But he that is married careth for the things that are of the world, how he may please his wife.

1 Corinthians 7:36 “If any man thinketh he behaveth himself uncomely toward his virgin *whom he hath espoused . . . let him do what he hath promised, he sinneth not, let him marry*” (JST). The message is different when we realize he was referring to engaged couples. The JST change is consistent with the RSV which translated, “*virgin*” as “*betrothed*,” and the NIV, “the virgin he is engaged to.” Paul specifically speaks to engaged people who are called on missions. Should they marry first or go? The “*man*” can also be seen as her father as in the JB, “If there is anyone who feels that it would be fair to his daughter to let her grow too old for marriage.”

1 Corinthians 7:37–38 “. . . the man who has settled the matter in his own mind, who is under no compulsion but has control over his own will” (NIV) Paul honors personal revelation to each young couple. He encourages

engaged couples, to receive divine direction. Paul's restraint about the timing of marriage is changed a few years later when he writes to Timothy, instructing young women to marry and have children (1 Timothy 5:14).

Advice for Widows

1 Corinthians 7:39–40

1 Corinthians 7:39–40 “A woman . . . is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord” (NIV) Paul speaks of widows in particular. His statement gave freedom for widowed women to choose their spouse. At the time, most first marriages were arranged, and second marriages were dependent on age, financial situation, and social class. A widow was not bound to anyone— for the first time in her life.

As a child, her father had control over her, and that charge was transferred to her husband upon marriage. The *Mishnah* speaks of widowhood as synonymous with a woman's freedom: “A wife . . . can get her freedom by divorce, or through her husband's death.”²⁷ This freedom was not relished, though, as it often resulted in abject poverty. For this reason, most Jewesses did not remain widows for long. There were tax incentives, too. In an attempt to bolster the families among Roman citizens, Caesar Augustus enacted reforms to legally and financially pressure fertile widows and divorcees to remarry within two years.²⁸ He added a penalty tax to citizens who were widowers and divorcees who did not have at least three children.²⁹

. . . The early Christian leadership showed a particular concern for widows, which stemmed from their Master's example. All three synoptic Gospels record Jesus condemning the Jewish leaders for not caring for widows: “Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation” (Matthew 23:14; also see Luke 20:46–47). . . . The Twelve acknowledging the widows' neglect “in the daily ministrations” that led to the calling of seven valiant men to oversee their needs (Acts 6:1).³⁰

We see the Savior and his apostles aware and working to resolve the plight of single women in the early church.

Header Image: Oxyrhynchus 209, manuscript of Romans 1:1–7. Image via Wikimedia Commons.

ENDNOTES

1. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 93. The text block on Corinth includes information from: Bromiley, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 1.773. Raymond E. Brown, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (New York: Doubleday, 1997), 513. Leadership Ministries Worldwide, *1 & 2 Corinthians: The Preacher's Outline and Sermon Bible* (Chattanooga, TN: Alpha-Omega, 2003), 1. Robert L. Millet, *Studies in Scripture: Acts to Revelation* (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1987), 6.178, 81, 91.
2. 1 Corinthians is one of the that textual scholars most consistently agree were written or dictated by Paul are in chronological order as written: 1 Thessalonians, Galatians, Romans, 1&2 Corinthians, Philippians, Philemon. With stylometry (a statistical analysis of word order and patters generated by computers), John L. Hilton found evidence that thirteen of the fourteen books attributed to Paul include a high probability of his word patterns—the only exception being Ephesians.
3. Outline adapted from: John W. Welch, *Charting the New Testament* (Provo, UT: FARMS, 2005), 14–2
4. Paul makes a connection between his apostolic office and God's will (also in 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Collosians1:1 and 2 Timothy 1:1)
5. Dallin H. Oaks, General Conference, April 1985. "It is significant that when we partake of the sacrament, we do not witness that we take upon us the name of Jesus Christ. We witness that we are willing to do so. The fact that we only witness to our willingness suggests that something else must happen before we actually take that sacred name upon us in the most important sense....our witness relates to some future event or status whose attainment is not self-assumed, but depends on the authority or initiative of the Savior himself"
6. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: First Corinthians*, 148. The messiah was expected to rule righteously over the peoples of the world and establish a utopian society. Dating back to the time of the New Testament, the Dead Sea scrolls applied this "term to the prophet who would come to acknowledge the royal messiah and to the high priest who would offer perfect sacrifices in the messianic kingdom."
7. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: First Corinthians*, 159. "Elaborate philosophical arguments had been developed among the Greeks to demonstrate the god must be free from distress and even from influence from any source outside himself.
8. *Ibid*, 160.
9. *Ibid*.
10. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 99.
11. *Ibid.*, 98, 100.
12. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: First Corinthians*, 176–177.
13. John L. Hilton, "On Verifying Wordprint Studies: Book of Mormon Authorship," *BYU Studies Quarterly*: 1990; Vol. 30:3, Article 15. Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/byusq/vol30/iss3/15> (accessed: 8/6-/9). Translators can only use their own vocabular in producing the text in their own language. Joseph felt inspired to use several biblical phrases which he was familiar with in his own translation. Every word in the Book of Mormon we find in Joseph Smith's

vocabulary. Yet his writing style is very different from Nephi, Alma, or Mormon, etc.

14. All Greek and Hebrew translations are taken from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible, <https://biblehub.com/> from (accessed 8/7/19).
15. Joseph F. Smith, *Gospel Doctrine Selections from the Sermons and writings of Joseph F. Smith* (SLC, UT: Deseret News, 1919), 23.
16. Fitzmyer, *Anchor Bible: 1 Corinthians*, 261.
17. Anderson, *Understanding Paul*, 103, 104.
18. "<https://www.josephsmithpapers.org/paper-summary/new-testament-revision> (accessed 8/8/19)
19. Gerald L. Bray, ed., *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, New Testament VII: 1–2 Corinthians* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2014), 58.
20. Jacob Neusner, ed, *Dictionary of Judaism in the Biblical Period* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999), 223–224.
21. *Mishnah, Kiddushin*, 29b.
22. Ken Campbell, ed., *Marriage and Family in the Biblical World* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 2003), 144. *Mishnah, Kiddushin*, 2.1; "A man may give his daughter in betrothal while she is still in her girlhood either by his own act or by that of his agent." On girl's arranged marriages see *Mishnah, Yebamoth*, 13.1.
23. Ehat and Cook, *Words of Joseph Smith*, 9–10; 42, 110, 210, 327–331, "Paul . . . knew . . . all the ordinances, and blessings [that] were in the Church."
24. The KJV is quite Victorian in its vocabulary choice, but Paul used very clear words to describe the need for intimacy in marriage for both spouses.
25. F. F. Bruce, *1 & 2 Corinthian*, 68.
26. See previous notes on slavery from Matthew 19–20; Mark 10; Luke 18 and John 13–17; also see Matthew 26:13; Luke 23; etc.
27. *Mishnah, Kiddushin*, 1:1.
28. Witherington, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, 23.
29. Jackson J. Spielvogel, *Western Civilization* 7th ed. (Belmont, CA: Thomson & Wadsworth, 2009), volume 1, 152; "Augustus also revised the tax laws to penalize bachelors, widowers, and married persons who had fewer than three children."
30. Lynne Hilton Wilson, *Christ's Emancipation of New Testament Women* (Palo Alto, CA: G. P., 2015), chp 6.