



For the week of July 24



Monday, July 25 — 1 Corinthians 13

Chapter Summary: In one of the most well known chapters of the entire New Testament, Paul explains to the Corinthians that whatever gifts they may have in the church, they are all useless without a genuine and heartfelt love for others. Paul describes this love in great detail and explains why it is better than any other gift a Christian could possess.

Devotional: How many times have we said the right thing the wrong way? We are regularly reminded that our tone of voice and the expression on our face communicate just as much (if not MORE) than the words we speak. In an age of text messaging and 140 character tweets, we miss so much of the human side of conversation. Paul challenges us to examine our heart, not just our actions, and make sure that we genuinely love the people we are serving and helping. Though his direct application is to the church, we certainly need this attitude in our families and in our dealings with those outside the church. How can you work to love others more like Christ loves them?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- If love is what makes all my “works” meaningful, then what is the value of the good deeds I do?
- Explain what Paul means when he says, “Love never fails.” How does that match up with what we see today in families and couples?
- Why does Paul say love is greater than hope or faith?



Tuesday, July 26 — 1 Corinthians 14

Chapter Summary: Paul addresses the Corinthians who spoke in tongues during the worship service. He says that all tongues must be interpreted so that everyone can understand what is being said. This is part of a larger principle he lays out that the worship service must be intelligible to an outsider. He encourages them to have decency and order in their times of worship.

Devotional: Have you ever visited a congregation and felt like an outsider in the worship service? It's so easy for a church to become myopic and only see itself. How can you reach out to people so they know we want them as guests? How can you make them feel more comfortable when they visit? Paul indicates that the worship service is a vital part of the life of a church and specifically involved in our evangelistic efforts. How can we make it the best it can be?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul says one of the main purposes for Christians worshipping together is edification. How do we sometimes forget that?
- What are the tongues Paul is talking about here?
- What would cause a Christian to speak in tongues without an interpreter present? Is this an attitude we must fight even today?



Wednesday, July 27 — 1 Corinthians 15

Chapter Summary: Paul reminds the church that the heart of the Gospel is that Christ was raised from the dead. He talks about Christ's resurrection and how it gives us hope for our own resurrection. To deny the resurrection is to deny the entire Christian faith. It is the resurrection that gives us hope for eternity.

Devotional: What will Heaven be like? What will you look like in Heaven? What do you hope to look like?

Paul stops the Christians from squabbling over who gets to do what in the worship service and reminds them to think about Heaven. He encourages them to think about what it will be like to have eternity forever and what it will be like to enjoy a glorious spiritual body. How does a focus on heaven and eternity together with God and all the saints help us to stop being petty with each other in the here and now?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- This one of very few passages that talk in detail about life after death. Why do you think God doesn't give us many specifics about how the afterlife works?
- Paul makes the case that the resurrection is the heart of our faith. Many might argue that it was Christ's death on the cross that forgave our sins. How does the resurrection come to be such a critical part of the Christian faith?



Thursday, July 28 — 1 Corinthians 16

Chapter Summary: Paul concludes this letter by reminding the Corinthians of their commitment to give to the brethren in Rome. He tells them of his personal plans to come and visit them soon before giving them his final thoughts. He closes this letter by giving greetings from all those who are with him and updating them on news from those brethren. He ends the chapter and the book with a doxology.

Devotional: How much do I have to give on Sunday? Do I have to give anything at all? Why should I give?

Christians have always been known as generous people but they have also struggled with their giving. Paul reminds the Corinthians about their commitment to give to the saints who were in dire need in Jerusalem. He encourages them to plan their giving, not just give based on emotion. They should give a percentage of their income, not an amount (as they prospered) and they should give regularly (on the first day of the week). How is your giving a reflection of your faith and love for others?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Elsewhere Paul says that God loves a cheerful giver (2 Cor. 9:6) but here he indicates that God wants us to give in a planned and methodical way. How do those two work together? How are we tempted to emphasize one over the other?
- Paul speaks at length about his personal travel plans. He speaks of God's will, but also indicates he has made some choices. Apollos has also decided when and where he will travel. How do we submit to God's sovereign will in our lives and still make our own decisions?
- How is our love for the Lord (22) and for others (14) related?



Friday, July 29 — 2 Corinthians 1

Chapter Summary: Paul opens this letter to the Christians in Corinth by talking about the suffering they are going through as well as some of the hard times he has endured. Paul had been in fear for his life recently and had undergone many trials. He also explains how his difficulties caused him to be unable to visit with the brethren in Corinth as he had at first planned to do.

Devotional: “I’ve been there and I’m here for you” are great words of comfort to someone in a difficult time. Paul says that God helps us in our times of difficulty so that we can comfort others with the comfort we have received. What has happened in your life and how did God see you through some dark days? How can you use those experiences to help others in their times of trial? Who do you know that could use some words of comfort?

Questions for more thought/discussion:

- Paul says the Corinthian church was a “partaker” of the sufferings he had been through. How does this describe the relationship between a supporting church and a missionary?
- What does Paul say in verse 11 about the power of prayer?
- Apparently some in Corinth were upset with Paul for not coming when he promised. Even though Paul explains his change in plans, how does keeping our promises impact our ability to share the gospel with others? How is Paul a good example of what to do when you have let others down, even if it wasn’t your fault?

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