

Adult
Sabbath School
Bible Study Guide
July | Aug | Sept 2026

FIRST AND SECOND CORINTHIANS



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First and Second Corinthians

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Come visit us at our website: <https://absg.sspmadventist.org>.

Printing and Circulation Office: Pacific Press® Publishing Association, 1350 N. Kings Road, Nampa, ID 83687-3193

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The Christian Life

People have written letters since ancient times. We continue to write them today. We write and send them in more modern ways. For the most part, emails replace paper, ink, envelopes, and stamps. But however we write letters now, we continue to write them for the same reason people wrote them long ago. We want to connect with other people to exchange information, feelings, and ideas.

Why else do we write letters? We have something to say. Paul had something to say, too. But he often didn't have the time to talk face-to-face with people. So, he wrote to them.

In Paul's letters we read some of the most beautiful truths in the Bible. Here are some examples: "While I was with you, I decided to teach you only about Jesus Christ [the Savior]. I taught you about his death on a cross. I wanted to forget everything else" (1 Corinthians 2:2, EASY). Also, "You know that our Lord Jesus Christ is very kind. He was rich, but he made himself poor to help you. So then, because he became poor, you could become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, EASY). And what about Paul's beautiful hymn in 1 Corinthians 13 that praises God's love?

Sad to say, Paul's letters may confuse us sometimes. The church members at Corinth made many mistakes. Some members were guilty of sex sins. Also, other members met only in small groups. The different groups argued and fought with each other. If you think your church has problems, get ready for the problems Paul had to solve at Corinth! (Maybe your local church's problems aren't as bad now as you thought, right?!) But as bad as things were in Corinth when Paul wrote his letters, things were much worse there in the past.

Even so, Paul's letters to the Corinthians are exciting to read. What makes them so exciting? The answer is the way Paul solved the problems in the church. Paul asked the church members to look closely at their hearts and their behavior. He asked them to compare their lives and the life around them with the Good News about Jesus. In

his letters to the Corinthians, Paul preaches the message of the Cross. If any people preach a different message, Paul wishes for God to punish them (Galatians 1:8, 9)!

In Paul's day, Corinth was a rich and important city. Corinth was famous for its busy harbor, beautiful buildings, ships and shipbuilders, and pottery. The city was an important business center. But Corinth was also famous for its sex sins and worship of many different gods. Daily life in Corinth was filled with the worship of these false gods. This information about Corinth helps us to understand the problems in the church at Corinth and why Paul wrote the things he did.

This quarter, we will look at Paul's letters to the Corinthians. In these letters, Paul shares the Good News as the most important part of Christian life. The answer to our problems in life today is the same answer that Paul gave the Corinthians: "Jesus Christ and his death on the cross" (1 Corinthians 2:2, ERV).

Jesus is coming soon! Now more than ever, we need to work together in peace and love. We need the Holy Spirit more than ever before. We need to use our spiritual gifts for God. We need a deep experience with our Lord. Now is the time for us to work for Jesus with all our hearts. We must fight against false teachings. We must grow in the love of Jesus. Our fellowship with each other must grow strong. Hold tight to the Good News about Jesus. Be loyal to the Cross. Paul's letters to the Corinthians teach us to do just that.

The answer to our problems today is the same answer Paul gave the Corinthians: Jesus and His death on the cross.

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The Message About the Cross



SABBATH—JULY 4

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:17–31; Colossians 1:20; Acts 13:16–47.

MEMORY VERSE: “Some people think that the message about Christ’s [the Savior’s] death on the cross is silly. Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]. But it is different for us, the people that God is saving. The message about the cross shows us God’s power to save us” (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY).



We will learn how the Cross is the answer to separation and other problems in the church, both in Paul’s day and in ours.

CICERO was a Roman writer. He died about 50 years before Jesus was born. Cicero wrote about the cross. Most Roman people didn’t need to worry about dying on a cross. The cross was a punishment for slaves, the worst criminals, and the enemies of Rome. So, Cicero told the Roman people not to bother to think about it. Cicero’s words show us that the cross was a symbol of shame for the Romans. They hated the cross.

Compare Cicero’s words with Paul’s. Paul wrote: “The message about the cross shows us God’s power to save us” (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY). For Paul, the Cross was God’s answer to the sin problem. God accepted sinners because of the Cross (Ephesians 2:16; Colossians 1:20). Jesus paid the penalty for our sins on the cross (Colossians 2:14).

The Cross is Paul’s answer to the problems in Corinth. This week, we will look at the powerful message about the Cross. We will learn how the Cross is the answer to separation and other problems in the church, both in Paul’s day and in ours.

THE GOOD NEWS ABOUT THE CROSS (1 Corinthians 1:17–31)

Paul says that the message about the Cross shows us God’s power to save us. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that Paul wanted to preach only about “Jesus Christ and his death on the cross” (1 Corinthians 2:2, ERV).

Read 1 Corinthians 1:17–31. What important idea do we learn in these verses?

In 1 Corinthians 1:18–31, Paul compares human thinking with God’s wisdom. The Cross shows the worst about us and the best about God. 1 Corinthians 1:18–31 is introduced with powerful Bible truth from 1 Corinthians 1:17: Jesus’ death on the cross can save people. So, the message about the Cross must be the most important part of our preaching (also read 1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul says that God didn’t send him to baptize. God chose Paul to be an apostle. An apostle is a preacher and teacher of the Good News. The word “apostle” comes from the same word in the Greek language as the word “send.” So, the words “apostle” and “send” are connected. This connection shows us that Paul’s basic task was to preach the Good News about Jesus and not to baptize. Is Paul saying that baptism isn’t important? Of course not! Paul is scolding a few baptized Christians. These Christians praise the church leaders who baptized them more than they praise Jesus.

In 1 Corinthians 1:17, Paul talks about “clever words” (EASY). Paul isn’t saying that clever words and fancy sermons are bad. But they must teach us about the Cross. In Athens, Paul used science, clever words, and fancy ideas. But he didn’t convince many people to accept Jesus. So, Paul “decided to follow a different plan in his work in Corinth. Paul wanted to get the Corinthian people to pay attention to his message. He decided not to use fancy words and clever explanations. He ‘decided to teach’ the Corinthians ‘only about Jesus Christ.’ He ‘taught’ them ‘about his death on a cross.’ He ‘wanted to forget everything else’ [1 Corinthians 2:2, EASY].”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 244, adapted.

Why did Paul’s preaching have more success in Corinth than his preaching in Athens? How can fancy words and clever sermons often get in the way of our message about the Cross?



The Cross shows the worst about us and the best about God.

**PEOPLE WHO THINK THE CROSS IS SILLY
(1 Corinthians 1:20, 21, 23, 25, 27)**

Paul compares human ideas to God's wisdom: "Some people think that the message about Christ's [the Savior's] death on the cross is silly. Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]" (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY).

Read 1 Corinthians 20, 21, 23, 25, and 27 (EASY). How many times do these verses use the word 'silly'? How does this word help us understand Paul's message about the Cross? Why is the message about the Cross silly to people who are destroying their own lives?



Whatever problems we have, God has people who are willing to hear Bible truth.

In 1 Corinthians 1:18, 23, Paul talks about lost people. These people think that the Cross is silly. The word "silly" (EASY) in these verses doesn't mean stupid or not being smart. The word "silly" is really connected with bad behavior or evil thinking. The word also means fighting against God and not having any understanding. So, the people who thought the Cross was silly were really fighting against God. They didn't have understanding. Their thinking was evil because their behavior was evil. No wonder Paul talked so much about this topic in 1 Corinthians.

Think about Paul's problems in the city of Corinth. He is in a city where the people are filled with pride because they know a lot. So, they are very smart and wise in their own eyes. Paul tells them about a Jew, Jesus of Nazareth. The Romans nailed Jesus to a cross. Then Jesus woke up from the dead. Jesus did all these things to pay for their sins. He also died for the sins of everyone else on earth. No doubt the Corinthians said, "Is this guy Paul joking? How can anything he's saying be true?" They thought Paul's message was completely crazy. Why should any smart, educated Corinthian believe anything Paul said?

For many of the Jews, Paul's message was worse than crazy. What Jew expected Rome to kill their Savior? The Savior would beat the Romans. The Romans wouldn't kill Him.

So, from the start, Paul had many problems in Corinth. But Paul won many people, both Jews and non-Jews, to Jesus.

What lesson does Paul's experience teach us?

Whatever problems we have, God has people who are willing to hear Bible truth. We must be ready to let God use us to bless these people, wherever they are. Some of these places may be as bad, or worse, than Corinth was.

GOD'S POWER TO SAVE US (Colossians 1:20)

The message of 1 Corinthians 1:18 is easy for us to understand. What the Cross means to us depends on how we look at it. If we fight against God, the Cross is silly to us. If we love God, the Cross has the power to save us.

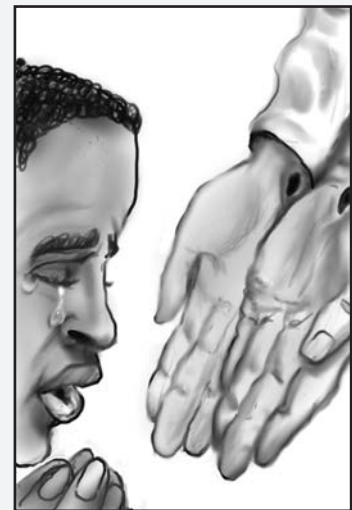
What did Jesus do for us on the cross? Read Colossians 1:20 and 1 Peter 2:24 for the answer.

When we look at 1 Corinthians 1:18 in the Greek language, we learn something very interesting. Paul says, "Those people are destroying themselves [their own lives]" (EASY). The people are the cause of their own suffering. So, they are lost.

In 1 Corinthians 1:19, Paul uses a quote from Isaiah 29:14. In verse 19, we read that God causes the people to be destroyed. But wait a minute. Didn't we just read in verse 18 that the people destroy their own lives? At first, we may think that these two verses say different things. But the verses do fit when we understand what Paul is really saying. The idea in verse 19 is that God will destroy the people who are already destroying their own lives.

Compare the lost sinners to the people that God saves (1 Corinthians 1:18). The lost sinners destroy their own lives. But "it [what happens] is different for us, the people that God is saving" (1 Corinthians 1:18, EASY). This verse shows us that only God can save us. The plan to save sinners comes only from Him. Do you see that Paul says God is saving us? We are not saving ourselves. We, of course, can't do that. We can destroy ourselves. But only God can save us. His saving love is a gift that He gives to sinners. As we see in 1 Corinthians 1:21, God saves people who believe. So, silly people reject the gift God offers them in the cross of Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:30). When they reject this gift, they destroy their own lives.

"If you serve sin as your master, it will pay you with death. But if you belong to our Lord Jesus Christ, God gives you a gift! That gift is life with God for ever" (Romans 6:23, EASY). How does this verse also say what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 1:18, 19?



God's saving love is a gift that He gives to sinners.

A SAVIOR NAILED TO THE CROSS (Acts 13:16–47)

Paul wrote, “Jewish people want to see God do a miracle. Then they will listen [believe]. Gentile [non-Jews] people want to listen to a message that has clever ideas” (1 Corinthians 1:22, EASY). No one, Jews and non-Jews alike, expected or wanted a Savior on a cross.

Read Mark 8:31, 32; Mark 9:30–32; and Mark 10:32–34. These verses show us that the Jews thought the death of a Savior on a cross was crazy and strange. As we already saw, the Jews expected the Savior to fight the Romans. That didn’t happen, at least not in the way we think a war should be fought and won.

For sure, Christians in Paul’s time also thought that a Savior dying on a cross was a crazy idea. But the Cross is a symbol of faith for so many Christians today. So, we may have trouble understanding how Christians in Paul’s time thought and felt about the cross.

The Cross shows us everything God was willing to do to save us. The idea of the Lord dying on a cross for sinners is surprising. Why would He do that? (Imagine in your mind what the angels thought when they saw Jesus die on the cross. They knew and worshiped Jesus in heaven!)



Imagine in your mind what the angels thought when they saw Jesus die on the cross.

Read Acts 13:16–47 (look closely at verses 26, 38, and 47). What do these verses teach us about the Cross?

Paul says Jesus sent him to preach the Good News. So, Paul preaches the message of a Savior who died on a cross (1 Corinthians 1:23). Paul talks again about these ideas in 1 Corinthians 2:1–5. Paul did what Jesus sent him to do. When Paul preached, he says, “I did not use clever words when I spoke to you. I did not try to make you think that I was very wise” (1 Corinthians 2:1, EASY). Paul says, “While I was with you, I decided to teach you only about Jesus Christ. I taught you about his death on a cross. I wanted to forget everything else” (1 Corinthians 2:2, EASY). Paul also says, “I did this so that you would not believe because of man’s wise words, but you would believe because of God’s power” (1 Corinthians 2:5, WE).

Does God always do things the way we expect? Why is the answer important for us to understand when things don’t happen the way we expect?

GOD’S POWER AND WISDOM (1 Corinthians 1:24–29)

In 1 Corinthians 1:19, 20, 30, 31, Paul says that God’s wisdom and human wisdom are very different. Paul doesn’t reject all human wisdom. Paul rejects human wisdom that tries to replace God’s wisdom. Human wisdom can’t free people from sin. Only Jesus can, as the chart below shows us:

“The teaching about the cross seems [is] foolish [silly; not wise] to those [people] who are lost.	But to us who are being saved it [the teaching about the cross] is the power of God [the power God uses to save us].”	1 Corinthians 1:18 (ERV)
“But Christ [Jesus] is God’s power and wisdom	to the people God has chosen, both Jews and Greeks.”	1 Corinthians 1:24 (ERV)

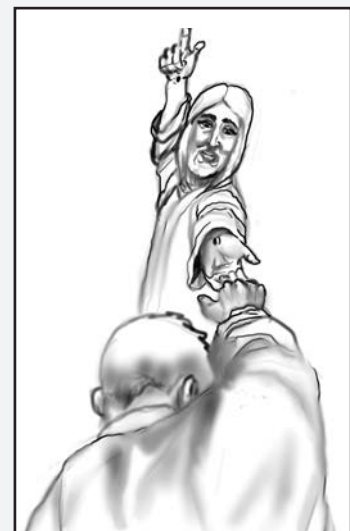
Both 1 Corinthians 1:18 and 1 Corinthians 1:24 show that Jesus is God’s power. What does that mean? God in Jesus saves people from their sins. “The good news is the power God uses to save every one who believes” (Romans 1:16, WE).

Jesus is more than God’s power. Jesus is also the wisdom of God. What does that mean for us? God solved the sin problem in Jesus. Human wisdom was powerless to solve it. Human wisdom can’t save anyone (1 Corinthians 1:21). But “the Bible has taught you how you can be truly [really] wise. You understand that God saves you because you believe in Christ Jesus” (2 Timothy 3:15, EASY).

Read 1 Corinthians 1:24–29. Notice the words Paul uses: “silly,” “weak,” “power,” and “wise.” What is Paul using these words to say?

People may think the Cross is silly. But God “is wiser than people with their clever ideas. . . . he is stronger than any human power” (1 Corinthians 1:25, EASY). Paul isn’t saying God is weak or silly. Paul is saying God’s power and wisdom are more powerful than anything human.

Think about the idea in 1 Corinthians 1:26 that God doesn’t choose many people who are “clever or powerful” or who “belonged to important families” (EASY). What is the message for us in this verse?



God solved the sin problem in Jesus.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Calvary,” pages 741–757, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Today, people respect the cross of Calvary. They love what Jesus did for sinners there. But in Paul’s day, people hated the cross. The cross filled them with terrible fear. So, when they heard about a Savior who died for them on a cross, they thought the idea was silly.

“Paul knew what the Jews and Greeks in Corinth would think about his message. . . . His message would make the Jews angry. The Greeks would think Paul’s message was silly and crazy. They wondered, how can the cross save anyone?

“But to Paul, the cross was the most important object in life. In the past, Paul hurt the followers of Jesus. Then Paul saw God’s love for sinners in Jesus’ death. Ever since that time, Paul always talked about what Jesus did for sinners on the cross. This new understanding of God’s love changed Paul’s life forever. . . . Paul knew from personal experience that a change happens in the heart when we understand God’s love. Then Jesus becomes everything to us.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 245, 246, adapted.



“Paul knew from personal experience that a change happens in the heart when we understand God’s love.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In the Garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed, “ ‘Father, if it is possible [if You can do it], please save me from this time of great [terrible] pain’ ” (Matthew 26:39, EASY). What does this prayer teach us about the price Jesus paid on the cross?
- ② Paul says, God “is wiser than people with their clever ideas” (1 Corinthians 1:25, EASY). In what ways is God’s wisdom different from human wisdom?
- ③ The message about the Cross upset the Jews. The Greeks thought the message about the Cross was silly. What Bible truths do we preach today that cause people to feel and think this way? Why do you think that is so?
- ④ Paul says, “If someone does not believe in God, they cannot accept the message that comes from God’s Spirit” (1 Corinthians 2:14, EASY). How can we touch the hearts of these people with our words about Jesus? Or do we touch their hearts only with how we live and what we do?

THE HEALING TOUCH OF JESUS

Fabiola lived in a peaceful town in Brazil. But she felt no peace in her heart. She learned she had breast cancer during COVID-19. Fabiola was so afraid she was going to die.

In the meantime, in the city of Salvador, a woman named Luisa was suffering deeply. Her marriage of 23 years ended when her husband cheated on her and gave her a terrible disease. At the same time, Luisa's mother started not to remember names and words. Around that time, Luisa saw a neighbor end her life. Luisa wondered if she should do the same thing.

Both Fabiola and Luisa were suffering deeply, the same as the woman in Mark 5. This woman bled for 12 years. Fabiola and Luisa needed healing, the same as this woman.

Fabiola and Luisa needed Jesus' healing touch to fill their hearts with hope.

God gave them hope in surprising ways. Fabiola was watching TV in the evening. Her small dog hopped onto her lap. The dog stepped onto the TV controller and changed the channel to the Hope Channel in Brazil.

Some 800 miles away, Luisa's dog did the same thing! In Fabiola's and Luisa's suffering, God caused their dogs to put their paws on the TV controller. The dogs changed the channel, and the lives of both women changed forever. Both women learned about the life-changing love of Jesus, their Savior.

The hearts of both women filled with hope.

Today, Fabiola has a new life. She encourages people around her with the same message of hope she got from Jesus. The message from the Hope Channel helped her to think about her breast cancer in a new way. She is no longer sad or afraid. Now, as she waits in the doctor's office, she shares Christian books, talks about Jesus, and encourages everyone around her with the hope she found.

The shows Luisa watched on Hope Channel helped her to understand she needed help. She felt so very sad! The help she got changed her life.

Luisa says, "I was the same as that woman who bled for 12 years. I had no hope. But after Jesus touched my heart with His love, I want Him to live in my heart forever."

Hope Channel helps people who are suffering, the same as Fabiola and Luisa. Many people are looking for hope, healing, and Jesus. 84 Hope Channels worldwide are touching people's lives with Bible studies and other Christian shows. Thank you for your support. Your help allows Hope Channel to help many more people know the love of Jesus in their lives. When you give to the offering during Sabbath School, part of that money helps support Hope Channel's work. Thanks for your support.

INSIDE *Story*

by VYACHESLAV DEMYAN



The dog stepped onto the TV controller and changed the channel to the Hope Channel in Brazil.

Peace and Love in Jesus



SABBATH—JULY 11

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 1:12–17; 1 Corinthians 3:1–4; 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; Colossians 1:24.

MEMORY VERSE: “My Christian friends, I tell you this with the authority [in the name] of our Lord Jesus Christ: ‘Please agree with each other. Do not become separate groups. Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way’ ” (1 Corinthians 1:10, EASY).



Jesus will help us agree with each other and work together.

IF YOU KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT WILD ANIMALS, you know that some animals live in herds or groups. These groups can be big or small. Wolves, dolphins and other sea animals, and army ants all stick together. Chimpanzees have close relationships, too. Some chimpanzees live together in groups of 15 to 150 chimps. Their relationships are not always peaceful. Sometimes the chimps fight each other.

Humans are much the same. They most often live in groups. Sometimes members of these groups fight each other. The same thing happens in our churches. Worse, sometimes one church group doesn't get along with another group.

Did you ever see that happen in your church?

If yes, you can understand Paul's troubles in Corinth. This week, we will look at 1 Corinthians 1–4. In these chapters, Paul talks about the problem of fighting in the church. He will show us the answer to solving our fights: we must have peace and love in Jesus. Jesus will help us agree with each other and work together.

SEPARATION IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 1:12–17)

Paul gave the Corinthians this advice: “ ‘Please agree [cooperate] with each other. Do not become separate groups. Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way’ ” (1 Corinthians 1:10, EASY). Paul talks about the idea of working together in peace in 1 Corinthians 1–4. This topic connects all parts of Paul’s letter together.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:12–17. How do these verses help us understand why we should not say we are the followers of a church leader? How does Paul solve this problem?

Paul uses strong words to talk about the fighting in the church at Corinth. Paul uses the Greek words ‘schisma,’ which means ‘separation’ (1 Corinthians 1:10), and ‘eris,’ which means ‘arguing’ (1 Corinthians 1:11). The Greek word ‘schisma’ is used elsewhere in the New Testament to talk about the different views that cause separation in the church. New Testament writers often include the Greek word ‘eris’ (‘arguing’) in their lists of bad behavior. Arguing is something that Christians should not do.

Read the lists of sins in Romans 1:29; Romans 13:13; 1 Corinthians 3:3; 2 Corinthians 12:20; and Galatians 5:20. What other sins do you see in these lists, along with ‘eris’ (‘arguing,’ ‘fighting’)? What do these lists show us about how bad arguing and fighting are?

Some church members got into fights. Then they went to the judges in the courts of law to solve their problems (1 Corinthians 6:1–3). Paul wrote to the church: “I say this so that you will feel ashamed. There is surely [for sure] a wise person in your group who could decide quarrels between yourselves” (1 Corinthians 6:5, EASY). Worse, members didn’t stop fighting before they celebrated the Lord’s Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17–22).

The fighting in the church worries and frightens Paul. So, the first thing he talks about in his letter to the Corinthians is the need for working together in peace.

Read again 1 Corinthians 1:12–17. Then think about how these verses help us understand why groups that cause separation put the church in danger. What can your church do to avoid this problem?



Members didn’t stop fighting before they celebrated the Lord’s Supper.

FOLLOW JESUS, AND NOT HUMAN LEADERS (1 Corinthians 1:10)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10. What do you think Paul meant when he wrote, “Be united [joined together as one] and think about things in the same way” (EASY).

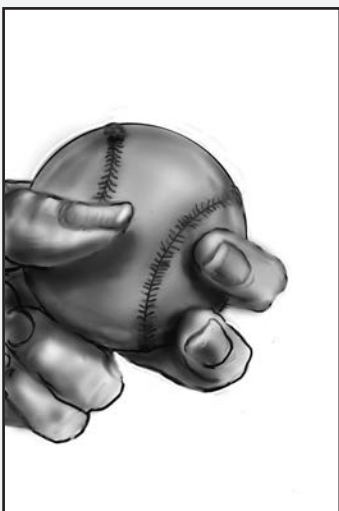
When we fight and separate, we reject Jesus (1 Corinthians 1:10). God “chose you to be joined together with His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (1 Corinthians 1:9, NLV). Jesus is our Lord. He is the most important part of our life. So, then, what is the answer to these questions Paul asks: “Does Christ take sides [does Jesus divide His church? Does Jesus cause separation]? Did Paul die on the cross for you? Were you baptized in the name of Paul?” (1 Corinthians 1:13, Nlrv)? The answer to each question is “No!” We were baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” (Matthew 28:19, WE).

Paul says, “All of you together are Christ’s body. And **each of you** is a part of that body” (1 Corinthians 12:27, EASY, boldface added). The body has many parts. Each part has a job to do to make the body work. At the same time, all the parts make one body. This symbol helps us understand that Paul wants peace and agreement, and not for everyone in the church to be the exact same.

Another important idea for Paul is the teaching that Jesus is our Lord. Paul talks about this idea again and again. We see it in the opening of his letter (1 Corinthians 1:2, 7, 8, 9, 10). So, before Paul talks about the problems with separation and following human leaders, he talks about Jesus. Paul wants us to remember everything that Jesus as our Lord gives to us. The church doesn’t follow human leaders. We follow Jesus.

Look at Paul’s words in 1 Corinthians 1:10. The word written as “united [joined together as one]” comes from the Greek word ‘katartizō.’ ‘Katartizō’ means that something is made new. When church members follow human leaders, relationships in the church must be healed and made new. Only Jesus can make that happen. He helps us die to self. Then we can work together in peace in the church.

In the past few years, many Seventh-day Adventists started small-group Bible studies. How is a small group different from a group that makes a human leader more important than God? How can we be careful that our small groups don’t do that?



The body has many parts. Each part has a job to do to make the body work.

WISDOM AND GROWTH (1 Corinthians 3:1–4)

How does separation in the church start? Separation starts when we praise human leaders too much. We make these leaders more important than they really are. Worse, we make them more important in our lives than God. This habit is not good for the church's spiritual health.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1–4. How does Paul talk about the spiritual growth of the church members at Corinth?

Spiritual growth helps Christians to respect God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6, 7). The Holy Spirit teaches us to understand God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:13). God's wisdom is different from human wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6; 1 Corinthians 2:13). God shows us His wisdom in the cross of Jesus (1 Corinthians 2:1–4). Paul wants the church to work together in peace (1 Corinthians 3:1–17). But first, he wants his readers to understand their need for God's wisdom and growth in Jesus.

Wise Christians are spiritual people. They do not live for the pleasures of this life. They are not the same as newborn babies (1 Corinthians 3:1). Wise Christians compare spiritual things with the Bible. That's because "only God's Spirit can explain them [the message that comes from God] to people" (1 Corinthians 2:13, 14, EASY). Wise Christians need spiritual "food" and not "milk" (1 Corinthians 3:2; compare with Hebrews 5:12). This spiritual food is a symbol for deep Bible truth. The Christian "who lives on milk is still [continues to be] a baby. He knows nothing about right teaching [Bible truth]. But solid food is for those who are grown up. They are mature [wise; grown up] enough to know the difference [to tell them apart] between good and evil" (Hebrews 5:13, 14, ICB). Wise Christians don't say, "Paul is my leader" Or, "Apollos is my leader" (1 Corinthians 3:4, EASY).

We are all God's workers (1 Corinthians 3:9). We, as a church, are the same as God's field, building, and temple (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17). We all belong to God because of Jesus (1 Corinthians 3:11).

Did you praise or follow someone in the past who later disappointed or hurt you? What lesson did this experience teach you?



We, as a church, are the same as God's field, building, and temple (1 Corinthians 3:9, 16, 17).

SERVING AS JESUS SERVED (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2)

In 1 Corinthians 4:1, 2, Paul tells us how we should think about leaders in the church. What is Paul’s advice?

In 1 Corinthians 3:1–4, Paul says that separation happens in the church when members aren’t growing in Jesus. Before Paul talks about this topic, he first says, “But we think about these things in the same way that Christ [the Savior] thinks” (1 Corinthians 2:16, EASY). Living the way Jesus thought and lived is not always easy, right? In the time of ancient Greece and Rome, leaders and thinkers fought each other for control and power. The church at Corinth wanted the people in their city to accept them. So, they did the things that the Corinthian people liked and praised. The church today may be in danger of doing the same thing.



When we serve people as Jesus served them, we become “Christ’s [the Savior’s] servants” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY).

Read Philippians 2:5–8. How does this verse help us understand what it means to “think . . . in the same way that Christ [the Savior] thought” (1 Corinthians 2:16, EASY)?

Separation also was happening in the church at Philippi (Philippians 2:1–4). But maybe the separations at Philippi were not as bad. Philippians 2:1–8 teaches us that we must serve the way Jesus served. How do we do that? We must die to self. We must stop being selfish. We must live to bless people more than ourselves. Jesus did that.

When we serve people as Jesus served them, we become “Christ’s [the Savior’s] servants” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY). The words “Christ’s servants” help us understand the idea we serve Jesus as His assistants or helpers. We will have the correct view about our leaders when we understand Jesus’ example of leadership. The servants of Jesus are also managers for Him (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2). What is a manager? A manager takes care of the property that belongs to someone else. Everything we own belongs to Jesus.

Pray about the message in Philippians 2:5–8. What do these verses tell us about God’s love for us? Why must we die to self? How will that help us show God’s love to other people?

A LIFE THAT SHOWS THE CROSS (2 Corinthians 11:23–28)

We must not worship our human leaders. But we should support them. Let's be thankful for our leaders. Help them lead out in church work. God chooses people to do His work on this earth. We should respect good church leaders whose lives are examples of Jesus and the Cross.

Only Jesus can help someone become a good leader. The Cross helps leaders die to self. Then they won't try to control other people. Good leaders in the church praise God for all their success. When Jesus worked on this earth, He gave all the praise for His success to God (John 17:4).

Paul tells us that our work for God must start with the Cross. The Cross shows us God's wisdom and power to save. At the same time, the Cross shows us that human wisdom is weak and silly. In 1 Corinthians 4:1–13, Paul talks about leadership and the Cross. First, God decides what the rules are for good leadership (1 Corinthians 4:1–5). Second, Paul says that suffering is part of any work we do for God (1 Corinthians 4:9, 11–13). Let's talk a bit more about this second idea.

What does it mean to suffer for Jesus? Read 2 Corinthians 11:23–28 and Colossians 1:24 for the answer.

Christian leaders must follow Jesus. They must be willing to suffer for their brothers and sisters as Jesus did. Leaders must be willing to die for Jesus as they work for Him. Paul says that he and Apollos are "like [the same as] men sentenced to die" (1 Corinthians 4:9, ICB). Paul adds, "We continue to be hungry and thirsty. Our clothes have become old. Sometimes people hit us for no reason. We do not have our own homes" (1 Corinthians 4:11, EASY). Paul and Apollos also were hurt, attacked, and insulted. People behaved as if Paul and Apollos were the same as "garbage. We are [the same as] everybody's trash, right up to this moment" (1 Corinthians 4:13, NIV; also read verse 12). Paul also says the Corinthians are rich, wise, important, and the same as kings. Why does Paul say these things? He wants to show us that the Corinthians are filled with pride. Pride is not part of real Christian leadership. Pride is the cause of all separation in the church (1 Corinthians 4:6).

How much did you suffer for Jesus in the past? What about now? What does your answer teach you about yourself?



Christian leaders must follow Jesus. They must be willing to suffer for their brothers and sisters, as Jesus did.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Training of the Twelve,” pages 17–24, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“When we work together in peace in the church, we show everyone on earth that we are God’s chosen people. We show that we have the truth. Our working together in peace confuses and upsets the enemy. Satan does everything he can to destroy our peace and love in the church. When God’s people believe the truth and live it, they become powerful. Then their lives can change the lives of other people for the better.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 1, page 327, adapted.

“God wants His people to be in perfect peace and love. His people will agree about Bible truth. Jesus died to make us ‘free from all evil. He wanted to make us pure [clean and holy]. He wanted us to be his very own people. He wanted us to desire [want] to do what is good’ [Titus 2:14, NIV]. Jesus wants to remove the spirit of fighting from the church. Then the church can grow and become strong. Then we can do God’s work without destroying each other. God wants all His people to work together in peace and love. Jesus prayed before He died on the cross. He prayed that His followers would be joined together as one, just as He was joined as one with His father. Then everyone on earth will believe that God sent Jesus. Jesus’ prayer is wonderful and touches our hearts. His prayer is also for us today: ‘I do not ask this for these people only; I ask it also for the people who will believe in me when they hear what these people say’ [John 17:20, WE].”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 4, page 17, adapted.



“Jesus prayed that His followers would be joined together as one, just as He was joined as one with His father.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① At the end of Jesus’ work on earth, He prayed for His followers to work together in peace (John 17:21–23). Why is this peace in our hearts powerful proof that God sent Jesus to save sinners? Why is fighting a problem for the work God gave the church to do?
- ② Read 1 Corinthians 4:9–13. What do these verses say about God’s chosen leaders? How are these leaders different from the leaders we see today?
- ③ In 1 Corinthians 4:16, Paul tells the Corinthians to copy him. What does Paul mean? How is copying a leader different from praising a leader too much?

TWO PLANS FOR THE FUTURE

When Dante Hermann grew up, he wanted to be very rich or to be a tattoo artist. People said, “If you want to be rich, you must work hard.”

Dante said, “No, I can get rich without working.”

Dante needed a miracle to make his plan happen.

Dante was a miracle child. His mother tried for years to have a baby. Finally, the doctors told her to give up. Then Dante was born. But he was a very sick baby. The doctors said he needed to move to a tropical place, or he would die. So, his parents left their home in Germany to live in the Canary Islands.

At the age of 16, Dante wasn't rich or a tattoo artist. Dante caused his teachers a lot of problems in class. So, his teachers told him to drop out of high school to work as a handyman. But the work was hard. He didn't earn much money. So, Dante started to sell drugs. A year later, he made a deal with the devil. Dante sold his soul to Satan for drugs, wild living, and rock 'n' roll. Dante got his hand tattooed as proof of his deal with Satan.

For a while, Dante felt happy. He wasn't super rich. But he had all the money and fun he could wish for. So why did he feel empty inside? He saw that his drugs were destroying lives. A voice in his heart said, “Do you think it's OK to get rich from destroying people's lives?”

Then Dante got into trouble with the police. To escape, he went to Germany. Life wasn't better in Germany. So, Dante went back to the Canary Islands seven years later, when he was 25. Dante quit drugs. A friend taught him how to be a tattoo artist. Dante was happy to be doing one of the things he planned in life. He earned a lot of money. But he wasn't super rich.

Then Dante's dad went to court. A company that made drinks was using a brand name that Dante's dad owned. But the company was using it without permission from Dante's dad. So, Dante's dad was taking the company to court. Dante's dad offered to give his son 10% of any money he got if Dante helped him win in court.

At the same time, a friend gave Dante a Bible. Dante started to read it. He read, “The blessing of the LORD brings wealth [makes a person rich]. And it [the blessing] comes without painful work” (Proverbs 10:22, NIV).

Dante thought, “If I give God my heart, He will bless me and make me rich.” He decided to give his heart to Jesus.

Today, Dante is a pastor in Germany. He is rich. But not because he has a lot of money. He said, “When I was a tattoo artist, my heart was empty. I thought if I were rich, I would be happy. But all I needed was Jesus.”

INSIDE Story



Dante heard a voice in his heart say, “Do you think it's OK to get rich from destroying people's lives?”

Sin in the Church



SABBATH—JULY 18

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 5:1–13; 1 Corinthians 6:1–13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8; 1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9.

MEMORY VERSE: “You should know that your body is a temple for the Holy Spirit that you received [got] from God and that lives in you. You don’t own yourselves. God paid a very high [expensive] price to make you his. So honor God with your body” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20, ERV).

OUR BRAINS are much the same as sponges. Sponges soak up water very easily. In the same way, what we put in our minds stays there, the same as water in a sponge. Maybe we don’t remember everything that enters our minds. (If we did, we’d have trouble thinking!) But everything we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is all there in our minds. These things can change what we think, feel, and do.

So, we must be careful. As Christians, we must not let the bad things around us change us for the worse. Sad to say, the Christian church in Corinth had this problem from the start.

Paul warned the church not to separate into groups (1 Corinthians 1–4). Paul also talked about sex sins; going to court against other members; selling sex for pay; marriage; and staying single. Church members often acted the same way that non-Christians did. The separations that Paul talked about in 1 Corinthians 1–4 caused the problems that Paul warned against in later chapters. How does Paul solve the sin problems in the church? What lessons can we learn from his experience?



Everything we see, hear, smell, taste, or touch is all there in our minds.

WHEN WHAT WE SAY DOESN'T MATCH WHAT WE DO (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

All during Christian history, pastors, thinkers, and church members studied the New Testament to learn about the church. They wondered, “What makes the church a success?” They also asked, “What is the best way for church members to work together?” The amazing stories about the church in the book of Acts show us the answers. But often, we don't remember an important part of the stories: people have problems. So, we can read the New Testament to see also what a church should **not** do. Paul's letters to the Corinthians can help us understand that better.

Read 1 Corinthians 5:1–13. What problem does Paul talk about in these verses? Why is this problem so awful?

Paul uses the words “his stepmother” (1 Corinthians 5:1, ICB). So, the verses show that a man is having sex with his stepmother. Earlier, Paul wrote, “People from Chloe's house have told me news about you” (1 Corinthians 1:11, EASY). The news Paul is talking about may be this relationship between this man and his stepmother. Sex between family members is a terrible sin. That's why Paul says, “Even people who do not know God do not do things as bad as that!” (1 Corinthians 5:1, EASY). And this sin is now happening in a Christian church during New Testament times? Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 5:1, 2 show us that the news surprises and upsets him.

As bad as this sin is, the problem gets worse. Paul gets more upset when he learns that the Corinthians aren't sorry or ashamed of the problem in their church. They are filled with pride because they welcomed this man into the church as a member (1 Corinthians 5:1, 2). Worse, the Corinthians are bragging about it (1 Corinthians 5:2, 6)! Paul wants to correct the problem with the man. Paul also wants to correct the church. The church isn't living what they believe. Paul is so upset with the church. What is wrong with these people?

We don't really know why the church accepted this man. Maybe he was rich and gave the church a lot of money. Then the church became ‘blind’ to his sin (Leviticus 18:7, 8). Worse, in Paul's eyes, they bragged about it!

What things do we accept that the Bible warns against?



Paul gets more upset when he learns that the Corinthians aren't sorry or ashamed of the problem in their church.

SEX SINS IN THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

What must we do when there are sex sins in the church? What is the best way to solve the problem? The answer isn't always easy. The problem was hard for Paul to solve. The problem is hard for us to solve, too. So, what do we do? We must follow the Bible. We must pray and act with love. We want the person who is being punished to come back to Jesus.

What does Paul tell the church to do? Read again 1 Corinthians 5:1–13 for the answer.



Church punishment succeeds when the punished member comes back to the church.

In 1 Corinthians 5, Paul says that the man who had sex with his stepmother should be removed from the church (1 Corinthians 5:2). Also, the man should be “punished” (1 Corinthians 5:3). Then Paul tells the church to “hand this man over to Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5, NIV). Paul adds, “Do what the Bible says: ‘Send the bad person away from among yourselves’ ” (1 Corinthians 5:13, EASY). Paul tells the church members not to “be friends with people” who do sex sins (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, EASY). Paul warns, “Do not even agree to eat a meal with them” (1 Corinthians 5:11, EASY). Paul uses strong language that may upset modern readers. But we must remember that Paul is talking about someone who is not hiding his sin. So, Paul must use strong language to solve the problem. Let's look at some of what Paul says and explain what his words mean.

“Send the bad person away” (1 Corinthians 5:13, EASY; also read verse 2). This verse is talking about what punishment the church should give the man.

“Give this man to Satan” (1 Corinthians 5:5, ICB). This man didn't live in obedience to God's law. The man chose not to be under God's protection. So, the man put himself under Satan's control.

“You must not be friends with people” who are doing sex sins (1 Corinthians 5:9, 11, EASY). **“Do not even agree to eat a meal with them”** (1 Corinthians 5:11, EASY). When we are close friends with people who do sex sins, we may want to copy their sins. So, we need to protect ourselves as best we can from the evil around us.

“Then God may save the man's spirit” (1 Corinthians 5:5, EASY). Church punishment is meant to help sinners give up their sins and come back to God. Church punishment succeeds when the punished member comes back to the church.

PROTECTING THE CHURCH (1 Corinthians 5:3, 12, 13)

In 1 Corinthians 6:1–11, Paul continues to talk about how Christians should solve problems with other members in the church.

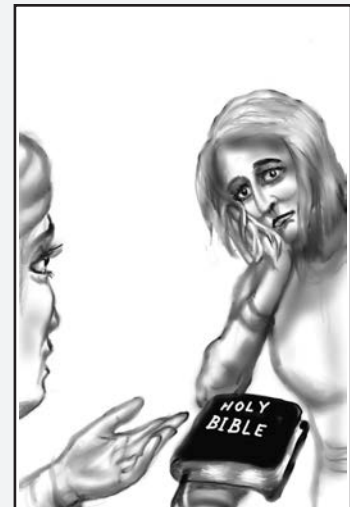
Read 1 Corinthians 5:3, 12, 13 and 1 Corinthians 6:1–13. What is Paul trying to teach the Corinthians and us?

In 1 Corinthians 6:1, Paul uses a word that is written as “complaint” in the WE Bible. “Complaint” comes from the word ‘pragma’ in the Greek language. In 1 Corinthians 6:1, Paul uses ‘pragma’ or complaint to talk about going to court. We must understand that 1 Corinthians 6:1–11 isn’t talking against criminal courts. The Bible respects the power of courts of law to punish criminals (Romans 13:1–5). Paul talks about a court of law right after he talks about sex sins. Moses did the same thing in Deuteronomy 22:22–24. So, we can see that Paul follows the Bible to solve problems in the church.

We don’t know for sure what the problem in court is about. The problem may be a sex sin. Whatever the “pragma” was, Paul was not happy to see church members taking other church members to court. The judges in these courts of the land were not Christians (1 Corinthians 6:1). As Christian brothers and sisters, why couldn’t the church members solve their problems on their own?

Maybe the church members who went to court are the father and son in 1 Corinthians 5:1. Again, we don’t know for sure. We don’t need to know that information to understand Paul’s teaching. Paul cared about the church and what people outside the church thought about it. Christians shouldn’t share problems in the church with the public (1 Corinthians 6:6). Christians shouldn’t use the courts to judge or solve problems inside the church. In the Kingdom of Rome, judges showed more favor in court to people who were important or rich. So, the church must not go to the courts to solve their problems. They must use the Bible.

Think about Paul’s list of sins in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 and in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10. Why does Paul include sex sins on the same list with worshiping statues, stealing, cheating, and being selfish?



The church must not go to the courts to solve their problems. They must use the Bible.

JESUS MAKES US FREE FROM SEX SINS (1 Thessalonians 4:1–8)

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8. What do these verses say about the connection between our living a holy life and not doing sex sins?

In 1 Thessalonians 4:1–8, Paul teaches us an important rule about how to live as Christians. So, why were the Christians in the church at Corinth not following it?

Some church members in Corinth believed that the Good News about Jesus made them free. So, now they could do anything they wanted. They said that just as the stomach was made for food, the body was made for sex (1 Corinthians 6:13). Paul says that Jesus doesn't make us free **to** sin. He makes us free **from** sin. Sex sins should not be part of the Christian life (Romans 8:2; Galatians 5:13; Romans 6:18, 22). Paul tells us, "Our bodies belong to the Lord. So you should not use your bodies to have sex in a wrong way" (1 Corinthians 6:13, EASY). Who we are must control what we do. Both things are connected. In 1 Corinthians 6, Paul shows us this important rule in three different ways.

First, Paul says God washed us from our sins. He made us clean and holy. Now God accepts us because of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:11). The list of sins in 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10 and the sex sins in 1 Corinthians 6:12–20 cannot be part of the Christian's life.

Second, we are part of the "body" of Jesus (1 Corinthians 6:15). The symbol of the body shows us that we must be united with the Lord (1 Corinthians 6:17). Sex sins break our relationship with God (1 Corinthians 6:13, 15). Whoever joins with a person in sex becomes one body with that person (1 Corinthians 6:16). So, Jesus must control our sex lives, with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Third, our bodies are the same as temples where the Holy Spirit lives (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). If we want to live a holy life, we must have a close relationship with Jesus with the Spirit's help. Then we won't do sex sins. Paul tells us "to serve God with your whole life. Offer your bodies to him like [the same as] a sacrifice [offering] that continues to live" (Romans 12:1, EASY).

Think about all the suffering that sex sins cause the human family. What should this thought tell us about why Christians must not sin against their bodies?



Paul says that Jesus doesn't make us free to sin. He makes us free from sin.

MARRIED OR SINGLE (1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9)

Look again at Paul’s teaching that your body is the same as “a temple for the Holy Spirit” (1 Corinthians 6:19, ERV). Do you see that Paul teaches this idea while he is warning the church against sex sins? What is the only way we can live a holy life? (Read yesterday’s study.) Our bodies must become the same as a temple for the Holy Spirit to live in. The church must be different from the community around it. The Holy Spirit in our hearts makes that change possible.

Read 1 Corinthians 6:19–7:9. How do these verses help us to follow the commandment not to do any “sex sins”? (1 Corinthians 6:18, NLV).

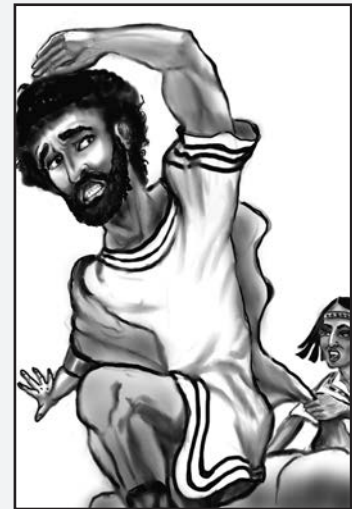
We can learn important Bible truth about sex in 1 Corinthians 7. This chapter can be divided into two parts: (1) lessons about marriage (1 Corinthians 7:1–24) and (2) lessons about being single (1 Corinthians 7:25–40). 1 Corinthians 7 helps us understand that these topics are important and necessary. So, we must talk about them.

But we must remember that Paul is answering questions about the problems in the church at Corinth. Then we will understand Paul’s ideas about marriage better. If not, we may think that Paul doesn’t respect marriage very much. But that is not true (read 1 Timothy 4:1–3; 1 Timothy 5:14; also Hebrews 13:4).

Also, we must remember that God made sex. But God made us to enjoy sex only in marriage. Sex is a gift. God made it for marriage between a male and a female. That is the only type of sex that the Bible accepts.

That’s why Paul warns us to “run away from every kind of wrong sex!” (1 Corinthians 6:18, WE). When Paul gives us this warning, he may be thinking about the story of Joseph (Genesis 39:6–18). Joseph ran away from Potiphar’s wife when she tried to have sex with him. The Bible tells us that Joseph “ran out of the house” (Genesis 39:18, EASY). The Bible doesn’t say so, but we can see from the story that Joseph waited to have sex only in marriage (Genesis 41:45). Joseph was filled with the Holy Spirit (Genesis 41:38). He wanted to do what was right in God’s eyes.

How can we, as a church, protect ourselves from wrong ideas about sex that are in our communities worldwide?



Joseph ran away from Potiphar’s wife when she tried to have sex with him.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “A Message of Warning and Entreaty,” pages 298–308, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

In the list of sins in 1 Corinthians 5:10, 11 and 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10, Paul talks about worshiping statues, getting drunk, and sex sins. As Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:7 (compare with Exodus 32:1–6), idol-worshiping feasts were filled with people who ate and drank too much. These things caused people to do sex sins (1 Corinthians 10:8). Ellen G. White says:

“People who are selfish and eat too much can’t enjoy the blessing of a holy life. . . . God made the human body very strong. We can do terrible things to our health. But the body can continue to correct the suffering we cause it. After a while, our wrong habits will hurt our bodies. We will suffer if we continue to eat and drink too much or if we enjoy the wrong types of food and drink. Then we will have a hard time staying healthy. Our bad habits will cause our minds, bodies, and spirits to become weak.”—Ellen G. White, *The Sanctified Life*, pages 25, 26, adapted.

“Self must die. You must get rid of every false god from your heart. When your heart is empty, the Spirit of Jesus can fill your spirit completely. People who are filled with the Spirit of Jesus have faith that causes them to show God’s love to other people. This faith washes the heart clean from every sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Home Missionary*, November 1893, adapted.

“God wants to change our hearts. He wants us to be clean and holy. That’s why He sends us His Spirit. His Spirit works in us at all times to help us change. . . . We have natural habits that need to be corrected. If the Spirit doesn’t correct these habits, they will destroy us.”—Ellen G. White, Manuscript 12, 1888, adapted.



“We will suffer if we continue to eat and drink too much or if we enjoy the wrong types of food and drink.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 How do Paul’s questions about the body help us to understand his worries about the church? (Read 1 Corinthians 6:19; 1 Corinthians 5:6; 1 Corinthians 6:2, 3, 9, 15, 16, 19.) Why should we also care about these same problems today?
- 2 Today, many people outside the church think marriage is old-fashioned. How can we show them that marriage is really a gift from God that comes from Eden?

FASHION FOR JESUS

A fashion show in New York City is about to start. Photographers get their cameras ready to take pictures. The models wait to walk down the runway. They wear the newest and most beautiful fashions.

The woman who runs the show is Isabelle. Isabelle is backstage. There, she prays with the models before she sends them down the runway in front of the crowds.

Isabelle knows many famous people who make clothes. She also knows many famous movie stars who wear them. But these things are not the reason for Isabelle's happiness. What gives her joy is the work for God that Bryant Park Life Hope Center is doing. This center is in the city. Here, Seventh-day Adventists are touching lives and teaching people about Jesus.

Isabelle grew up in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. She was taught that we must win people to Jesus. Isabelle was a ballet dancer, a model, and even a skateboarder. Now she makes beautiful clothes for people to wear. Whatever Isabelle does in life, she does for Jesus. In the past, Isabelle got injured badly. Jesus healed Isabelle from her terrible pain. Now Isabelle wants to serve Jesus even more.

God healed Isabelle just before the Life Hope Center opened, in 2021. Isabelle says, "At that time so many miracles happened. I wanted everybody to know what God did for me. So, when Life Hope Center leaders asked for volunteers, I said Yes."

God gave Isabelle much success in the fashion business. She can meet people few Seventh-day Adventists can meet. She can go places where few of us get the chance to go. Isabelle uses her fashion shows to bring people close to Jesus in their hearts.

Isabelle's ads for her fashion shows share her love for Jesus. Isabelle explains, "In every collection of fashion I do, I always ask the audience to look into their hearts. I want them to think about their actions and behavior. I want them to ask, 'Is there a God out there? Should I change? Is there hope for me?'"

Isabelle adds, "After Fashion Week, the people who worked with me call me up on the phone just to hear my voice! They say my voice gives them peace. I know that's God, because I talk too fast to be peaceful!" Isabelle prays with her models, her workers, and anyone in the fashion business who is nervous or under pressure. Some people ask Isabelle what church she goes to. They say, "Wherever you go, I want to go." Then Isabelle brings them to Life Hope Center for a program or Bible studies. Or she takes them to a nearby Seventh-day Adventist church.

Isabelle uses every part of her life to win people to Jesus. What if every follower of Jesus today did the same thing?

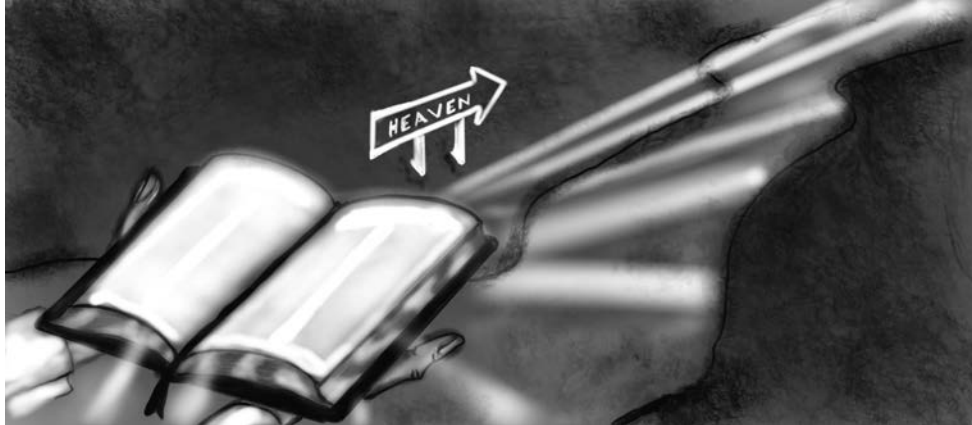
INSIDE *Story*

by SANDRA DOMBROWSKI



Isabelle prays with her models, her workers, and anyone in the fashion business who is nervous or under pressure.

Do Everything to Honor God



SABBATH—JULY 25

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 8:1–13; 1 Corinthians 9:1–6; 1 Corinthians 10:7–11; Mark 10:17–22.

MEMORY VERSE: “So if you eat or drink or whatever you do, do everything to honor God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLV).



Because we are God's temple, He lives in us and makes us strong and holy.

IN 1 CORINTHIANS 8–10, we finish reading about the topic we started in chapters 5–6: sex sins. At the same time, chapters 8–10 introduce Paul's answers to some questions. The church members at Corinth asked Paul these questions in a letter (1 Corinthians 7:1). The rest of 1 Corinthians is about Paul's answers to these questions.

1 Corinthians 7 shows us that the topic of sex sins (chapters 5–7) is connected to worshiping false gods (chapters 8–10). The Bible often talks about these two sins together (read Acts 15:20, 29; Acts 21:25; 1 Corinthians 6:9; Ephesians 5:5; Colossians 3:5; Revelation 21:8; Revelation 22:15). Paul tells us that, as Christians, we must not do these sins (1 Corinthians 6:18; 1 Corinthians 10:14).

Last week, we learned that we are the temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Because we are God's temple, He lives in us and makes us strong and holy. He gives us the strength to run away from sex sins. This week, we will learn how we can stop worshiping false gods, too. How do we do that? We can stop worshiping false gods when we “do everything to honor God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLV).

KNOWING AND LOVING GOD (1 Corinthians 8:1–13)

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1–13. Why does Paul compare knowing God with loving Him? What is Paul talking about in these verses?

Paul talks about food offered to the statues of false gods. Paul uses this topic to talk about a bigger problem in the church: not having enough love in our hearts (1 Corinthians 8). The church separated into two groups because of the problem with eating food offered to statues. Some church members believed they could eat food offered to statues of false gods. That was because they knew these gods weren't real (1 Corinthians 8:4). Paul says these Christians are strong (1 Corinthians 4:10). But Paul says that the Christians who complain about this behavior are weak (1 Corinthians 8:9–12). Why does Paul say these Christians are weak? Because they didn't give up some of their false beliefs when they became Christians. What happened when these weak Christians saw the strong Christians eating food offered to false statues? The weak Christians thought that maybe they can worship Jesus and false gods, too. So, Paul didn't want the strong Christians to cause the weak Christians to sin.

The Bible doesn't have nice things to say about people eating food offered to statues (Acts 15:20, 29; Acts 21:25; compare with Revelation 2:14, 20). But Paul doesn't use the same strong language in these verses to talk about this topic in his letter to the Corinthians. Paul wants the church to be at peace. He knows that this topic can cause separation in the church. Paul is not saying that knowledge itself is evil. But Paul is against church members being filled with pride and separating from the church because they think they know more than other members. What happens when we share Bible truth without love in our hearts? We can cause separation in the church. If we have Bible truth, but we don't have love in our hearts, we really know nothing (1 Corinthians 8:2). We must love God and know Him. Then He can make us wise (1 Corinthians 8:3).

Both Paul and Moses teach that we must have love in our hearts. Or everything we know about God is useless.

Paul says if we don't have love in our hearts, what we know may become a bad thing (1 Corinthians 8). Why must we share our beliefs with love?



What happens when we share Bible truth without love in our hearts? We can cause separation in the church.

LOVE THAT ISN'T SELFISH (1 Corinthians 9:1–6)

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1–6. What example of love do these verses show us?

In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul offers us examples of love that isn't selfish. Paul and Barnabas want to help other Christians grow strong in their faith. So, they don't accept any money, support, or other things that other Bible workers got from working for the church. Some of these things that Paul and Barnabas didn't do or accept included:

“Receiv[ing] food and drink from the people that we [Paul and Barnabas] help” (1 Corinthians 9:4, EASY). Paul was an apostle. An apostle was a leader, teacher, and preacher in the church. As an apostle, Paul may ask the people he helps to support him. Many spiritual leaders in Paul's day used to do that. But Paul didn't. He supported himself with making tents (Acts 18:3).

“Bring[ing] a believing wife with us when we travel” (1 Corinthians 9:5, ERV). A married apostle was allowed to bring his wife with him on his preaching trips. The church agreed to pay for it. Examples of married couples include Priscilla and Aquila (Romans 16:3), Adronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7). But Paul wasn't married (1 Corinthians 7:8). Yes, Paul could get married. Then he could get support from the church for himself and his wife when they traveled. But Paul chose not to do that.

Not “working for a living” (1 Corinthians 9:6, NLV). Paul and Barnabas were allowed to earn pay for their work for God (1 Corinthians 9:4–6). But they didn't accept any money from the church. Paul made tents for a living (Acts 18:3). We don't know what work Barnabas did for a living. We do know that Barnabas sold land that he owned and gave the money to some Bible workers (Acts 4:36, 37). Barnabas was willing to work to support himself.

Is it fair for Paul and Barnabas to earn a living from the church? Paul shows that the answer is “Yes” (1 Corinthians 9:7–12). The Lord Himself commanded, “Those [people] who tell the Good News should get their living from this work” (1 Corinthians 9:14, ERV). But Paul doesn't get any money from the church. Why not? Paul says that his choice not to accept money makes his preaching of the Good News more powerful. So, Paul is an example of love that is not selfish (1 Corinthians 9:1–18).



Paul and Barnabas didn't accept any money from the church. Paul made tents for a living (Acts 18:3).

LEARNING FROM THE PAST (1 Corinthians 10:7–11)

In 1 Corinthians 9:27, Paul talks about why self-control is important. Paul wants Christians to follow his example. At the same time, Paul says that Jesus is the best example of self-control for us to follow (1 Corinthians 11:1).

What sins did Israel do in the desert? God blessed Israel with many gifts during this time. Why did these gifts make Israel's sins even worse? Read 1 Corinthians 10:7–11 for the answer.

In 1 Corinthians 10:1–5, Paul talks about the history of God's people in the desert. Paul's words about the cloud and the sea help us remember how God led and protected Israel in the desert. Paul also talks about the food and drink that God gave His people. The food and drink are a symbol of God's loving care. Paul talks about the experience of Israel in the cloud and sea. This experience is the same as a baptism. In the same way, when Paul talks about the food and drink, he helps us remember the Lord's Supper.

In other words, 1 Corinthians 10 teaches us that Christians are living the same experiences that Israel lived in the desert. Paul tells us Israel's history because he doesn't want us to make their mistakes. God blessed Israel in many ways. But Israel wanted evil things (1 Corinthians 10:6). They wanted to worship false gods (1 Corinthians 10:7). They did sex sins (1 Corinthians 10:8). No wonder, then, that "God was not pleased with most of them" (1 Corinthians 10:5, ICB).

We can easily blame the Israelites for their bad behavior. But Paul says that Christians can easily do the same sins, even with everything we know about Jesus. That's why Paul warns us: "So watch yourself! The person who thinks he can stand against sin had better watch that he does not fall into sin" (1 Corinthians 10:12, NLV). The words "who thinks" tell us that some people in the church didn't know they were in danger of doing the same sins that Israel did. Are we in the same danger today?

Satan will try to get us to sin. But the Bible promises that God "will not allow the testing to be too hard for you" (1 Corinthians 10:13, WE). God will make a way to keep us from sinning. So, why do we continue to sin?



Paul's words about the cloud and the sea help us remember how God led and protected Israel in the desert.

DO NOT WORSHIP FALSE GODS (1 Corinthians 10:5–22)

Read 1 Corinthians 10:5–22. Why must we not worship false gods?

In 1 Corinthians 10:14–22, Paul again talks about food offered to statues of false gods. Today, we may think the idea of offering food to statues is strange. But people offered food to statues all the time in Bible times. People killed animals and offered the meat to the gods in temples. The people gave part of the animal to the priests. The priests were the religious leaders at the temples. The priests sold the meat. Some of the meat was sold in the public markets. This meat was not kept separate from other meat that was also sold in the market. So, a Christian could buy meat that was offered to statues and not know it. Paul gave the church some advice about the meat: Christians may buy the meat that was offered to statues in temples.

So, Christians could eat this meat at home (1 Corinthians 8:1–13). Paul said that Christians were allowed to eat the meat at home because the false gods are not alive. They were nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4). But Christians must not go to the temple celebrations of false gods. Why? Because that is the same as worshiping demons (1 Corinthians 10:20, 21). As Paul says, “You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and then go drink a cup that honors demons. You cannot share a meal at the Lord’s table and then go share a meal that honors demons” (1 Corinthians 10:21, ERV). As Jesus said, “‘You cannot serve two masters at the same time’ ” (Matthew 6:24, ERV).

Paul teaches us that God wants us to serve Him with our whole hearts. When we worship false gods, we make God jealous (1 Corinthians 10:22). Paul gives us a rule against worshiping false gods when he shares a quote that Moses wrote in Deuteronomy 6:4, 5: “ ‘Listen, people of Israel! The LORD is our God. The LORD is the only God. You must love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’ ” (ERV). To this idea, Jesus added, “ ‘You should love other people as much as you love yourself’ ” (Mark 12:31, EASY).

A false god can be more than a stone or wood statue. We can make false gods from almost anything. What false gods, if any, do you need to give up in your life?



People killed animals and offered the meat to the gods in temples.

HOW TO GIVE UP FALSE GODS (Mark 10:17–22)

In 1 Corinthians 8:1–3, Paul says that love for God keeps us safe from worshiping false gods. Paul talks about this topic some more in 1 Corinthians 10:23–11:1. In 1 Corinthians 8:3, Paul talks about our love for God. Later, Paul talks about our love for other people. “Do not think about the things that will help you. Instead [but], each of you should think about what will help other people” (1 Corinthians 10:24, EASY).

Read Mark 10:17–22 and Mark 12:28–31. What is the same about these two verses? How do these verses help us understand 1 Corinthians 10?

In 1 Corinthians 10, Paul does the same thing Jesus did in Mark 12:28–31. Paul connects the two most important commandments of God’s law: love for God and love for other people. In the story about the rich young man (Mark 10:17–22), Jesus connects these two types of love. Jesus wants us to think about Deuteronomy 6:4 (read Mark 10:8) and the last six commandments (read Mark 10:18). The rich young man had a problem. He loved the things he owned more than he loved God and other people (Mark 10:20). The rich young man loved his money more than he loved the poor (Mark 10:21, 22). So, this young man worshiped a false god: money.

In 1 Corinthians 10:27, 28, Paul teaches us that we must love God more than anything else. We must love people as we love ourselves. At the same time, love doesn’t mean that we “‘are free to do anything!’ . . . Not everything helps you to be strong as a believer [Christian]” (1 Corinthians 10:23, EASY). Some things don’t help other people grow strong. That’s why Paul adds, “Do everything to honor God” (1 Corinthians 10:31, NLV). Honor and praise belong only to God. Anything that ‘steals’ honor from God is the same as a false god (Isaiah 42:8). So, we must not give honor, praise, or attention to any false gods. When we do, we ‘rob’ God of the things that belong to Him.

In 1 Corinthians 10:33, Paul says that he didn’t live to make himself happy. He did what was best for other people because he wanted “them to be saved” (1 Corinthians 10:33). That is how Paul copied Jesus in his life.

How can you learn to love other people as you love yourself?



The rich young man loved the things he owned more than he loved God and other people (Mark 10:20).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “Idolatry at Sinai,” pages 315–330, in *Patriarchs and Prophets*.

“Just think about all the good things we could do if we lived to bless other people! God blesses each of us with gifts. We must use these gifts to help other people. . . . Then everyone who really loves God will stop worshiping self.”—Ellen G. White, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, November 18, 1884, adapted.

“Paul wanted Christians to think about how their words and behavior made other people think and feel. Paul didn’t want them to do anything that caused anyone to think they supported the worship of false gods. Some new Christians were weak in the faith. Paul didn’t want the strong Christians to do anything to cause them to fall into sin. That’s why Paul said, ‘When you eat anything, or you drink anything, do it all in a way that praises God’ [1 Corinthians 10:31, EASY]. . . .

“Paul’s warning to the church at Corinth also is for Christians in every time and age. His words are also for our time today. What were the false gods that Paul was talking about? Yes, Paul was talking about not worshiping statues made from wood or stone. But we can make self our false god. Do you love an easy life? That can be your false god. What about eating and drinking anything you want? Then those things can be your false gods, too.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 316, 317, adapted.

“Are you doing something good that is holding God’s work back? Then stop doing it. Do not do things that get in the way of God’s work. Don’t do anything that will cause other people to reject Bible truth. . . . You may be allowed to do many things. But if they will hurt God’s work on this earth, we should not do them.”—Ellen G. White, *Testimonies for the Church*, volume 9, page 215, adapted.



“Do you love an easy life?
That can be your false
god.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- 1 Paul tells us that sometimes the behavior of a strong Christian can hurt the growth of a weak Christian. Think about the times when that may happen. Why is loving God more than anything the answer to this problem?
- 2 What are some of the false gods we worship today?
- 3 Why is worshiping false gods so bad?

THE DAVIS INDIANS—PART 1

Ovid Elbert Davis was born in Michigan, on April 3, 1868. In 1902, he decided to follow Ellen White's advice. She wrote about how people should serve God in foreign lands. So, Davis studied how to be a Bible worker. Then he accepted a job to work with Indians first in Alaska and then in British Columbia.

On January 19, 1906, the General Conference voted to send Davis to British Guyana. The Seventh-day Adventist Church just started working there. Davis married Carrie Rosley, in April, and the couple went to Guyana the next month.

Davis gave Bible booklets and other books to people during his first two years in British Guyana. Then, in 1910, he started a new church 160 miles upriver. In that same year, some groups in Guyana invited Davis to visit them. These family groups lived deep in the jungle. No white man went there before. The family groups wanted Davis to teach them the Good News about Jesus.

These family groups heard about Seventh-day Adventists from other family groups nearby. Davis heard stories about an old village chief. A shining person visited the chief and taught him and his people about Adam and Eve, how sin started, the promise of a Savior, and the Second Coming. The shining person also showed the people how to worship on the seventh-day Sabbath and live a healthful life. The shining person told the chief that a man with a black book would come and teach them more.

The journey to the jungle village took Davis two months. In one report he said that he traveled 29 days on a boat. Then he traveled another 10 days through the forest.

Davis taught the family groups from his "black book," the Bible. Davis taught them all about Jesus. Davis started three centers there. He wrote that 187 people decided to follow Jesus. Davis built three church buildings. He started to teach the new Christians Bible truth. He also taught them to sing a song about Jesus in English.

Davis came back for a second visit in 1911. In his travel diary, he complained about a fever and heart problems before he left on his trip. His last words were written on Monday, July 17. He wrote, "I spent the day teaching the people and giving them a new name." The people wanted a new name that showed their decision to follow Jesus and obey Bible truth.

This story came from Michael Cambell's story in the online Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists. We invite you to visit encyclopedia.adventist.org to enjoy more stories about Seventh-day Adventist Bible workers and pioneers. Read the rest of the story next week.

INSIDE Story

by MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL



The shining person told the chief that a man with a black book would come and teach them more.

Spiritual Gifts



SABBATH—AUGUST 1

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 12:1–6, 12–31; 1 Corinthians 13:1–7; 1 Peter 4:8–11; Ephesians 4:11–13.

MEMORY VERSE: “Love is the thing you should want more than anything else. But you should also want other things the Spirit gives. You should want very much to be able to speak words from God” (1 Corinthians 14:1, WE).



Every member does different things to help the church work.

WHEN WE COMPARE the church to the human body, we can learn many things. The body has many different parts. In the same way, the church has many different members. Every member does different things to help the church work. Every member has different spiritual gifts, too. These gifts help the church work together in peace and love. The peace and love in the church show the peace and love that are in God's heart.

This week, we will look at 1 Corinthians 12–14 and its teaching about spiritual gifts. These chapters are part of a bigger set of chapters about correct Christian behavior in the church (1 Corinthians 11–14). Paul talks about the problem with meetings that are out of control. His answer to this problem is spiritual gifts. The gifts help the church “become strong” (Ephesians 4:12, EASY). In short, God gave the church different gifts to help unite it.

For sure, Paul is thinking about the problem in the church of separation into different groups (1 Corinthians 1–4). The answer to this problem is to become one in Jesus. Now Paul adds to this idea with his teachings about the gifts. Our becoming one in Jesus and with the Spirit is the only way to help us avoid separation in the church.

DIFFERENT GIFTS FOR DIFFERENT MEMBERS (1 Corinthians 12:1–6)

Paul starts a new topic in 1 Corinthians 12:1. The word “now” (ERV) shows that Paul is going to talk about something new in this verse. That new topic is spiritual gifts.

In 1 Corinthians 12:2, 3, Paul says that the Spirit’s first gift is faith in Jesus as Lord. In New Testament times, when people said that Jesus was Lord, that was the same thing as saying that the King of Rome was **not** Lord (Acts 17:7; also read John 19:12, 15). So, the person who said that Jesus was Lord could be punished with death. That’s because the King of Rome was worshiped as a god. Anyone who said that the King of Rome wasn’t a god was guilty of a crime against the Roman government.

Both Jesus and Paul taught that faith in God is a gift from the Holy Spirit. For sure, faith is the most basic gift. So, we shouldn’t be surprised that faith is first on the list in 1 Corinthians 13:13. Paul says faith is a spiritual gift in 1 Corinthians 12:9. But faith isn’t the only gift. There are many other gifts, too. The Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different people. “He [the Holy Spirit] decides which gifts he will give to each person” (1 Corinthians 12:11, EASY).

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1–6. What is Paul talking about in these verses?

Paul says, “The Holy Spirit helps us with different kinds [types] of gifts. But it is the same Spirit who gives them. We serve the Lord in different ways, but all of us serve the same Lord. We do different kinds [types] of work. But it is the same God who helps us all to work in different ways” (1 Corinthians 12:4–6, EASY). Do you see from these verses that God gave spiritual gifts to the church to help us work together? When we work together, we show God’s love and peace (also read Ephesians 4:8–11). Yes, the Spirit gives gifts to Christians. But God gives us the strength to serve Jesus in the church (1 Corinthians 12:5, 6). The Holy Spirit gives each Christian gifts (1 Corinthians 12:11). But we must use the gifts to help the church as a whole.

The church must work together in peace and love. Why is this work so important to the church?



Both Jesus and Paul taught that faith in God is a gift from the Holy Spirit.

ONE CHURCH, DIFFERENT GIFTS (1 Corinthians 12:12–31)

As we saw already in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6, Paul talks about how God makes us one in Jesus. At the same time, Paul also talks about how each church member is different. So, the Holy Spirit gives different gifts to different members. Paul wants us to understand that we are one church with different gifts. God gives different gifts to members in the church to help it to become one with Jesus.

The different spiritual gifts show us the love and peace in God's heart. The Father is one Person. The Son is another Person. The Holy Spirit is another Person. All Three are God. The Father, the Son, and Holy Spirit all have separate personalities. But they work together to grow the church and give it strength to do its work (1 Corinthians 12:4–6; Ephesians 4:11–13).



The eyes must depend on the hands to feel objects or pick things up.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12–31. What does Paul compare the church to in these verses? Why is this symbol so powerful? How does the body with its different parts help us understand the church with its many members?

One important idea in 1 Corinthians 12 is that the body's parts are different from each other (1 Corinthians 12:15–20). But each part depends on the rest of the parts (1 Corinthians 12:21–26). The feet depend on the eyes to help them see where they must walk. The eyes can't touch anything. But the hands can. So, the eyes must depend on the hands to feel objects or pick things up. Some parts of the body may seem to be weak (1 Corinthians 12:22) or not as useful or important as other parts (1 Corinthians 12:23). But this idea is meant to teach us how much we must depend on each other and work together. All members are necessary to the church (1 Corinthians 12:22).

Sad to say, some church members thought that certain gifts were better than other gifts. Paul didn't want the Corinthians to make this mistake. So, he asked them to remember to do everything with love. When we do things with love in our hearts, that is "the best way of all" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NIV). Whatever our gift is, we must use it wisely and with love. Then we will make God happy.

Look at the lists of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10, 28; Romans 12:6–8; and Ephesians 4:11. What is your spiritual gift? How can you use it to help the church?

THE BEST WAY

(1 Corinthians 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 4:8–11)

“Love is not the same as every other gift from God. Love is a very special gift. Love helps us to use all the other gifts in the right way.”—Carl P. Cosaert, “1 Corinthians,” *Andrews Bible Commentary: New Testament* (Berrien Springs, MI: Andrews University Press, 2022), page 1643, adapted.

How is love connected with the spiritual gifts? Read 1 Corinthians 13:1–7 and 1 Peter 4:8–11 for the answer.

We must have love to use the spiritual gifts correctly (read 1 Corinthians 13). Paul says that God’s love must control us. Or the spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12 are useless. The Holy Spirit gives some people the gift of saying wise words. The Spirit gives other people the gift of knowing what is true (1 Corinthians 12:8). To some people, the Spirit gives the gift of faith. This faith is so strong that it can move mountains (1 Corinthians 13:2). But these gifts have no worth if we don’t have love. What if a person can speak many different languages but doesn’t have love in his heart? Then the gift of languages is just noise (1 Corinthians 13:1). In the same way, the important gift of getting messages from God is nothing if we don’t have love (1 Corinthians 13:2).

In 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, Paul talks about what love is and what it is not. Also, he talks about what love does and what it does not do. Love is more than a feeling. Love is an action. Paul says that love is patient. Love is kind. Love is happy when good things happen. Love always hopes for what is best. When our hearts are filled with love, we won’t brag. We won’t be jealous. Our hearts will be empty of all pride. We won’t be mean and nasty. We won’t try to get our own way. We won’t get upset easily. We won’t hate people or be happy when bad things happen to them.

1 Corinthians 13 shows us the way we should behave when we use the gifts God gives us. Love is the answer to the wise use of our spiritual gifts. Paul includes faith and hope in the same list with love. But the most important of these three gifts is love (1 Corinthians 13:13).

Why is love so important to our faith? How does our showing God’s love to other people help us better understand His love for us?



**This faith is so strong
it can move mountains
(1 Corinthians 13:2).**

THE GIFT OF TALKING IN OTHER LANGUAGES (1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26, 27, and 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30)

In 1 Corinthians 12 and 14, Paul talks about the gift of talking in other languages. People with this spiritual gift can talk in languages they never studied before.

Paul talks about this gift in 1 Corinthians 12:8–10. (Also read 1 Corinthians 12:28, 30 and 1 Corinthians 13:1, 8.) Paul talks about this gift many times in 1 Corinthians 14. The Greek word for ‘language’ is ‘glossa.’ Paul uses this word more than 20 times in 1 Corinthians 12–14 and 15 times in 1 Corinthians 14. Also, he uses the Greek word ‘heteroglossos,’ which means “strange languages” (1 Corinthians 14:21, EASY). So, this topic matters to Paul. The church in Corinth used this gift in the wrong way. Many people started talking in different languages all at the same time during public worship! This problem caused trouble in the church (1 Corinthians 14:23, 27, 33, 40).

What lessons did Paul teach about the gift of talking in other languages? Read 1 Corinthians 14:5, 13, 26, 27 and 1 Corinthians 12:10, 30 for the answer.



If no one can understand, then the gift of speaking in other languages isn't helpful to the church (1 Corinthians 14:6).

When someone is talking in a different language, people in the church need to understand what the person is saying (1 Corinthians 14:9). If no one can understand, then the gift of speaking in other languages isn't helpful to the church (1 Corinthians 14:6). So, Paul says that someone else needs to explain what is being said. Paul isn't against the gift of talking in other languages. He is worried that the church thinks the gift is the most important gift. Then they may not care about having the gift of communicating special messages from God.

For sure, Paul wanted everyone in the church at Corinth to talk in other languages (1 Corinthians 14:5). But he didn't expect that to happen (1 Corinthians 12:10). Today, some Christians teach that everyone must talk in a second or third language before they can get baptized. But these people don't understand Paul's teaching.

Are there people in your church who learned a second language? How can they use this skill to share Jesus with other people? Also, how can this skill help us better understand the spiritual gift of talking in other languages?

THE GIFT OF SPECIAL MESSAGES (Ephesians 4:11–13)

The gift of special messages from God is an important gift. Paul often talks about this gift before he talks about the gift of talking in other languages (1 Corinthians 12:10, 28; 1 Corinthians 13:8). Paul wants us to understand that the gift of special messages is very important.

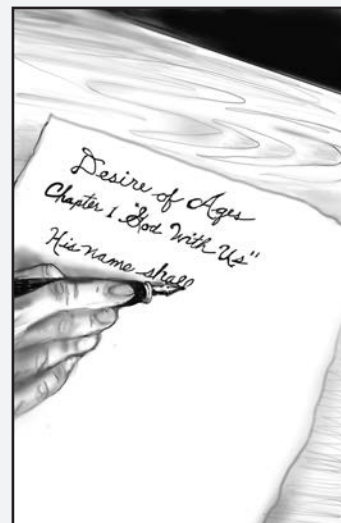
Why did God give the church spiritual gifts? Why did God give us the gift of special messages? Read Ephesians 4:11–13 and 1 Corinthians 14:3, 4 for the answers.

The gift of special messages teaches the church how to live. This gift also gives the church hope and encouragement (1 Corinthians 14:3; compare with Acts 15:32). Special messages from God can be information about the future. Or they can be news from God to His people. In Acts 2:29–31 (compare with Amos 3:7), David is God's special messenger. God shows David what will happen in the future. In Acts 15:32, Judas and Silas are named God's special messengers. But their messages aren't about what will happen in the future. Their messages encourage God's people and make their faith strong.

In Ephesians 4:11–13, we learn that the spiritual gifts didn't stop in New Testament times. The spiritual gifts should be in the church until Jesus comes back (Acts 2:39). How do we know if someone really is God's special messenger? This person must pass the Bible test. This test has four rules: (1) The messenger's words must come true (Deuteronomy 18:22; Jeremiah 28:8, 9). (2) The special message must fit with other special messages in the Bible (Deuteronomy 13:1–3; Isaiah 8:20). (3) The messenger's life shows that Jesus lives in his heart (1 John 4:1–3). (4) Jesus warned us that false messengers do evil and say evil (Matthew 7:15–20). In the same way, you can tell true messengers from the things they say and do.

The book of Revelation shows us that the gift of special messages is an important part of God's end-time church (Revelation 12:17; Revelation 19:10). As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God chose Ellen G. White to be His special messenger. We see the gift in her writings.

Why do we, as a church, believe that Ellen G. White was God's special messenger?



As Seventh-day Adventists, we believe that God chose Ellen G. White to be His special messenger. We see the gift in her writings.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Roswell F. Cottrell, “Spiritual Gifts,” pages 5–16, in Ellen G. White, *Spiritual Gifts*, volume 1.

“Go to work for the Lord. Trust in Him. He will go with you. He will help you touch hearts and change lives. Some workers will be wonderful speakers. Other workers will be excellent writers. God gives some workers the gift of prayer. To other workers, God gives the gift of singing. God gives some workers the special skill to explain the Bible so that people can understand it. Each gift is a powerful blessing from God. The Lord works together with the worker. God gives wise words to one worker. To another worker, God gives faith. But all these workers serve the same Master. He is in control of all the work. The different gifts help us to do the different types of work God gives us. ‘But all these ways are from the same God. God works in us all in everything we do’ (1 Corinthians 12:6 [ICB]).”—Ellen G. White, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, April 12, 1906, adapted.



“God gives some workers the gift of prayer.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think more about the spiritual gift of special messages from God. Why is this gift more important than the gift of talking in other languages if nobody can understand what is said? If you need to, read 1 Corinthians 14 again to review Paul’s teaching.
- ② In class, talk about the life and work of Ellen G. White. Why do we, as a church, believe that she was a special messenger from God? How does God bless the church with this gift? What is the best way for the church to use this gift?
- ③ Think of three to five people who really love you. How do you know their love for you is real? What does your answer tell you about why Paul talked so much about love in his teaching about spiritual gifts?
- ④ For sure, a loving heart is very important. But is that the only thing a special messenger should have? What else do they need to have to be a real special messenger from God?

THE DAVIS INDIANS—PART 2

The last words in Davis's travel diary were: "God blessed this trip. After I finished starting a church center, I got sick." The church center was started on June 25, 1911. This center was the first Seventh-day Adventist church center in the area. Before Davis died, he promised that someone would come and teach the people. Davis died July 31, 1911, from blackwater fever. Chief Jeremiah buried Davis at Mount Roraima. Davis's wife, Carrie, went home to the United States.

After Davis died, the Indians came to his grave every Sabbath and sang. Many times, they asked the Seventh-day Adventists in Mount Roraima to send them another teacher. 14 years passed before new Bible workers showed up in the village.

In 1918, an explorer found a group of Indians who were singing a song about Jesus in the English language. The explorer wondered how they knew English. He soon learned. The Indians showed the explorer the religious books and things that belonged to Brother Davis. Then the Indians worshiped Jesus together.

After 10 years, Chief Jeremiah was done waiting for a teacher. In 1922, he hiked for four weeks to the Seventh-day Adventist center in Georgetown to ask for a teacher. W. E. Baxter and C. B. Sutton visited Mount Roraima the following year. They traveled for a long time to find the Davis Indians. They arrived at Davis's grave on October 25, 1925. Chief Jeremiah and his son brought them a stack of papers. In the stack was a letter from Davis. The date on the letter was July 17, 1911. The letter said that 130 persons at Roraima gave their lives to Jesus. The 130 persons decided to follow Him and be loyal to the Bible truth of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. Sad to say, both Baxter and Sutton got a terrible fever on that trip.

In August 1927, a special offering helped Arthur and Elizabeth Cotts to continue the work at Mount Roraima.

Davis's death filled so many Seventh-day Adventists with surprise. His death helped them to remember that they must continue to follow Jesus' command to share the Good News with people everywhere, even in faraway places.

Today, a hospital with 54 beds in Georgetown, Guyana, is named in honor of Davis. In 1956, the Davis Indian Training School became part of the Mount Roraima center. In the early 1980s, more than 1,500 Davis Indians said they were Seventh-day Adventists.

This story came from Michael Campbell's story in the online Encyclopedia of Seventh-day Adventists. We invite you to visit encyclopedia.adventist.org to enjoy more stories about Seventh-day Adventist Bible workers and pioneers.

INSIDE
Story
by MICHAEL W. CAMPBELL



**The letter said that
130 persons at Roraima
gave their lives to Jesus.**

A Picture of Love



SABBATH—AUGUST 8

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 13; Galatians 5:22, 23; John 13:1, 34; 1 John 4:8; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13.

MEMORY VERSE: “The three most important things to have are faith, hope and love. But the greatest [most important] of them is love” (1 Corinthians 13:13, NIV).



What is love? How does love behave? The life of Jesus fully shows us the answers to these questions.

LOVE is very powerful. That's why Paul wrote so much about this topic. 'Agapaō' is a word for 'love' in the Greek language. Paul uses 'agapaō' (or other words for love connected with it) more than 135 times in his letters. That's almost half of all the words for love in the New Testament. Wow! That should tell us that 'love' is an important topic in Paul's letters to the Corinthians.

We can read many wonderful verses about love in the New Testament. Some of these verses include Romans 8:35–39; 1 Corinthians 2:9; 1 Corinthians 8:3; Galatians 2:20; Colossians 1:13; 1 Thessalonians 3:12, and more.

But none of these verses compares to 1 Corinthians 13.

Last week, we saw that without love, everything we have is worth nothing. That includes our spiritual gifts. This week, we will look closely at 1 Corinthians 13 and the beautiful picture of love it shows us.

As we will see, love is more than a feeling. We must show love in our lives. We show love with the words we say and the things we do. Without love, our words and actions have no worth.

What is love? How does love behave? The life of Jesus fully shows us the answers to these questions.

WHY LOVE MATTERS (1 Corinthians 13)

Last week we looked at the topic of love in 1 Corinthians 13. This week we are going to study Paul's words on the topic more deeply.

Read 1 Corinthians 13. What is Paul saying in this chapter about love?

Paul isn't saying that the gift of speaking in different languages isn't important (1 Corinthians 13:1). Paul also isn't saying that special messages from God, spiritual understanding, wise words, faith, and helping people are useless gifts (1 Corinthians 13:2, 3). But those skills do not help anyone if we don't have love in our hearts.

What type of love is Paul talking about in 1 Corinthians 13? Is it the same as the love in the sentence, "I love strawberries"? Or "I love my friends or children"? Paul isn't talking about these types of love. Yes, 1 Corinthians 13 often is read at many weddings. But Paul is not talking about the love between a husband and wife.

The love that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13 is more than a feeling, good behavior, or helping people. For sure, these things show us some part of the love Paul talks about. But the love in 1 Corinthians 13 is a special gift from the Holy Spirit. The Spirit also helps us to be loving and not selfish. Real love includes giving our thoughts, feelings, and actions completely to Jesus. Then He will live in us and help us to love other people.

What warning does Jesus give us in Matthew 24:12?

As this verse shows, love is so important and necessary. We must not let the love in our hearts for other people grow 'cold.' We need Jesus' help to keep our hearts 'warm' and filled with love for our families, churches, and neighbors. Jesus is our example. He died for us on the cross. What better and more powerful example of love can there be? Of course, we can't match Jesus' love. But with His help, we can do our best to show His love in our lives.

Think of times when people need to see an example of Jesus' love more than they need anything else. What are some of these times?



**Jesus is our example.
He died for us
on the cross.**

WHAT LOVE DOES

(1 Corinthians 13:4–7; Galatians 5:22, 23)

In 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, Paul helps us understand what love does and doesn't do. In Paul's 'picture' of love, he uses words of action. For Paul, love is more about actions than feelings.

So, what does love do? How does it behave?

1. Love is patient ('makrothymeō'). 'Makrothymeō' means to be patient, even in hard times. We must be patient with each other (Ephesians 4:2).

2. Love is kind ('chrēsteuomai'). The only time that the New Testament uses the word 'chrēsteuomai' is in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. Elsewhere in the New Testament, writers use words connected with 'chrēsteuomai.' In the Greek language Bible, writers of the Psalms often use words connected with 'chrēsteuomai' to talk about God's love (Psalm 145:9). Paul wants us to understand that our love for other people must show God's love and forgiveness for us.

3. Love is happy ('synchairō') when good things happen. The word 'synchairō' means that we can feel happy for other people when good things happen to them (Luke 1:58; Luke 15:6, 9; 1 Corinthians 12:26; Philippians 2:17, 18).

4. Love never gives up ('stegō') on people. 'Stegō' can mean to keep something private and not tell anyone. 'Stegō' also can mean to stay strong to the end. We see this second idea in 1 Corinthians 9:12. So, most Bible thinkers believe that in this verse 'stegō' means to stay strong to the end.

5. Love never stops trusting or believing ('pisteuō'). 'Pisteuō' comes from the same Greek word for faith ('pistis'). In 1 Corinthians 13, love never stops believing the best about God and each other.

6. Love never loses hope ('elpizō'). In the New Testament, the word 'elpizō' always means that we will believe or expect that something good will happen.

7. Love never quits ('hypomenō'). How is the word 'hypomenō' different from 'stegō'? We just saw 'stegō' means "to stay strong to the end." The two words are not very different. They mean much the same thing: to stay strong during hard times. Paul uses a new word to teach the same idea and to help us pay attention to how love stays strong. Love stays strong when it believes and hopes.

Compare 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 to Galatians 5:22, 23. What same ideas do you see in both sets of verses? How can we show this love in our own lives?



Paul wants us to understand that our love for other people must show God's love and forgiveness for us.

WHAT LOVE DOES NOT DO (1 Corinthians 13:4–7)

Read again 1 Corinthians 13:4–7. In these verses, why does Paul tell us what love doesn't do?

Yesterday, we looked at seven things that love does. Today, we will look at eight things love doesn't do.

What does love **not** do?

1. Love doesn't get jealous ('zēloō'). 'Zēloō' can mean something good: "But above all, you should want ['zēloō'] the more important gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:31, NIV). Also, "Brothers and sisters, you should want ['zēloō'] to prophesy [to speak special messages from God]" (1 Corinthians 14:39, NIV). But in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7, and also in Acts 7:9, the word 'zēloō' is used to show us what we shouldn't do. So, we should want spiritual gifts. But we should not be jealous of people and their spiritual gifts. Jealousy causes separation (1 Corinthians 3:3).

2. Love doesn't brag ('perpereuomai'). Bible writers use 'perpereuomai' to show us someone whose heart is filled with pride. This person also wants praise from other people. Real love isn't selfish in that way.

3. Love doesn't say, "I am important! ('physioō')." Paul also uses the word 'physioō' in 1 Corinthians 8:1: "When you know about something, that can make you proud" [EASY]. 'Physioō' shows us someone who feels he is very important.

4. Love isn't mean ('aschēmoneō'). 'Aschēmoneō' can mean many different things. Often it means to misbehave or do what is wrong. Paul may be talking about the mean behavior of strong church members toward weak members in the church (1 Corinthians 4:10; 1 Corinthians 8).

5. Love isn't selfish ('zēteo'). Love tries to do what is good for other people, not just for self (read 1 Corinthians 10:24). Love helps other people (read Lesson 5). When everyone tries to do what is best for other people, we all win.

6. Love doesn't get mad easily ('paroxynō'). Paul uses 'paroxynō' to show us someone who gets mad easily.

7. Love doesn't remember ('logizomai') the wrong things people do. The word 'logizomai' means that we don't keep a record of the wrong things that other people do. So, love means to forgive.

8. Love isn't happy ('chairō') when people do wrong. When we really love other people, we aren't happy when they make mistakes. We try to help them.



When everyone tries to do what is best for other people, we all win.

A PICTURE OF JESUS (John 13:1, 34)

We may get upset with ourselves when we don't always show love in all the ways that Paul talks about in 1 Corinthians 13. For sure, Paul was thinking about Jesus when he wrote 1 Corinthians 13. Only Jesus can show love in all the ways Paul talks about. So, Paul's picture of love is really a picture of Jesus.



Jesus felt joy when He followed His Father's plan and felt His Father's love for Him (John 15:9–11; John 17:12–14).

Read John 13:1, 34; John 15:9, 12; 1 Timothy 1:14; 2 Timothy 1:7, 13; 1 John 3:16; and 1 John 4:7–12, 19–21. What can we learn about love from these verses?

God is love (1 John 4:8). God loves us so much that He gave us His only Son (John 3:16). Jesus shows us this love (Hebrews 1:3). If we want to know how to show love, we must look at Jesus. Then we will see that Jesus shows us the love in 1 Corinthians 13.

Jesus is patient. Paul says, "Christ Jesus showed that he was completely patient ['makrothymia'] with me, the worst person. That was an example to those people who would later believe in him. They would believe and receive [get] life for ever with God" (1 Timothy 1:16, EASY).

Jesus is kind. The Bible says that "the Lord is kind" (1 Peter 2:3, LEB). The word "Lord" in this verse is Jesus.

The word "kind" in this verse is also connected to the Greek word for being kind in 1 Corinthians 13:4.

Jesus is happy when good things happen. Jesus felt joy when He followed His Father's plan and felt His Father's love for Him (John 15:9–11; John 17:12–14).

Jesus stays strong to the end. Hebrews 12:3 says, "Think carefully about how Jesus lived on earth. Bad people did very bad things against him, but he continued to be strong" (EASY). Jesus suffered more than anyone else (Philippians 2:8). Jesus did these things because He wanted to do what He needed to do so that we could live with Him forever. That thought filled Him with joy!

Jesus always trusts and believes. When Ananias wondered if Paul was really a Christian, Jesus answered, " 'I have chosen him to work for me!' " (Acts 9:15, EASY). Jesus sees people for who they really are. More than that, He sees who they can become with His love.

What are other ways that Jesus shows us what love is?

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE
(1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 John 4:8)

So far, we learned that love is patient, kind, joyful, trusting, and hopeful. Love never quits and stays strong. Jesus is all these things. When we understand these things about Jesus, our next job is to copy His life. Paul wanted the Corinthians to copy Jesus.

But the Corinthians needed to learn a lot. So do we. After Paul tells us what love does and doesn't do, he ends with a talk about how real love is everlasting. Paul wants to encourage us to show this love in our lives.

The time will come when we won't need special messages about the future anymore. We will speak only one language. Human wisdom will be replaced with God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 13:12). The gifts that the Holy Spirit gives us will stop when we finish the work that God gave us the gifts to do (1 Corinthians 13:10). But "love will always continue" (1 Corinthians 13:8, EASY).

In the same way, faith will be replaced with sight when Jesus comes back (2 Corinthians 5:7). We will finally have everything we hoped for (Romans 8:24). Most of all, love will continue. Love shows us the heart of our Three-in-One God. The Three-in-One God is God the Father, Jesus the Son, and the Holy Spirit. At the same time, faith and hope will also continue forever in a way. God's people will always remember the faith and hope they had in their hearts. They had faith that Jesus would save them (Romans 4:3). They hoped for a better life in the new earth. God's love is the strongest gift of all. God's love will continue forever.

Very soon, we will see our Lord face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:12). Until that day comes, we must show these three things in our lives: faith, hope, and love. These three gifts show us the life we can have with God's Spirit. These three gifts were very important to the Christian life (Romans 5:1–5; Galatians 5:5, 6; Ephesians 1:15, 18; Ephesians 4:1–5). Love is the most important gift of all (1 Corinthians 13:13). That's because God is love (1 John 4:8).

Think about the idea that "God is love" (1 John 4:8, ERV). What does this idea mean exactly? We can understand this idea only in part now. At the same time, why is this verse very good news for us?



Very soon, we will see our Lord face-to-face (1 Corinthians 13:12).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Need of Love,” pages 545, 546, *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, August 28, 1888.

“If you say you are a Christian, then your heart will be filled with love for God and for people. If your heart isn’t filled with this love, then you aren’t a true follower of Jesus. Maybe you have enough faith and power to do miracles. But without love, your faith is useless. Maybe you give big offerings to the church and help many people. But if you don’t have love in your heart, then all your gifts won’t earn you God’s favor. Even if you gave away all of your belongings to feed the poor. Maybe you are willing to die for God. But if you don’t have love for God in your heart, God will not reward you for giving up your life.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, pages 318, 319, adapted.

“We have many sermons. What we need most is love for people who are lost. This love comes from the throne of God. Real Christianity will fill our whole lives with love. Love changes every part of us: our brain, the heart, our helping hands, and the feet. Love helps us to stand strong for God. Love keeps us from being weak or walking on the wrong road in life. Jesus’ love for lost people gives strength to the whole Christian life.”—Ellen G. White, *Lift Him Up*, page 134, adapted.

“What is the only love that can heal? The love that comes from the heart of Jesus. Only Jesus can heal our hurting and suffering hearts.”—Ellen G. White, *Education*, page 114, adapted.



“Only Jesus can heal our hurting and suffering hearts.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Do you think Paul’s list about love is complete? If no, what else would you add to the list?
- ② What do you think Paul meant when he said, “Love is the thing you should want more than anything else” (1 Corinthians 14:1, WE)? How does this command help us to understand what Paul says in 1 Corinthians 13:4–7?
- ③ Which parts of love do you need to show more in your daily life? Which parts of love does your local church need to show? Why do you think Paul compares love with the gifts of special messages; different languages; and wise words (1 Corinthians 13:8)?

MEETING THE GENERAL

(To protect the people in the story, we are not sharing their names, the name of the writer, or where the story happens.)

That morning, I prayed longer than I often did. My wife and I were trying to get permission to stay in a country whose name we can't share with you. We had many problems trying to get permission. Finally, we were told that we could try to get a special card to stay in the country for six months. But we needed to go talk to the people in charge of deciding who could visit and stay in the country.

We knew that my wife's passport could be a problem. When the people in charge saw the information on her passport, they would tell her she couldn't stay. I didn't know any person who could help us. So, I asked God for help.

At the office for visitors to that country, we filled out papers and waited. We were nervous. The woman who helped us accepted my passport and papers. But she didn't accept my wife's passport. The woman asked us many questions about my wife's passport. None of my explanations convinced the woman. She waved us away and said, "You go see the general."

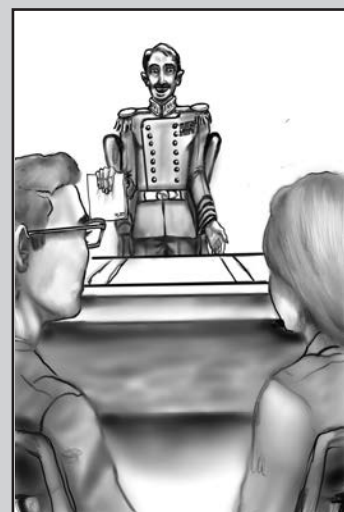
My heart pumped hard in my chest. I said a quick prayer. Someone showed us to an office at the end of a long hall. In the office, a young man sat behind a large desk. He smiled and said, "I am the general." He took our passports. Then he told us cheerfully that he was studying English. He hoped to serve soon in the United Nations. He didn't ask why we were sent to see him.

After a few minutes of filling out papers, he stood and announced, "The work is done. Come back tomorrow for your cards." I was surprised and happy. I felt the Holy Spirit tell me to give him my phone number. I wrote it down on a piece of paper and gave it to the general. I told him to call me anytime he wanted to meet and practice English. I would be happy to come visit him.

Later that day, the general sent me a text message. He said that he finished our cards early. We could come pick them up. We were so surprised and happy. God helped us—and so fast! We understood now that He used our problems to help us meet the general.

The general and I continue to talk. We have met many times. We talk about life and our beliefs. As the general's English gets better, our friendship grows. God continues to bless the work that my wife and I came to do in this country. We came to God when we were in need. We asked Him to help us do His work. God answered our prayer. He helped us remember the real reason we work for Him: to lead other people to Jesus.

INSIDE Story



After a few minutes of filling out papers, the general stood and announced, "The work is done. Come back tomorrow for your cards."

When Jesus Woke Up From the Dead



SABBATH—AUGUST 15

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, 9–19, 20–23; Luke 24:44–47; 2 Timothy 1:12.

MEMORY VERSE: “And if Christ did not rise [wake up from the dead], then what we told you was not true [correct], and what you believe is not true. . . . If Christ was not raised [if God didn't wake Jesus up from the dead], then what you believe is no good. Your wrong ways [sins] have not been forgiven” (1 Corinthians 15:14–17, WE).



Paul says that Jesus' resurrection is our only hope that God will save us.

DURING PAUL'S TIME, some people didn't believe in the resurrection. The resurrection is the time when the dead will wake up at the Second Coming. Why did people have a hard time believing in the resurrection? They saw what death did to the human body. They knew the body dried up and became dust. So, they didn't think the resurrection could happen. Many people think the same thing today.

Paul wants us to understand the Bible truth about the resurrection. This teaching is important. If Jesus didn't wake up from the dead, He is not who He said He is. If Jesus didn't wake up from the dead, the Cross has no power to change our lives. And our sins are not paid for. What hope do we have then? None. But our Lord woke up from the dead. He went to heaven. He will come back to take us home!

This week, we will look at 1 Corinthians 15 and its teaching on Jesus' resurrection. Some church members in Corinth were saying there is no resurrection. What is Paul's answer to this false teaching? Paul says that Jesus' resurrection is our only hope that God will save us.

**ANNOUNCING JESUS' RESURRECTION
(1 Corinthians 15:1–4)**

Paul starts 1 Corinthians 15 with the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin. What does Paul say about the Good News? (1) Paul preached the Good News to the Corinthians. (2) They believed it. (3) But now they must hold on tight to it. (4) Then God can save them (1 Corinthians 15:1, 2). Jesus' resurrection is important to our being saved (also read Romans 10:9, 10). As we saw, the resurrection is the time when people will wake up from the dead. The resurrection is an important part of the Good News. If we reject Jesus' resurrection, we really reject our faith in Jesus.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:1–4; Luke 24:44–47; and Romans 1:1–4. What do these verses teach about the resurrection?

In 1 Corinthians 15:1–4, we read a short explanation about Paul's message. Notice how Paul says, "Christ [Jesus] died as a sacrifice [offering] for our sins. The Bible already said how that would happen" (1 Corinthians 15:3, EASY). Does "the Bible" in this verse mean certain verses in the Old Testament or the whole Old Testament? It doesn't matter. What's important is that Jesus' death and resurrection keep God's Old Testament promises.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:2, 11. Why does Paul include the idea of believing with preaching in these verses?

Before we can announce that Jesus woke up from the dead, we first must believe in His resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15:5–8 give us Bible proof that many people saw Jesus after He woke up from the dead. Many of these people were alive when Paul wrote his first letter to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:6). In this letter, Paul is really saying, "Go ask these people what they saw." So Paul was very sure that Jesus woke up from the dead.

The people who saw Jesus after He woke up from the dead were witnesses. That's why Jesus said they were " 'the people who have seen what has happened here' " (Luke 24:48, EASY).

What are our reasons for believing in Jesus' resurrection? Also, what other things do we believe, even if we didn't see them happen?



The people who saw Jesus after He woke up from the dead were witnesses.

OUR ONLY HOPE! (1 Corinthians 15:9–19)

In 1 Corinthians 15:9–19, Paul explains why we must not reject Jesus' resurrection. The resurrection was the time when Jesus woke up from the dead. Without the resurrection, we have no hope now or in the future.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:9–19. What do we lose if Jesus didn't wake up from dead?



**Without the resurrection,
we have no hope now or
in the future.**

Most non-Jews didn't believe in the resurrection. The Greeks believed that the spirit flew off to wherever the dead go when the body died. So, Paul starts 1 Corinthians 15:12–19 with a question that shows his surprise: "What? How can some of you say that there is no resurrection?" (1 Corinthians 15:12, writer's translation). Paul has a hard time understanding the people who don't believe in the resurrection. Many people saw Jesus after He woke up from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:5–8). Worse, if Christians don't believe in the resurrection, they have no hope. If Jesus is in the grave, God can't forgive our sins.

If there is no resurrection, then Paul says: (1) Jesus didn't wake up from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:13, 16). (2) Our preaching is empty, without any promise (1 Corinthians 15:14). (3) Our faith also is empty. (4) We are false witnesses. (5) Our faith is useless (1 Corinthians 15:17). (6) Our sins aren't forgiven (1 Corinthians 15:17). And (7) the dead continue to sleep in their graves (1 Corinthians 15:18).

If the resurrection is a false teaching, our preaching and our faith are useless (1 Corinthians 15:14). So, if Jesus is not alive, our faith is a lie. Why? Because without the resurrection, God can't forgive our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). If so, we are false witnesses. If Jesus didn't wake up from the dead, we are lying to people when we tell them the Good News that Jesus can save them from their sins (1 Corinthians 15:15).

How can we understand 1 Corinthians 15 if the dead fly off to heaven (or to hell) right away after they die? Why is the teaching that the dead sleep so important for us to understand?

JESUS WAS THE FIRST (1 Corinthians 15:20–23)

Jesus' resurrection is real. As we saw already, the resurrection is the time when Jesus woke up from the dead. Yes, the resurrection happened. So, we can be sure that everyone who died in Jesus will wake up from the dead at the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:20–23).

Read 1 Corinthians 15:20–23. What does Paul mean when he says that Jesus “was the first one” (verse 20, WE)?

Jesus is named “the first one.” That’s because He is proof that the dead in Christ Jesus will wake up from the grave at the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:23; Revelation 20:5, 6). Jesus will bring the kingdom back to God the Father. Then the earth will be under God’s control again (1 Corinthians 15:25–28). Paul says that Jesus will put Himself under God’s control (1 Corinthians 15:28). How will Jesus do that? To answer this question, we must compare Jesus with Adam. Jesus became a second Adam to save us from sin (1 Corinthians 15:45). But Jesus will give Himself completely to the Father to serve Him. The first Adam didn’t do that.

In 1 Corinthians 15:29–34, Paul continues to talk about Jesus’ resurrection. Again, Paul says that rejecting this teaching is silly. Paul uses the teaching of baptism to help us understand what he is saying. Baptism is a symbol of our relationship with Jesus in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12). If Jesus didn’t wake up from the dead, then why do we get baptized? We can understand Paul’s thinking. What is hard to understand is his words about Christians who got baptized for people “who have already died” (1 Corinthians 15:29, EASY). What does Paul mean?

Does this verse mean that people got baptized for dead people who didn’t know Jesus? Did they get baptized because they thought that it would help save these people who died without knowing Jesus? Of course not! Some people decided to get baptized so that they could see their dead loved ones again at the resurrection. Also, some people chose to get baptized because they wanted to live the same as the Christians who died in Jesus. So, people didn’t get baptized **for** the dead. They got baptized **because** of them.

Think about Paul’s words in 2 Timothy 1:12. Why was Paul so sure about the future? How can we be, too?



Baptism is a symbol of our relationship with Jesus in His death and resurrection (Romans 6:3, 4; Colossians 2:12).

A NEW BODY (1 Corinthians 15:36–41)



But our resurrected bodies will be made for our life in heaven and on the new earth. Our new bodies can't die.

In 1 Corinthians 15:35–39, Paul gives us a short talk about the resurrected body. The resurrected body is the body that Jesus will give us when we wake up from the dead.

Paul starts his short talk with two questions: (1) “How does God raise [wake up] dead people, to make them alive again?” And (2) “What kind [type] of body will they have?” (1 Corinthians 15:35, EASY). These questions are answered in 1 Corinthians 15:36–49.

Read 1 Corinthians 15:36–41. How do these verses answer the questions in 1 Corinthians 15:35?

Paul uses three examples to help his readers understand what happens at the resurrection. As we already saw, the resurrection is the time when God’s people will wake up from the dead at the Second Coming. (1) Paul’s first example compares the body to a seed. The body is the same as a seed that first must die. Then the seed can become a plant. This change is a miracle. Paul’s teaching is plain: the resurrection is a miracle from God. (2) Next, Paul talks about how God gave animals and people different types of bodies to live on this earth. In the same way, God will give us new bodies for our lives in heaven and on the new earth. (3) In Paul’s final example, he talks about the body we will have when we wake up from the dead (1 Corinthians 15:40–42). We will have “very beautiful” bodies (1 Corinthians 15:43, EASY). The resurrected body will be much more beautiful than our bodies now.

Paul compares the bodies we have now with our resurrected bodies. The bodies we have now are made for life on this earth. Our bodies die. They are weak and can sin. But our resurrected bodies will be made for our life in heaven and on the new earth. Our new bodies can’t die. They are powerful and spiritual (1 Corinthians 15:40–44). Paul uses the same Greek word “sōma” for both our bodies now and our resurrected body later. But our new bodies won’t be the same as the ones we have now. Praise the Lord!

Paul doesn’t use the word “spiritual” (EASY) to mean we won’t have bodies. In Philippians 3:21, Paul says that Jesus “will change these weak bodies that we have now on this earth. He will make them become strong and beautiful, like [the same as] his own body that he has in heaven” (EASY). We will have real bodies. But they won’t get sick or die.

OUR FINAL WIN OVER DEATH (1 Corinthians 15:54–57)

Read 1 Corinthians 15:54–57. What do these verses teach us about our final win over death?

Paul starts the last part of 1 Corinthians 15 with a surprising teaching: “Our weak human bodies cannot go to heaven, to join God in his kingdom there. Our human bodies will die. They cannot share in something that will continue for ever” (1 Corinthians 15:50, EASY). Many Bible readers think Paul is teaching that we won’t have bodies in heaven. But that isn’t what the verse teaches. Just as we saw in 1 Corinthians 15:42–49, Paul is comparing the bodies we have now (or even our dead bodies) with the resurrected body. The resurrected body is the body we will have when Jesus wakes us up from the dead. The bodies we have now are ruined with sin and can die. But the resurrected body is clean from sin and is everlasting (1 Corinthians 15:50, 53, 54). In short, Paul is saying that our bodies need to be changed in a big way first before we can go to heaven.

Paul uses the words “bodies of flesh and blood” (1 Corinthians 15:50, ERV) to mean the natural bodies that we have now. In these bodies, we can choose to sin. In Jewish writings, the words “flesh and blood” mean sinners. That’s why our bodies must be changed when Jesus comes back. He must make them perfect and holy to match our hearts.

So, when Jesus changes us (1 Corinthians 15:54), He gives us beautiful new bodies (1 Corinthians 15:51–53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–17). “When that happens, what is written in the Bible will be true: ‘God has won against death. He has destroyed it completely!’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:54, EASY). Then God’s people will sing this song: “ ‘Death, you can no longer win! Death, you no longer have any power to hurt us!’ ” (1 Corinthians 15:55, EASY). These things happen at the Second Coming (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52). How long will it take Jesus to change our bodies? Paul tells us: “In a very short time, no longer than it takes for the eye to close and open, the Christians who have died will be raised [resurrected; made alive]. It [the change] will happen when the last horn sounds. The dead will be raised [will wake up] never to die again. Then the rest of us who are alive will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52, NLV).

Life is so short. How does this idea help us to learn to be patient while we wait for Jesus to come back?



“The dead will be raised [will wake up] never to die again. Then the rest of us who are alive will be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:52, NLV).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “God’s People Delivered,” pages 635–652, in *The Great Controversy*.

“The earth shook as the Son of God spoke to His people who were asleep in their graves. Jesus commanded them to wake up! Right away, the dead woke up. They came out of the graves with beautiful bodies that were everlasting. They said, ‘We won! We won the fight against death and the grave! Death, you can no longer win! Death, you no longer have any power to hurt us!’ (See 1 Corinthians 15:55.) Then the living saints and the saints who woke up from the dead shouted together with joy. When many of God’s people died, their bodies were sick with disease. Now they wake up with bodies that are filled with everlasting health and strength. The living saints change in a second. The change happens as fast as the eye can open and close. Then the living saints will be lifted into the air with the saints who woke up from the dead. Together, they meet their Lord in the air. Oh, this meeting will be so beautiful! Death separated friends. Now these friends unite again. Nothing will separate them again.”—Ellen G. White, *The Story of Redemption*, pages 411, 412, adapted.



“Death separated friends.
Now these friends unite
again.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think about the people who saw Jesus after His resurrection. The Resurrection is the time when Jesus woke up from the dead (Acts 1:22; Acts 2:32; Acts 3:15; Acts 4:33; Acts 5:30–32). Jesus woke up from the dead around two thousand years ago. How can we be His witnesses for the Resurrection today?
- ② Jesus’ resurrection is an important part of the Good News (1 Corinthians 15:1–4). Without the resurrection, our preaching about the Good News wouldn’t matter (1 Corinthians 15:14). Why? What does your answer tell you about why Jesus’ resurrection is so important?
- ③ In class, let’s talk about what happens after we die. What does the Bible teach us? Why does 1 Corinthians 15 do us no good if God’s people go to heaven right away when they die?

MEETING PEOPLE WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT'S HELP

(To protect the people in the story, we are not sharing their names, the name of the writer, or where the story happens.)

My wife and I prayed for God to help us start a home church in the country where we served as Bible workers. In this country, our lives are in danger because we are Christians. We knew only that people from other countries would come to the church in the beginning. But we had faith that God would send us local people whose hearts He was working on. We waited a long time, but God answered our prayers!

I met Salman when I needed a taxi driver. Salman drove me where I needed to go. We started a conversation during the trip. Soon we started to talk about religious topics. Salman said that he became a Christian two years ago after he searched online for answers to his spiritual questions.

Salman and I slowly became friends. I asked him if he was part of a community of Christians or had any Christian friends. I was surprised when he said he never met a Christian before! My wife and I invited him to our home worship meetings. Salman came. Then he started to come every week. We were happy when he got married and brought his wife. She also fell in love with Jesus.

Not long after, Salman decided to tell his brother Faisal about his love for Jesus. To Salman's surprise, Faisal told him he already was a Christian! Faisal explained that he also tried to find answers online to spiritual questions. In his search for answers, Faisal gave his heart to Jesus.

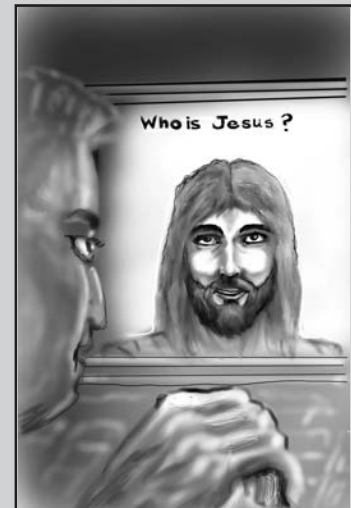
Salman told Faisal about our home church. Faisal joined our group. He believed with all his heart that God brought us together. Not long ago, Faisal visited a church because he wanted Christian fellowship. But the church leader told him not to come back because people from his country were a different religion. The law did not allow Faisal to be there. We praised God for helping us give Faisal a place of fellowship.

After two years of praying, Salman and Faisal decided to tell their family about their faith in Jesus. With God's help, their parents accepted their decision. But other family members rejected them.

Please pray that Faisal and Salman and his wife will continue to grow in their relationships with Jesus. Please also pray that the Holy Spirit will help my wife and me to meet more of God's children in this country.

At Global Mission, we protect the names of our Bible workers who live and work in countries where their faith in Jesus puts their lives in danger. To learn more about Global Mission's church-planting work, visit bit.ly/GMPioneers.

INSIDE Story



Salman said that he became a Christian two years ago after he searched online for answers to his spiritual questions.

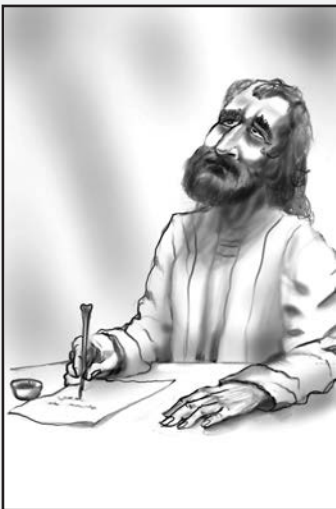
Loving People as Jesus Loved Them



SABBATH—AUGUST 22

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 1:3–14; 2 Corinthians 7:5–13; 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13.

MEMORY VERSE: “When I wrote that letter, I was very sad and upset. I cried a lot. I did not want to make you sad. Instead [but], I wanted you to know that I love you very much” (2 Corinthians 2:4, EASY).



Paul's letters to the Corinthians show us his deep love for them. He never stopped loving them.

PAUL didn't always have an easy life. He spent time in jail. He was often in danger. He wrote: “Five different times, the Jewish leaders punished me with whips. Each time they hit me 39 times. Three times the Romans punished [beat] me with sticks. People threw stones at me to kill me once [one time]. Three times I have been on ships that broke in the sea. Once I was in the sea for a night and a day. I have travelled on many journeys. I have been in danger from rivers and also from robbers. I have been in danger from my own people and also from Gentiles [non-Jews]. I have been in danger in cities and also in the wilderness [desert]. . . . I have been in danger from false believers. I have worked very hard, and I have been in pain. Many times I have not slept [can't sleep]. I have often been hungry and thirsty. Many times I have had no food. I have often been cold and without enough clothes. . . . But also, every day I have trouble in my mind. I worry about the believers in all the churches” (2 Corinthians 11:24–28, EASY). Paul's letters to the Corinthians show us his deep love for them. He never stopped loving them. Paul learned from Jesus how to love the churches (2 Corinthians 5:14; 1 Corinthians 11:1).

THANKSGIVING (2 Corinthians 1:3–7)

Read 2 Corinthians 1:3–7. What is Paul thankful for in these verses?

Paul is thankful for the hope and help that God gives to people who are suffering. In these verses, Paul says that God “helps us every time we have trouble” (2 Corinthians 1:3, WE; also read verse 4).

When God helps us, we feel hope. We must share this hope with other people (2 Corinthians 1:4, 5). When God helps us, we can help other people who are suffering. We understand their suffering better because we suffered. We know how to help them better because God helped us.

Paul could help other people who were suffering because God helped him when he suffered. “Our hope for you is strong. If you have the same trouble we have had, then you will also have the same comfort [hope] and help we have” (2 Corinthians 1:6, WE). In these verses, Paul shows us a picture of God’s amazing love.

What is Paul thankful for in 2 Corinthians 1:8–11?

Paul talks about his terrible troubles. His suffering was so bad that he and his traveling companions thought they were going to die (2 Corinthians 1:8). But God saved them. Then things got better for Paul (2 Corinthians 1:10). Before, they were afraid they were going to die. But now, they are filled with hope that God will save them again (2 Corinthians 1:10).

What important lesson does Paul’s story teach us? When God saves us in the past, we have hope that He will save us in the future. God uses suffering and hard times to teach us to trust Him. Hard times help us to grow. They can help us to give our hearts to God. Paul’s thankful heart shows another important lesson. We must pray for other people. We also must show God that we are thankful to Him for saving us from our troubles (2 Corinthians 1:11).

We all will suffer hard times in this life. Think of a time in the past when you suffered hard times. What helped you or gave you hope at that time?



Paul could help other people who were suffering because God helped him when he suffered.

HONEST AND GOOD WITH EVERYONE (2 Corinthians 1:12–14)

Yesterday, we read about Paul’s love for the Corinthians. Paul showed his love in the help and hope he gave them during their suffering. God gave Paul hope during hard times. So, Paul knew how to give help and hope to other people who were suffering (2 Corinthians 1:1–11). Today, we will learn about other ways Paul and his friends showed the Corinthians love.



Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Corinthians.

Read 2 Corinthians 1:12–14, along with 2 Corinthians 2:17 and 2 Corinthians 4:2. How does Paul’s honest behavior show his love for the Corinthians?

In 2 Corinthians 1:12–14, Paul introduces an idea that he will talk about for the rest of his letter. Some people in the church doubted that Paul was honest. They questioned Paul’s leadership. Some church members in Corinth thought that Paul had trouble making decisions. They worried that he changed his mind too much. So, some of the Corinthians didn’t think Paul made a very good leader. In answer to these fears, Paul says that his behavior was always honest and good with everyone.

Let’s look more closely at these two words: “honest” and “good” (2 Corinthians 1:12, EASY). The word written as ‘honest’ comes from the Greek word ‘haplotēs.’ Paul uses this word to show that his behavior and his words were always honest and true. In short, ‘haplotēs’ helps us understand that Paul’s heart was filled with love for the Corinthians. The word “good” comes from the Greek word ‘eilikrineia.’ This word also helps us to understand that Paul had no evil feelings in his heart for the Corinthians.

The Corinthians should trust the honesty in Paul’s heart. In 1 Corinthians 1:12, Paul says that his “honest” and “good” behavior and feelings for the Corinthians came from God. Sad to say, some people didn’t understand Paul’s first letter to the church (read 2 Corinthians 1:13, 14). Paul hopes they will understand his words and his behavior on the day when Jesus comes back (2 Corinthians 1:14).

Do people sometimes think the worst of your good behavior and honest words? What does your answer tell you about why we must be careful how we judge the words and behavior of other people?

CHANGING PLANS FOR LOVE (1 Corinthians 16:5–7)

Yesterday, we learned that some church members at Corinth doubted Paul's love. Today, we will look at why Paul changed his travel plans (2 Corinthians 1:15–2:4).

What was Paul's first travel plan? Read 1 Corinthians 16:5–7 for the answer.

In 1 Corinthians 16:5, 6, we learn that Paul planned to pass through Macedonia on his way back to Corinth. Maybe he would stay in Corinth for the winter. From Corinth, Paul would travel to Judea with the offering he collected for the poor in Jerusalem. But then Paul's plans changed. He got a bad report from Timothy about Corinth (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Corinthians 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:1).

Paul planned to hurry from Ephesus to Corinth to solve the problems Timothy told him about. Paul's new plan was to travel from Ephesus to Corinth, and then from Corinth to Macedonia. Then Paul planned to travel back to Corinth. From there he would go to Judea (2 Corinthians 1:15, 16). Paul went from Ephesus to Corinth. But then Paul went back to Ephesus. His plans changed. He didn't go back to Corinth as planned. At least, not right away. That's because Paul's latest visit didn't go so well. So, Paul went back to Ephesus and wrote to the Corinthians. Paul thought that sending a letter was better than making things worse with another personal visit (2 Corinthians 2:1, 3).

So, the Corinthians felt they couldn't depend on Paul. They felt that he didn't love them enough (2 Corinthians 1:17). In answer, Paul asked the Corinthians to think about Jesus and the Good News. Paul would keep his promises to the Corinthians, just as God kept His promises to them because of Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:18–22). That's why Paul says, "Jesus says yes to all of God's many promises" (2 Corinthians 1:20, NLV). Paul's answer shows us that Jesus "is not someone who changes his message between 'Yes' and 'No.' He always says 'Yes,' and he does what he says" (2 Corinthians 1:19, EASY).

Paul loved the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 2:4). That's why he waited to visit them again. Another visit right away would cause the Corinthians more pain, and not joy (2 Corinthians 1:24; 2 Corinthians 2:3). Paul's experience helps us understand that we can easily believe the worst about other people.



Paul went from Ephesus to Corinth. But then Paul went back to Ephesus. His plans changed. He didn't go to Corinth as planned.

FORGIVENESS AND LOVE (2 Corinthians 7:5–13)

In Macedonia, Paul heard from Titus the excellent news that his strong words caused good changes in the church.

As we saw yesterday, Paul chose not to visit the Corinthians a second time. After Paul went back to Ephesus, he sent the Corinthians a letter filled with strong, painful words. The letter made the Corinthians “sad . . . for a short time” (2 Corinthians 7:8, EASY; also read 2 Corinthians 2:3, 4; 2 Corinthians 7:12).

What happened when Paul sent the strong letter? What did the Corinthians do? How did Paul answer? Read 2 Corinthians 7:5–13 for the answers.

Paul and Titus met later in Macedonia. There, Paul heard from Titus the excellent news that his strong words caused good changes in the church. In the past, some members at Corinth were against Paul. But now the church was on Paul’s side. This news filled Paul’s heart with joy. For sure, our leaders need the support of us church members. Our support makes their work so much easier.

Read 2 Corinthians 2:5–11. What important idea do we read about in these verses?

These verses are about church punishment. Bible thinkers don’t agree who is being punished. Was it the man in 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 who had sex with his stepmother? Or was it someone who was upset with Paul for changing his travel plans? We don’t know for sure. Anyway, 1 Corinthians 5:1–5 teaches the church what to do when a member sins.

1 Corinthians 5:1–5 teaches us that punishment helps the sinner come back to God (2 Corinthians 2:6–8, 10). Love and forgiveness are an important part of church punishment. Punishment may be painful. But it is also necessary. Some churches don’t punish members when they do terrible things or public sins. On the other hand, some churches punish, but they are unforgiving and mean. Church leaders must be loving and kind when they punish sin. Paul loved the church so much (2 Corinthians 2:4)! That’s why he tells the church to show love to the person they punish (2 Corinthians 2:8).

God loved the church, and so did Paul. So, the church in Corinth could show love to the person who did wrong (2 Corinthians 2:8). What does this idea teach us about love?

WINNING WITH JESUS (2 Corinthians 2:12, 13, NlrV)

Where did Paul go after he wrote his painful letter? What did Paul do when he arrived there? Read 2 Corinthians 2:12, 13 for the answer.

Paul felt worried while he waited for Titus (2 Corinthians 7:5, 6). Even so, Paul didn't stop talking about Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:12). Paul loved Jesus so much! At that time, he didn't know how the Corinthians felt about his letter. So, Paul wanted to learn from Titus what the Corinthians thought.

Paul's work at Troas was a big success. "But Paul couldn't stay there long. He needed to take care of all the other churches. He worried most about the church at Corinth. Paul hoped to meet Titus at Troas to learn how the Corinthians felt about his letter. But Paul didn't get the chance. Paul wrote these words about his experience at Troas: 'But I had no peace because I did not find my brother Titus there' (2 Corinthians 2:13, ICB). So, Paul left Troas and crossed over to Macedonia."—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 323, adapted.

How did Paul feel when he met Titus in Macedonia? How did he feel when he heard Titus's good news about the Corinthians? Read 2 Corinthians 2:14–17 for the answer.

Paul is filled with joy! He says, "We thank God for the power Christ [the Savior] has given us. He leads us and makes us win in everything" (2 Corinthians 2:14, NLV). What a beautiful verse! When our hearts are filled with Jesus, then "God spreads [sends] the knowledge of [the Good News about] Christ everywhere like [the same as] perfume" (2 Corinthians 2:14, NlrV).

Paul is happy in Jesus because the painful letter helped the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 7:5–9). Paul's letter is a success. Meanwhile, in 2 Corinthians 2:17, Paul says again that he is an honest leader. Jesus Himself sent Paul to do his work (2 Corinthians 2:17; 2 Corinthians 1:12). A false leader is selfish. But an honest leader preaches Bible truth because he loves Jesus with his whole heart.

What helps you to do everything you do for Jesus?



An honest leader preaches Bible truth because he loves Jesus with his whole heart.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Message Heeded,” pages 323–334, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“People who suffered much often bring the most hope to other people. Suffering teaches them important lessons. Their lives are better because of their painful experiences. So, now they know how to fill other hearts with happiness wherever they go. These people don’t stop trusting in God when troubles came. They hold on tight to Jesus and His love. God’s love protects them. Now these same people are living proof that God loves and cares for us.”—Ellen G. White, *God’s Amazing Grace*, page 122, adapted.

“Paul knew that he must punish sin in the church. But Paul didn’t lose his self-control. Paul explained the reason for his actions. He worked hard to make sure that the church understood that he was the friend to the person who did wrong! Paul made the church understand that it hurt him to cause them pain. Paul helped them to know that he cared about what happened to them.”—Ellen G. White, in *The SDA Bible Commentary*, volume 6, page 1094, adapted.



“People who suffered much often bring the most hope to other people.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① In 2 Corinthians 2:1–14, Paul says that he is an honest leader for Jesus. Why is honesty so important in leadership?
- ② Paul changed his travel plan. What does this change tell us about why we must be open to making changes when needed?
- ③ At times, Paul felt worried and upset during his work for God. He suffered and felt pain because of the decisions he needed to make. Paul was human. His experience helps us remember that our church leaders are human, too. They suffer and feel pain, the same as other people. What can we do, as church members, to make their jobs easier?
- ④ Paul talks about his worries (2 Corinthians 2:13) right before he talks about his success in Jesus (2 Corinthians 2:14). How can he talk about these two different things at the same time? How can we?

A LITTLE BOY'S LOVE FOR SERVING GOD

Myron Iseminger is a Bible worker who serves God in Lebanon. As a young boy, Myron loved stories that Eric B. Hare wrote. Eric B. Hare was a Seventh-day Adventist Bible worker and writer. Myron says, "As a boy, I read all of Eric B. Hare's stories about Bible workers overseas. But I never thought that I would become a Bible worker myself."

In the late 1970s, Myron's sister announced she was taking a year off from college. She was going to Japan to volunteer as an English teacher. After Myron studied for a year to be a pastor, he also decided to volunteer. He wanted to go to the Middle East. This decision changed the rest of his life.

Myron said, "I thought it would be really neat to go to the Bible lands. I also thought the experience would help me be a better pastor. My Middle East experience gave me so much more than I expected. That year, my view about the world started to change. I saw another way of life and thinking. I went to my students' homes. I heard their stories. I saw their personal suffering and pain. I started to understand life from another person's view. I understood how easily we judge groups of people until we meet them one-on-one and come to love them." Myron started to believe that God was asking him to serve overseas for a very long time.

When Myron went back to college, he decided to study business, too. This decision would also change his life.

A church leader shared some advice with Myron that made him think and pray. The man said, "If you want to serve God in a foreign country, make sure the woman you marry wants to serve God there, too!" Myron's wife, Candace, never traveled outside the United States before they got married. Myron says, "But Candace was willing to go with me to another country."

Not long after, a General Conference leader told Myron about a job for an accountant in the Middle East. Soon, Myron and Candace were moving into an apartment in the Egypt Field office. Myron's new job was hard but rewarding. He says, "I enjoyed working overseas. I liked helping God's people make the most of what they had when their money was limited. Sure, the work was often hard. But I enjoyed making lives better."

Later, Myron worked for the church in different jobs.

If someone told Myron what he would do when he grew up, he wouldn't believe him. The little boy who loved the Eric B. Hare stories about Bible workers grew up to make a living as a Bible worker! Myron says, "If we give our hearts to Jesus, He will use us wherever He needs us. He can plan our lives much better than we can." Your offerings help support Bible workers. Please give during Sabbath School.

INSIDE
Story
by KATHIE LICHTENWALTER



**As a young boy,
Myron loved stories that
Eric B. Hare wrote.**

Our Work for God



SABBATH—AUGUST 29

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 3:1–9; 2 Corinthians 4:7–18; 2 Corinthians 5:11–15.

MEMORY VERSE: “We have much trouble, but we do not give up. We are in hard places [trouble], but help always comes. People trouble [bother] us, but God is always with us. We are beaten, but we are not killed. We always feel as if our body is dying, just as Jesus died. Then the life of Jesus also can be seen in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:8–10, WE).



Our hope is that we will live in glory with Jesus after He comes back again.

THIS WEEK, we will look at 2 Corinthians 3–7. In these chapters, Paul talks about his work to win people to Jesus. Ellen G. White says, “What is the strongest proof that God chose someone to serve Him and preach the Good News about Jesus? The answer is the changed lives of the sinners that the pastor leads to Jesus. God makes the hearts and minds of these sinners holy. We see their new lives. Jesus lives within their hearts and minds. That’s how we know that God chose someone to serve Him and to be a leader and a teacher. When Jesus lives in our hearts and minds, we will have hope. Our hope is that we will live in glory with Jesus after He comes back again. [What is this glory? Jesus will give us new bodies that can’t get sick. He will give us everlasting life. We will live with Him forever.] So, when a pastor sees that his preaching is changing lives, his faith is made strong. The changed lives of these people are proof that God chose the pastor to serve Him.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 328, adapted.

'LIVING LETTERS' FROM JESUS (2 Corinthians 3:1–9)

In what way can we be the same as a letter from Jesus? Read 2 Corinthians 3:1–9 for the answer.

In New Testament times, important people wrote letters of praise for others. These letters helped the people they wrote about to get promoted. The letters helped other leaders to trust and support these workers. Paul didn't have any of these letters. The changed lives of the Corinthians were proof that God gave Paul his work. At the same time, Paul knew that his efforts and skill didn't grow the church (2 Corinthians 3:4–6). God was the reason for the church's success. So, Paul refused to brag about his efforts (2 Corinthians 3:5; 1 Corinthians 2:2).

Paul uses the examples of the two promises to talk about his work: the old promise and the new promise. The old promise came from God who gave it to Moses to give to Israel. Paul and his friends taught the people about the new promise that God made to His people. We may think that the old promise gave God's people no hope of being saved. That is false. God offered His saving love to people in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament showed the Good News before it happened. "The Bible already said what would happen at a future time. It said that God would make the Gentiles [non-Jews] right with himself, if they believed in him. God showed this good news to Abraham a long time before it happened. He [God] said to Abraham, 'I will bless people from all countries because of you'" (Galatians 3:8, EASY).

In 2 Corinthians 3:1–4:6, we learn that the old promise is a symbol for the experience of people who depended on their own good behavior to save them. They tried to earn God's favor with their obedience. The new promise is a symbol for the experience of people who trust completely God's love and forgiveness. They depend on God to do everything He promised to do for them and in them.

As we can see, Paul is talking about two different experiences. He is not talking about two different messages about the Good News. God made one plan to save us. There is only one Good News. Paul says, God "did not save us because of any good things that we have done. He chose to do it [save us] because he is very kind. He decided to do that before time began, because of what Christ Jesus would do for us" (2 Timothy 1:9, EASY).



The old promise came from God who gave it to Moses to give to Israel.

SUFFERING FOR JESUS (2 Corinthians 4:7–18)

Read 2 Corinthians 4:7–18. Make a list of Paul’s sufferings in these verses. How did Paul live through these terrible experiences?



For sure, the words “life of Jesus” talk about the resurrection.

Hundreds of years ago in Old Bohemia, John Huss wrote, “Jesus is Master of this earth. We are sinners who live and die. But Jesus suffered for us! Why should we not suffer, too? God uses our suffering to make us clean from sin.”—Ellen G. White, *The Great Controversy*, page 105, adapted.

Paul was willing to suffer for Jesus. Paul knew he was the same as a pot made from clay that could break (2 Corinthians 4:7). At times, Paul felt hurt and confused about what to do. He got knocked down. He was hurt. But he did not lose hope. He didn’t let his sufferings destroy his faith. He didn’t believe that God left him alone (2 Corinthians 4:8, 9). Paul said, “We always feel as if our body is dying, just as Jesus died. Then the life of Jesus also can be seen in our body” (2 Corinthians 4:10, WE; also read verse 11).

What does Paul mean when he writes “just as Jesus died”? Paul may mean his sufferings in verses 8 and 9. Or he also may be talking about his understanding that he needed to die to self every moment, as Jesus died. The words “life of Jesus” may mean Paul’s escape from death. Or these words may mean the spiritual strength God gives us to win the fight against sin in this life. For sure, the words “life of Jesus” talk about the resurrection. As we already saw, the resurrection is the time when God’s people wake up from the dead at the Second Coming (2 Corinthians 4:12).

In 2 Corinthians 4:7–18, we read that God uses us to preach the Good News. We are weak. So, the praise for our success goes to God, and not us (2 Corinthians 4:15). Often, Bible workers suffer in their work for God. We may suffer much in this life. But our suffering is only for a short time compared with the everlasting reward that God will give us (2 Corinthians 4:17). “The things that we can see are only here for a short time. But the things that we cannot see will continue for ever” (2 Corinthians 4:18, EASY; also read 2 Corinthians 5:7).

Why must we always keep the hope of the resurrection alive in our hearts (1 Corinthians 15:52)?

**WORKING WITH JESUS TO BRING SINNERS
BACK TO GOD (2 Corinthians 5:11–15)**

Read 2 Corinthians 5:11–15. How do these verses show us that Paul’s work for God is all about Jesus?

Paul says, “We know that the Lord will judge us, so we are careful to obey him. Because of that, we tell God’s message to people. We want them to believe in God. And God himself knows that we try to do what is right” (2 Corinthians 5:11, EASY; also read verse 10). That’s why Paul wants to obey God in everything. Paul loves Jesus and trusts in His love for him. So, Paul wants to serve the Lord with all his heart (Deuteronomy 10:12).

Paul’s work is all about Jesus, and not himself. Paul doesn’t praise himself. Paul brags about Jesus (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul says, “But I do not want to say any great [good] things about myself. The only thing that makes me great is our Lord Jesus Christ’s death on the cross” (Galatians 6:14, EASY). Paul wants to give the Corinthians a good reason to brag about Him (2 Corinthians 5:12): “No, we are not praising ourselves again. But we are telling you this [our story] so that you may really be proud of [filled with pride for] us. Then you will be ready to answer people who are proud of themselves [filled with pride about their own selves]” (2 Corinthians 5:12, WE). These people who are filled with pride are false teachers. They don’t really care about people as Paul does.

Paul says he is a messenger for Jesus. What is his message all about? Read 2 Corinthians 5:16–21; Colossians 1:19–23; and Ephesians 2:13–16.

Paul’s message is: “ ‘Come back to God!’ ” (2 Corinthians 5:20, EASY). Again and again, Paul preaches this idea in 2 Corinthians 5:16–21. God accepts us because Jesus died for us on the cross. When we belong to Jesus, God makes us new people (2 Corinthians 5:17). God expects us to join Jesus in His work to bring sinners back to God. We must announce the Good News about Jesus to everyone (2 Corinthians 5:19). When we do this work, we become “messengers for Christ [Jesus]” (2 Corinthians 5:20, WE).

How does Jesus’ love for you help you to share Him with people who don’t know God?



Paul doesn’t praise himself. Paul brags about Jesus (2 Corinthians 12:9).

GOD WANTS US TO BE HOLY (2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1)

As we saw yesterday, Paul tells church members in Corinth to come back to God. Then Paul asks them to live a holy life. How? Paul gives us the answer: we must separate ourselves from people and things that separate us from God.

What does it mean to live a holy life? Read 2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1 for the answer.



A holy life is not something we do. But God expects us to do our part and say no to sin.

In 2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1, Paul talks about love. Church members must love each other as brothers and sisters (1 Corinthians 6:11–13). They show that they are one with God when they try hard to be at peace with each other.

Next, Paul warns church members not to separate from God. Paul then gives church members six rules. These rules will help church members to stay near to God in their hearts. (1) “Do not be joined together with those who do not belong to Christ [the Savior]” (2 Corinthians 6:14, NLV). (2) “So come away from those people” (2 Corinthians 6:17, ERV). (3) “Separate yourselves from them” (2 Corinthians 6:17, ERV). (4) “Don’t touch anything that is not clean” (2 Corinthians 6:17, ERV). (5) “We must keep ourselves clean from everything that makes our bodies or our spirits unclean [not clean; dirty]” (2 Corinthians 7:1, EASY). (6) “We should try to be altogether [fully] holy because we respect God” (2 Corinthians 7:1, WE). These rules show us that a holy God wants us to live holy lives. We also must separate from false gods.

In 2 Corinthians 6:11–7:1, you also will see seven promises. These promises show God’s plan for the church to be the same as a holy temple. (1) God will live in us, the same as a temple. (2) God will walk with us. (3) God will be our God. (4) We shall be His people. (5) God will accept us. (6) God will be a Father to us. (7) We shall be God’s sons and daughters. (Read 2 Corinthians 6:16, 17, 18.)

Do you see the first four promises? When we allow God to do these things for us, He can accept us. Then He will be our Father, and He will make us His children. This shows us that a holy life is a gift. It is the work of the Holy Spirit in the heart. A holy life is not something we do. But God expects us to do our part and say no to sin.

What do God’s promises in 2 Corinthians 6:16–18 tell us about what it means to be holy?

HOPE AND JOY (2 Corinthians 7)

How does Paul feel when he learns that the Corinthians were sorry for their behavior? Read 2 Corinthians 7 for the answer.

Paul tells the Corinthians that his heart is filled with love for them (2 Corinthians 7:3, ERV; also read 2 Corinthians 6:11). Paul also asks the Corinthians to love him (2 Corinthians 7:2).

The Corinthians loved Paul and his friends. That's why Paul feels so much joy in verse 4. Paul's words show the happiness in his heart: "I know you and I trust you. I am proud of you. You have helped me to be strong. So, even when we have many troubles, I am still [continue to be] very happy" (2 Corinthians 7:4, EASY). Paul is filled with hope and joy. We can help our pastors to feel hope and joy, too, when we give our hearts completely to Jesus.

In 2 Corinthians 7:5–16, Paul explains some more about his reason for his hope and joy. These two ideas fill these verses. This part of the letter ends the same way it started: with hope in God (2 Corinthians 1:3–7). Paul's kind words in 2 Corinthians 7 comes from the happiness he feels. His painful letter to the Corinthians helped them.

Titus gives Paul the good news about his letter. But God is the real reason for Paul's hope and joy (2 Corinthians 7:6). That's why Paul says that God "helps us every time we have trouble" (2 Corinthians 1:3, WE; also read verse 4).

Yes, Paul's painful letter caused the Corinthians to feel very sad. But God used that letter to help the Corinthians to feel sorry for their sins and stop doing them (2 Corinthians 7:9–11). When the Corinthians started to feel sad about their sins, that was part of God's plan (2 Corinthians 7:11) to help them to stop sinning. God uses our sad and painful experiences to help save us (2 Corinthians 7:10). This news brings much joy to the heart of God's servants.

Did you do something against the Lord in the past that made you feel deeply sorry? How did this experience help you to stop sinning and come back to God?



God used that painful letter to help the Corinthians to feel sorry for their sins and stop doing them (2 Corinthians 7:9–11).



“God gave us this message to share with everyone on earth: Come back to God.”

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Re-read Ellen G. White, “The Message Heeded,” pages 323–334, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“We must show everyone in heaven and on earth that God is forgiving. We must show that God loves us. He brings us back to Himself with His love. We feel sorry in our hearts for our sins. We stop sinning and come back to God. We believe that Jesus died for our sins. We understand that God accepts us because of Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Special Testimonies on Education*, page 223, adapted.

“As a church, God gave us much Bible truth. These truths are very important. God gave us this Bible truth to help bless the human family. God gave us this message to share with everyone on earth: Come back to God. God gives us His strength to help other people come back to Him.”—Ellen G. White, Letter 32, 1903, adapted.

When we come back to God, what must we do? We must live holy lives. Ellen G. White talks about this topic. She explains what Paul meant when he said, “We should try to be altogether [completely] holy because we respect God with fear [obedience]” (2 Corinthians 7:1, WE). Ellen G. White says that Paul “wanted to help the new Christians in Corinth to grow in faith and to become strong. Paul wanted them to have deep love in their hearts for God. Paul wanted them to live completely for Jesus and to build up His kingdom.”—*The Acts of the Apostles*, page 201, adapted.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Paul says we are the same as pots made from clay. In these pots is a treasure from heaven. This treasure is the Good News about Jesus (2 Corinthians 4:7). For sure, clay pots can break. But how can our weakness show the Bible truth about the Good News?
- ② What does it mean to become a new person in Jesus (2 Corinthians 5:17)? How does this new life change the way we live each day? How did Jesus make you a new person?
- ③ In 2 Corinthians 6:4, 5, Paul gives a long list of his painful experiences of suffering for the Good News. What does Paul think and feel about his sufferings (read 2 Corinthians 6:6, 7)? How does Paul’s answer help you with your own suffering?

JAKE'S PRAYER DIARY

(The name of the Bible worker in this story was changed to Jake. To protect him, the place where he works is not named.)

Jake is a Bible worker. His job is to start new churches in places where people don't know about Jesus. Jake knew he must pray every day now that he and his wife were living in a country where there were very few Christians. Jake decided to keep a prayer diary. He wrote down everything he prayed for each month. Then he waited to see how God answered his prayers.

Jake met with a group of members at the new church he started. Together, they made a plan to study the Bible with the visitors who came to their church. The church members got together each day of the week to pray for the visitors.

During one house church meeting, a member introduced Jake to Omar. Omar was a cook who found Jesus many years ago. The Holy Spirit helped Jake to start a conversation with Omar. Soon, the two men promised to meet.

A few days later, Omar visited Jake. Omar told Jake how he learned about Jesus as he read the Bible. For the past 15 years, Omar was very careful. He didn't talk to too many Christians because he didn't want to lose his life. Omar's family and friends didn't know that he was a Christian. Jake listened with joy as Omar said that he wanted to be baptized.

From that time on, Jake and Omar met almost daily to study the Bible.

During that same month, Jake met Wassim. Wassim was a young man who left his country with all its troubles and went to Europe. Wassim had many questions about God and religion. He started to explore Christianity. In Christianity, Wassim found peace that he never knew before. When Wassim went back to his country, he searched online for other local Christians. Soon, he found Jake's house church.

Jake was happy when he learned that Wassim also wanted to be baptized. Jake met each week to study with Wassim. They studied about faith, Jesus, and everlasting life.

After Jake's first month of prayers, he was filled with love and wonder for God's answers. A month ago, Jake asked the Lord to help him give Bible studies. Now he had two students who loved studying the Bible!

Jake is now getting ready to write down his prayers in his diary for month #2. His heart is filled with joy. He knows that his work for God is just getting started. Jake feels God's strength leading him forward.

To learn about the work that Global Mission Bible workers do to start new churches, visit bit.ly/GMPioneers.

INSIDE Story



Jake wrote down everything he prayed for each month. Then he waited to see how God answered his prayers.

Giving and Serving



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 5

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 8:1-5, 9; 2 Corinthians 9:7, 9, 13, 15; Romans 15:26, 27.

MEMORY VERSE: “You know that our Lord Jesus Christ is very kind. He was rich, but he made himself poor to help you. So then, because he became poor, you could become rich” (2 Corinthians 8:9, EASY).



When we give, we show Jesus' love.

IN 2 CORINTHIANS 8 AND 9, we learn that Paul wants the Corinthians to help their brothers and sisters in Judea. God wants us to give, too. When we give, we show Jesus' love. Everyone in heaven loves to give. That's why God gave us Jesus. Look at these wonderful words: “God loved the world [people] so very, very much that he gave his only Son. Because he did that, everyone who believes in him will not lose his life, but will live for ever” (John 3:16, WE).

John 3:16 shows us why God gave Jesus to us: so that “everyone who believes in him will not lose his life, but will live for ever.” Giving is part of our work for God. No wonder Paul says that he and his companions were “Christ's [the Savior's] servants. God has also given a special job to us. We must explain his message to people so that they understand it” (1 Corinthians 4:1, EASY). We also are Jesus' servants. God gave this special work to us, too.

This week, we will look at serving God and giving. These two things were an important part of Jesus' work. The offerings we give help the church to do God's work.

THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS (2 Corinthians 8:9)

Paul encourages the church in Corinth to finish collecting an offering for the poor churches in Judea. The Corinthians already decided to do this task (2 Corinthians 8:10, 11; 2 Corinthians 9:5; also read 1 Corinthians 16:1–4). But a misunderstanding between Paul and the Corinthians causes problems. After the problems are solved (2 Corinthians 1–7), Paul wants the church to finish the task.

Paul tells the Corinthians about the example of the Macedonians (2 Corinthians 8:1–7). The Macedonians were very poor. But “they give to others as if they were rich” (2 Corinthians 8:2, WE). For sure, we don’t need to be rich to give as the Macedonians gave. The Macedonians’ example shows us Jesus’ gift in giving Himself for us (2 Corinthians 8:8–15).

Read 2 Corinthians 8:9. What does this verse tell us about the example of Jesus?

This verse is one of the most powerful truths in the whole Bible. In just a few words, Paul tells the story of Jesus’ work. We see God’s saving plan in just one verse.

Yes, Jesus was rich. As God, He lived in heaven (John 17:5). But He decided to leave heaven and come to this earth. His life here was filled with sorrows and suffering. He became poor (Luke 9:58). Jesus was One with God in heaven. But He left “everything that belonged to Him and made Himself the same as a servant who is owned by someone. He became human by being born as a man” (Philippians 2:7, NLV). “And when he lived as a man, he made himself even less important. He obeyed God completely, so that he died. He even died on a cross” (Philippians 2:8, EASY).

Jesus gave His life so that we may live forever with Him. He offered Himself to save us. Serving God and giving go together. As we saw, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 is a story about a money offering. But it is also really about Jesus and how He gave Himself to us. During this week, we will see how other gifts also show us Jesus’ gift of Himself to us.

Think about everything Jesus did for us. How do His being born, His life, death, and waking up from the dead give you hope?



Paul encourages the church in Corinth to finish collecting an offering for the poor churches in Judea.

OUR REASON FOR GIVING (2 Corinthians 8:1, 5)

Read 2 Corinthians 8:1, 5 and 2 Corinthians 9:7, 9, 13, 15. What is the important message in these verses?

In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul talks a lot about giving: 2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 8:5; 2 Corinthians 9:7; 2 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 9:13; and 2 Corinthians 9:15. As we can see, 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 start and end with giving (2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 9:15). These two chapters talk about four reasons for giving our offerings. We give because:

1. We are thankful for God's love and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 8:1; 2 Corinthians 9:14, 15). In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, Paul starts with this topic: "the grace [love and forgiveness] that God has given to the churches in Macedonia" (2 Corinthians 8:1, NIV). A little later, Paul says, "You know how much love our Lord Jesus Christ had" (2 Corinthians 8:9, WE). The love of Jesus is one of the most important reasons for giving. God did so much for us when He gave us Jesus. When we give offerings to God, we show Him our thankfulness for His love in our lives.

2. We want to follow the example of Jesus (2 Corinthians 8:9). Jesus was rich and became poor. (Remember, "rich" is a symbol for Jesus' life in heaven before He came to this earth as a Baby. "Poor" is a symbol for Jesus' life after He was born.) How did Jesus become poor? He gave up everything that belonged to Him in heaven to come to this earth to save us. In the same way, our offerings help other people learn about Jesus.

3. We want to share God's blessings (2 Corinthians 9:10, 11). We give to other people because God first gave to us. God makes us rich with His gifts. Then we may share these blessings with others.

4. We love God and other people (2 Corinthians 8:8, 24). Giving is the test of real love. Giving is powerful proof that love fills our hearts.

How much do you give to the Lord? When you look at the Cross, how much do you really give compared with how much you really should give?



Jesus gave up everything that belonged to Him in heaven to come to this earth to save us.

PLANNING (2 CORINTHIANS 9:7)

Read 2 Corinthians 9:7. What does this verse teach us about giving?

God decided to save us before Adam and Eve sinned. Jesus' death for us was part of a very old plan (Revelation 13:8). So, the sin problem didn't surprise God. He was ready. As part of His plan, He gave us Jesus. In 2 Corinthians 8 and 9, we learn that planning is an important part of giving. Here are two important rules to follow:

Rule #1: Planning starts with a decision. Paul gives us this advice: "Each of you should think carefully and then decide how much you can give" (2 Corinthians 9:7, EASY). The word "decide" comes from the word 'proaireō' in the Greek language. This word is made from joining two words together: 'pro' and 'aireō.' The word 'pro' means doing something ahead of time. The word 'aireō' means "to decide" in this verse. So, 'proaireō' means deciding to do something ahead of time. Also, do you see that Paul starts 2 Corinthians 9:7 with the words "each of you"? These words show us that not everyone will give the same amount of offering. Paul is saying that people should think carefully about the amount before they give it.

Rule #2. Planning includes knowing how much to give. First, Paul gives an example of rule number two in 2 Corinthians 8:3. Paul says that the Macedonians "gave as much as they could and even more than that" (2 Corinthians 8:3, WE). Next, Paul uses Rule #2 to encourage the Corinthians to finish collecting money for the poor. Paul wants the Corinthians to give what they can (2 Corinthians 8:11). That's why Paul says, "God does not want you to give more than you are able to [can] give. He will be happy about what you can give" (2 Corinthians 8:12, EASY). The Bible tells us how much we should give for tithe. Tithe is 10% of all the money we get. We don't follow the same rule for offerings. As Paul says, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give" (2 Corinthians 9:7, NIV). In other words, we must look carefully at how much money we earn or get. Then we must decide how much we will give as an offering. Each of us must give from how much we earn or get. We can't do that without planning.

Do you give God what you owe Him in tithes and offerings? If your answer is "No," what is your excuse?



We must look carefully at how much money we earn or get. Then we must decide how much we will give as an offering.

A JOYFUL GIVER (2 Corinthians 8:1–5)

Why did the Macedonians give a big offering? What made them want to do that? Read 2 Corinthians 8:1–5 for the answer.

There are many reasons why the Macedonians gave a big offering:

1. They were filled with joy (2 Corinthians 8:2). The Macedonians gave because they were filled with joy. Later, Paul says, “God loves those [people] who are happy to give” (2 Corinthians 9:7, ERV). The word for “happy” in the Greek language is used only here in the New Testament. A word from the same word family is “gladly.” This word is used in Romans 12:8: “If a person can help someone, he must do it gladly” (WE). This word can be used to mean “happiness,” “being glad” or “joyful.” In 2 Corinthians 9:7, a cheerful or happy giver is someone who wants to give.

2. They give much (2 Corinthians 8:2). Paul says that the Macedonians gave a lot. But first he says that they are very poor. Being poor doesn’t stop them from giving. The more we give, the more God will give to us to give. Paul says, “God will make you rich in every way so that you can always give freely” (2 Corinthians 9:11, ERV). When we give, we show that the Good News about Jesus changed our lives (2 Corinthians 9:13).

3. They gave because they wanted to (2 Corinthians 8:3). The Macedonians didn’t have much to give. But they gave anyway because they wanted to. Their money was very limited.

4. They believed giving was a blessing (2 Corinthians 8:4). The Macedonians volunteered to give money to the poor in Judea. Paul says, “They asked from their hearts if they could help the Christians in Jerusalem” (2 Corinthians 8:4, NLV).

5. They believed that giving an offering was part of giving their lives fully to God (2 Corinthians 8:5). Paul says, “They did more than we had even hoped for! First, they gave themselves [their whole hearts and lives] to the Lord. Then they also gave themselves to us. They did that because God wanted them to do it” (2 Corinthians 8:5, EASY). When we give ourselves to the Lord, we also will serve other people. We will give them what they need. The Macedonians gave their lives to God. So, giving can be other things, not just our money.



When we give ourselves to the Lord, we also will serve other people. We will give them what they need.

WORKING TOGETHER IN PEACE AND LOVE
(Romans 15:26, 27)

We saw that Paul encourages the church members in Corinth to collect money for the poor churches in Judea. Paul hopes that the offering will help the Corinthians to work together in peace and love. Paul also wants to show that the non-Jewish churches are part of the same family of God as the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. In the past, the non-Jews were the enemies of the Jews. Now, they are all God's people. Paul wants the whole Christian family, both Jews and non-Jews, to work together in peace and love. That will be powerful proof of God's love for years to come.

Titus and two other Christians were responsible for the offering. God filled Titus's heart with love for the church (2 Corinthians 8:16). God also chose two other brothers in Jesus to help Titus (2 Corinthians 8:18–23). Paul says these two men “bring glory [honor] to Christ [the Savior]” (2 Corinthians 8:23, ICB). When we give offerings, we show we are loyal to Jesus. Jesus is the Head of the church (Ephesians 4:15).

In 2 Corinthians 8–9, Paul says that the offerings should be given to the people in the church that God chooses. When we bring offerings to the church, we show our love for God and the church. That's why Paul says, “So show these men that you love them. Then all the churches will be sure about you. They will know that we were right to be proud of you” (2 Corinthians 8:24, EASY).

When we bring offerings to the church, we cause peace and love in the church to grow. At the same time, we also give offerings because of the peace and love already in the church. God chose the church to help Him finish His work on the earth. Money can help the church to finish its work and to work together in peace and love. But if members are selfish, then money can cause separation in the church.

How does Romans 15:26, 27 show Paul's wish for the church to work together in peace and love?

Paul shows that collecting and giving offerings is a way of serving God. Giving also shows that God's love and forgiveness is alive in our hearts. Giving is worship and fellowship, too. All that from offering? Think about it.

How do our offerings to our local churches help peace and love to grow in the church worldwide?



When we bring offerings to the church, we show our love for God and the church.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “A Liberal Church,” pages 335–345, in *The Acts of the Apostles*.

“Are your hearts filled with Jesus’ love? If yes, you will follow His example. He became poor for us to make us rich. Money, time, and our relationships with others are all gifts God gave us. These gifts have no worth if we don’t use them to serve the Lord. The church in New Testament times used all its gifts to do God’s work and build up His kingdom. We must do the same today. We must let the Holy Spirit remove from our hearts a love for the things of this life. We must be ready to give up whatever Jesus asks us to give up so that we may share the Good News about Him with other people. When we do these things, the Good News will change lives in a powerful way.”—Ellen G. White, *The Acts of the Apostles*, page 71, adapted.

“The Lord doesn’t need our offerings. We can’t make the Lord rich with our gifts. King David says: ‘Everything that we have comes from you. So we are giving back to you things that already belong to you.’ [1 Chronicles 29:14, EASY]. At the same time, God allows us to show Him how much we are thankful for His love. We can save our money and not spend it all on ourselves. Then we can give it as an offering to God to help other people learn about His love and forgiveness. Our offerings show God how much we love and thank Him for everything He does. God made no other way for us to show our love and thankfulness to Him.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels on Stewardship*, pages 18, 19, adapted.



“Our offerings show God how much we love and thank Him for everything He does.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Think some more about 2 Corinthians 8:9. How does the example of Jesus help us to be better managers of everything God gives us?
- ② John 3:16 helps us to understand that everyone in heaven loves to give. Read John 15:13; Ephesians 5:2, 25; Galatians 2:19, 20; and 1 John 3:16. What is the same about these verses and John 3:16? What message do they teach us?
- ③ How does giving bless our lives? Read 2 Corinthians 8, 9 for the answer. What else can we give God, along with our offerings? What does Jesus’ example of giving teach us?

BLESS YOU!—PART 1

People who looked for faith didn't often go looking for it in Copenhagen, Denmark. Rob and Bethany knew that moving to this European city meant they would need to change their ideas about success as Bible workers. Their success would be in the friendships they made and not in the number of people they baptized.

Rob and Bethany arrived in Copenhagen in 2024. The people in the city didn't have much interest in having God in their lives. But Rob and Bethany didn't come to preach sermons on street corners. They came to build friendships.

Years earlier, the couple served in a church before they went to school to study religion. At the school, God filled their hearts with a wish to serve Him in a new way.

Rob said, "Almost everyone we knew and worked with was Seventh-day Adventist. We understood that we wanted to meet people who were not our religion. We wanted friends we could introduce to Jesus." They wanted to help start new churches.

The first church that Rob and Bethany helped start was in British Columbia. Rob and Bethany never did this type of work before. During this experience, they became friends with people with different beliefs. They soon learned how to share their faith while they connected with their new friends.

Four years later, Rob and Bethany were invited to start a church in Copenhagen. They now felt ready to do this work. They decided to make relationships and friendships the most important part of their work. Rob came up with a word that shows their plan: **BLESS**. Each letter stands for part of their plan.

- **B** is for Begin With Prayer. Rob explains, "You start with a personal friendship with Jesus. Then you ask Him to help you lead other people to Him."
- **L** is for Listen. Rob says, "You don't talk first. You learn. You listen to other people's stories and lives. You learn about their needs and how God is already working in their lives."
- **E** is for Eat. Rob says, "One of the best ways to connect with someone is to share a meal together. Eating together builds trust."
- **S** stands for Serve. Rob explains, "When we serve people in small ways, they open their hearts to us."
- **S** is for Share. Share comes last for a reason. Rob explains, "When someone is ready, share what Jesus does for you in your own life."

Rob and Bethany weren't starting with a program or a building. They started with prayer.

Read part 2 of their story next week.



**"Eating together
builds trust."**

False Teachers



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 12

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: 2 Corinthians 10:1–11, 13–17; 2 Corinthians 11:1–15, 22–28; 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.

MEMORY VERSE: “We do not use the things of [from] this world [earth] in our fighting, but we use the power [strength] of God. This power can break down the walls where the enemy hides” (2 Corinthians 10:4, WE).

FOR SURE, PAUL had more than enough problems to solve. Now another problem came into the church: false teachers. The false teachers fought against Paul and His work for God. Worse, these false teachers convinced church members in Corinth to believe their lies! Paul says his fight against this problem was the same as a spiritual war.

Paul knew that the false teachers weren't just fighting against him. They fought against Jesus Himself. As a leader, Paul didn't care about making people listen to him or having a lot of power. He knew that his message could save lives. Paul also knew that God sent him to preach this message: “This letter is from me, Paul. God chose me to be an apostle [teacher and leader] of Christ [the Savior] Jesus. That is what he wanted” (1 Corinthians 1:1, EASY).

What should we do when false teachings come into the church? The church must solve the problem with love. At the same time, the church must follow Bible truth. Bible truth must not be mixed with lies. Then Bible truth will have the power to save lives and give people the hope of everlasting life.



Paul knew that the false teachers weren't just fighting against him. They fought against Jesus Himself.

SPIRITUAL WAR (2 Corinthians 10:1–11)

Paul was gentle and loving with the Corinthians. So, some church members thought Paul was shy and had no courage. They thought he was too afraid and weak to solve problems. Read 2 Corinthians 10:1–11. What words in these verses show us that Paul had the courage to solve the problem with the false teachers in the church at Corinth?

Paul starts 2 Corinthians with these words: “I, Paul, need to ask you something” (EASY). Paul is worried about the false teachings in the church. Paul’s enemies accused him of being a mean and nasty bully when he wrote his letters from far away. But they said he was a coward when he talked face-to-face with people (2 Corinthians 10:10, 11). Paul says he is not being weak when he is gentle and loving. He is behaving the same way Jesus did.

We must not be afraid to punish false teachers (2 Corinthians 10:2). But we must punish them with a spirit of love in our hearts. Jesus had this same spirit (2 Corinthians 10:1). Jesus said, “ ‘I am gentle [loving] and do not have pride’ ” (Matthew 11:29, NLV). But Jesus also had courage. He turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple. He said they were robbers (Matthew 21:12, 13). Jesus also told the Jewish leaders they were liars. He compared them to graves that were beautiful on the outside only (Matthew 23:23–27). Paul also knows that we are in a spiritual war, just as Jesus did. So, we need to put on God’s battle suit (Ephesians 6:12–17).

In 2 Corinthians 10, Paul uses military words. That’s because we are in a spiritual war against evil. In this fight, we are trying to win people for Jesus. People must choose between life or death. So, we must fight against lies and false teachings. We must destroy these lies and false teachings with Bible truth. When we show that false ideas are wrong, “We change the way that people think, so that they want to obey” Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:5, EASY).

In this spiritual fight, Paul acts with Jesus’ strength and power. This power helps the church grow strong (2 Corinthians 10:8). Church leaders must remember that their strength and power come from Jesus. So, they must empty their hearts of all pride, the same as Jesus did.

How can we be loving and at the same time strong when we punish false teachers? Why must we be both?



Jesus turned over the tables of the money changers in the temple.

BRAGGING ONLY ABOUT THE LORD (2 Corinthians 10:13–17)



Paul's love for Jesus caused him to talk all the time about the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin.

Yesterday, we saw that Paul and his travel partners were in a spiritual war. They used God's weapons to fight against evil. Today, we will learn that false teachers brag about their skills and ideas. But Paul brags only about the Lord. As Paul wrote, "If a person brags, he should brag only about the Lord" (2 Corinthians 10:17, ICB).

Sad to say, some preachers brag about their preaching. Why is this behavior so bad for the church? What problems does it cause? Read 2 Corinthians 10:13–17.

Some people are surprised that Paul brags in these verses. In Bible times, people often bragged about their skills in public. Special rules controlled what they could say. (The rules helped protect them from upsetting their audience.) Paul knew about the rules. He followed them. But Paul doesn't brag about the things the false teachers bragged about. Paul brags only about Jesus. Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 10:17 come from the Old Testament: " 'But if someone wants to brag, let him brag about this: Let him brag that he understands and knows me. Let him brag that I am the Lord. Let him brag that I am kind and fair. Let him brag that I do things that are right on earth. This kind of bragging pleases me,' says the Lord" (Jeremiah 9:24, ICB). Paul uses this quote from the Old Testament to show that Jesus is the reason for everything he does.

So, when Paul brags, he really is bragging about Jesus, and not himself. The false teachers compare their teachings to the teachings of other teachers. Paul thinks this behavior is silly (2 Corinthians 10:12)!

In 2 Corinthians 10:14–16, Paul says that preaching the Good News is the most important part of his work in Corinth and everywhere else. Paul's love for Jesus caused him to talk all the time about the Good News that Jesus saves us from sin. The false teachers in Corinth praised their own skills and teachings. Paul didn't need to brag about himself. The Lord accepted him and gave him his work (2 Corinthians 10:12, 18; 1 Corinthians 1:1). Paul was loyal to this work to the end of his life (2 Timothy 4:7).

Read again 2 Corinthians 10:12–18. How can church leaders and members avoid the mistakes of the false teachers? Why is it so wrong to brag about ourselves?

**WARNING AGAINST FALSE TEACHERS
(2 Corinthians 11:1–15)**

The New Testament has many warnings against false teachers in Christian communities. Jesus Himself warned His followers about this problem (Matthew 7:15–20). The New Testament writers also talked about this topic (Galatians 1:6–9; 1 Timothy 6:3–5; 2 Peter 2:1–3).

What does Paul say about his problems with the false teachers? Read 2 Corinthians 11:1–15 for the answer.

Paul warns against what the false teachers are doing. At the same time, Paul says that his work is all about Jesus. Paul compares the church in Corinth to a bride. Then Paul compares himself to the bride’s father. Paul says that he has the job of giving her to Jesus, who is the same as the groom (2 Corinthians 11:2). Paul loves the church so much (2 Corinthians 11:11). So, he did everything he could to help her. That’s why he chose not to accept any money or support from the church (2 Corinthians 11:7–12).

On the other hand, Paul compares the false teachers to the snake that lied to Eve (2 Corinthians 11:3). The false teachers in Corinth tell lies, the same as the snake. Their hearts are full of evil (2 Corinthians 11:3, 4). Paul was worried about the false teachers. Paul didn’t want them to trick the Corinthians and lead them away from Jesus.

The false teachers preached a different message than Paul preached. They taught about a different Jesus and a different Good News. Just because someone preaches about Jesus doesn’t mean that God gave him his message. That’s why Jesus warned, “ ‘Some people say to me, “Master, Master!” But not all of them will come into the kingdom of heaven. Only the people who obey God, my Father in heaven, will come in. They do what he wants them to do’ ” (Matthew 7:21, EASY). In Galatians 1:6–9, Paul says that whoever preaches a false message about the Good News is under a curse. Sad to say, some Christians in Corinth allowed people to preach and teach this false message.

Paul warns against these false leaders (2 Corinthians 11:13). They pretend to be followers of Jesus. But they are really servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:14, 15). Paul says, “God will punish them in the end” (2 Corinthians 11:15, EASY). Strong words! What does Paul’s warning tell us about what we should think and do about false teachings in the church?



Paul compares the church in Corinth to a bride. Then Paul compares himself to the bride’s father.

SUFFERING FOR THE GOOD NEWS (2 Corinthians 11:22–28)

As we saw yesterday, Paul warned that the false teachers were servants of Satan (2 Corinthians 11:1–15). Now Paul makes fun of the false teachers. He brags in the same way the false teachers do (2 Corinthians 11:16–21). Paul does that to show the Corinthians that they were silly to pay attention to anything the false teachers said. If the Corinthians respected the false teachers, they should respect Paul more. Paul suffered much for the Good News. His suffering shows that he is a loyal servant of Jesus (2 Corinthians 11:22, 23).

Read 2 Corinthians 11:22–28. What is Paul saying in these verses?



Paul doesn't brag about what he did for Jesus. Paul brags about what Jesus did for him.

Paul has the same Jewish ancestors as the false teachers (2 Corinthians 11:22). But Paul served Jesus more than they served Him (2 Corinthians 11:23). Paul did more work than they did. Paul went to jail more. The beatings that Paul suffered were far worse than the ones they suffered.

But Paul has more to say. He makes a list of the things he suffered. His list includes five beatings. Paul got whipped 39 times during each of these five beatings (2 Corinthians 11:24). Paul also was beat with sticks. He was hit with stones. He was on ships that broke at sea. He was in danger in deep waters (2 Corinthians 11:25) and from rivers. On his journeys, he was in danger from robbers, Jews, non-Jews, the desert, and false believers (2 Corinthians 11:26). Paul worked hard. He got tired. He worked all night and didn't sleep. He was hungry and thirsty. Sometimes he didn't have enough food. He was cold and without clothes at times (2 Corinthians 11:27). During these hard times, he always worried about the churches (2 Corinthians 11:28).

Paul suffered these things because he was a loyal servant for Jesus. If Paul really wanted to brag about his sufferings, he'd have a lot to say! As we will see, Paul doesn't brag about what he did for Jesus. Paul brags about what Jesus did for him.

Do you suffer for the Good News about Jesus? What did your experience teach you? How can Paul's example help you be at peace with your own suffering?

TROUBLEMAKERS IN THE CHURCH (2 Corinthians 12:20, 21)

In 2 Corinthians 12:14–13:10, Paul tells the church that he is coming to visit them. This will be Paul’s third visit (2 Corinthians 12:14; 2 Corinthians 13:1). People are causing trouble in the church. Paul wants to come to Corinth again to solve the problem. Everything Paul did and said was meant to make the church grow strong (2 Corinthians 12:19).

What sins were causing trouble in the Corinthian church? Read 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21.

The list of sins in 2 Corinthians 12:20, 21 is much the same as other lists in Paul’s letters (Romans 1:29–31; Galatians 5:19–21). The first two sins on Paul’s list were already problems in Corinth in the past. The members were jealous and fighting again. Paul is afraid that things won’t be much different when he arrives in Corinth for his third visit (2 Corinthians 12:20). If things aren’t different, Paul warns that he is ready to punish the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 10:6).

Paul is worried that some of the members hadn’t really changed. He was afraid that they continued to do evil (2 Corinthians 12:21). Their past sins included sex sins. These sins can cause separation in the church.

Paul talks about how punishment can help church members heal and come back to God (2 Corinthians 13:1–4). Being weak is no excuse for living in sin. God will give us His strength to win the fight against any sin (2 Corinthians 13:4). The sex sins in the church were proof that some members weren’t trusting in Jesus’ power. Paul wanted these sinning church members to give up their sins. Paul wanted them to come back to God. God’s love and power could give them the strength to be obedient. The last thing Paul wanted to do was to punish these church members. That’s why Paul tries to convince them to stop sinning first: “Now we pray to God that you will not do any wrong things. . . . We want you to do what is right. . . . We pray that you will become completely as you should be” (2 Corinthians 13:7–9, ERV). This prayer is very beautiful!

Read 2 Corinthians 13:5. Paul asks the Corinthians to look at their hearts to see if they are living in the faith. What does that mean? How can you know if you are?



God’s love and power could give sinning church members the strength to be obedient.

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “The Laodicean Church,” page 125, in *Advent Review and Sabbath Herald*, September 30, 1873.

“People accept and believe false teachings. But they don’t need to. Not when the Bible clearly teaches us what is truth. People will not be tricked or fooled if they compare their personal beliefs to the Bible. The Bible shows us if our beliefs are true or false. But some people hold on tight to their false ideas. They refuse to accept what the Bible says. Many people accept false teachings about the Bible because those ideas agree with their own personal ideas. Some people accept lies and cause other people to accept them, too. When we study the Bible, we should empty our hearts of a selfish spirit and all pride. We must give up the wish to try to find something new in the Bible that no one thought about before. We must accept that our ideas may not be correct.”—Ellen G. White, *Counsels to Writers and Editors*, pages 36, 37, adapted.



“People will not be tricked or fooled if they compare their personal beliefs to the Bible.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Read 2 Corinthians 10:1–6 again. What is Paul’s plan in these verses for fighting the spiritual “war” (EASY) for God’s truth? How can we use Paul’s plan to fight our own spiritual wars?
- ② The Bible says that before Jesus comes back, many false teachers will come into the church. These false teachers will try to lead God’s people away from Bible truth. What can your local church do to protect church members from false teachers who may be in your church? Why is protecting church members from false teachings so important to our finishing God’s work on this earth?
- ③ Why did Paul brag about his long list of sufferings (2 Corinthians 11:16–33)? Also, what does it mean to brag about the Lord?
- ④ Why is it important for church members to look closely at their lives to see if they are living in the faith (2 Corinthians 13:5)? How will that help us in our walk with Jesus?

BLESS YOU!—PART 2

Rob and Bethany went to Copenhagen, Denmark, to start new churches. Before going to Denmark, they started a church in British Columbia. There, Rob and Bethany learned how to build friendships with people that helped them accept Jesus.

In British Columbia, Rob and Bethany became friends with a man who grew up in a Seventh-day Adventist home. The man's religious experiences in the past left him doubting and unhappy. The Seventh-day Adventists he knew growing up were worried about the end times and about being saved. They had no peace. When the young man grew up, he left the church completely.

Over time, the man started to see something real and beautiful in the way that Rob and Bethany lived. Rob and Bethany invited the man into their lives. They shared meals, conversation, and their lives with him.

The man watched Rob and Bethany carefully. He listened to what they said. Rob said, "Our new friend saw that what we were doing was real. We weren't fake Christians. We were trying to live the same as Jesus. We really cared about this man and wanted to be his friend."

Then something terrible happened in this man's life. The man didn't go to a church for help. He came to the family he trusted: Rob and Bethany. The man started to ask questions about faith and God. Soon, the man started to believe again. This time, his faith was in the Jesus he never knew before.

Now this man is a Christian who is filled with love for Jesus. His whole life is changed.

How did this happen? With little things: Rob and Bethany listened, served, and lived the Good News in their daily lives.

Rob says, "We are so excited to be part of someone's spiritual journey. Start with the basics: prayer, listening, eating together, and serving. When the time comes, share your faith. That's what Jesus did. Today, hearts are changed in the same way."

Today in Copenhagen, Rob and Bethany meet new friends in their neighborhood. Their home is open for fellowship and shared meals. Rob and Bethany are always looking to make new friends. They love to listen to, serve, support, and share with their new friends. Their past experiences show them that this loving plan is the best way to win people to Jesus today. Rob and Bethany pray daily that God will bless them with more real friendships as they start new churches for Him.

Please pray for our Bible workers who serve in places where people do not think they need Jesus in their lives. To learn more, visit GMsda.org/refocus.

INSIDE *Story*

by OFFICE OF ADVENTIST MISSION



Rob and Bethany invited the man into their lives. They shared meals, conversation, and their lives with him.

Love, Forgiveness, and Fellowship



SABBATH—SEPTEMBER 19

READ FOR THIS WEEK'S LESSON: Romans 16:20; John 3:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 13:11; 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Romans 8:35.

MEMORY VERSE: “I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ will continue to be very kind to you all. I pray that God’s love will be with you. And I pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to serve each other as friends” (2 Corinthians 13:14, EASY).

PAUL ends his second letter to the Corinthians with five important commands (2 Corinthians 13:11). (Paul already wrote about these ideas in his letters to the Corinthians.)

1. “Be joyful” (NirV). Joy is an important part of Paul’s letters.

2. “Work to make things right with one another [each other]” (NirV). This verse comes from just one word in the Greek language: ‘katartizō.’ (Also read 1 Corinthians 1:10.)

3. “Help one another [each other]” (NirV). Paul wants church members to encourage each other (2 Corinthians 1:3–7). Paul starts and finishes his letter with this idea. God encourages us so that we will encourage other people (2 Corinthians 1:4, 6).

4. “Agree with each other” (ERV).

5. “Live in peace” (ERV). Paul’s 4th and 5th commands are about working together with one heart and mind. When we work together in peace and love, “the God of love and peace will be with you” (ERV).



Paul wants church members to encourage each other (2 Corinthians 1:3–7).

THE LOVE AND FORGIVENESS OF JESUS (Romans 16:20)

Paul starts and ends his second letter to the Corinthians with the same idea: the love and forgiveness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 1:2; 2 Corinthians 13:14). As we saw at the beginning of this quarter, Paul just can't stop thinking and talking about Jesus.

"You know how much love our Lord Jesus Christ had. He was rich, but he became poor for your sakes [for you]. Because he became poor, you can become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9, WE). Wow! Jesus left the riches in heaven to become poor. Jesus walked the dirty roads of ancient Galilee. "And when he lived as a man, he made himself even less important. He obeyed God completely, so that he died. He even died on a cross!" (Philippians 2:8, EASY). We live on a planet filled with sin, death, and suffering. So, we may have trouble understanding everything that Jesus left behind in heaven to come to save us.

Read Romans 16:20; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 4:23; and 1 Thessalonians 5:28. What important teaching do you learn in these verses?

Paul talks a lot about God's love and forgiveness in his letters: read Romans 5:15 and Romans 5:17. Paul also starts and ends other letters the same as 2 Corinthians: he talks about Jesus' love and forgiveness (Romans 1:7; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 1:3; 1 Corinthians 16:23; Galatians 1:3; Galatians 6:18; Philippians 1:2; Philippians 4:23). This topic filled Paul's heart and mind. He wanted it to fill the hearts and minds of the Corinthians, too.

Paul wants all the churches to show God's love and forgiveness all the time. Notice what Paul says to the Ephesians: "May God give loving-favor to all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with a love that never gets weak" (Ephesians 6:24, NLV). Did Paul want people to love Jesus with less love than that? Of course not! Paul wanted the love and forgiveness to touch more and more people (2 Corinthians 4:15). God's love and forgiveness were enough for Paul (2 Corinthians 12:9). He wanted these things to be enough for the churches, too.

Think about all the mistakes you make. What reward do you think you should get for your wrong words and actions? But what does God offer you anyway?



Jesus walked the dirty roads of ancient Galilee.

HOW MUCH DOES GOD LOVE US? (John 3:16, 17)

“I pray that the Lord Jesus Christ [the Savior] will continue to be very kind to you all. I pray that God’s love will be with you. And I pray that the Holy Spirit will help you to serve each other as friends” (2 Corinthians 13:14, EASY). Paul ends his second letter to the Corinthians with this verse. Do you see that he talks about the Godhead? The Godhead is the Three-in-One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. When we understand the work that the Godhead does, we will better understand God and His love.

Read John 3:16, 17; Romans 8:37–39; and 1 John 4:8–11. What do these verses tell us about God’s love?

In 1 John 4:8, we read that “God is love” (ERV). Love is an important part of who God is. God gave His only Son to die for us to show us what is love (John 3:16). God sent Jesus to save us (John 3:17). That was part of God’s plan (Acts 3:20, 21; 1 John 4:10, 14). Many times, Jesus said that the Father sent Him (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37).

Paul says, “But God showed His love to us. While we were still [continued to be] sinners, Christ died for us” (Romans 5:8, NLV). Marriage is a symbol of God’s love. The love between parents and children shows us God’s love, too. Nature also shows us God’s love. Ellen G. White wrote, “The budding flowers and the growing grass show us that ‘God is love’ [1 John 4:8, ERV]. The birdsong, the perfume of flowers, the green trees show us that our Father in heaven cares for us. He wishes to make us happy.”—*Steps to Christ*, page 10, adapted. But the most powerful proof of God’s love is Jesus. God gave Jesus as an offering for our sins. Jesus gave His life for us. When we understand this Bible truth, we also “should be willing to die for our brothers” and sisters (1 John 3:16, WE).

Paul wanted the Corinthians to live in peace. But without love, we can’t live in peace with each other. That’s why Paul wrote, “Love helps people to become strong” (1 Corinthians 8:1, EASY). Without love, everything is useless and empty (1 Corinthians 13:1–3). So, everything we do must be done in love (1 Corinthians 16:14).

What would we lose from the Good News if Jesus were not fully God?



God gave His only Son to die for us to show us what is love (John 3:16).

THE GOD OF LOVE (2 Corinthians 13:11)

In ancient times, people didn't believe that the gods loved humans. They believed the gods were mean and nasty. So, people needed to bring the gods offerings and gifts to make peace with them. The idea of a God of love was a new and strange idea in Paul's day. Paul says that our God is "the God of love and peace" (2 Corinthians 13:11, ERV).

Read 2 Corinthians 13:11. What hope does this verse give you? How can you live what this verse teaches?

The words "the God of love and peace" can be understood two ways. First, God gives us love and peace. Second, God always feels love and peace. You don't need to choose one meaning over the other. Both meanings are correct. Love and peace are part of God. So, He gives us love and peace.

Paul talks about the other ways God blesses us. God encourages us (Romans 15:5). God gives us hope (Romans 15:13). As we just saw, God gives us peace (Romans 15:33; Romans 16:20; 1 Corinthians 14:33; Philippians 4:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:23). God gives us mercy, love, and forgiveness (2 Corinthians 1:3). God helps us feel better (2 Corinthians 1:3). God gives us all these gifts because He loves us.

The words "God of peace" are used many times in the Bible. But the words "God of love" are used only in 2 Corinthians 13:11. So, we should give this special verse our careful attention and study.

As 2 Corinthians 13:14 shows us, Paul believes in one God in Three Persons. We believe in one God as Three Persons, too. As we saw already, the Three-in-One God is named the Godhead. The Godhead includes the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Together, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit live in an everlasting relationship of love. The Three-in-One God loves us. The Three-Person God commands us to love each other. We must love each other in a way that shows the love that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have for each other. This love shows everyone God's love.



We must love each other in a way that shows the love that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit have for each other.

FELLOWSHIP WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11)

Paul says, “You belong to Christ [Jesus]. . . . You are able to [can] help one another because his Spirit is in you” (Philippians 2:1, EASY; also read verse 2).

Some people say that the Holy Spirit is not really a Person. But that is not correct. Why would Paul include the Holy Spirit in the Godhead if He is not a Person? As we saw already, the Godhead is the Three-in-One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The Father and Son have a personal relationship with each other (2 Corinthians 1:3; 2 Corinthians 11:31). In the same way, the Holy Spirit has a personal relationship with us. This relationship helps us understand that Spirit also is a Person (Romans 8:15, 16; read also John 14:16, 17, 26; John 15:26).

The words “his Spirit is in you” (EASY) also can be written as “Do we share together in the Spirit?” (ICB). We can understand these words two ways. First, they can mean the fellowship we have with each other. The Spirit gives us this fellowship. Second, these words can mean our personal relationship with the Holy Spirit. Both ideas are correct.

Read 1 Corinthians 2:10, 11; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 12:11; and 2 Corinthians 3:6, 17. What did Paul teach the Corinthians about the Holy Spirit?

Paul has much to say about the work of the Spirit. The Spirit makes the church grow strong (1 Corinthians 14:12). The Spirit gets people ready to do God’s work (1 Corinthians 2:4, 5). The Spirit explains God’s deep secrets (1 Corinthians 2:10, 11) and teaches them to us (1 Corinthians 2:13). The Spirit lives in us (1 Corinthians 3:16; 1 Corinthians 6:19). The Spirit works with Jesus to make us clean and holy (1 Corinthians 6:11). The Spirit gives spiritual gifts to the church (1 Corinthians 12–14). God puts His mark on us to show us we belong to Him. The Spirit lives in our hearts as proof that we are God’s (2 Corinthians 1:22). The Spirit writes God’s law in human hearts (2 Corinthians 3:3). The Spirit gives us new life in Jesus (2 Corinthians 3:6). He helps us win the fight against sin (2 Corinthians 3:17). For sure, we can’t live without the Holy Spirit.

Why must we believe that the Holy Spirit is God? How does this Bible truth help us understand God’s love for us?



The Spirit lives in our hearts as proof that we are God’s (2 Corinthians 1:22).

OUR THREE-IN-ONE GOD (1 Corinthians 1:3, 4, 9)

Some people do not understand 2 Corinthians 13:14. They think this verse says that only Jesus gives us love and forgiveness. Love comes only from God. And only the Holy Spirit gives us fellowship. But these ideas are false.

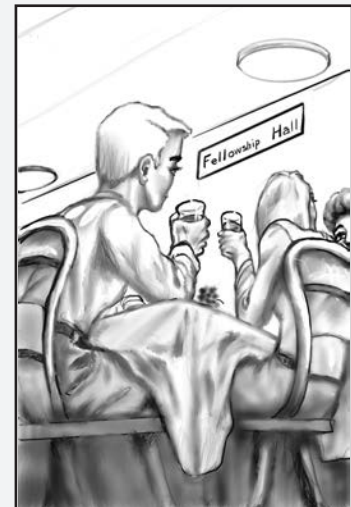
Read 1 Corinthians 1:3, 4, 9; 1 Corinthians 10:16; 2 Corinthians 1:2, 12; Romans 8:35; Romans 15:30; Galatians 2:20; and Ephesians 3:19. What do these verses say about love, forgiveness, mercy, and fellowship? Which members of the Godhead give us these things? As we saw already, the Godhead is the Three-in-One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together to save us. Mercy, love, and fellowship come from all three of Them, and not just one of Them. At the same time, each member of the Godhead has certain jobs and tasks in saving us. In Galatians 4:4–6, Paul tells us that the Father sent Jesus to save us. This information tells us that the Father made the plan (Galatians 4:4). The Son was born from a woman (Galatians 4:4). This verse tells us how Jesus came to earth. Jesus kept the ancient promise God made in Eden (Genesis 3:15). The Son saved us. His death helped the Father to accept us. His death made a relationship between us and the Father happen again. The Holy Spirit helps us to become God’s children (Galatians 4:6).

Paul also tells us that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit work together to help the church do its work (1 Corinthians 12:4–6). The Godhead gives us spiritual strength (Ephesians 3:14–19). The Godhead helps us to work together in peace and love in the church. Our fellowship with church members shows other people the love between the members of the Godhead (Ephesians 4:4–6). The Three Persons of the Godhead also work together to save us (Ephesians 1:3, 13, 14). In Ephesians, Paul says that we must be filled with the Father (Ephesians 3:19), the Son (Ephesians 4:13), and the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5:18).

Paul ends his letter with a beautiful promise in 2 Corinthians 13:14. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit will be with us now and in the future.

How should our fellowship with each other show the beautiful relationship of the Godhead?



Our fellowship with church members shows other people the love between the members of the Godhead (Ephesians 4:4–6).

ADDITIONAL THOUGHT: Read Ellen G. White, “‘Let Not Your Heart Be Troubled,’” pages 662–680, in *The Desire of Ages*.

“Only Jesus’ love and forgiveness can change our hearts. His love and forgiveness make our hearts new and give us new life. Then we can live for God. . . . Men can’t make their hearts clean or holy. Only Jesus can heal us from sin. Sin is the same as a disease. Jesus is the Mighty Doctor. Jesus is heaven’s best gift. He is filled with love, forgiveness, and Bible truth. Only Jesus can save sinners.”—Ellen G. White, in *Signs of the Times*, May 2, 1892, adapted.

“We must understand that the Holy Spirit is a Person. He is as much a Person as God is a Person. The Holy Spirit has a personality. If He didn’t, He couldn’t communicate with our own hearts and minds and tell us we are God’s children. The Holy Spirit is God. If He weren’t, He couldn’t share with us the secrets that are hidden in God’s mind.”—Ellen G. White, *The Faith I Live By*, page 52, adapted.

“Three living Persons belong to the Godhead. [As we already saw, the Godhead is the Three-in-One God: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.] When we accept Jesus and get baptized, we are baptized in the name of these three mighty powers: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These powers will work with the obedient servants of heaven to help them live a new life in Jesus.”—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, page 615, adapted.



“When we accept Jesus and get baptized, we are baptized in the name of these three mighty powers: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.”

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

- ① Most of us know the hymn “Amazing Grace.” Grace is God’s love, forgiveness, and power over sin. What is so amazing about the grace of Jesus?
- ② The picture-story about the two sons is a powerful example of God’s love (Luke 15:11–32). How do we know that the father in this picture-story is a loving father? What does he do to show his love?
- ③ How can local churches show that they have God’s Spirit in their hearts? How can church members show love for each other?

THE CHURCH THAT STARTED IN A BAR

The people in the village laughed at the Christians. The people told each other, “These Christians must be crazy to think we would worship God in a building that has an evil past!”

Leenus was one of those Christians who talked in that way. Then he started a church in the most unexpected place: a small room that used to be a bar. Leenus was a Seventh-day Adventist Church pioneer in Kenya. Before Leenus became a church pioneer, he was the pastor for a church of a different faith. Now, he was starting a church filled with a new group of Seventh-day Adventist Christians.

Leenus became a Seventh-day Adventist after he went to meetings and studied some Bible lessons. Then Leenus started to share that Bible truth with the members from his old church after he got baptized.

Leenus signed up 360 people for Bible studies. He went from home to home and answered people’s questions until every person finished the lessons. Leenus was very happy when 15 people asked to be baptized.

Seventh-day Adventist Church leaders came to baptize the people. Then they told Leenus he would be their new pastor. But soon they wanted Leenus to do something else. The leaders made Leenus a church pioneer because of his skills in sharing the Good News. Leenus smiled and said, “They told me to travel in Kenya and teach more people about Jesus.”

Leenus arrived in a new town where no one was Seventh-day Adventist. Leenus went from door-to-door. He shared Bible truth with the families he met. Leenus worked hard. Then one person accepted the message. Leenus said, “I told this man, ‘Work with me. Together we will help people accept Jesus.’ ”

Leenus held Bible meetings. Many people in the community came. They asked Leenus, “Where is your church?” Leenus told them that his church was in an old shop.

The people said, “No, no! That old shop used to be a bar.” The people told Leenus, “We can’t worship God there!”

Leenus prayed about getting a new church. God helped him to get some land. Then God sent Leenus some people to help build the church. Now, 10 members meet every week on Sabbath in the brand-new church.

Leenus plans to hold more Bible meetings in the community. He says, “That way, people can see and know we are here.” Leenus believes that having a new church helped the people know that God is with them. Leenus explains, “They can see that God is doing something for us. He is helping us grow.”

INSIDE
Story
by RICK KAJIURA



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