



*First*

# CORINTHIANS



DALBY  
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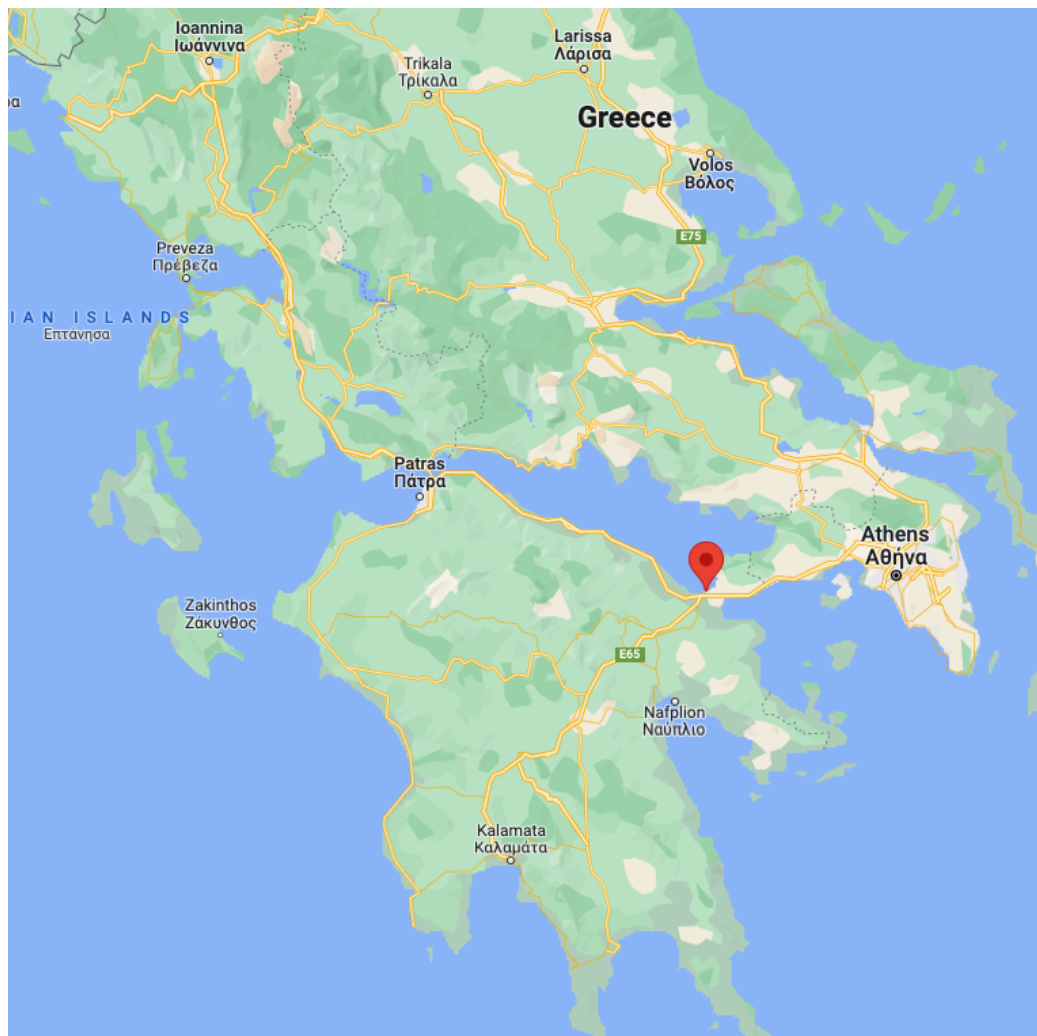
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# *Introduction to* **FIRST CORINTHIANS**

*First*  
**CORINTHIANS**

Corinth was a rich city - a rich city with classy people and strong future prospects. In roughly the same spot as it is today, Corinth sits as protector of a narrow strip of land separating mainland Greece from the Greek Peloponnese. That meant it controlled ocean access to the Aegean and Mediterranean, and because of that, it controlled the flow of a lot of wealth.



Paul spent an 18 month stint there from 50-51 AD; you can read about that in Acts 18. It was successful, and a new church had started. But, after coming to believe in the resurrected Christ who brought forgiveness and a new life, the prosperity and upward mobility of the city took its toll. In the time between Paul's initial visit and this letter in 54/55AD things had gone downhill.



The Corinthians weren't having theological problems, so much as they were being lured into the lifestyle of those who didn't follow Jesus. They perceived that the best way to make the gospel look good was to have powerful and attractive leaders (Chs 1-4). They were sure the gospel diminished the importance of their bodies (Chs 5- 7). They were convinced the gospel allowed unbridled freedom (Chs 8-11 ). The cross gave them special abilities more than others (Chs 12-14). The resurrection of their souls meant their soon to be dead bodies didn't matter (Ch 15-16).

Paul writes to remind them of what they really knew: Christ's death and resurrection turns our view of the world upside down.

Because of the Cross they were indeed free, but not the cultural freedom of self determination and the free-choice to fulfil their dreams - It's a cross-shaped freedom to do whatever it takes to advance the gospel.

As we chart through these chapters there are some tricky bits, so make sure you ask the hard questions. Overall, keep Paul's aim in mind: to live a cross shaped life in a city that doesn't follow Jesus.

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# Study One

# CROSS SHAPED UNITY

1 Corinthians 1:1-2:5

First  
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Oxfam, climate change, world mission, etc. There are lots of things that bring people together, and in doing so, often drive them apart.

**Q1.** What are some of the current causes that unite people, and why do you think they have that effect?

## READ 1 Corinthians 1:1-2:5

**Q2.** Count how many times Paul mentions "Christ" in v1-9. What do you reckon this tells us about what Paul wants for the Corinthian church that Christ is mentioned so many times in these opening verses?

**Q3. V 12-17** highlight an issue in the church in Corinth. What is it?

What are the three things Paul appeals to them to do in v10?

"that you \_\_\_\_\_"

"that you \_\_\_\_\_"

"that you \_\_\_\_\_"

**Q4.** In v18-25, how is the message of the cross viewed differently by:

Those who are perishing	Those who are being saved



**Q5.** From ch1v26 to ch2v5, Paul reminds the Corinthian church that boasting in human power and wisdom is useless. What does Paul claim is the only thing worth knowing (ch2v2)?

**Q6.** What are some things that might divide us or distract us as a church?

**Q7.** In light of what we've just seen, what should always be at the centre of our church here at DPC?

**Q8.** Think about some ways you might keep the message of the cross of Christ central in:

A. Your own life

B. Our church life

The message of the cross looks weak, but it's actually God's power. The Cross of Christ is a message worth shaping our lives around. Pray together that God would help us be united and focussed on the gospel of Christ and him crucified as we head into the future.



# Study Two

# CROSS SHAPED WISDOM

1 Corinthians 2:6-16

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Wisdom is a highly prized asset. Sometimes we call it something else - "get up and go", "switched on", "on the ball". It's that ability to navigate the world and it's relationships really well. In Corinth, wisdom (*sophia* in Greek) was the most valuable public virtue. The sophists got a lots of respect, and they got a lot of students whose parents paid a lot of money for them to be trained. Everyone wanted to be wise; they were always looking for ways to get ahead. The problem for Christians was, the message of the crucified Lord was about being a servant....

There are lots of things that make people who follow Jesus look foolish, from churches that look completely out of touch, to Christian morals that run counter to most Aussies.

## READ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

**Q1.** What kinds of issues make Christians look foolish to the world?

**Q2.** Look through the verses and fill out this table:

Person with Spirit	Person without spirit

**Q3.** In a sentence, how would you describe the difference having God's Spirit makes to a Christian?



**Q4.** How is the nature of God's wisdom described in v6-9?

**Q5.** What is it that the spirit mainly does in v12?

**Q6.** When are some times you've felt like you were treated as a fool for being Christian? And, how can we encourage each other in this?

**Q7.** We're often drawn to really clever teachers and speakers online, how do these verses guide us in what the wisest thing to be listening for might be?

**PRAY** for someone in your life who you'd love to understand God's wisdom in the message of the gospel.



# CROSS SHAPED FOUNDATIONS

Study Three

1 Corinthians 3:1-23

First  
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**Q1.** Have you ever been part of a building project? Did you do it alone or with others? How important were the foundations?

## READ 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

**Q2.** How would you describe the problem with the Christians at Corinth in v1-4 according to Paul?

**Q3.** From v5-9, write down the different roles guys like Paul & Apollos play in the church compared with God.

Verse	Paul & Apollos	God
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		

**Q4.** As we think about ourselves then, what role do we play in the spiritual growth of other people and of ourselves?

What role does God play?



**Q5.** What do you reckon it means for Christians to be God's building (v9), *as well as* being those who are building together on the foundation of Christ (v10-12)?

**Q6.** If God is the one who causes growth in our lives, how do you think that might affect our outlook on life?

**Q7.** What other foundations have you tended to try to build on rather than building on the foundation of Christ?

**Q8.** Do you see your fellow believers as your co-workers in the work God is doing? If not what might you do this week to change both your attitude and actions?



# Study Four

# CROSS SHAPED COMMUNITY

1 Corinthians 6:1-20

First  
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**Q1.** If you've ever watched an episode of "Judge Judy", you'll know that humans often need help sorting out their disputes. What are some of the common disputes people take before the courts?



## READ 1 Corinthians 6:1-20

**Q2.** What is the issue Paul addresses in v1-11?

**Q3.** In the previous chapter, Paul talked about not judging those outside the church, but instead to focus on getting their own house in order. Why do you think he's so upset with the way Christians in Corinth were dealing with disputes?

**Q4.** Some people were desperate to be right, to come out on top, and they didn't care how it looked to anyone else. What does Paul offer as an alternative to winning a dispute (v7-11)?

**Q5.** Think about some areas in your life where it might be better to let yourself be wronged or cheated for the sake of the gospel.



**Q6.** V11 outlines the turning point for the Corinthian Christians, and all followers of Jesus. What three things does Paul say has transformed their way of living?

"But you were \_\_\_\_\_"

"You were \_\_\_\_\_"

"You were \_\_\_\_\_"

Even though some of them were desperate to come out on top through taking others to court, Paul reminds them that all of them had been wrong at some stage. But because of Christ's work in dealing with their sin and setting them apart for God's service, they are now something completely new. They could make every decision knowing there's no better advantage to be had.

**Q7.** From v12-20, how would you describe Paul's reasoning in urging the Corinthian Christians to "Flee from sexual immorality" (v12-20)?

**Q8.** In what ways does this passage challenge us as Christians to be different from those around us who don't know Jesus?

**Q9.** "Therefore, honour God with your bodies." Reflect on a few ways you might do this in your own life.





# CROSS SHAPED FREEDOM

Study Five

1 Corinthians 9:19-23 & 10:23-11:1

First  
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Freedom is a powerful idea, even more so in the years following COVID19.

**Q1.** When you think about freedom, what kinds of things come to mind?

**READ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23 & 10:23-11**

**Q2.** List all the ways Paul shapes his life and behaviour because of the gospel:  
(E.g. "I have made myself...", "To the \_\_\_\_\_, I became \_\_\_\_\_.")

**Q3.** In 9:19-22 what's Paul aiming for when he uses his freedom?

**Q4.** In the second reading, what does Paul say to use your rights for?



**Q5.** What has Christ done, and how is it an example of what Christians should do (11:1)?

In defending our freedoms the most important thing is not causing jews, or greeks or God's church to stumble.

**Q6.** What do you think about the idea of giving up whatever freedoms you could claim if it helps your church family?

**Q7.** It can feel threatening to not take up your rights. How can the gospel help us reassure each other when our freedoms are trampled on?



# Study Six

# CROSS SHAPED CHURCH

1 Corinthians 11:2-34

First  
CORINTHIANS

This passage has some confronting stuff in it. And so it's important to keep in mind that Paul is dealing with specific issues for the Christian gathering in Corinth. It's also important to remember that each of us comes to the bible already thinking in certain ways. Try and put some of that to the side and see what the words of the Bible themselves say.

**Q1.** At the beginning of chapter 11, Paul outlines the guiding principle for Christian living (11:1). What do you reckon our society's "guiding principle for life" is in 2023?

## **READ 1 Corinthians 11:2-16**

Paul's day had some simple cultural conventions that are a lot different from our own, but they would have been readily understandable for a middle-eastern culture. In Corinth there were a bunch of reasons to wear a head covering. But a couple have obvious implications for our passage: 1) Men drawing a veil over their head when they offered sacrifices to pagan gods (see below), and 2) Women removing their veil to assert their independence from their husband and marriage.

It seems as though some women in the church exercise their freedom in Christ by getting rid of their head covering (head coverings were the cultural norm at the time - see note below).

**Q2.** What is Paul's response to this?

*"It can be assumed that respectable Greek women wore a head covering in public. If so, the practice of the Corinthian Christian ladies outraged the proprieties. Paul rejected it with decision. It is no part of the life of the Christian needlessly to flout accepted conventions."*

**Leon Morris (TNTC p149)**



**Q3.** Before anything else, notice what activity both the men and the women are doing. Does Paul think it's a problem? What is the outcome of their behaviour while they do these things?

The problem with what they are doing is not that they are praying or prophesying, but that the way they are doing it is bringing dishonour to their gathering and to Christ.

**Q4.** V7-10 refer back to the fact that the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2 portray man created first followed by woman. What do you think this means for the behaviour of the women in Corinth?

**Q5.** What do v11-12 show about the difference Jesus makes to gender roles? How are men and women to be valued in the gathering of followers of Jesus?

Paul recognises that there are differences in gender roles, and often the way men and women behave sends certain signals in their culture. The Corinthian gathering looked contentious and disgraceful because they flouted social conventions and failed to see their value in Christ first and foremost.

Christians are called to order our gatherings in a way that honours Christ above our desire to exercise our freedom for our own sake.

### **READ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34**

In v17, Paul's tone changes - he's angry with the Corinthians about reports that their gatherings are full of division and that they actually do more harm than good.

**Q6.** In v20-22 describe what's happening when they gather to have the Lord's supper?



**Q7.** As you read on from v23-26, what is *meant* to be proclaimed by this meal?

There's no pretending this isn't a difficult passage, but a few things are clear. One is, that they flouted the normal gender roles in their church gatherings which brought shame and dishonour to Christ in Corinth. The second is, that they lorded it over each other in the Lord's supper, trying to promote themselves, rather than proclaiming Christ. The common theme is not about gender or ceremony, but that Christian gatherings should proclaim Christ and not ourselves. Whatever we think about gender we take our cues from Christ and be sensitive to our culture, and when we gather we seek the honour of Christ and not ourselves.

**Q8.** What are some ways we might be guilty of proclaiming our own honour instead of Christ's at DPC?

**Q9.** How should Jesus shape how we organise ourselves and behave as a church?

**Q10.** Think about times you have been contentious about issues in a group or just among your friends. What challenge does this passage have for you?

**Pray** that as a church we would seek the honour of Christ above all else as we gather. That we might not seek to pursue our own benefit or honour within our church community, but that we might help each other proclaim Christ clearly as we gather together as his people.



# The GOSPEL DRIVEN CHURCH



SWQCC is back for 2023! Join us from 14-16 July at Dalby Christian College as we hear the gospel taught through Jared Wilson (Pastor, Assistant Professor, Author) over the weekend. You will also have the chance to choose from a great range of electives designed to equip you for ministry in your local context. School-aged children will have their own program running across the weekend, and a creche will be available each morning session. Meals are provided Friday night, Saturday from morning tea to supper, and Sunday morning tea. Please see our website for a list of local hotels and campsites if you need to book accommodation for the weekend.

**Where:** Dalby Christian College, Dalby

**When:** 14-16 July 2023

**Register:** [www.swqcc.org.au](http://www.swqcc.org.au) (early bird closes 20 May)

**f** : [www.facebook.com/SWQCC](https://www.facebook.com/SWQCC)





# CROSS SHAPED GIFTS (PT1)

Study Seven

1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13

First  
CORINTHIANS

It's been said that the gathering of the Christians in Corinth would have looked more like a mini trade expo with people showing off their skills, than a church service we might recognise today. It's a massive problem in this letter; it takes up 3 whole chapters. They had turned their church into an opportunity to show how good they were at tongues, and how spiritually superior they were.

**Q1.** Try and put yourselves into the shoes of someone who has never been to a church service. What does your group think that experience would be like?

**Q2.** Look over 12:4-11 and see how often the words different/same/similar/one etc are used. Put them in the table below:

Where "different" is used	Where "same/similar" is used

**Q3.** From v7-11, who gives the gifts, and what can we tell about what they are for?



The idea of "the body" is used by Paul to help the Corinthians understand how gifts are to be viewed among Christians. It gets to the heart of the problem they were having. It's not the presence of spiritual gifts, but their practice of them.

**Q4.** In v15-17 what do you think the problem might be in their church gathering in Corinth?

**Q5.** As you read through v18-26, what is God's attitude towards the varying gifts and skills in the Christian gathering?

**Q6.** Think about yourself for a minute, if you honestly reflect do you think of yourself as a more important part of church? Or, do you think of yourself as not that important?

How does this passage speak to you?

**Q7.** Why don't you try and think about a way someone else in your group has loved another. Spend some time encouraging each other in this.



# CROSS SHAPED GIFTS (PT2)

1 Corinthians 14:1-40

First  
CORINTHIANS

In chapter 14, the focus turns from talking about gifts generally, to addressing the specific gifts of prophecy and tongues. They are somewhat controversial topics among some Christians today as they were then.

**Q1.** Have you been to a church that encourages tongues and prophecy or does not allow women to speak? Share your experience.

**READ 1 Corinthians 14:1-40**

**Q2.** How does the passage describe the practice and purpose of:

a) Prophecy?

b) Tongues?

If we're going to be honest, there are a lot of uncertainties about what tongues and prophecy were in Corinth. It's equally difficult to tell if what we call tongues today is the same thing. And so we need to be careful not to be too dogmatic (arrogantly certain) either way.

**Q3.** Whatever gifts people have, what is to be the main goal for using them in church (v12)?

**Q4.** Look at v20-23. What impression were their gatherings giving? What impression *should* they be giving (v24-25)?



**Q5.** How would you summarise Paul's general desire for how the Corinthian church should use their gifts from v26-40?

**Q6.** When you read that the gifts you are given are not for your sake but for the whole church, does it change the way you view them? If so, how?

**Q7.** In a society where we often talk about the rights we have to do what we want so long as it doesn't harm others, how does this passage fit with that? Do we throw out these instructions or do we push against our culture?

### **WOMEN IN CHURCH**

All of us come to the Bible with existing ideas. You might have the cultural idea that women run the home (common in Australia in the 50s). You might equally have the cultural idea that men and women are exactly equal (common now in Australia , except in sport...).

We need to be aware of our own cultural baggage before we make a call about another's. Clearly in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, Paul expects that women **can speak** in church gatherings, because they prophesy and pray! So v35 can't mean women never talk. It's complex!

The context is the misuse of gifts in the church that probably resulted from their pagan background. In some pagan ceremonies, women would constantly question religious prophets. Paul's point may be that this practice is completely out of line in church gatherings of Christians, because the authority of God's word is from the Scriptures, not just a noisy few.

Paul's point in this section is consistent - the church gathering is to be well ordered and appropriate, rather than a chaotic free-for-all with people calling out or talking over each other or women interrupting those speaking to ask a question.





# Study Nine

# CROSS SHAPED HOPE

1 Corinthians 15:12-58

First  
CORINTHIANS

This chapter ends Paul's discussion on how the gospel should shape the way the Corinthians lived in their city. For Christians, the world is not a finite material place...in other words, "stuff" has an infinite future. The Corinthians seemed so focussed on "spirituality" that their use of material stuff - like their body - wasn't a big deal to them.

**Q1.** How would you explain what will happen on Jesus' return to someone who doesn't know Jesus? What are your thoughts on what heaven might be like?

## **READ 1 Corinthians 15:12-58**

**Q2.** What do some people in Corinth seem to be saying (v12)?

**Q3.** Why does Paul seem convinced this issue is one he needs to correct (v13-19)? What happens if the dead are not raised?

What's Paul's answer to this in v20?

**Q4.** If the dead are indeed raised, of course it leads us to ask: what will those resurrected bodies look like? What if I get cremated? What if I'm beyond recognition? To answer this Paul uses two word pictures:



a) What does the seed idea tell us (v36-38)?

b) What does the flesh idea tell us (v39-40)?

**Q5.** Summarise how Paul describes the difference between "natural bodies" and "spiritual bodies" in v42-49?

**Q6.** What's the significance of the "two Adams" in this passage?

**Q7.** How does Paul's conclusion in verses 53-57 make you feel? Why?

**Q8.** How might the resurrection of Christ encourage us as we follow him? Write down a few ways Christ's victory over sin & death might spur you on and pray about it together.













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