

1 Corinthians Cheat Sheet

Written by: Paul (Rom 1.1), and Sosthenes (possibly the same Sosthenes mentioned in Acts 18.17, a “ruler” of a synagogue at Corinth who was beaten by a mob because the proconsul Gallio refused to entertain the Jews charges against Paul) from Ephesus (1 Cor 16.8, cf. Acts 18.19).

Date: Early 50’s. The decree for Jews to leave Rome as in AD 49 (cf. Acts 18.2) and Gallio was proconsul of Corinth in AD 51 and held his role for less than two years.

Recipients: The church in Corinth, a largely gentile group (cf, 1 Cor 8:7; 12:2). Paul first visited this church on his second extensive missionary journey (begun in Acts 16, but see Acts 18.1). Paul stayed here perhaps as long as 2 years (cf Acts 18.9-11).

Occasion: The Church in Corinth has apparently continued to grow, with the Corinthians having been visited by Apollos in the interim and likely contributing to their growth (1 Cor 3.5-7). Paul had written a previous letter (now lost) to the Corinthian church (1 Cor 5.9) in which he likely told them of his collection (cf. Acts 11.27-30) for the first time (1 Cor 16.1-4), mentioned his change in travel plans (1 Cor 4.18), and spoke against associating with believers who indulged in sexual immorality (1 Cor 5.9-13). Now, having received a report from members of Chloe’s household (1 Cor 1.11-4.5; 11.2-16?, 11.17-34; 15.12-34) as well as a letter in reply to Paul’s initial letter (1 Cor 16.17? Cf. 7.1-39; 8.1-11.1; 12.1-14.39; 16.1-9), Paul addresses these problems in the church while trying to maintain his relationship with them.

Emphases: 1 Corinthians is a long letter, occasioned by a variety of things. As such, it’s emphases are going to be equally varied. First of all, Paul addresses the increasingly divisive nature of the church (something reported by Chloe’s people), a development that has them challenging his authority as an apostle. The church is also struggling with what it means to be live out their faith in a religiously, culturally, and socio-economically diverse city. There are, therefore, several problems that are addressed by Paul in his response to their letter and Chloe’s report: divisions over leaders and wisdom (1:18-4:21) , sexual immorality among believers (5:1-13) , lawsuits among believers (6:1-21), issues around marriage and singleness (7:1-40), eating food sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1), distinctions between men and women (11:2-16), abuses at the Lord’s Supper (11:17-34), spiritual gifts (12:1-14:40), and the resurrection (15:1-58).

All of these problems seem to be influenced by an understanding of spirituality that is influenced by the culture around them (elevation of the spirit over the body, interest in rhetorical skills, knowledge, and wisdom, a different ethical standard for the wealthy, maintenance of social boundaries and furtherance of one's influence reflected in patron-client relationships, political enmities pursued through prosecution in the courts)

The big picture made small

- 1.1-9** Greeting and Thanksgiving
- 1.10-4.5** Addressing division over who is wisest, when God revealed in Christ ought to be their focus
- 5.1-6.20** Paul Responds to matters he has heard about
- 7.1-11.1** Paul replies to matters in their letter
- 11.2-15.58** Back to matters he's heard about, this time regarding their worship and theology of the resurrection
- 16.1-24** Bits and bobs at the end of the letter

The Big picture made long

1.1-3 Introductory Matters

- 1.1 Writers: Paul and Sosthenes
- 1.2 Recipients: Corinthians
- 1.3 Greetings

1.4-9 Prayer and Thanksgiving

1.10-4.5 Division over who is wisest, when God revealed in Christ ought to be their focus

1.10-17 An appeal for unity in the face of divisions over teachers

- 1.10 Appeal for unity in face of division
- 1.11-12 Quarrels reported by some Chloe's household based on who's teaching people follow
- 1.13-17 The appeal based on the unity of Christ and the gospel, for it is the gospel, not the wisdom of the teacher, that matters.

1.18-25 The foolish Gospel redefines what wisdom truly is

- 1.18-19 Gospel is wisdom to those being saved, but foolish to the rest.
- 1.20-25 But the gospel has redefined what counts as wisdom: Jesus Christ crucified is the power and wisdom of God. God's foolishness is wiser than human wisdom!

1.26-2.5 The logic to God's wisdom, and Paul's approach

- 1.26-31 and the wisdom in the foolishness of God is so that no one may boast before him (they weren't much to look at when they were saved!). Believers are found in Jesus, who alone is our wisdom, righteousness, holiness, and redemption.
- 2.1-5 the same may be said of Paul, who resolved to forgo human wisdom in preaching Jesus alone, relying on the Spirit's power, not rhetoric, so that their faith might rest in God alone.

2.6-16 Those mature in their faith recognize the wisdom of the Spirit's teaching

- 2.6-10 There is a message of wisdom spoken among the mature, however. A message hidden from the worldly wise and for God's church alone, revealed by the Spirit.
- 2.11-13 For God's Spirit alone knows God's thoughts and can unpack them for Paul and his associates. There is no other secret teaching/teacher.
- 2.14-16 Those wise in the world regard this as foolish, and can't discern the truth, but the person with the Spirit is able to make judgements on all matter of things, because having the mind of Christ, they may know the mind of God.

3.1-4.5 Paul addresses immature quarreling over whose teacher is best

3.1-9 The immature corinthians fight over whose teacher is best, misunderstanding their role in their lives entirely

3.1-4 The corinthians, however, are not mature in their faith, as is shown by their quarrelling over teachers.

3.5-9 Paul and the other teachers are, after all, only humans doing God's bidding, but it is God who works, who makes things grow. Paul and the teachers are merely workers in God's service among his people, who are God's estate.

3.10-17 Jesus the foundation, Paul and others the builders, believers the Church, and God can look after himself

3.10-15 Paul outlines his role as a worker and highlights the fact that Jesus has laid the foundation for his (and others') work. The workers quality will be shown on the day of the Lord

3.16-17 The Corinthians themselves are God's temple (what he and others are building), and any who are opposed against it will be struck down by God himself

3.18-4.5 A word of caution to the Corinthians on being wise, and a suggestion on how they should regard leaders and levying judgement

3.18- 23 The Corinthians are not wise, and if they want to be, they should become fools for Christ. So, no more boasting over leaders. They have everything they could want in Christ already, and they are all in Christ as well.

4.1-5 They are to regard leaders as the least in God's household, servants of Christ, the true leader. Paul's service will be measured by Christ, and that is all he is concerned about (not their judgements!). So too, they are to reserve judgement until the day the Lord comes and exposes things for what they are.

4.6-20 The reason for Paul's scathing tone

4.6-13 Paul has addressed the above so that they may learn not to go beyond what is written, and to avoid a baseless pride, when they have all received the same thing from Christ. He then goes sarcastically after their bloated egos, comparing their pride with the apostles' humility, service, and righteous suffering and endurance

4.14-17 Paul is not trying to rub their faces in their immaturity, but desires to warn them, as a father to his children, to imitate him and his way of life in Christ, which Timothy, who he is sending to them, will remind them of.

4.18-20 Some of the corinthians have begun to take their relationship with Paul lightly, but he coming to them soon with the power of the Kingdom of God. The outcome of his arrival (discipline or love) will be determined by their behaviour.

5.1-6.20 Other matters Paul has heard about:**5.1-13 Sexual immorality and the stance of the community towards it**

5.1-5 A man is sleeping with his father's wife. Since Paul is with them in Spirit, they should accept his judgement as one who is present and hand the man over to Satan so that the spirit (of the church? Of the man?) might be saved later.

5.6-8 The church's boasting is not good, given how this relationship may poison the whole community. Given Christ's death, they are to be like bread with new yeast, not old.

5.9-11 Paul now must clarify an earlier command: when I said stay away from sexually immoral people, I meant precisely those who claim to be brothers or sisters but are sexually immoral, greedy, a slanderer, drunk, or cheat.

5.12-13 It is the business of the church to hold themselves accountable to the wisdom of God. God will judge those outside the church.

6.1-11 Deal with each other well, don't drag each other to court!

6.1-6 On dealing with holding one another accountable: don't take each other to court! It's a cop-out. You ought to be wiser than this. Paul says this to shame them, given that people are currently taking one another to court.

6.7-11 The existence of intra-church lawsuits shows the depth of their failure. Rather than endure wrongs, they commit them. It's like they have forgotten wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God. That is what they were, but it is no longer who they are.

6.12-20 Don't buy into the idea that you can do what you like with your bodies (no frequenting prostitutes!)

6.12-17 The Corinthians seem to think they have the right to do anything, but Paul tempers their assertions with some wisdom, noting that we are not to be mastered by anything and that the body is not made for sexual immorality, it is made for the Lord. God has raised the Lord and will raise us also, being a part of Christ himself. Being one with Christ, we ought not to unite ourselves sexually with prostitutes.

6.18-20 Rather than claim a right to do anything, they ought to flee from sexual immorality, their bodies being temples to the holy spirit, not their own, but bought with a price.

7.1-11.1 Paul replies to matters in their letter**7.1-40 On whether or not it is good to abstain from sex and on questions of marriage and divorce****7.1-9 On sex**

7.1-7 to those who are married: in the face of sexual immorality, husband

and wife should engage in sex with one another. You may abstain for purposes of prayer, but that is it. Paul wishes they could be like he (unmarried) but recognizes that each one has their own gift from God.

7.8-9 To the widowed and unmarried: remain as they are, unless they are horny. Then, better to marry.

7.10-16 On divorce

7.10-11 to those women (and men) looking at divorce: don't! But if you do, remain unmarried or try to reconcile.

7.12-16 to the rest: don't divorce your spouse if they are an unbeliever. Your relationship may sanctify them in the end. Divorce only compromises the children. If the unbeliever leaves, however, let them. God calls is to live in peace (that is, not create unnecessary conflict). Such a response may result in their salvation.

7.17-24 On one's Christian vocation and place in life

7.17-20 After addressing the question of divorce, Paul transitions to speaking about the life situation of believers in general (versus one's choice or the situation that has arisen as a result of another's choice in divorce): Live in whatever situation God has assigned you (this is what Paul says to all the churches). Circumcision is given as an example. Circumcision is nothing, after all, and keeping God's commands is everything.

7.21-24 Slavery is another example remain. One is able to live out their vocation as a member of Christ's body whether or not they are slave or free (though if there is a chance to be free, take it!)

7.25-40 On whether or not to marry

7.25-28 Marriage is not a sin, but Paul would personally prefer that they stay single.

7.29-35 The reason for this is that Paul does not want the people to be too attached to a world that is/will be passing away. A single individual is able to focus more clearly on doing the Lord's work. This is not place restrictions on them, Paul says, but to frame his encouragement toward singleness.

7.36-40 Each person needs to pay attention to their own desires and limitations.

8.1-11.1 Covenant Allegiance and life in Christ in Corinth

8.1-9.27 On Food Sacrificed to Idols

8.1-6 Paul begins this question by emphasizing the limitations of knowledge versus a life of love before God. This will be his framework for addressing the question. He then moves on to affirm that for believers, there is only one God, regardless what others may hold to.

8.7-13 But the fact remains that others do hold to other gods and our behaviour has an impact on them. And while what we eat does not win us God's approval, the reverse is also true. Our 'knowledge' can actually hurt and alienate other people, so we ought to let love guide our decisions instead.

9.1-27 Status and rights should be subordinated for the sake of the Gospel (or, On food sacrificed to idols, Pt. 2)

9.1-12 Paul is as free to do what he likes as the believers in Corinth, but his behaviour isn't dictated by his 'rights'. However, they abstain from this out of love so as not to throw up any obstacle to the Corinthians' faith.

9.13-18 In the face of claiming what is rightfully owed to him (in the name of 'freedom', Paul states that the nature of his good news to them denies him that possibility.

9.19-23 Paul's freedom allows him to accommodate his lifestyle to that of the people he is living with or serving and in so doing, he obeys the law of Christ. He willingly identifies with the weak and seeks common ground to share so that he might spread the good news.

9.24-27 And the reason Paul does this is because he wants to thrive and succeed in his service to Christ, a service that comes with a prize unfading and eternal.

10.1-11.1 Covenant Allegiance matters!

10.1-13 Moses and the people of God had a comparable experience to us (baptism of a sort, spiritual food and drink) and yet they felt God's displeasure when they opted to give into their cravings of evil things. So too, we should avoid such things (as well as sexual immorality). Stand strong and be careful not to fall, follow God in the midst of your own temptations.

10.14-22 And so Paul urges them to flee from idolatry. Since we participate in the body of Christ, do not think you can be involved in the sacrificial meal of another without consequence. Food is not the issue, participation in the altar of another is.

10.23-11.1 Against the mottos of the Corinthians, Paul proposes that they should instead seek out the good of others. Rather than participate in idolatrous meals, buy your meat in the market. When you eat with others, eat with a mind to what they may think (and don't worry about trying to please some 'pious' third party). In whatever you do, do it for the glory of

God and that others have a clear road to salvation. Follow my example, as I follow Christ.

11.2-15.58 Back to matters he's heard about, this time regarding their worship and theology of the resurrection

11.2-16 On women's hair and head coverings in worship (and a corrective on implications of status)

11.2-16 Paul compliments the people on holding to the traditions he has passed on, but now speaks to the way men and women (husbands and wives) participate in worship. He is speaking here to the gender roles of each (that is, the performative aspect of their biological sex) in the same vein he has already been addressing food sacrificed to idols; namely, that they should engage in worship in a way that builds one another up and does not contribute to divisiveness. But Paul's argument, which amounts to paternalistic headship, is qualified by verse 11, lest people take it too far. He is not arguing for superiority, for both men and women are equal before God, but rather for capitulation to the ways of Jewish and Greco-Roman culture insofar as it does not dilute this reality. Paul concludes with three more arguments from what is 'seemly' or accepted, from what is conventional, and from what is done in all the churches.

11.17-34 On how to participate in the Lord's supper

11.17-22 Where before Paul was appreciative, here he is not: in the way the Corinthians celebrate the Lord's table. They do so based off of socio-economic differences, and so in Paul's mind, it is not the Lord's table at all. Indeed, the meal looks more like a Greek affair than a Christian one.

11.23-26 What he taught them was that the meal of bread and wine was to be taken in remembrance of Jesus.

11.27-34 Therefore, when they engage in the meal in an unworthy manner, they sin against the body and blood of the Lord himself. What the church ought to do is examine themselves before they participate in the supper, as those who do not bring judgement on themselves. Indeed, Paul seems some of the ailments and deaths in the community as a direct result of their unworthy participation in the meal. This judgement is a disciplining, however, not a rejection. Keep the table sacred, he concludes, with a promise to speak more to this when he arrives.

12.1-14.38 About Spiritual Gifts

12.1-31 The diverse gifts of the Spirit

12.1-3 Speaking now to the way the Spirit gifts people, Paul makes it clear that anything that goes against Jesus is not from the Spirit, but what affirms Jesus as Lord is.

12.4-11 What is of God is for God and from God. That is, the Spirit gives gifts for the common good, and to each one or another, one or more of these gifts may be given as the Spirit sees fit.

12.12-26 Paul offers an image of the body by way of analogy. Like a body, we are bound up together, we are one though made of many parts, and each part has its job to do according to the wisdom of God. Our diversity is his intention. But diversity and difference does not infer status or prominence even if it means different treatment (though Paul follows Jesus in honoring the weaker to leaven the 'strong'). Our treatment of the body ought to be determined by God's authorship, so that there is no division amongst the parts.

12.27-31 The Corinthians are the body of Christ, and so they have different parts with many different gifts, no one person holding them all. Paul, now, will show them how to navigate this reality (and what the greater gifts are that they should be seeking).

13.1-13 On the way of Love in desiring and exercising the gifts

13.1-3 Regardless of one's gift, love is the all important measure.

13.4-7 Paul records the attributes of the love he expounds, and what defines it.

13.8-13 Love never fails, whereas all else in this world is passing. Our knowledge is not and cannot ever be complete. Only in the end shall know fully, even as we are fully known. Faith, Hope, and love are what remain to us, but the greatest of these is love.

14.1-38 On what gifts ought to be eagerly desired (over and against what they seem to value)

14.1-5 And now Paul makes it clear: follow the way of love and eagerly desire the gifts of the spirit, especially prophecy, which is for building up the body. Tongues may appear to bring status, but it encourages only them, not the body. Not that tongues are therefore less, but prophecy edifies the whole.

14.6-19 By fixating on tongues without revelation is meaningless and without point. Language only matters if there is a meaning all can understand. So pursue those gifts that are 'meaning'-full to the church. Seek interpretation so that passion and understanding may come together in our worship the Lord. And if there is no interpretation, everyone else is barred from entering into worship as well, leaving them un-edified. Again, tongues are a gift, but intelligible words are greater!

14.20-25 Paul admonishes the Corinthians for thinking like children. And uses a quote from the Hebrew Bible to make the point that tongues are a sign for believers, but to an unbeliever, they look crazy! Prophecy, though,

can bring about someone's salvation.

14.26-33, 36-38 In the context of a worship gathering, the gifts of the spirit are to be used in such a way as to build everyone up. Further, there should be order in the meeting. The same goes for prophecy. The prophet can control their tongue, and so should prophecy in an orderly fashion, for God is a God of order, in every congregation (you are not special). Paul calls on a prophet to confirm this in the reading of his letter and warns those who ignore them.

14.34-35 are likely an interpolation, though this is not the traditional or majority view. I reject them as authentic for the following reasons: They do not sit well with the context, since it contradicts 11.2-16, where the participation of women in worship is assumed; the appeal to the law is unlikely by Paul; the verses interrupt the main theme of prophecy, tongues, and community edification to address only women with an absolute and no regard for the freely given nature of the gifts of the spirit. Furthermore, these verses reflect parallels with 1 Timothy 2, when limitations on women participating in worship became stricter.

15.1-58 On the Resurrection

15.1-11 And now, to Paul's Gospel itself: the death and resurrection of Jesus (Paul offers an account of those to whom Jesus appeared). Of this group, Paul values himself least of all, both because he was the last to whom God appeared, and because he persecuted the church. He and the rest of the apostles preach the same message.

15.12-19 Some Corinthians are saying there is no resurrection of the dead. But if there is no resurrection, then Jesus hasn't been raised either, and we have no hope, and the apostles are made to be liars, and people are still stuck in their sin, and all who have already died are lost!

15.10-28 Paul's logic is thus: Just as death came through one man, so too has life. Jesus is the first of those raised into new life, but at his return, so too shall we be raised. This event signals the end, the total victory of Jesus over all things, including, lastly, death. Paul then maintains that economic hierarchy of God the father over Christ the Son.

15.29-34 If there is no resurrection, Paul points out that their habits and practices make no sense! And after citing Isaiah, he cites also the poet Menander to encourage them to stop associating with those who peddle this teaching.

15.35-44 Paul now addresses the question of how this will look or is to take place. Our bodies are like seeds sown by God. They need to die to become transformed. And the bodies of those things in creation are different from one another, each having their own glory. Ours are sown in weakness, and dishonour, but raised in power and glory!

15.44-49 Our first body is a natural one, as Adam's. Our final, resurrection body, will be as Jesus': a spiritual one.

15.50-57 If we are to inherit our hope of glory, it cannot be according to our natural bodies, but our changed ones, and so in a flash, after our death, we will be transformed. Death will lose its sting and we will share in the victory with and through Jesus

15.58 So stand firm and give yourself to the work of the lord!

16.1-24 Bits and bobs at the end of the letter

16.1-4 About the collection, Paul gives a possible procedure for them to follow so that it can be collected and sent off.

16.5-9 On Paul's travel plans (he hopes to visit after Macedonia, so that he can spend more time with them). At present he is committed to his work in Ephesus.

16.10-11 Instruction to look after Timothy and send him off in peace when he goes to return to Paul

16.12 Regarding Apollos, he will return to them soon.

16.13-14 Stand firm in the faith, being courageous and on guard, doing everything in love

16.15-18 Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (Paul's letter carriers) are upstanding people in their community and should be looked to for example and leadership.

16.19-20 Greetings from the church in Asia

16.21-22 Paul signs off with a a strong warning/curse

16.23-24 Final farewells