



FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

1 Corinthians

The Ultimate Group Project

We all know the experience of working on a group project for school. Whether your teacher was kind enough to let you pick your partners or paired you with random students, the goal is to work together to get the job done. This can be a great experience, but it can also be extremely annoying and frustrating because we cannot control what other people do. In an ideal world, every member of the group does exactly what they're supposed to do and carries their own weight. But if you've ever had this experience, you know that is not always the case. In class, you and the other students might talk about what each one of you is going to do when you get home to better contribute to the overall assignment, but there is always a slacker in the group—someone who not only does not want to do the work, but who also just wants to ride the coattails of others, thus creating more work for the rest of the group members. This isn't fun for anyone. Sometimes, a group is full of people who just aren't motivated to get anything done, and this is very evident in the final product. Some people just aren't willing to do the work that is necessary. This can be seen not only in the classroom, but also in our homes, at work, or in extracurriculars like sports, band, or other clubs. When we expect someone to pull their weight and they don't, it can be frustrating. We see this exact situation on full display in Paul as he writes this letter to the church of Corinth.

Today, we get the privilege of embarking on a big journey through the book of 1 Corinthians. As we begin to dissect this letter that Paul wrote to the church of Corinth, we're going to see how Paul isn't satisfied with what the church is producing. Paul spent over a year and a half establishing the church in Corinth and left them, hoping that they would continue to nurture the growing church. Paul writes this letter because, unfortunately, that was NOT the case.

Paul heard a report and received a letter from the church in Corinth. These messages showed that the church was dealing with problems like division, immoral behavior, idol worship, and confusion about their beliefs. **Paul wrote this letter to help them become a place where God's Spirit truly lives, staying true to the teachings of the gospel, and being ready and without blame when Jesus Christ returns.**

As we read 1 Corinthians 1:1–9, we're going to get an introduction to this letter and see the key ideas introduced to us. If you are a Christian, then you are part of the Church, and God has tasked us with a big responsibility in the church.

Paul has been given a leadership position in the Church, and he knows it's his job to address the issues he has heard about. Because when we think about it, growing and maintaining the church is the single most important group project we will ever have.

Open It

Describe a time when you worked on a group project and everything seemed to go wrong.

Day 1 — Explore It

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–9.

1. How does Paul describe the people he's writing to in this letter (v. 2)?
2. What reasons does Paul give for being thankful to God for the Corinthians (vv. 4–9)?
3. How does Paul talk about the spiritual gifts and blessings the Corinthians have received (vv. 5, 7)?
4. What does Paul say has been confirmed in the Corinthian church (v. 6)?
5. How does Paul describe the Corinthians' excitement for Jesus' return (v. 8) ?
6. What does Paul say to reassure the Corinthians about God's faithfulness (v. 9)?

Day 2 — Today's Theme: The Point is Extremely Clear

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–9.

Movies are something I've come to love, and I always appreciate one that everyone can enjoy. If you're anything like me, then you're a fan of Pixar's *Inside Out*. I love this movie because of the simple way it approaches the complex idea of emotions and how the human brain works. I'm by no means a scientist, but the way the movie conveys human emotions is done in such a way that no matter how old or how intelligent you are, you can understand it. The main idea of the movie is to push us to embrace all emotions, recognizing that each one plays a vital role in our well-being and personal growth. Regardless of how old you are, you can leave the movie thinking, "It's okay to feel certain emotions sometimes; it's a part of being human," and that's because the main point of the movie is so well conveyed. **It's extremely clear.**

As Paul starts his letter in 1 Corinthians, we see his main point clearly broadcast for all to see. The church of Corinth has gotten into some really ungodly things (we'll see these as we get deeper into the book) and has fallen off track as far as the church goes. Paul doesn't start this letter by rebuking them, but by sprinkling it with love, thanksgiving, and, most importantly, **Jesus!** In these first nine verses, Paul mentions Christ nine times. You can see what he is doing here. This is not only a reminder that the church at Corinth needs, but it's one that we need daily.

If our life isn't built on Christ, we aren't living life at all. Paul is reminding us, and the church, of this! **It's extremely clear,** we need Christ in our lives.

7. What things distract you from growing closer to Jesus?

8. We're going to briefly jump ahead to 1 Corinthians 3:9–14. What do these verses remind us to do?

9. How can we live a life that ensures that Jesus is our foundation?

Day 3 — Today's Theme: First Impressions Matter

Read 1 Corinthians 1:4–9.

As Christians we are called to keep each other accountable, but most importantly we are called to show the grace and love of Christ. It would be all too easy for Paul to open this letter by shaming the Corinthians, but he doesn't. We might think Paul would skip giving thanks, considering the problems in the church. But instead, he celebrates God's grace among them, focusing on **God's kindness rather than the Corinthians' actions**. Paul's first prayer of thankfulness focuses more on who God is rather than on the qualities of the Corinthian believers.

10. Before dissecting all the flaws in the Corinthian Church, Paul first highlights that God is working among them. How can we be better at approaching situations like Paul did here?

11. Even though the people in Corinth had many flaws, God was still working. How have you seen God working in your own life? What about in the lives of others you know in our church?

12. What qualities of God does Paul point out in this passage?

13. What qualities of God have stood out to you in your life recently?

Day 4 — Today's Theme: Strap In

If you've ever been on a roller coaster, then you know all the thrills it brings, but for the most part, roller coasters end really quickly. This will not be the case with this series! We're going to be studying 1 Corinthians for a while, and it's going to be a great ride, so I'd encourage you to strap in!

In this series, we'll learn how God's Word talks about things like staying united as a church, using spiritual gifts, dealing with sexual immorality, marriage and divorce, church discipline, the rights and freedoms believers have, worship, the importance of the resurrection, and being generous. These are the real-life and spiritual issues Paul was concerned about in the Corinthian church, and they're still important for churches today.

14. What's one part of your faith that you hope to grow in as we study 1 Corinthians?

15. How can your small group build better relationships throughout the course of this study?

16. What does Paul highlight for us that we can better display to each other, during this series?