

1 Corinthians Devotionals

Read 1 Corinthians 1

To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. 1 Corinthians 1:2

What church are you part of? Most of us are pretty quick to tell others about the pastor, music, and or people that we love in our church. We often feel a little odd and perhaps even nervous about attending another church either as a guest or as a potential new attender. As you worship with your church family, you may even feel a bit disconnected from other churches. There are some out there that get lost in the methods and weaken the message, either accidentally or deliberately. However, there are many churches out there truly acting as the church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul writes this letter to a specific church, yet it's a letter for all churches and believers everywhere. This church was in a time of great disagreement and strife, and Paul begins by reminding them of the larger family of faith they represent. They are not THE church, but A church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Everybody everywhere that calls upon and claims the name of the Lord Jesus Christ are a part of the church of God. We are called to be saints together as well as saints with any servant at anytime. Mission trips are a beautiful picture of this relationship, suddenly able to work with complete strangers with different backgrounds, but the same Lord. Do you view your church as THE church? A gospel-preaching church is part of the church of God, but there are more than we often recognize. Look for your opportunity to support and serve other saints and churches. Move away from competition and more towards cooperation, honestly examining your approach towards other churches. We need more churches united in purpose and community for the larger mission of the gospel.

Read 1 Corinthians 2

For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ. 1 Corinthians 2:16

Lots of people have opinions on how God should be operating in this world. The presence of evil or unresponsiveness to their prayers leads them to believe God is either uninvolved, uncaring, or myth. People who claim belief in God without relationship, tend to see God as responsible for doing what the individual deems to be best. A relationship to God through Jesus is what changes all of that. We begin to consider God's purposes beyond the moment.

We can't possibly understand the plans and reasoning of God. Even if He were to take time to explain, the complexity is more than we can grasp. My prayer request doesn't simply affect my life, but the lives of many others who may be uttering similar or conflicting prayers. So we're told instead of trying to instruct God, we are to operate in the mind of Christ. How did Christ operate on earth? He bent himself to the will of the Father. He displayed for us a life lived in complete obedience and submission, both requesting from God and submitting to His will. If

Jesus operated this way, should we expect to live any differently. God doesn't need your opinion. As one friend recently said, God's will for one person touches His will for many others at thousands of different points. I can come honestly before God with my requests, but I must also come with the mind of Christ. **Is the intention of your prayers to direct God or to be directed by God? Do you stop to consider that your prayers may be short-sighted compared to what He's actually willing to do? We must continue in God's Word and prayer so that we are renewing our minds in order to know God's good, pleasing, and perfect will (Romans 12:2). Take time today to examine where your thinking and prayers mirror that of Jesus, and where they do not.**

Read 1 Corinthians 3

So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. 1 Corinthians 3:7

Where do you accomplish the most for God? Perhaps there is a ministry area of the church that you have great influence over as a leader or helper. Do you see your home as your greatest ministry area, working as a blessing to your parents, spouse, or children? It's important that we find our area of impact and that we also recognize the true measure of that impact. Paul points out that the spiritual giants of their church are nothing more than tools in the hands of God. The one who plants or waters the gospel is not the miracle worker. It's God who grows a seed of the gospel into faith and believers into disciples. We have an impact on that work, but we are not the primary cause.

Let's change that opening question a bit: Where do you accomplish the most with God? As I write sermons or prepare counseling sessions, I'm easily tempted to take on too much responsibility for the success or failure of the end product. A good sermon certainly requires study, but also requires prayer. Some of my worst sermons (in my estimation) have been used to bring people to salvation and repentance, while some of my best sermons (my estimation again) have fallen completely flat. Those moments are both a challenge and an encouragement. They're challenging me to think more properly of myself while encouraging me to remember that God is the great Doer! **God has called and gifted every believer to serve Him. But that service has never been intended to be apart from Him. I know that you sometimes attempt to go it alone as a proof of repentance from some recent sin, or to demonstrate your maturity in Christ. True repentance and maturity are not acts that distance us from God, but bring us closer in self-reliance. This one certainly sent me praying today, so look at your personal ministry and examine anywhere you may be attempting ministry accomplishment apart from the glory and power of God Himself.**

1 Corinthians 4

For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. 1 Corinthians 4:15

Online worship services have a place in our society. For many it can be their first interaction with a church to understand what to expect if they begin attending that church. The issue

becomes that some churches are counting their online feed as a separate “campus”, with one church recently boasting 200,000 attend their worship services online. Should these people be considered part of the church? More importantly, should the church be ok with such a low level of contact? We’ve not been called to build attenders, but disciples. The former builds the name of pastors and churches, but the later promotes the name of Jesus and His Kingdom.

The Corinthian church didn’t have the benefit of the Bible as we have it today, and often short-term “teachers” or guides as Paul calls them, passed through these young churches. Some were well-intentioned while others were not, but in either case there was no long-term investment. Paul calls himself a father, but this is not to be taken as a validation of calling pastors by such a term. He’s instead pointing out that he invested in their lives like a father does for his children. He “birthed” them in the gospel and continued on with them in their growth as disciples. He invested the time so they too could bring people to faith and maturity in the gospel. Watch for people who want to guide you without even knowing you. Discipleship is a process of investment. Not only should the mature provide discipleship by the study of God’s Word, but also by being around enough that their example becomes an illustration into the life of the learner. **Are you merely acting as a guide to the learners around you? Have you taken the time to not only tell your kids how to pray, but taught them too? Are you checking in with the people that you’ve led to Christ to encourage them in their faith? God has not called us to temporary contact, but instead to deep investment in people just as Christ did with His own disciples.**

Read 1 Corinthians 5

I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people – not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world. 1 Corinthians 5:9-10

After literally begging me for months, I finally attended a co-workers party while we were in college. I knew alcohol was the main fuel for his parties, but after assuring me there would be Mountain Dew, I finally relented. Driving to his house I was considering how I could potentially be a witness to those in attendance, but it became clear that I would have very little influence. Many were already in full party mode when I arrived and there was constant pressure on me to drink myself stupid. I stayed for two miserable hours and then left and never returned to one of his parties.

Scripture tells us that bad company corrupts good character. However, there is also a call on the believer to find opportunities to associate with bad company for the sake of the gospel. Paul’s making a deeper point that we cannot continue with Christians who are in unrepentant disobedience as if nothing is wrong. It fails to treat sin seriously and allows the disobedient believer to believe things aren’t that bad. But we cannot separate from lost people because they act like lost people. We are promised heaven at salvation, but we aren’t taken straight there. We have a call to encourage other people to place their faith in Christ as well, and the contrast of our lives can wake up the heart of the sinner. **Be sure to examine every worldly situation to determine whether you are influencing or being influenced. God has called us to**

be on guard against sin, while remaining aware of sinners. Your job or school situation may be tough due to the lives of unbelievers around you, but consider that perhaps you are the missionary God has placed among them for salvation. Pray for your patience, your witness, and your influence among the world God has made you part of.

Read 1 Corinthians 6

You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20

Ask people to name their all-time favorite mobile phone, and you may hear them echo my answer: the Motorola Razr. This flip-phone was my upgrade in 2008 and in terms of call quality and ease of use, it remains one of the most popular phones of all time. In 2018, Motorola began to float the idea of re-releasing the Razr as it had originally been produced. Despite the initial excitement they abandoned the plan because while people love nostalgia, no one really wants to go back from a smartphone to a flip-phone. Instead, they'll release a new phone, call it the Razr, and charge \$1500.

While nostalgia may affect our view of phone, cars, and television shows, there is no room for nostalgia over our life before Christ. Chapter 6 challenges us to leave the old life fully behind. Don't settle disputes in the old way (v.7). Don't operate in the old sins that used to define you (v.11). Finally, don't live as if you belong to yourself. We still have choices to make but when we said yes to Jesus, we acknowledged a great price had been paid for us. Jesus didn't just say, "I love you." He proved it. When I resist any temptation to the old life, I'm not simply saying no to the old, but yes to the new! Jesus has made me a new creation and to honor Him for that in my choices just makes sense! **When you think about your struggles with the old life, would you say they come during your moments of greatest closeness with God? Probably not, and that's the opportunity that Satan and his forces are looking for. When you're distant from God, you're slower to remember all God has done for you. To glorify God in your body requires us to live mindfully that we have been purchased at the price of God's own Son. Allow that truth to help you properly see the value of the old life in comparison to the new one.**

Read 1 Corinthians 7

Only let each person lead the life that the Lord has assigned him, and to which God has called him. 1 Corinthians 7:17

My childhood was very transient, never living anywhere more than 3-4 years due to military moves and later financial hardships. As a result, changing houses, friends, and schools was just part of my life and to me seemed normal. So when I met my wife, I couldn't imagine what it was like to grow up in one house while attending one school. Even as an adult, it still feels weird to remain anywhere for a long period of time and often I've found myself considering my future more than my present.

Jim Elliot once said, "Wherever you are, be all there." While he prepared for missionary work in Ecuador, he saw himself on mission at his campus and among his neighbors. He committed himself not to miss what was now while looking towards what may not be. We are each called to live the life which God has placed before us. We're tempted to live someone else's life, but that only brings dissatisfaction and chasing after the wind. God has designed us and called us for personal purposes, which challenges us to stop looking ahead so much that we miss what's around us. **Are you living more passionately for the future than the present? God doesn't forbid us from making plans, as long as those future plans don't distract us from where He has us today. Do you need to repent of discontent? Ask God to give you reminders that He has plans for you everyday. So wherever you are, be all there and give your best for God and others.**

Read 1 Corinthians 8

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make a brother stumble. 1 Corinthians 8:13

Is there an area you've found freedom in Christ that you perhaps didn't feel early in your faith? For me it's a freedom in music. My church in college is where I really began to grow as a disciple through the faithful study of God's Word. However, many in that church deemed any music other than "Christian music" to be an offense to God. As a result, I only listened to Christian music which isn't always the most compelling stuff. At some point I realized that certainly there is music that glorifies sin which I should refrain from, but not every secular song is a glorification of sin. I now listen to a wide variety of music, making choices not based on the perceived righteousness of the music, but the reality of what the music is actually saying.

While freedom in Christ is a great gift, it's not an opportunity to show off our personal convictions. Paul had realized that eating food sacrificed to idols was no big deal because the idols weren't real. It seems he often ate this food in order to be around those who were in idolatry and needed the gospel. But there were other believers who hadn't reached this same conclusion as Paul, and he was more willing to simply avoid that food than to tell another believer they were wrong. **When it comes to personal convictions, it's best that people arrive at those convictions personally. The Pharisees had many personal convictions they attempted to push off on other people as biblical commands. That's a terrible precedent, causing people to focus more on the beliefs of a teacher, which can be in error, than on the inerrant teachings of the Scriptures. Set your personal convictions, but be kind and considerate to other believers who may still be struggling through those decisions. Teach on the freedom of Christ, but don't flaunt it.**

Read 1 Corinthians 9

Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. 1 Corinthians 9:24

Madison, WI was the site of my first half-marathon last fall. I trained very diligently and felt ready to tackle the challenging course. As the day drew closer, I set a goal of completing the

race in 2 hours and 10 minutes. It's not a blistering pace, but it was going to be right on the edge of what I already could do. I crossed the finish line around 2:15 instead and had some disappointment despite being able to finish. While recounting my time to a very experienced marathoner, she encouraged me to take a different approach. "That's your PR!", a term for personal record. Before that race my personal record was zilch.

Paul says in a race only one runner wins the prize, and all the runners run to obtain it. Since salvation is available to all, and not depended on our personal effort, there must be a deeper point from Paul here. Every person who crosses the finish line has run the race. Some were blazing while others just plod along slow and steady. However, if you're running the race against yourself you have a chance to win! Salvation is that we will all hit the finish line in Christ. Sanctification is hitting the finish line well, stretching out towards it for the glory of God. When our faith lacks motivation, Christ will still drag us across that line into eternity because of His promises. But wouldn't you rather run across that line hand-in-hand with Him as you chase the character of Christ in your life? **Many of the races I run have a finishing medal for everyone, but not everyone feels the same as they look at it; some know they gave it their all and some regret the places they slacked off. Shoot for a PR in your faith life this week. Did you struggle in your devotional reading last week? In your prayer life? In sharing your faith? Then pray and seek the power of God that you may run your faith life in such a way as to win the prize!**

Read 1 Corinthians 10

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it. 1 Corinthians 10:13

You have struggled or are struggling with a habitual sin. This is a term I heard in my teens as a new Christian that didn't require much effort for me to understand. Habitual sins are often the leftover sins of our previous lives before Jesus. In some cases, they may have been the very sins that most convinced us of our need for a Savior. Habitual sins can cause a lot of frustration and shame, but you can move past them! While there are several great places for further study in this chapter, I believe verse 13 is the greatest scripture in the battle against temptation. Look at the lessons we learn.

Every temptation is "common". Your sin struggle is not unique to you, though it can often feel that way. In your times of sin struggle, it can feel that God might have given up on you, yet "God is faithful." You cannot "outsin" the grace that God has placed on you through Jesus. Also every temptation is an opportunity for you to win! You may feel the defeat is a foregone conclusion, but God provides a way of escape with every temptation. It might be a scripture, a person, an alternative use of your time...something to all you to escape and endure. My own habitual sin struggles remained because I thought I couldn't win or because I just decided to abuse Jesus' patience and forgiveness. Once I memorized this scripture as well as the meaning behind it, I found myself ready and willing to win against sin. Confess to the Lord that common

temptation you're sick of and your readiness to fight. You CAN have victory over your habitual sin!

Read 1 Corinthians 11

But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:32

The standard of punishment in collegiate athletics is highly subjective. Two schools that seem to commit the same violations don't always receive the same judgment from the governing board of the NCAA. There has been a clear deference to larger schools that make more money in basketball and football receiving lesser penalties than smaller schools who do the same things, but don't bring as much financial benefit to the NCAA. As a result, the same infraction leads some schools to be disciplined while others are harshly condemned.

It's obviously better to be disciplined than condemned. When sin is exposed in the life of a believer, there is no eternal judgment. God guides us to righteousness for our sake and the sake of our service to his kingdom. For the lost person, continued sin continues to pile on their unforgiven guilt. God knows both situations, but only in one does God work for our improvement because of our recognition that we need it! The Christian and non-Christian have an equal need to confess our sins before God. As believers, we know that God may discipline us in order to turn our hearts correctly for the future. The unbeliever may feel they are experiencing no consequences, which may be true as their ultimate consequence will be one for eternity. Ask God to examine and reveal your heart. Be open to the discipline and correction of God, knowing that he does so in order that you may further leave sin behind. Don't be envious of the unbeliever who seems to get away with everything. Their condemnation is an eternal one, so share Christ that they may avoid it as you have!

Read 1 Corinthians 12

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. 1 Corinthians 12:14

If you were to ask me what characterizes a good church, I would encourage you to take a deeper look than normal. When choosing a church you might rightly judge it by the approach to biblical preaching, musical worship, and other Sunday morning elements. Having served in ministry for almost two decades, I'd encourage you to examine what goes on behind the scenes. A good church is one that can operate on a daily basis if something happened to its pastor. Would visitors still be engaged? Would members be cared for in crisis? Do solid procedures govern the facilities and weekly ministries? A church that can't operate well apart from its pastor constant oversight is not a strong church.

The pastor may often be the face of the church, but he is not the success of the church. You love your church because of the people who teach your children, or lead your bible study group, or serve on the worship team. If you stopped for a moment to consider everyone that serves during the course of just one worship service, you'd realize how many more hands are at the wheel **than** you may have previously recognized. What weekly impact are you making on

your church? The body of Christ and the local church does not consist of one member, but of many who work together to ensure we are a church that reaches upward and outward. That's not a one-man job. You may consider your role at church to be a small or insignificant one. But consider what would happen if you stopped serving? Those small gaps in service and unmanned roles begin to add up quickly and suddenly the body feels the pain from those underserved areas. **Pray for God's power and direction over your area of service. If you are not consistently serving in some area of your church, begin to pray for what that area could be and talk to leadership in your church that can direct you to places that we need to fill the gaps. Churches aren't built on the personality of the preacher, but the service of the people.**

Read 1 Corinthians 13

"Love never ends. As for prophecies, tongues, knowledge...it will all pass away. For we know in part, but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. 1 Corinthians 13:8-10

Our previous chapter made us aware of our spiritual gifts. While there are pastors and staff within your church, every person has a role because every person has a spiritual gift: an ability gifted to us by the Holy Spirit at salvation. In some cases, this magnified a previous aspect of your life, or in others it brought a completely new opportunity for service. There are easy gifts that people readily talk about: teaching, administration, hospitality. There are also difficult gifts to understand: tongues, miracles, healing. As a result, some people call themselves "cessationist", meaning they believe that second group of gifts have ceased based on this chapter. This issue is all these gifts are too intermingled to simply throw out the ones you don't understand.

Cessation is a comfortable position, but not an earthly one. Not until the perfect comes (heaven), will the partial pass away (spiritual gifting on earth). In reality, all the spiritual gifts are miraculous demonstrations of the power of God and to deny one would deny them all. Do you know your gifts? Spiritual gift inventories can be a good starting point to determine where your gifts might exist (download from our "Discipleship" link at fbcmp.net). You can also talk to people who know you best and ask for their thoughts. Most importantly, after taking a gifts inventory and talking to others, be sure to discover them in prayer. These gifts were brought by the Holy Spirit and are best discovered and utilized through the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians 14

For God is not a God of confusion but of peace. 1 Corinthians 14:33

This is what we call in seminary, "a hard chapter." Often I write my devotionals pretty quickly after reading, but there was so much here that requires a deeper dive. While there may seem to be random instructions throughout the chapter, verse 33 is the hinge on which it all swings. Earlier, there is a caution against speaking in tongues if it creates confusion within the church. Additionally, there is a command for women to remain silent in the church as well. This seems to be in conflict with his earlier statements in 1 Cor 11:5 about women praying or prophesying in church, clearly not silent acts.

The Corinthian church was filled with new, and at times, arrogant believers. Some saw speaking in tongues, whether real or faked, as their opportunity for attention or leadership. But an untranslated message was of no value. Additionally, some women were speaking up as preachers in a role they were not designated for, which also created confusion in the worship life of the church. God does not bring confusion, but peace. We may have times the scripture is confusing because of our struggle to understand, but the church cannot allow times of worship to become a free-for-all where everyone attempts to make their voice heard. As pastor, I limit people's opportunities to speak in worship apart from pre-planning so that confusion is not allowed to reign by unchecked words. **As you come to worship with your church family, pray for clarity and peace. Pray for humble hearts in those who worship, teach, and preach that their voices and thoughts will not be their greatest priority. Doing so permits confusion and pushes out the peace of God.**

Read 1 Corinthians 15

But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of God that is with me. 1 Corinthians 15:10

"It is what it is" has become a common refrain in our house. As issues creep up whether in our physical home or in some relationship or outside situation, my wife or I will often use this statement. I don't consider it a statement of defeat, but of reality. At times we fail to understand our current reality which prevents us from knowing how to pray and plan to see the situation change. I don't pray for people to get good reports at the doctor, but honest and correct ones. If healing has occurred, we'll praise God. If healing is still needed, we'll beseech God. We have to recognize that it is what it is so we can ask for it to be something new!

Paul's statement is similar: "I am what I am." He considered himself least of the apostles because he came so late to the party, due to the fact he was busy persecuting the church! Of course Paul wishes he had a different story, but it's better to admit the truth of what he was and what he is now. Paul's story allowed him an opportunity to engage with people that Peter, John and others never could. I used to be jealous of others who had a long history of growing up in the church and seemed to know so much more about God than I did. Since then, I've learned to be encouraged to recognize I am what I am and the grace of God covers who I was and empowers me for who I am to be. **Is there any part of your past you hate? Grace in Christ has covered your past to allow it to become a testimony of God's great love and work for every life. Own your testimony for the glory of God, letting others know the grace of God is available for them as they are. They don't have to change...God's grace is the catalyst for true earthly and eternal change.**

Read 1 Corinthians 16

For a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. 1 Corinthians 16:9

My son's high school football career has revealed how much more of the game there was for me to understand. After years of simply watching the ball, he has played along the offensive and defensive line where the real work happens. As his offensive line blocks to open up holes for the ball carrier, I notice they're precarious holes. Yes a path has been opened, but there are large people being held back on both sides and linebackers moving up to the hole to stop the ball carrier, and yet the hole remains. If a player hesitates at the opening because of potential adversaries, the ball never moves forward.

Have you ever prayed for open paths from God? Of course you have, but an open path doesn't always mean an easy path. God may clearly reveal His will through our prayers, but that revelation isn't always easy. Jesus had a wide opening for the cross, but it was a hard place of sacrifice. Paul had many open doors to bring the gospel places, but that didn't reduce the number of people that tried to stop or oppose his message. We sometimes are like that football running back, hesitating when an opening show up because we know a hit might be waiting on the other side. Open doesn't always mean easy, and we should be thankful for that. Paul knew that the door open for his ministry would bring challenges that build his faith and inspire other believers and even win some to Christ who saw Paul's devotion to bring them the message at risk of his own life. **If you're not praying for open doors of God's will in your life, you should. You should also be prayerfully preparing yourself for the adversaries those open doors create as well. Challenges aren't our call to quit, but to endure for the sake of the message and our testimony. Is there any open door you're hesitating at or retreating from due to adversaries and challenges? Consider today what your endurance in those challenges can mean for your faith on the other side and your testimony for Christ among believers and unbelievers alike.**