

Learning To Think Christianly – Follow Up Guide

Key passages: 1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 2:10–13; 3:1–11; 4:6;

Message Summary: The divisions and conflicts in the Corinthian church were not caused by a lack of spiritual gifts, resources, or gifted leaders. At their root was their immaturity in the gospel. Paul wrote 1 Corinthians to establish the church more deeply in the good news of Jesus Christ, showing them how the gospel must shape every part of their life together.

But Ironically, the next section of 1 Corinthians addresses issues that remain sources of debate and division in the church today.

The issues explored in the next major section of 1 Corinthians:

- Sexual behaviour and legal disputes — chapters 5–6
- Marriage and relationships — chapter 7
- Social status and everyday life choices — chapters 8–10
- The roles of men and women — chapter 11:1–16

How can these rather complex passages, that often spark debate between believers be of any help? The answer lies in what Paul is doing in this letter.

Paul is not simply putting out fires or handing down rulings to solve the Corinthians' problems for them. He is teaching them how to think, reason, and work through their differences by applying the basic truths and instructions God has already given them in Jesus Christ.

Paul had already spent a year and a half teaching the Corinthians (Acts 18:11). Their foundation did not come from human wisdom or Paul's personal opinions. God had revealed these truths through the Spirit, and Paul had taught them (1 Corinthians 2:10–13).

Paul also warns them not to “go beyond what is written” (1 Corinthians 4:6). They must not invent their own systems or add their own rules. Instead, they must learn to reason from the foundation they have already received and align themselves with the teaching of Christ in the real situations they face.

Paul shows us how to work through differences without abandoning the essentials of the good news of Jesus and his teaching. He gives us a front row seat for understanding what doing theology in culture looks like.

Paul moves between four key questions as he addresses each issue.

1. What is happening? What is the root issue causing the disagreement or division?

2. What has God done in Christ, and who are we now? Return to the gospel (*kērygma*). What has God accomplished through Jesus' death and resurrection? Who are we now as people who belong to Christ?

3. What basic principles have we already been given? Recall the apostolic teaching (*didachē*). What has Christ taught us about living together as his family? Which first principles of the gospel apply to this situation?

4. What best aligns with these basics and reflects the gospel here? Apply the principles wisely. How can we respond faithfully to Christ's teaching in this particular situation? What response will honour Jesus and advance the gospel?

The aim is not to invent our own beliefs, create more rules, or simply vote for the most popular opinion. It is to learn to think and act in step with the gospel, applying the essentials faithfully while exercising wisdom and flexibility in different situations.

Discuss in Community with Others:

1. How can we hold different personal convictions and still be of the same mind and judgment?
2. How do we distinguish between a core principle of Christ and a secondary conviction that we should not impose on everyone else?
3. How can we tell whether we are defending our own preferences or pursuing what best reflects the gospel of Jesus Christ?