

1 AND 2 CORINTHIANS - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. As you read through the letters to the church in Corinth, do you learn anything significantly different or new about what God is like? What was the historical background for these letters? Do these letters represent a true Christian gentleman trying to deal with the complex problems of the Corinthian church and becoming so involved that he actually suffered as he did so? Does 1 Corinthians 13 sound like the Saul (Paul) who persecuted Christians before the "Damascus road experience"? How could he write 1 Corinthians 13:4,5 and also 2 Corinthians 10:12-13; **11:5,6, 21-33**; 12:1,11? Or was he trying to practice just what he preached? (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)
2. How many letters did Paul write to the church at Corinth? How many times did he visit the church at Corinth? (2 Corinthians 10:9,10; 12:14; 13:1; compare 2 Corinthians 1:23) Can you reconstruct the historical sequence of his letters and his visits? What was the conclusion of this experience with Paul, Titus, and the Corinthians? (2 Corinthians 7:6,12-16) What letter is referred to in 1 Corinthians 5:9? Do we have that letter? Where does he deal with the subject of sexual immorality? Could it be 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1? Compare also 1 Corinthians 1:11; 5:1. Is there a third letter and perhaps, even a fourth? (2 Corinthians 2:3; 7:8,12; 10:9-11) Do these verses sound like he is referring to 1 Corinthians? Does 2 Corinthians 10:1 and following sound like Paul is beginning a new letter? Why do you think the Corinthians would say such things, as in 2 Corinthians 10:10, about their former pastor?
3. What were the problems in Corinth? (1 Corinthians 7:1,2,25; 8:1; 11:17-22; 12:1)
4. How do you reconcile the following verses?
5. How did Paul feel about his personal freedom in Christ? (1 Corinthians 9:1,2,19-22; 10:23,24; Galatians 3:28; 5:1) How does a person who feels he is perfectly free in the gospel act? Do you think Paul would do, eat, wear, or say anything that would offend another church member, especially a new one? (See Romans 14:13-18; Galatians 5:13-15) **Could a person be truly free and still keep the commandments?**
6. Do we really believe love is the fulfillment of all law? (Romans 13:8,10) If we love God and love our fellow men, have we really kept all the commandments? (Matthew 22:34-40; Mark 12:28-34; Luke 10:25-28) Would it be safe to live forever next door to someone who could be described by the words of 1 Corinthians 13? Would it really be safe for God to let into heaven anyone who could not be described by those words, or at least wants to be, and chooses to be truly loving?
7. Considering Paul's behavior toward the Corinthian church, how should a truly mature Christian behave toward others? **Would he be willing to limit his own freedom rather than cause another child of God to stumble?** How many things did Jesus do to meet people where they were?
8. How many of the following passages do you consider inspired? Are they all equally inspired?

- a. “For married people I have a command which is not my own but the Lord’s...” (1 Corinthians 7:10, *GNB*; Compare Matthew 5:32; 19:9; Mark 10:11,12; Luke 16:18)
- b. “To the others I say (I, myself, not the Lord):...” (1 Corinthians 7:12, *GNB*)
- c. “Now, concerning what you wrote about unmarried people: I do not have a command from the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord’s mercy is worthy of trust.” (1 Corinthians 7:25, *GNB*)
- d. “That is my opinion, and I think that I too have God’s Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 7:40, *GNB*)

Why would Paul make such statements? In this chapter, was Paul speaking truth that is consistent with the rest of Scripture?

9. Do you agree with Paul when he said, “For I am the least of all the apostles—I do not even deserve to be called an apostle...”? (1 Corinthians 15:9, *GNB*. Compare 2 Corinthians 11:5; Ephesians 3:8; 1 Timothy 1:15,16) How would this statement compare with Ellen White’s statement that she is a “lesser light”? (*4RH* 486:2;1; *CM* 125; *Ev* 257) Should these two be given the lowest positions among inspired writers?
10. On what basis did Paul suggest that we might “speak in tongues”? Is this experience, in which no one else could understand what was being said, (1 Corinthians 14:2) the same as the Pentecostal experience in which “all of us hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things that God has done!”? (*Acts* 2:11, *GNB*) How much speaking in tongues would take place if we insisted that “everything must be done in a proper and orderly way”? (1 Corinthians 14:40 *GNB*; compare 1 Corinthians 14:33); if we “would rather speak five words that can be understood, in order to teach others, than speak thousands of words in strange tongues”? (1 Corinthians 14:19, *GNB*); if “two or three at the most should speak, one after the other, and someone else must explain what is being said”? (1 Corinthians 14:27, *GNB*); if “the women should keep quiet in the meetings. They are not allowed to speak”? (1 Corinthians 14:34, *GNB*); if we always recognized that “best of all, however, is the following way. I may be able to speak the languages of human beings and even of angels, but if I have no love, my speech is no more than a noisy gong or a clanging bell”? (1 Corinthians 12:31-13:1, *GNB*); if we recognize that the Spirit of God is the Spirit of truth (*John* 14:17; 15:26; 16:13) so that everything said must be weighed and tested by the truth (Scripture)?; and if we realize that the gifts of the Spirit will lead to “self-control”? (*Galatians* 5:23)
11. What would happen to the church if all the members were constantly striving to behold the Lord and were being changed as described in 2 Corinthians 3:18?
12. What does it mean to carry within our bodies the death of Jesus? (2 Corinthians 4:10)
13. Is our message still the same as Paul’s, “that God was making all human beings his friends through Christ”? (2 Corinthians 5:19, *GNB*) How would this affect our day-by-day living?
14. Why did Paul say, “For God loves the one who gives gladly”? (2 Corinthians 9:7, *GNB*)
15. Who do you think were the “very special so-called ‘apostles’ of yours!”? (2 Corinthians 11:5, *GNB*)

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