

RAY C. STEDMAN

Adventuring Through the Bible

A Comprehensive Guide to the Entire Bible

New Enhanced Edition



Adventuring Through the Bible

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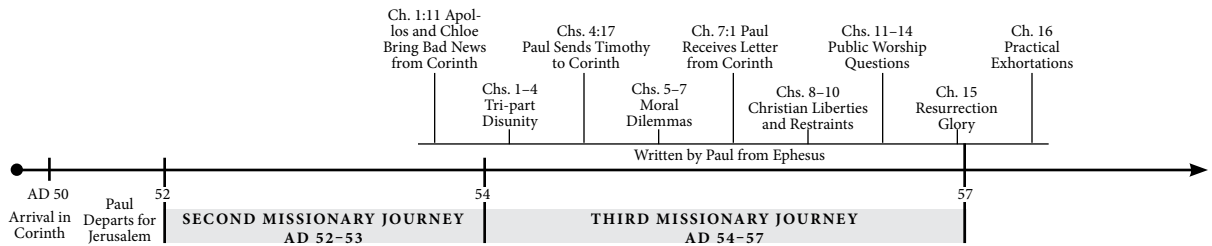
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The Epistle to the Twenty-First Century

Our culture is devoted to sensualism and pleasure. Nothing is too extreme, nothing is censored, nothing is forbidden. It's also an information-oriented society, devoted to the rapid transmission and endless analysis of events, ideas, and philosophies. We live in a postmodern, post-Christian age—wide-open sensuality in our entertainment media, rampant prostitution, and pervasive pornography.

Paul's first epistle to the Corinthians captures the problems and temptations we face as Christians in our own culture. Of all the cities we find in the New Testament, Corinth most closely resembles American culture today.

Corinth was a resort city, the Mecca of sensuality and pleasure seeking in the first century world. Located on the Peloponnesian peninsula, it was a beautiful city of palms and magnificent buildings. It also drew the great thinkers and speakers of Greece who would gather in the public forums and talk endlessly about ideas and issues—from politics to philosophy, from economics to metaphysics.

Corinth was also devoted to the

worship of the goddess of sex. In the city there was a temple dedicated to the Greek goddess of love, Aphrodite. Part of the worship of the Aphrodite was the performance of certain religious ceremonies involving sexual activity. The approximate ten thousand priestesses, who served in the temple, were actually prostitutes. The city was openly given over to the most depraved forms of sexual activity. Unrestrained eroticism was not only tolerated, but approved by the leaders and opinion makers of Corinthian society.

Paul in Corinth

Into this city came the apostle Paul with the gospel message.

You remember the story from the book of Acts. Paul had traveled down through Thessalonica and was driven out of that city

CHAPTER OBJECTIVES

The goal of this chapter is to demonstrate the remarkable relevancy of the teachings of 1 Corinthians to our lives today. The pagan, hedonistic culture of first century Corinth was remarkably similar to the culture of our own twenty-first century world. Paul offers sound advice and penetrating insight to those who are living in morally and spiritually corrosive times.

by an uprising of the Jews against him. From there he passed briefly through the little city of Berea and then to Athens. Walking through Athens, he noted the many temples to pagan gods, and he eventually preached to the Athenians on Mars Hill. When he left Athens, he came across the little isthmus where Corinth was located. There he stayed about a year and a half to two years, preaching the gospel and making tents for a living.

In Corinth, Paul met Aquila and Priscilla, a Jewish Christian missionary couple originally from Pontus, a region along the north coast of Asia Minor along the Black Sea (modern Turkey). They had recently come from Rome after the Roman emperor Claudius expelled the Jews in AD 49. Priscilla and Aquila—the most famous couple in the New Testament—are mentioned in Acts 18:2–3, 18–19, and 26; Romans 16:3–4; 1 Corinthians 16:19; and 2 Timothy 4:19.

Priscilla and Aquila were tentmakers, so Paul stayed with them and joined them in their tent-making business while he formed a church in their home. Soon the gospel spread throughout the city of Corinth. Many Corinthians, on hearing the gospel, believed and were baptized and became members of church in Corinth. Aquila and Priscilla left Corinth to accompany Paul on his missionary journey, and later settled in

their home region of Pontus (so they were no longer in Corinth when Paul wrote this letter).

As you read Paul's letter, you discover that the Corinthian church had become a problem-plagued church—probably the biggest problem church in the New Testament! Yet the Corinthian church also had much to commend it. As Paul begins his letter he reminding them of their calling to be sanctified and holy, set apart for God's service:

To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2–3).

Paul goes on to write about the great themes of the Christian faith, which the Corinthians had believed and put into practice. He notes that they had received Christ by faith and grace, and had entered into a new life. Paul then comes to a key



statement—the statement around which every other point in the letter is built:

God, who has called you into fellowship with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, is faithful (1:9).

That is the central truth of the Christian life: We are called to share the life of the Son of God. Everything that follows in this letter focuses around this verse and the concept of fellowship with Jesus Christ.

The Outline of 1 Corinthians

The letter to the Corinthians falls into two major divisions: chapters 1 through 11 deal with what we might call “the carnalities,” and chapters 12 through 16 focus on what Paul calls “the spiritualities.” The carnalities include everything that is wrong with the Corinthian church. The spiritualities include everything the church needs to do to correct what is wrong.

As you read this letter, you will see not only the problems of the Corinthian church, but will also recognize issues that afflict the church today. Like the first-century Corinthians, we suffer from all the carnalities—at least in principle. And in order to set our lives straight, we need the spiritualities. First Corinthians is directed to believers living in a sex-saturated atmosphere, dominated by the constant ebb and flow of ideas and information. It is directed to Christians who are living in the midst of pressures and temptations of the kind you and I face every day.

In the first section, Paul identifies and addresses three major problem areas in this church: First, there is the problem of divisions;

second, there is the problem of scandals; and third, he answers certain questions the Corinthian Christians have asked him about.

The Carnalities—What Is Wrong with the Corinthian Church?

The first problem—divisions among believers—was a direct result of the surrounding culture infecting the church. And this is a problem we contend with today. You hear it again and again: “The church is lagging behind! The church is out of step! We need to catch up with the times in which we live!”

While I would never want the church to be stodgy and resistant to change, I would be even more horrified to see the church become indistinguishable from the surrounding world. When a church begins to reflect the spirit of the age in which it lives, it ceases to reflect Jesus Christ. It ceases to be sanctified, set apart, and distinct from the culture. When that happens, the church loses its power—and that’s what had happened to the church at Corinth.

The Corinthian Christians had allowed divisions over human philosophies to come into the church. They had gathered around certain religious leaders and now were divided into factions, saying, “I follow so-and-so, and his insights are better and truer than the foolishness you and your leader believe!”

Sects, factions, and cliques had arisen. Some in the Corinthian church saw themselves as followers of Peter, and some as followers of Apollos. Some gathered themselves around the teachings of Paul himself. There was even an exclusive little group who claimed to be the purest of all—who said they followed Christ

THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

THE CARNALITIES—WHAT IS WRONG (1 CORINTHIANS 1–11)

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alone. They were the worst troublemakers of all because of their spiritual pride.

Paul begins by showing that human wisdom is useless. He sets it aside completely and says that human insights are always partial and untrustworthy. The Corinthians will never learn anything, he insists, until they give themselves to the wisdom of God:

For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe (1:21).

The deep issues of God and the life of the spirit cannot be settled by a popularity contest or philosophical debate, they can only be settled by the Word of God. The church will never solve its problems as long as it pursues this writer, that teacher, this pastor, or that speaker. Insight comes from the Spirit of God speaking to us through His Word.

I would be horrified if you were to read this book and then go around quoting Ray Stedman, holding me up as the final authority. This book is intended to be a guide and a help for your own personal study of God's Word. If you emerge from our adventure together through the Bible better equipped to go out and say, "This is what the Bible says about that," then I will be pleased.

The apostle Paul answers the factions and divisions in Corinth by confronting the Corinthian church with the message of the cross—the message that presents the cross of Christ as the instrument by which God cuts off all human wisdom. This does not mean that human wisdom is worthless, at least in its own narrow realm. But history shows conclusively that human wisdom is useless

in solving the deepest problems of human beings. The wisdom of man has never been able to prevent war, end poverty, or resolve the troubling questions of human meaning and existence.

In fact, human wisdom views God's wisdom as foolishness. As the apostle Paul observes:

For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. For it is written:

"I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate" (1:18–19).

When we understand this, we realize that we will never begin to learn until we first learn that we do not know anything. When we come to appreciate the message of the cross, we understand that God took His own Son, a completely perfect human being, made like us in every way, and nailed Him up to die. That is the message of the cross. That is why it looks so foolish to the natural man and woman.

The cross of Christ operates on a totally different principle than worldly wisdom. It is like a saw that rips across the grain of the wisdom of this world. Once we understand and accept that fact, says Paul, we begin to discover the secret, hidden wisdom that unwraps the questions of life and answers them one by one. We begin to understand ourselves and see why this world is the way it is and where it is heading and why all the confusion and problems of life exist.

Paul is saying, in effect, "I won't waste

time arguing with you about the philosophies of Socrates or Plato or Aristotle or any other human being. They have their place. But when it comes to solving the deep-seated problems of human nature, there is only one wisdom that has the answers, and that's the message of the cross."

God designed us to learn, inquire, and wonder, but He never intended that all our knowledge should come from worldly sources. He designed us to learn from Him, to seek our answers from Him. And He provided the answers in the form of revelation in Scripture. Our knowledge must have a right foundation, so He constantly calls us back to the principle He laid down in the Old Testament:

The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding (Prov. 9:10).

That is the true source of knowledge and wisdom. And this is where we must begin.

The cause of the divisions in the Corinthian church was not due to differences of human points of view. No, you can have many points of view on many issues in a church and still have unity and fellowship. As Paul makes clear in 1 Corinthians 3, the cause of these divisions was carnality, pride, and the fleshly desire to have preeminence and to be praised. Paul tells them that as long as carnality is at work in their lives, they will remain spiritual infants. They will never grow (see 1 Cor. 3:1–5).

All we do in the flesh is wood, hay, and stubble; fit only to be burned (see 1 Cor. 3:11–15). All the praise we crave and seek from others is worthless—no, it's worse than worthless, for when we crave and seek it, we

bring division and destruction to God's work. His judgment is true and it is relentless; He is not the least bit impressed by the works we do in the flesh. Only what is done in the Spirit will last. The message of the cross must come in and cut off the flesh before we can experience growth and maturity. Until that happens, division and conflict will reign in the church and in our lives.

Beginning in chapter 5, Paul turns to the matter of scandals in the church. These were, of course, the result of the carnality of the Corinthian members. Paul bluntly confronts the sexual immorality in the church and cites a specific case—a case that was being openly regarded with acceptance and tolerance. Paul's response: This sin must be dealt with. "Expel the wicked man from among you," he writes in 5:13, citing a principle from Deut. 17:7; 19:9; and elsewhere. Whenever sin breaks out openly and there is no repentance, the church must act in discipline—or the sin may infect the entire church. The Corinthian church had failed to act. As a result, immorality was eating away at the heart of the body.

Here again we see a parallel to the church today. It is frightening to see certain leaders in some churches openly advocating sexual immorality, encouraging young people to sleep together and live together, and commending people for the ministry who are living in openly immoral relationships. Today, as in first-century Corinth, we are surrounded by a culture that accepts immorality as normal, even healthy. But we in the church must stand for God's truth because violation of God's laws of sexual conduct are, in fact, a violation of the humanity of the individuals involved.

It is not just the wrath of God that burns

when there is sexual sin. The love of God burns just as brightly. God loves us too much to allow us to hurt ourselves and each other by abusing one another sexually and using each other for mere self-gratification. It is not only God's law, but also God's love for us, that is transgressed when we sin sexually against one another.

If we want young people to keep themselves sexually pure, we must help them to understand that sex is more than just a matter of "thou shalt not." They need to understand that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. The Son of God Himself dwells in us, and we are never out of His presence. Everywhere we go, He is with us and in us. Everything we do is done in the presence of the Son of God Himself.

Would we drag Jesus into a house of prostitution or into the presence of pornography? What a horrible thought! If our young people can learn to practice His presence and consciously take Him wherever they go, they will be better equipped to withstand the pressures and temptations that come their way.

Answering Their Questions

Beginning with chapter 7, Paul turns to the four major questions the Corinthians had written to him about—marriage, meat that was offered to idols, women's hats, and the Lord's Table.

First, the Corinthians asked Paul if it was right to be married in view of the pressures that surrounded them. They wondered if, perhaps, they should give themselves completely to the service of God in an ascetic lifestyle. Although Paul himself was

FOUR CONCERNS IN THE CHURCH AT CORINTH

Marriage
Meat offered to idols
Women's hats
The Lord's Table

not married, he told them that it is best, if possible, for men and women to be married, that marriage is a perfectly proper way of life. Each man should have his own wife and each woman her own husband.

Paul goes on to say that it is also good to have a single life, if God grants this as a special calling to an individual. Singleness, too, is a perfectly honorable way of life. Marriage is not a necessity, though it is often an advantage. But marriage can also be a problem. Paul deals thoughtfully with the question of marriage.

Second, the Corinthians asked Paul about meat that had been offered to idols. They were worried about offending God and the conscience of a weaker Christian in this matter. Although we are no longer troubled by the problem of whether we ought to eat meat offered to idols, we still confront similar issues. We have Christian taboos about many issues that are not directly addressed or stated to be evil in Scripture: smoking, social drinking, dancing, entertainment media, and many other issues.

It's interesting that Paul was an apostle, with all the authority of an apostle, but he absolutely refused to make up rules about these matters. Why? Because weak, immature

Christians always want somebody to put them under the law. But if you put Christians under law, then they are no longer under grace, and Paul knew that Christians must learn to deal with what he calls “the law of liberty.”

Paul links “the law of liberty” with two other laws. One he calls the “law of love”: that is, the law that says, “I may be free to do it, but if I put a stumbling block in somebody else’s path, I won’t do it.” This limitation is not imposed by my conscience but by another’s conscience—and by my Christian love for that person. I set aside my rights in order to avoid offending the person whose conscience is more legalistic or fragile.

The other law Paul appeals to is the “law of expediency.” Everything is legal and lawful, but not everything is helpful or expedient. There are a lot of things I *could* do, and many directions I could go as a Christian, but if I spend all my time doing the things I am free to do, I no longer have any time to do the things I am called to do. That is not helpful or expedient.

Third, the Corinthians asked Paul about a concern over women’s hats. Hats? Yes, hats! It may sound silly today in our culture, but it was a big issue at that time and place—and not as silly as you might think. This particular church had a problem because of the local culture. If a woman was seen bareheaded in Corinth, she was immediately identified as a prostitute, one of the temple priestesses, and that’s why Paul writes to these people in Corinth and says, “You women, when you come to church, put a hat on! It is a sign that you are a Christian woman subject to your husband” (my paraphrase; see 1 Cor. 11:3–16).

The fourth problem the Corinthians asked about concerned the Lord’s Table. There were certain individuals partaking of the Lord’s Supper in a mechanical way, seeing no meaning and having no insight into what they were doing. So the apostle had to show them that everything the Christian does must be done with a sincere heart and a clear understanding of the meaning of the Lord’s Supper.

Correcting the Carnalities

Beginning with chapter 12, Paul deals with the great spiritualities, which are the correction to the problems at Corinth. These problems could not be corrected by human effort, but must begin with recognition of the ministry of the Holy Spirit in a believer’s life. Notice that chapter 12 begins with that very word, *spiritualities*:

Now about spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be ignorant (12:1).

The English translation here uses two words, “spiritual gifts,” but in the original Greek language, there is only one word here, and it is a word that might literally be interpreted “spiritualities.”

Paul says he does not want the Corinthians to be uninformed concerning the spiritualities. Why not? Well, because the spiritual realm, even though invisible, is the realm of ultimate reality. The spiritualities make all other realms of life work. It is the presence of the Spirit that makes Christ real to us, and the gifts of the Spirit—the spiritualities—are designed to make the body of Christ function effectively. As the church

performs its function, it reaches out and affects society on every side, carrying out the eternal plan of God.

We have missed so much of the richness of the provision of Christ for His church. We know so little about the gifts of the Spirit. What is your gift? Do you know? Have you discovered it? Are you using it? Or do you need the same spiritual prodding that Paul gave Timothy:

For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands (2 Tim. 1:6).

The body of Christ functions by the exercise of its gifts, and every Christian has at least one gift. There are many different gifts, and we do not all have the same gift. That's why we need each other in the body of Christ: No two Christians are alike, and no one Christian is expendable. If one Christian fails to exercise his or her gifts, the entire body of Christ suffers.

Chapter 12 is a beautiful chapter, clearly showing us that we must not despise or offend one another because of a difference in gifts. One of the most beautiful—and convicting—passages in this chapter is the passage that clearly defines the church as a body made up of many indispensable parts:

God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be. If they were all one part, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, but one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, "I don't need you!" And the head cannot say to the feet, "I don't need you!" On the contrary, those parts of the body that seem to be weaker

are indispensable, and the parts that we think are less honorable we treat with special honor. And the parts that are unpresentable are treated with special modesty, while our presentable parts need no special treatment. But God has combined the members of the body and has given greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other (1 Cor. 12:18–25).

As we live in unity, carrying out our functions in the church and in the world by exercising our spiritualities, or spiritual gifts, in the power of the Holy Spirit, the world will be rocked on its heels by the force of our love and our witness. The proof that God is real and active in the world is the proof that we demonstrate in our lives.

We demonstrate God's reality and power when we have learned the secret set forth in the next chapter—the famous love chapter of the New Testament, 1 Corinthians 13. The most startling aspect of Paul's description of love is the way he defines love; not as an emotion, but as a decision, or act of the will:

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails (13:4–8).

In chapter 14, Paul takes up another problem that has historically caused much confusion in the church: the misuse of one of the gifts—the gift of tongues. The false use

of tongues is as much of a problem in today's society as it was when Paul addressed it in this chapter. To correct these abuses, Paul attempts to focus this section on the importance of the gift of prophecy. It is always amazing to me how many people read this chapter and completely miss the apostle's point.

The purpose of the chapter is to encourage those with the gift of prophecy to exercise it. But you hardly ever hear anything about that today. These days, we hear a lot about tongues but very little about prophecy. Paul was trying to play down the gift of tongues and play up the gift of prophecy. The gift of prophecy is simply the ability to explain and expound the Scriptures, to speak comfort, edification, and encouragement from the Scriptures.

Chapter 15 places great emphasis on the resurrection, and for good reason. What would any of these truths be worth if we did not have the living, resurrected Christ to make them real? The resurrection is the great pivot upon which the entire Christian faith turns. Without the resurrection Christianity collapses. If Jesus Christ was not raised from the dead, writes Paul, "your faith is futile; you are still in your sins" (15:17). Not only that, but if Christ is not raised, "we are to be pitied more than all men" (15:19)—we are fools.

But praise God, the resurrection was a real event. It did not occur in someone's

imagination; it occurred in history. Jesus is alive! That's why Paul can close chapter 15 with these words of confidence and encouragement:

My dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain (15:58).

Chapter 16 is Paul's postscript in which he catches up on certain matters that the church needed to know about, such as the need to take a regular collection, the commending of certain missionaries, Paul's personal plans, and a few last-moment words of encouragement:

Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love (16:13–14).

Like the first century Corinthians, we live in a world of pressures, temptations, and constant spiritual and moral battles. But you and I have everything we need to win the victory. We have the spiritualities of God, and these are more than enough to make us superconquerors over the carnalities of the flesh and Satan.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS



Wherever you find God at work, you find diversity balanced with unity. You find many spiritual gifts, but one Spirit. You find many kinds of service, but one Lord over them all. “There are different kinds of working,” Paul writes, “but the same God works all of them in all men” (1 Cor. 12:6). God the Father is in charge of the workings—and the results.

Our God is active and innovative. He is moving in these days—and He is moving through His people whom He has gifted through His Spirit.

The gifts of the Spirit are abilities or graces that are supernaturally given by God’s Spirit to enable us to fulfill the mission and purpose of the church. Spiritual gifts should not be confused with skills or natural talents, nor should they be confused with the fruit of the Spirit (see Gal. 5:22–23), which are nine character qualities manifested by those whose lives are controlled by the Holy Spirit.

We should never assume that the only place we can use our gifts is within the walls of the church. Yes, these gifts were given to edify (build up) the church—but they were also given for us to use in our homes, neighborhoods, workplaces, and wherever we live our lives. Nobody is left out; everybody receives a gift. Many believers have not discovered their gifts, but all believers have gifts nonetheless.

The New Testament lists at least twenty distinct spiritual gifts: Apostle, Prophet, Evangelist, Pastor-Teacher, Service, Exhortation, Giving, Leadership, Mercy, Helps, Administration, Wisdom, Knowledge, Discernment, Prophecy, Tongues, Interpretation, Faith, Healing, and Miracles. The gifts of the Spirit are listed for us primarily in 1 Corinthians 12, Romans 12, and Ephesians 4; 1 Peter 4 also makes reference to them.

Here is a list of the gifts of the Spirit and where they are found in the New Testament:

ROMANS 12:6-8	1 CORINTHIANS 12:8-10	1 CORINTHIANS 12:28	EPHESIANS 4:11	1 PETER 4:11
Prophet	Words of Wisdom	Apostle	Apostle	Speaking the Words of God Service
Service	Word of Knowledge	Prophet	Prophet	
Teacher	Faith	Teacher	Evangelist	
Exhortation	Gifts of Healing	Miracles	Pastor- Teacher	
Giving	Miracles	Healing		
Leadership	Prophecy	Helps		
Mercy	Discernment	Administration		
	Tongues	Tongues		
	Interpretation of Tongues			

1 CORINTHIANS

THE EPISTLE TO THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY

1. Read 1 Corinthians 1:1–17. Paul quickly jumps into the problem of divisions in the Corinthian church. Why are factions and divisions in the church so damaging to the cause of Christ?

Has division ever been an issue in your church? What do you think was the cause of that division? How did it affect you and your faith? If you were grading your church on being “perfectly united in mind and thought” (1:10), what grade would you give it? What grade would you give your own efforts to live in harmony and unity with other Christians?

2. Read 1 Corinthians 1:18–2:15. How does the culture around you define wisdom? What does worldly “wisdom” produce? Wealth? Power? Fame? Success? How does God’s wisdom differ from the “wisdom” of the world?

Paul writes that “the foolishness of God is wiser than man’s wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man’s strength . . . God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong” (1:25, 27). Why would God choose the weak and foolish things of the world to shame the strong? Have you ever seen this principle at work in your own life or in the world around you? Explain your answer.

3. Read chapter 3. Are the divisions in the Corinthian church caused merely by differences of opinion—or is there some other reason? Explain.

What is the solid food Paul wants the Corinthian believers to feed on? How would spiritual solid food help to heal the divisions in the Corinthian church?

4. Beginning in chapter 5, Paul turns to the matter of the scandals in this church, which were the result of carnality among the Corinthian believers. When you learn of sin in your family or your church, do you tend to respond with too much harshness or too much leniency? Which sins are the most difficult for you to confront? (See also 6:9–11). Do you think your church tends to be too tough on sin—or too soft?

Read 1 Corinthians 5:6–8. What does Paul fear will happen to the Corinthian church if the church does not deal with sin?

5. Read 1 Corinthians 6:12–20. The author writes, “If we want young people to keep themselves sexually pure, we must help them to understand that sex is more than just a matter

of ‘thou shalt not.’ They need to understand that their bodies are the temples of the Holy Spirit. . . . Everything we do is done in the presence of the Son of God Himself.” What does Paul mean when he says that our bodies are a temple of the Holy Spirit? If you want to honor God with your body (see 6:20), what do you need to stop doing? What do you need to start doing?

6. Read chapter 12. Of the spiritual gifts listed in this passage, which gifts have you received? Which gifts do you wish you had, but don’t? Do you think it’s right to ask God for specific gifts? How effectively are you using your spiritual gifts? What could you do to be a more effective steward of the gifts God has given you?

Focus especially on 12:12–13. How does a proper understanding of the diversity of spiritual gifts contribute to greater unity in the church, the body of Christ? What should our attitude be toward people whose gifts differ from ours?

Personal Application:

7. Read 1 Corinthians 1:4–9. These verses focus on an attitude of thanksgiving. Do these verses describe your attitude? Why or why not? What are you most thankful for? Does Paul’s attitude challenge you to demonstrate more gratitude to God?

8. Paul says in chapter 3 that we are building our lives on a foundation—and that foundation consists of either gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay, or straw. How strong is your spiritual foundation? What steps can you take this week to strengthen your spiritual foundation?

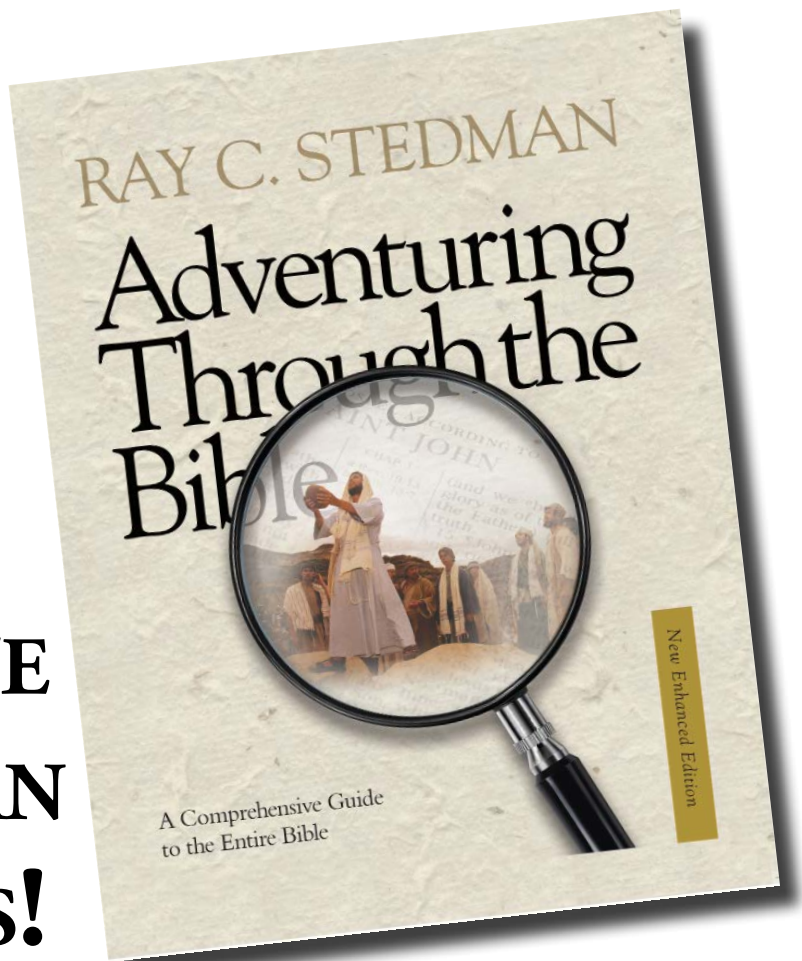
9. From chapter 3: Do you consider yourself a spiritual infant or a spiritual adult, or somewhere in between? Are you able to eat spiritual solid food or are you still only able to consume spiritual milk? Explain your answer.

10. Read chapter 13. Is the love described in this chapter a feeling or a choice? Why is this “love chapter” such an apt description of the character of Christ?

Who is the person in your life who comes closest to living out this kind of love? Which aspect of this kind of love comes natural to you? Which do you need to consciously work on? What changes can you make in your attitude and behavior so that you will be a better example of 1 Cor. 13 love? What steps can you take this week to make those changes and become a more loving and Christ-like person?

PLEASE NOTE: For an in-depth exploration of the epistles of 1 and 2 Corinthians, read *Letters to a Troubled Church: 1 and 2 Corinthians* by Ray C. Stedman (Discovery House Publishers, 2007)

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