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- Background
 - Written while Paul was in Ephesus (16:19).
 - A church was meeting at the house of Priscilla and Aquila (16:19), so this writing probably did not occur during Paul's first visit to Ephesus (Acts 18:18 – 21), but a little later (Acts 19:1 – 10), close to 54 AD.
 - Other people mentioned:
 - Sosthenes (1:1): Acts 18:17, a ruler of the synagogue in Corinth who, apparently, became a Christian.
 - Chloe (1:11): Mentioned only here.
 - Cephas (1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5): Peter (see John 1:42). Cephas is mentioned also in Galatians 2:9.
 - Crispus (1:14): Acts 18:8, another synagogue ruler who became a Christian
 - Gaius (1:14): The Gaius mentioned in Acts 19:29 was a Macedonian, so probably not the same person. The Gaius mentioned in Romans 16:23, since Romans was written from Corinth, probably is the same person. The Gaius mentioned in 3 John 1 may be either one, or a third Gaius.
 - Stephanus (1:16, 16:15, 16:17): Leader of another faithful household who may have brought the news of the disasters of the Corinthian church and may have been in the group that carried this letter.
 - Apollos (1:12, 3:4 – 6, 3:22, 4:6, 16:12): Described in Acts 18:24 – 19:1. As a powerful teacher, he developed a set of perhaps unwanted followers (1:12). Paul asserted that he and Apollos were not in competition, but harmony (3:3 – 4, 3:22, 4:6). Apollos was not under Paul's authority (16:12).
 - Barnabas (9:6): Although Barnabas and Paul had parted company before Paul went to Corinth, the Corinthians must have, at least, known his reputation if not his person.
 - Timothy (4:17, 16:10): Timothy may have been in the group that carried this letter. Timothy was known to the church in Corinth (Acts 18:1 – 5).
 - Fortunatus (16:17): mentioned only here
 - Achaicus (16:17): mentioned only here.
 - Aquila and Priscilla (16:19): They were a part of the congregation in Corinth until they moved with Paul to Ephesus (Acts 18:1 – 3, 18 – 19).
- Theme: Repairing the encroachments of culture
- (1:1 – 9) The objective. In the subsequent sections, each cultural encroachment has damaged some part of the objective. Paul exposed the problem areas because the Corinthian Christians had been blinded by their cultural baggage. Then Paul refocuses the objective.
 - (1) Summoned to be sent because God wanted it. Paul does not claim superiority or achievement.
 - (2) Despite the many problems described in the letter, Paul addresses them as the church at Corinth, as those dedicated to godly purposes, as holy ones, just like faithful people everywhere who stake their lives on the essential quality of Jesus. As the letter unfolds, these characteristics are cited again as attitudes that had been overshadowed by cultural norms, that needed to be resurrected.

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- (3) As in almost every letter, the author wishes that a gracious nature and peace will characterize each one of them. Cultural norms had begun to overshadow these objectives, resulting in the problems described in this letter.
- (4 – 8) Paul lists the characteristics of the Christians at Corinth for which he thanked God continually. Despite the problems described in the following chapters, Paul sees in them:
 - A gracious nature given by Jesus.
 - Enriched in speaking and knowing the truth.
 - Living demonstrations of the power of God.
 - An eager hope.
- (9) Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians that God is faithful, that our connectedness is by the promise of God, not by human effort such as is required for success in our culture.
- (1:10 – 4:21) Division
 - (1:10 – 13) Justifying separation
 - The history of the world is a story of ethnocentrism. That division was carried into the church through culture was to be expected.
 - Divisiveness is defeated by (see the list of qualities in Paul's objective above)
 - No claim to superiority or achievement (1). Division happens when individuals consider themselves superior.
 - Sanctified saints because of the quality of Jesus (2). If the group keeps getting smaller, the problem is the group.
 - Gracious character and peace (3). Those attributes overcome division.
 - Enriched by Jesus (5). Trust God that we will exceed our best.
 - Living demonstrations of the power of God (6). Division gives the gospel a bad name.
 - An eager hope (7). Positive expectations do not accept division.
 - (1:14 – 17) Focusing on practices
 - People have always had trouble with the abstract. The concrete is much easier.
 - The descent into ritualism is defeated by focusing on the aforementioned qualities, all of which depend on the power of God, not the best I can do.
 - (1:18 – 25) Worshipping complexity
 - When persecution ended in the fourth century and Christianity became fashionable, the church immediately turned to complexity resulting in division. Emperor Constantine called a convention to hear the arguments of Christian theology that were causing economic problems in the empire. After hearing the arguments, he declared the arguments to be without merit, far too complex for the common man to understand. He ordered that they choose compromise or death.
 - Complexity feeds authoritarianism.
 - The aforementioned qualities seek simplicity so that the power of God may be clearly seen, not obscured by the posturing of men.
 - (1:26 – 2:5) Valuing worldly success
 - Success in this world is not a bad thing unless it is valued above the simplicity of the Word.
 - Talented speakers have led Christianity since the second century.

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- Financial success (displayed in buildings and salaries) validates a denomination.
- The aforementioned qualities showcase the message, not the messenger.
- (2:6 – 16) Overlooking the obvious: God must reveal Himself.
 - (8) Case in point: if we are so smart, why was Jesus not accepted while on earth?
 - (11) Just as we do not know what is going on inside another person, we need to let God reveal Himself.
 - (14) The “natural man” is the best (not the worst) this world has to offer. If we get caught up in the best of this world, division will happen.
 - Spiritual: Not the modern definition, which is nebulous, but “a product of spirits.” Whether this is good or bad depends on the spirit (Ephesians 6:12, spiritual hosts of wickedness). To be spiritual (person, gift, food, body), the noun is to be controlled by a non-physical being. In this paragraph, one who is spiritual is one who is controlled by the Spirit of God. Those not controlled by the Spirit of God (assume the indwelling Spirit) will cause division (Jude 19).
 - (7) “For our glory”: The plan, from before Creation, has always been character development. Many other objectives have been asserted, creating division.
 - Many religious people claim that their teachings are “from the Spirit,” meaning from the Bible. However, this paragraph does not reference a written document but wisdom (6 – 7), character (7), and revelation (10). The Bible is one part of revelation. As seen in history, many divisions have occurred with both sides claiming to stand for the Scriptures. The other two activities of the Spirit are the proof of the revelation (see first paragraph: living demonstrations of the power of God).
 - Culturally, while proof is necessary for all others facets of life, religion has developed an immunity. Many people come into the church without an expectation of evidence for religious claims, or sound-byte proof-texts that fall apart upon closer inspection.
- (3:1 – 9) The baggage we bring with us
 - (1) Carnal: humans on a spiritual journey. Spiritual: spirits on a human journey. Division happens when we don’t make the switch.
 - Loyalty may be a good thing, but that is not the issue. God orchestrated this plan. The famous names are only the players.
 - Culturally, we tend to identify with the leader we can see, forgetting about the “eager hope” (first paragraph) and settling for human leadership..
- (3:10 – 15) The quality of construction is important
 - Of course, each group believes that it was built with the superior quality materials. Claims prove nothing. Fire is the revealer. Divisive groups tend to have low survival rates.
 - The foundation must be the person of Jesus: His character (2 Peter 1:3). Divisive groups focus on practices and teachings.
 - Culturally, careful construction with quality materials is beyond the reach of most people, so we develop a “close enough” attitude. Instead, we need to focus on the first paragraph: a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, and being a living demonstration of the power of God.

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- (3:16 – 17) We are individually important
 - In civil and military circles, the leader is more valuable than the rank-and-file.
 - The importance to God of each individual is difficult for both ends of the spectrum (authoritarians and self-deceived insights).
 - Division happens when we are not all equally important. The key is to have the gracious nature of Jesus (first paragraph).
- (3:18 – 23) We already own everything. Position is inconsequential.
 - (18) Take acceptance by theological leaders as a warning, not an endorsement.
 - (22) This is the concept of liberty. I am responsible for me. All things are tools at my disposal. While wisdom dictates that one listen to the advice of others, no one has authority over me but God.
 - Culturally, we expect some to be in charge. The vast majority are the followers with only limited liberty. The things of this world are often out of reach. The future is often feared.
 - Division happens when people want control.
 - See the first paragraph.
- (4:1 – 5) He who judges me is the Lord
 - (4) Paul sets a boundary. If I know that I am doing something wrong, I need to fix it. Beyond that, judging belongs to God.
 - Leaders don't trust followers, so allowing such liberty is countercultural.
 - We can offer advice to those whom we think are headed into trouble, but advice cannot become regulation. Rather, be living demonstrations of the power of God.
 - Judgment causes division.
- (4:6 – 21) Division is justified through arrogance.
 - (6) "What is written." At this point in history, this would be the Old Testament. This letter is fairly early, and those few earlier letters were not available to the church in Corinth (having been written to churches in Turkey). The admonition is to stay away from tradition that is not expressly given in the Scriptures. Much of the New Testament "goes beyond" what was written at the time Paul wrote this. The point is tradition versus Scripture. Strongly held tradition becomes a breeding ground for division. Rather, expect to be enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, which implies growth and change.
 - (7 – 8) Don't forget that we got to where we are by the influence of others, even the negative influences. Hopefully, we have grown beyond those who taught us, whether well or badly. Thinking that I am more "spiritual" is a type of arrogance (forgetting ones contributors) that leads to division. A gracious nature recognizes the positive of the past and downplays the negative.
 - (9 – 13) God has a history of using the downtrodden and oppressed as His spokesmen. Be wary when things go too well; "open doors" from God are seldom easy.
 - In every culture, success is accompanied by comfort and security. In the Kingdom of God, success is accompanied by worldly difficulties but spiritual grace, mercy, and peace. Division happens when the earmarks of success are confused.
- (5:1 – 7:40) Public Perception

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- The next series of topics fall under public perception: how the outside world sees Christians. This perception is important because our behavior can hinder the spread of the gospel.
- (Chapter 5) Bad behavior from church members
 - Sexual immorality is not the only issue. Covetousness, extortion, idolatry, reviling, and drunkenness are all listed in verse 11.
 - Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
 - (1) The case in point is that a man has his father's wife.
 - Even the outsiders think this is bad.
 - But it is not without parallel:
 - (1 Kings 2:13 – 25) Adonijah, David's oldest son, asked for Abishag, his father's last concubine. Solomon killed him for the request not for the immorality but for the clear claim to the throne.
 - (Genesis 35:22) Reuben slept with Bilhah, Jacob's concubine. He (his future tribe) was cursed for it in Genesis 49:4.
 - Certainly, this has happened at other times in history. My guess is that, generally, those occasions were for power or property.
 - The point is that this behavior made the church look bad to outsiders. One of the major reasons that the church exists is to display the power of God. (Note: if the outside world doesn't think that it is wrong, we have more time to deal with it. The problem in that case is only the damage to the individuals, not to the church in general.)
 - We are the Temple of the living God, therefore cleanse yourselves, perfecting holiness in the fear of Christ (2 Corinthians 6:16 – 7:1)
 - Unrighteousness is not "fitting" (Romans 1:28, Galatians 5:1 – 14)
Fitting?
 - John 17:20 – 23 "That the world may believe that Thou sent Me"
 - Matthew 5:48 "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect"
 - Malice and wickedness spoils sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:8)
 - Displaying the power of God (2 Corinthians 4:7)
 - Works of the flesh are contrary to the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:16 – 25, Colossians 3:18 – 3:10)
 - We are no longer slaves of sin (Romans 6:1 – 18, 8:13)
 - Everyone who has this hope purifies himself just as He is pure (1 John 3:3)
 - (2) Equally damaging was the attitude of most of the group (whoever complained to Paul about this obviously did not agree with it) that this was acceptable behavior.

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- Although “All things are lawful” does not come up until 6:12, certainly this is at the root of the cultural intrusion. Overreacting to legalism, everything became acceptable.
- This is not a gracious nature, but a spineless nature.
- Paul called this arrogance. In our time (after the New Testament was compiled), certainly this could be defended only by selective reading, which is a form of arrogance – finding the right magic line to justify what I want to do. Those who convinced everyone that this was acceptable should have been overthrown by those “enriched in speaking and knowing the truth.”
- The Christians in Corinth should have mourned. While making a big deal about the bad choices of others in the congregation probably is not productive, pretending everything is acceptable is just as bad. It should make us sad that people were overcome and pray that it be taken away so it can do more damage to the individuals and to the reputation of the church.
- (3 – 5) Deliver this one to Satan
 - Two kinds of people are to be excluded: those who call bad behavior good, and those who cause division (Titus 3:10).
 - Satan had no power over believers (Ephesians 6:11, James 4:7, 1 John 3:8, 4:4), but rather than negating Satan’s power, it was splashed over on the unbelievers (Revelation 12:13 – 17).
 - Apparently, the group could toss someone outside the protection zone.
 - The point was to bring the person back after the power of Satan had had its effect. It is a demonstration of hope, not punishment.
- (6 – 8) Another reason for fixing the problem was to prevent its spread. If we act like the behavior is acceptable, people will think it is.
 - At Passover, leaven was carefully removed from the house so that he unleavened bread would be truly unleavened, as a symbol of purity.
 - Jesus, our Passover lamb, should remind us that purity is appropriate for believers.
 - (8) Malice and wickedness spoil sincerity and truth.
- (9 – 10) Reminder: don’t carry this too far. Outsiders will make bad choices. They just need the gospel. If you stay away from all sinners, the gospel cannot be spread.
- (11) Do not eat with such a one
 - Remember, they did not have the disposable income to eat out.
 - The focus of this probably is the Lord’s Supper, which was practiced in homes, not church buildings. Don’t invite such a one to join you in Communion; don’t demonstrate connectedness with one who is not connected. Not having stated meeting times and places, exclusion was easy; just don’t tell him where or when.
- (12 – 13) Christians are told to judge each other, although compassionately.
 - (Romans 14:13) “Let us not judge one another.” Paul is cautioning Christians not to be so harsh that a brother is caused to revert to paganism.

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- (Matthew 7:1 – 6) “Judge not that you be not judged.” For by the same measure by which you judge, so shall you be judged.
- (Deuteronomy) “Put away the evil from your midst” (13:5) Kill false prophets. (17:7) Execute idolators. (17:12) Exclude those who ignore court rulings. (19:19) Punish false witnesses with the punishment their testimony may have caused. (21:21) Execute rebellious sons. (22:21) Execute virgin brides who aren’t. (22:24) Execute adulterers. (24:7) Execute kidnappers.
- The quotation from Deuteronomy is for extreme bad deeds, capital crimes under the Law of Moses. The admonition to exclude those of bad behavior from the church seems restricted to the “big” cases. What to do with the less extreme cases, which include many of the same behaviors, is explained in 6:9 – 20.
- (6:1 – 8) Christians suing Christians
 - Civil government maintains civil courts to settle property and disputes, including contracts, property damage, and similar liabilities.
 - Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
 - Christians sue Christians for a number of cultural reasons
 - This is business, not a matter of faith.
 - The civil courts operate on a standard set of rules; churches often don’t.
 - Airing our dispute to the whole church is unnecessary and unwise.
 - Paul’s reasons for keeping such judgments “in-house.”
 - (2) The saints are the standard by which the world will be judged. So the saints are much more qualified to make such decisions.
 - (3) The saints are the standard by which angels will be judged. If the saints can handle spiritual stuff, worldly matters should be easy.
 - (4) If you are seeking judgments from a court dedicated to worldly affairs, you are using judges who don’t have the sense to be Christians.
 - (5) Are you saying that not one of your congregation has any sense?
 - (7) Using civil courts to decide between brethren is a mark of failure. Your credibility with the world will be shot. Conversely, accepting being wronged would stand out to outsiders because you are acting like a family although not blood-related.
 - (8) Finally, at least one of the parties is or has done wrong to his brother, so the right place for this judgment is inside the church.
- (6:9 – 20) Behavior issues
 - This section is related to chapter 5, but is not of the sort that would ruin the effectiveness of spreading the gospel. Apparently, outsiders did not view these behavior issues as outrageous.
 - Culture allows us to rationalize poor behavior. Such self-deception creeps into the church because outsiders with baggage become insiders with baggage.

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- Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
- (9 – 10) This list of bad behaviors is summarized as unrighteousness. Those who excuse such behaviors as acceptable will not inherit the kingdom of God. This generalization (lacking specifics and boundaries) needs further definition.
- Paul's reasons for not excusing these behaviors:
 - (11) You were immersed in the essential quality of Jesus through the power of the Spirit. You were re-labeled as reserved for Godly purposes, you were declared acceptable by the same method. The behaviors named above are not appropriate to those in the essential quality of Jesus or those brought to that place by the power of the Spirit. Bottom line, those behaviors are now inappropriate to your position.
 - (12) The behaviors are not dictated by a right-wrong standard (legalism). Rather, although all things are, technically lawful, legality is not the issue. Rather, behaviors are now judged by profitability to the kingdom, and by whether they control me or I control them. This opens up two lines of required thinking. What profits the kingdom? How do I know if I am in control of me?
 - (13, 19) I assume that the argument was being made, "These behaviors are like food to me. They satisfy my needs." Paul says that the comparison does not work. Our bodies belong to Jesus, not ourselves.
 - (14 – 18) Paul provides illustration of why immorality is not appropriate: you can't share what belongs to Jesus, other sins hurt others, sexual sins hurt yourself.
 - (20) Use your body as the stage for a parade of God's character traits.
- (7:1 – 9, 25 – 40) Who should marry?
 - Culture has many reasons for marriage:
 - Self-worth: marriage is often a cultural expectation.
 - Children
 - Family alliances
 - Companionship
 - Paul's summary statement: If your sexual desires are causing bad decisions, get married (2, 5, 9). Marriage is the appropriate place for sex. Children are not mentioned.
 - Note that sexual desires and responsibilities go both ways.
 - None of the cultural expectations listed above appear in Paul's argument.
 - (7 – 8) If sexual desires are not an issue, then remain unmarried.
 - (25 – 40) Because of the present distress...
 - (25) Jesus never taught on this specifically, but here is Paul's application of the principles, as one with whom God communicates regularly.
 - (25 – 26, 29 – 31) The next 15 years or so would be full of catastrophic upheaval. Pay particular attention before taking on responsibilities. An application to any era may be appropriate.

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- (27 – 28, 35 – 38) It's not a right-wrong thing. Use your head.
- (32 – 34) Don't overlook the obvious. The married have responsibilities to family. The unmarried do not.
- (8:1 – 14:40) How we treat each other
 - (8:1 – 13) Maturing at different rates
 - In the church at Corinth were both Jewish and Gentile Christians (Acts 18:1 – 8). Jewish Christians would bring less idolatry with them, but more regulations about avoiding idolatry. Gentile Christians came in with a background of idolatry.
 - Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
 - (1 – 3) Contrast of knowledge with or without love.
 - (1) A play on words, “Knowledge puffs up; love builds up.” Obviously, this knowledge is that which fails to build up, fails to do what is best for the other person. If one abandoned knowledge, the Bible would be banned as a source of arrogance. The contrast is between teaching that makes me look good versus that which successfully grows faith in the other person.
 - (3) Our love for others (which builds faith in the other person) is based on our love for God.
 - A gracious nature provided through the work of the Spirit is key.
 - (4 – 7) Believers are at different levels of maturity
 - Theoretically, we know there is one God, that idols represent deception.
 - But a lifetime in a culture dominated by idols leaves its mark. So, even if one has a nagging fear of the power of juju, compared to God, idols have no power.
 - Even those who have not shaken the fear of idols Paul addresses as believers (albeit “weak”). They are not disqualified by their baggage.
 - Although our culture does not have a significant problem with idols, we carry with us baggage about proper procedures, authority, and doctrines. Paul does not say to leave baggage alone, but to grow faith in a way that does not destroy.
 - (8 – 13) How to navigate
 - (8) Recognize that even the most mature knowledge is not the objective, but rather faith and love. Certainly growth is a requirement. Being “enriched in teaching and knowing the truth” allows us to stimulate growth in a loving manner.
 - (9 – 12) Pushing too hard can destroy faith. We are each responsible for both protecting and growing the faith of others.
 - (13) I can drop back to a lower level of maturity if that is the path to growth. Taken in isolation, this verse would ban progress. In context, Paul's “never” is metaphorical. See verses 9:20 – 23.
 - The ditches:
 - The squeaky wheel syndrome: the weak refuse to grow, so everyone is required to stagnate. Instead, we must depend on the power of the

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Spirit to teach us how to reach them in a reasonable period of time.
Yes, there are times to walk away.

- The knowledgeable can lack love, so the weak are driven out or marginalized in their own group. The quality of that love is seen in the results.
- (9:1 – 23) Overdone equality
 - We have the same struggles with the concept of equality in our culture as did the early church. In the past century, we have debated allowing women to vote, “separate but equal” government services, minimum wage, mandated health insurance, and entitlements. The logic for each is not the same, which is Paul’s point. “Rights” are not the issue, but results. The issue is not highly technical, but common sense. If a technical argument disallows something that is obviously profitable, the problem is the technical approach.
 - Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
 - (1 – 6) Titles and rights
 - (1) “Am I not an apostle? Am I not free?” The Corinthians Christians had trouble with overdone leadership resulting in division (chapters 1 – 4). This contrast is between the identification of leadership titles and authority that then govern individual freedom. Paul was free to adapt to the situation, not be bound by cultural baggage.
 - (1 – 2) A “definition” of apostle, apparently, had been developed. Those who wanted to avoid Paul’s teaching simply cut him out by redefining his role. This is perpetuated today by the definitions of clergy and laity, and by church hierarchies. Only those who fit in my definition can possibly have anything of substance to teach.
 - Paul trimmed the overdone definition by cutting out the theory and focusing on the practical. Obviously, Paul had performed many miracles in Corinth. Great things had happened. So, even if Paul had done nothing elsewhere, even if he was not one of the original eleven, that was unimportant.
 - The “right” to being supported financially to preach the gospel is further described in the rest of the section. The first point is one of consistency: the other apostles (including the brothers of Jesus) were supported. Why not Barnabas and Paul? Note: Paul was supported by gifts from Thessalonica and Philippi while he preached in Corinth, so the Corinthians Christians had not paid him.
 - (7 – 14) Common sense
 - (7, 10, 13) Everyone expects to profit from work. What makes preaching different? If they are different, only the self-supporting could preach. Priests in the temple receive a part of every sacrifice, and you consider that to be appropriate.

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- (8 – 9) An example from the Law: Paul suggests that the rule about muzzling oxen was intended as an illustration of a bigger concept, not just an animal-welfare rule.
- (11) Paul's point is that spiritual things are much more valuable than material things, so this is not really payment for services, since you can't pay that much. Support is inconsequential by comparison.
- (14) Jesus said that those who spread the message should be compensated (Matthew 10:9 – 10).
- (12, 15) Paul did not use this right while working in Corinth because they were not mature enough to handle it. Instead, he worked with his hands, and also accepted support from Thessalonica and Philippi.
- (15 – 18) Paul was under obligation to preach (Acts 9:15 and others), so being an apostle was not a badge of honor. He was simply carrying out his charge as a servant, for which he deserved commendation. To do it for "free" (to be supported from elsewhere) was a safeguard against abuse.
- (19 – 23) Paul's method gave him freedom to adapt to the situation. If he were paid by those whom he taught, he would be judged by the students' cultural baggage. His independence allowed him to be a partner rather than an authority figure.
- (9:24 – 27) Intense athletes, not philosophical commentators
 - To this point, Paul has dealt with overdone equality and maturing from different places and at different rates. The summary is to be intense, not philosophical; look at this as serious business, not being diverted into small side points.
 - Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8). In this paragraph, the last two points stand out.
 - Specific illustrations:
 - (24) Like a race in track meet: certainly, everyone is in the "rat race." The fact that everyone is running should not divert us from the necessity of training.
 - (25) Track athletes train hard for an olive wreath. We should train even more intensely for an imperishable crown.
 - (26) And we must get beyond training. Those who shadow-box eventually hit someone.
 - (27) The intensity and seriousness of the race means that we turn every effort to the service of God. Eloquence may save others, but intensity saves me.
 - The point: Treat everyone in the Kingdom as fellow professional athletes, not as weekend warriors.
- (10:1 – 13) We can do better than the Israelites in the wilderness
 - God intended that the events in the wilderness be examples for Christians (10:11). Some things God engineered as future illustration material. At other times, God simply chose to include certain events in the historical narrative while omitting others.

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- In this case, we can do better than the Israelites in the wilderness because we are living demonstrations of the power of the Spirit.
- Historical references: The point is not to marvel at the stupidity of the Israelites, but to see how we do the same things.
 - (1 – 2) The cloud (Exodus 13:21 – 22, 14:19 – 20) directed them and protected them as we are directed and protected through baptism.
 - (1 – 2) The sea (Exodus 14:13 – 29) opened for them and collapsed on the Egyptians as we are rescued from this evil world through baptism. Note that only the Egyptians got wet.
 - (3) Spiritual food: manna (Exodus 16). Jesus compared Himself to manna (John 6:28 – 58), the bread of life. The food is called spiritual because of its miraculous origin, as opposed to natural origin.
 - (4) Spiritual drink: miraculous water (Exodus 17:1 – 7, 20:1 – 13). The water is called spiritual because it was of miraculous origin, not physical origin. A big rock did not literally follow the Israelites. Rather, the Spirit that produced the water was with them as they moved around in the desert. “The Rock was Christ” is a metaphor; Jesus is like that rock, producing living water when we need it. Jesus called Himself living water (John 4:10 – 14, 7:37 – 39). Note: Many people find references to Jesus in the Old Testament, resulting in the Messiah coming many times before He was predicted to come.
 - (5) The Israelites who left Egypt but refused to invade Canaan all died in the Wilderness except Joshua and Caleb (Numbers 14:20 – 34).
 - (6) Which evil thing after which they lusted is conjectural.
 - (7) The citation is from Exodus 32:6, the golden calf incident.
 - (8) The event cited is recorded in Numbers 25:1 – 9.
 - (9) The serpent event is in Numbers 21:4 – 9.
 - (10) Which incident of complaining is conjectural.
- (11) The ends of the ages: Hebrews 9:26 uses the same phrase to describe when Jesus was on earth. A better translation is “the last eon.”
- (12) This recalls the idea of 8:1, the beginning of the section about how to treat each other.
- (13) A promise that we can do better because of the power of God.
- The point: Remind one another of these things, especially the promise.
- (10:14 – 33) How to handle a mixture of former Jews and former idolaters.
 - The gracious nature given by Jesus and being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth are the key promises to apply to this situation.
 - (14 – 22) Why flee idolatry? Is it not a cultural norm like dress and sports? Note that the admonition against idolatry was not against their temples and idols, but upon the disruptions in the connectedness of spirits caused by it. In our culture, all that interferes with connectedness is idolatry.
 - (16 – 17) Example: We are connected through the Lord’s Supper.
 - (18) The Israelites were connected through the sacrifices.
 - (19) Not that idols have the same power to connect spirits.
 - (20) But the demons who are the power behind the idols want that connection.

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- (21) Some things are more than culture, but rather mess up important symbols. Idolatry is not a matter of culture or morality, but of connection.
- (23) Repeated from 6:12, with a twist. A reminder that this is not a rule but a way of thinking. We evaluate our choices based not on laws but on what is profitable and what builds up.
- (24 – 33) Practical example related to idolatry
 - (24) The principle: Seek the well-being of the other person. Like Philippians 2:4, “Do not look out for your own interests, but for the interests of others.”
 - (25 – 29) If we operated by rules, we could eat meat only if we knew its history, like the kosher laws.
 - The quote is from Psalm 24. Everything belongs to God anyway, so no items are inherently tainted.
 - If your host makes a point of telling you that the meat was sacrificed to an idol, don’t eat because the symbolism is important to him. It means nothing to you.
 - My liberty is intact. I am not restrained by another person; I am using the opportunity to teach the other person something to his benefit.
 - (30 – 33) A thing is just a thing. What matters is how I treat it. If I give thanks to God for it, and use it to expose the character of God, that’s a good thing. Just don’t be offensive or the opportunity to teach will evaporate. Like 8:1, “Knowledge puffs up; love builds up”, and 10:12, “Let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.”
- (11:1 – 16) Living illustrations
 - The paragraph focuses on the exercise of miraculous abilities, specifically prophecy. Many overlook this important fact and try to apply it to non-miraculous contexts.
 - The context implies that married women are the target audience, as women were to be subject to their own husbands, not all men in general (14:35. Ephesians 5:24, 1 Peter 3:1). Unmarried women (either never married or widows or divorced) are not mentioned. So, the head covering would have the same function as a wedding ring today (not that we should replace Biblical symbols with modern substitutes, it’s just a comparison). If the context is miraculous, then the head covering would be worn while exercising that gift of the Spirit. If the context is non-miraculous, then the head covering would be worn at all times, not just in the assembly.
 - Those who assume that the New Testament is a guidebook for “worship” will find regulations in this paragraph. The context is “How should we treat each other?” Remember the premise of the letter: cultural encroachment is defeated by a gracious nature given by Jesus, being enriched in speaking and knowing the truth, being living demonstrations of the power of God, and having an eager hope (1:4 – 8).
 - (6, 15) As a generalization, women in all cultures have maintained “long” hair, although the popular length has varied. A nearly universal exception is that many women in various cultures cut their hair as a sign of grief. In a few

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cultures, adulterous women were shaved as a punishment. But, under the Law, adulterers were executed.

- In this section on how we treat each other, the focus (like chapters 12 and 14) is maintaining the illustration especially when we might be inclined to be self-important.
 - (4, 7) In that time, head coverings were an acknowledgement of being subject to an authority figure. Rather than wearing a head covering as a symbol of subjection to God as did the Hebrew men, the Christian men represented the image and character of God in this illustration. Different sub-cultures had different practices in their religions, so no contrast with Greek or Roman practice may be inferred. The fact that head coverings were used as a symbol in the church further indicates that this was a short-term illustration, during the time of prophets. Men not wearing head coverings in our time would not illustrate anything because we do not put any importance on the wearing of hats.
 - (5) Again, the context is miraculous. This instruction couples to 14:26 – 40. Since female prophets were not to speak in an assembly of mixed gender, women who prophesied were to do so in a group of women. The head covering illustrated that they were still in submission (see Ephesians 5:21 – 33), and that they represented the attitude of the church in the Bride of Christ illustration.
 - (9) The argument about woman being created for man is a fact of history. In our time, this concept would be likely to start an argument because of the assumption that service is demeaning. Jesus characterized Himself as a servant, to the point of washing the feet of His disciples. Angels serve human. Neither relationship is demeaning. A wife's role is to illustrate the glory of serving. In verse 7, a wife illustrates the character traits of her husband, which is supposed to be a selling point for the gospel. Arguments ensue because the assumption is made that the character of the husband is nothing like the character of Jesus (which the husband represents) or that the husband will abuse the position. Paul's assumption is the opposite, that the husbands will do a good job in this role modeling.
 - (10) "Because of the angels." Angels were still learning faith. That a capable and independent woman would voluntarily take the role of a follower would teach that serving is not demeaning but meaningful.
 - (11 – 12) These facts are reminders to the men not to think too highly of themselves. This is an interdependent relationship.
 - (13) This is not rocket science. Stop overthinking it.
 - (14) Another cultural conclusion that limits the timeframe of its application. Long hair for men is a cultural thing.
 - (16) This is not an appeal to tradition, since the church in Corinth had been around only about two years, and Christianity itself only about 25 years (and only about 5 years with Gentiles). Rather, Paul is telling the contentious that this is not so complicated that it needs debate.
- (11:17 – 34) How we treat each other in the Lord's Supper
 - (17) The Lord's Supper had become a negative experience rather than a positive (unifying, edifying, joyous occasion).

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- (18) One of the illustrations of the Lord's Supper is our miraculous unity (10:17, John 17:21, *et al*). You can't have division and the Lord's Supper at the same time.
- (19) Sarcasm.
- (21) The one-another attitude had been lost. Sharing was neglected. Excess was common.
- (22) Cultural intrusion: the feast became more important than its meaning. Certainly, they had more than a crumb and a sip (we have swung over to the other side of the road, perhaps with a wheel in the ditch), but the point was not to satisfy physical hunger. Further, they had not regard for the poor among them.
- (23 – 25) Recounting the basic history (Matthew 26:26 – 29, Mark 14:22 – 25, Luke 22:14 – 22).
- (26) Another purpose: proclaiming the Lord's death, it's meaning as a sacrifice.
- (27, 29 – 30) The Lord's Supper is supposed to be a power teaching tool. Those who mess up the teaching will be classed with the unbelievers.
- (28, 31 – 32) The point is to examine oneself as opposed to judging the others. Chastened does not mean punished, but disciplined, given remedial instruction. As in Hebrews 12:3 – 11, chastening seems like punishment to a child, but later we figure out that it was just good training.
- (33 – 34) Do it together because it is about the group. The Lord's Supper is not an individual event. In our time, most who still practice it have made it a collective of simultaneous individual events, keeping the practice but losing the meaning.
- (12:1 – 31) Equally different
 - The Corinthian Christians, being all new converts, carried much culture with them into the church. So, equality, unity, and leadership posed many problems.
 - (1 – 3) Even when you were idolaters, you knew that the spokesman for an idol would not curse his own idol. So it is illogical that someone claiming to speak by the Spirit would curse Jesus.
 - (4 – 11) The same God works consistently, not in conflict with Himself.
 - God's gifts, services, and activities with which we are somewhat familiar:
 - Wisdom: But James 1:5 – 8 implies everyone. Were there degrees of wisdom?
 - Faith: Also Romans 12:2. Faith is required but also given.
 - God's gifts, services, and activities with which we are less familiar:
 - Knowledge: What might be miraculous knowledge as opposed to academic knowledge? Miraculous knowledge was planned to expire (13:8).
 - Healing: Like Jesus apostles
 - Other miracles: Like Jesus and the apostles
 - Prophecy: Ended per Daniel 9:24 – 27 and Zechariah 13:1 – 14:9, also 1 Corinthians 13:8.
 - Discerning spirits: Determining if a spirit was from God or Satan
 - Tongues: Languages not studied. Planned to expire (13:8)
 - Interpretation: Languages not studied

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- To the original audience, all of these gifts were common.
- The point of the list was that the same God gave them all, so they will work in harmony, not in opposition or causing division, but for the profit of all.
- Although the gifts are slightly different today, they are no less miraculous.
 - Do not call a non-miraculous event a miracle. This obscures the real miracles and separates the gospel from its attribute of first importance: evidence.
 - Expect miracles. God's mercy is His intense desire to fix what ails us. If we could be fixed by natural means, we would have already done it. So, our overcoming and development are miraculous.
 - Prove miracles (1 John 4:1). Frauds have used fake miracles since before the church (false prophets) with the end result of misdirected well-meaning people
 - The miracles are different because some of the objectives are different. The church has been made self-sustaining and the message is complete, so those powers are no longer needed. The power to overcome and character development will always be needed.
- (12 – 27) Body image
 - (13) Immersed into one body: the individual is overwhelmed by the group
 - (13) Drink one Spirit: All the faithful have the same Spirit dwelling in them, doing various things in each, but all in harmony because the same Spirit is fixing all of them at once.
 - (14 – 24) Each body part is different but all parts are interdependent.
 - (25) Division defeats the purpose of the body.
 - (26) Suffer together, rejoice together. Wisdom required. Avoid the obvious pitfalls of
 - Life is more than suffering. The good parts make the suffering bearable. Have balance.
 - Honoring only the talented: Certainly, we should rejoice with the individual accomplishments of fellow Christians, but not to the point of making them more important.
 - Detect attention-seeking behavior (wisdom).
 - Detect envy and treat the disease, not the symptoms.
- (28 – 31) Yes, there is a hierarchy
 - (28) These appointments were by God, not people. One must be able to prove that a claim is true.
 - (29 – 30) Not all have the same gift. None have all gifts.
 - (31) Culture says that talented people are important by virtue of that talent. God says the important thing is in chapter 13 (love).
- (13:1 – 13) Faith, hope, and love. The greatest is love.
 - Love (Romans 5:5) is greater than the aforementioned gifts even though those gifts garner a lot more attention in the world.
 - Sounding brass: mechanical amplifiers used in Greek amphitheaters.
 - (1) Without love, our miracles are empty.
 - (2) Without love, prophecy, understanding, knowledge, and faith are nothing.

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- (3) Without love, heroic acts have no profit.
- (4 – 7) Characteristics of love. Doing what is best for the other person regardless of the effect on me.
- (8 – 12) The miracles God displayed for the establishment of the church were to pass away when it was “consistent.” Ephesians 4:11 – 16 says the same thing, except without the love angle. Also Revelation 11:3 – 12. But love as a God-given miraculous gift would never fail or pass away.
- (14:1 – 40) It’s about one-another, not position or showmanship
 - The whole chapter has only one point repeated many times in slightly different ways. My conclusion is that the Christians in Corinth had a big problem with self-importance, which always has a negative impact on love.
 - (1 – 19) A contrast between tongues and prophecy. Prophecy is better because:
 - Without an interpreter, tongues are understood only by God and the one saying it.
 - This implies that the speaker understands (4)
 - The message is intended for God, not for others (2).
 - If others cannot understand, they cannot act (8)
 - If the message is not understood, it is useless (9)
 - All phonemes have meaning. (10)
 - The hearer thinks you are a barbarian (11)
 - The hearers cannot even say, “Amen,” at the end of a blessing of the food. (16)
 - Prophecy is infinitely more important:
 - Prophecy speaks edification, exhortation and comfort (3)
 - Prophecy is about others, not about me (4) (which is love)
 - Prophecy is greater because it builds up (5)
 - Seek gifts which edify (12) (which is love)
 - Teaching is 5000 times more profitable than tongues (19)
 - Interpretation
 - The person who speaks in tongues should also interpret (5)
 - Unless interpretation is available, tongues should not be done (28)
 - Summary (15): Spiritual gifts and understanding must be coupled together.
 - (20 – 25) Appropriate venues
 - God did this before with the Assyrians; the Israelites did not understand what they said, yet they brought a message from God. The unfaithful did not grasp the message then, either. (21)
 - Therefore, get the attention of unbelievers by speaking their home language. (22)
 - Unbelievers will not be impressed by prophecy in a one-on-one setting. Further reasons are not given. Perhaps prophecy requires too much of the attention span. Perhaps prophecy does not address what they are thinking. Perhaps prophecy lacks immediate proof. (22)
 - In the assembly, a mass of tongue-speakers will just make outsiders think you are crazy. (23)

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- In the assembly, a lot of prophesy about character development in the midst of a lot of character development will incite belief. (24 – 25)
- (26 – 40) Equality, appropriateness, and order
 - Everyone should participate, not just those who desire the limelight (26).
 - Evaluate everything by its edification value (26)
 - No more than three tongue-speakers, and only if interpretation is available.(27 – 28)
 - At most three prophets
 - The prophet had no authority. The others in attendance discussed it. (29)
 - Prophets could control their gift, so should be orderly and let others participate (30 – 33)
 - Female prophets should not speak in the mixed assembly (see 11:1 – 16). Therefore, female prophets must speak to groups of females. In that setting, they wear head coverings to illustrate that they are still playing the part of the Bride in their primary role-play. Verses 35 and 36 flesh out the explanation. God has handled this. The explanation (see verse 29) has been provided to the husband of the prophetess (35). Did you think God missed that? (36)
- (37 – 40) Remember Paul’s position as an authority figure
 - Apostles had two areas of authority
 - Edification (2 Corinthians 10:8, 13:10)
 - Financial support (1 Corinthians 9:4 – 18, 2 Thessalonians 3:9)
 - Apparently, some of the Christians in Corinth were so enamored of their gifts that they would ignore Paul’s directions.
 - If anyone insists on remaining ignorant, let it go. Don’t split over it. (38 – 39). Focus on love which will defeat the self-important.
- (15:1 – 11) Cultural encroachment: Religion isn’t supposed to make sense
 - Of first importance: evidence
 - (1 – 2) The following point has big ramifications: vain belief.
 - (3 – 8) Types of evidence
 - Predictions
 - Resurrection
 - Eye-witnesses
 - Application: Evidence is still of first importance. Without it the gospel is just another placebo for the masses.
 - (9 – 11) You got what everyone else got
 - Paul was the only authority figure to visit Corinth to this time. He reminded them that he was not the foremost and, in fact, probably less. So, their conclusions could not be greater than Christians elsewhere.
 - “By the grace of the Lord.” Paul reminded them that God could have ignored him or destroyed him, but chose to treat him graciously, Paul responded to the gracious way he was treated with great effort. Subtly, Paul is suggesting to the Corinthian Christians that his own approach was gracious, so they should respond with renewed effort, not considering him lowly because he was nice.

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- Application: The teacher is not important. We are not greater than another group. Do not think highly of leaders who abuse you.
- (15:12 – 19) Cultural encroachment: De-mythologizing the gospel
 - The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife or spirits. They had developed believable explanations for Scriptures that might be troublesome to their position. Some Greek philosophers taught the same (no afterlife or spirits). So, some in the church at Corinth would think this way.
 - The clever arguments focus on one spot, neglecting the other things that fall apart if their argument is true.
 - If resurrection will not happen, then Jesus did not rise. If that is true, then Jesus' predictions failed, therefore He was a fake, therefore you were not forgiven.
 - If resurrection is false, the faithful dead are just dead.
 - If the resurrection is false, then Christians are all deceived and therefore pitiable.
 - Same application for today. If Jesus did not rise, then He is not a "good teacher" because He deceived people about His own resurrection and deceived people with His teaching.
 - Similar application: If elders and evangelists still run the church, then Jesus prayer in John 17:20 – 23 failed, so He is not the Messiah...
 - Similar application: If Satan is ruler of this world, then Jesus is not. Therefore, Jesus failed.
 - Similar application: If we cannot be like Jesus in every way, then His promises failed.
 - Westerners generally have the impression that belief in the supernatural is somehow backward and ignorant. West Africans generally have no trouble with Christians being able to accomplish the superhuman, but they also believe in juju. Just laugh about it. I'm sure God does.
- (15:20 – 28) Cultural encroachment: If Jesus rose, why not everyone?
 - In every era, people have muddled the ideas of physical death and spiritual death.
 - Jesus rose, but not to regular human life again (appearing and disappearing).
 - Jesus was the first fruits; harvest is still future.
 - Later in the chapter, Paul will explain that we receive a new body that is described as spiritual (44). So, (22) because we are built like Adam, we will die physically. If we are also built like Jesus (connected spirits), we shall live.
 - The last enemy is death. Earthly authority dies also; the human authorities on earth won't bother you in heaven.
- (15:29 – 34) Cultural encroachment: Nothing really matters
 - So, are the departed not motivators?
 - Are the heroic just stupid?
 - If resurrection is not real, then life is pointless. Pursue physical pleasure.
 - Paul says, "Awake." Know God. Some church-goers had not taken advantage of the promises through the Spirit.
 - Modern applications: Is life about drifting along or does focus make life worthwhile?
- (15:35 – 56) Cultural encroachment: All will remain as we know it now.

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- Many people think the figures of speech about what heaven is like are literal, so they expect physical rewards. So did some in Corinth.
- (37 – 44) Points about the final resurrection
 - When a seed is planted (when a body is buried), you expect a plant, not just another seed.
 - The plant is very different than the seed.
 - There are many types of bodies, from galaxies to birds. Don't dictate the one God must pick.
 - The biggest point is that the seed was mortal. The plant will be immortal.
- (45 – 50) Benefits to the sequence of physical followed by spiritual
 - Physical life is awesome (like Adam being created). The spiritual realm is a lot better.
 - Just as we are humans like Adam, we will be spirits like Jesus.
 - The physical belongs to the physical universe. The physical cannot be in the spiritual universe.
- (51 – 56) Death will be conquered.
 - When God ends the universe, it is over. It will happen with a bang, not a whimper.
 - Although we have spirits while physically alive and the spirits of the faithful are connected (alive), we will get a new body on Resurrection Day that is suited to the new heaven and new earth.
 - Death (physical and spiritual) will end.
 - Know that your labor is not in vain.

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- (16:1 – 4) Collection for famine relief in Judea
 - History
 - (Acts 11:28 – 30) First news of future famine through Agabus.
 - (Acts 12:25) Saul and Barnabas return after taking the collection to Jerusalem
 - (1 Corinthians 16:1) Churches of Galatia were collecting funds also.
 - (2 Corinthians 8:1) Churches of Macedonia were collecting funds also.
 - Instructions
 - On each Sunday rather than scrambling to raise the promised funds after Paul arrives. Working people did not have savings accounts. While they might have been able to borrow to meet this promised donation, that process was slow.
 - No mention of a church treasury. Each one probably kept his own. Sunday would be a reminder to set something aside because of the church meeting.
 - The Corinthian Christians were to send along their own auditor.
 - If convenient but not necessarily, Paul would travel with the funds.
 - Cultural applications
 - Plan to do good, don't rely on spur-of-the-moment.
 - Audit the money. Everyone feels better about it. Don't just "trust." Future good works can be diminished by a bad experience.
- (16:5 – 11) Plans
 - The scene
 - (Acts 20:2 – 3) Paul stayed three months in the area of Corinth when he finally got there.
 - (2 Corinthians 1:15 – 2:13) Paul originally planned to sail to Corinth, travel through Macedonia, return to Corinth, then sail to Antioch. But, various threats caused him to change his plan twice.
 - (16:8 – 9) Paul planned to stay in Ephesus until late spring (Pentecost) because the gospel was being readily received. But, that success caused a backlash from the silversmiths of Diana whose business was shrinking due to loss of Diana worshippers (Acts 19:23 – 20:1). So that stay was cut short and revised to make it to Jerusalem for Pentecost (Acts 20:16).
 - (16:10) Timothy was sent on to check on the Corinthian Christians, probably not returning to Ephesus until after Paul had left. 1 Timothy encourages Timothy to remain in Ephesus a while (1 Timothy 1:3). But, Timothy caught up with the group after they had re-connected with Titus in Philippi (2 Corinthians 1:1).
 - The news
 - (16:6) Paul wanted them to finance his trip to Palestine.
 - (16:10 – 11) We think of Timothy as a proven servant of Jesus. The Corinthians were still unsettled on questions of whom to believe. The New Testament did not exist. Paul had much competition. Presumably, Timothy may have been disregarded due to his youth (1 Timothy 4:12).
 - (16:12) Paul did not have control over others, including Apollos, who made his own plans.
- (16:13 – 24) The importance of people
 - (13 – 14) Faith and love – but how?
 - (15 – 16) Follow successful faith.

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- (17 – 18) Honor those who make things happen (not just those who teach the Word). They refreshed a lot of people by bringing news back and forth.
- (19 – 20) Connections with distant Christians are important (*e.g.*, Romans 16).
- (21 – 24) Paul's personal postscript
 - Let the unbeliever be accursed! Isn't that a little harsh?
 - Come quickly (Revelation 22:20).
 - The other bookend: grow your gracious nature (1:3)
 - Love shared through the pipeline of the connecting Spirit.