

10 Issues the Gospel Solved in the Corinthian Church

It's not surprising for a church to have sin problems. A church is a group of sinners—saved and repenting sinners, yes, but still sinners.

If that's the case for a group of longtime Christians, imagine a church consisting *entirely of baby Christians*. When Paul wrote the letter of 1 Corinthians to the church at Corinth, the believers had been Christians for no more than three years. They were all recent converts. They didn't have generations of Christians in their culture. None of them grew up in a Christian home.

So it isn't surprising that the early Corinthian church continued to share some of Corinth's worldly values regarding leaders and sex and other issues. After Paul heard troubling reports about the church in Corinth and received a letter that the

church wrote him, he responded by writing 1 Corinthians. His most basic purpose is to exhort the Corinthian church to live like who they are: “saints” or God’s holy people ([1 Cor. 1:2](#)).

The one theme that drives everything Paul writes in 1 Corinthians is the gospel. One way to define the gospel is that Jesus lived, died, and rose again for sinners and that God will save you if you turn from your sins and trust Jesus. That is good news not just for non-Christians, but for Christians too. And it should affect everything about how we live.

In 1 Corinthians, Paul repeatedly uses the words *gospel* and *proclaim the gospel* (1 Cor. 1:17; 4:15; 9:12, 14, 16, 18, 23; 15:1–2), and the concept permeates the entire letter. “Christ crucified” ([1 Cor. 1:23](#)) and risen ([1 Cor. 15](#)) is central.

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The gospel solves every issue Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians because the gospel (and its presuppositions and consequences) is decisive for every issue regarding how Christians should live. The connection between Corinthian

problems and gospel solutions is usually *direct* (e.g., [1 Cor. 1:10–4:21; 8:1–11:1; 15](#)), but sometimes the solution *presupposes* the gospel (e.g., [1 Cor. 11:2–16](#)) or *flows from* the gospel (e.g., [1 Cor. 7; 12–14](#)).

Here's how the gospel solves the 10 main problems Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians.

Issue 1 (1 Cor. 1:10–4:21)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were dividing over church teachers. They embraced the values of their Roman society, which divided over ethnicity (e.g., Jews vs. Gentiles) and social rank (wise vs. foolish, powerful vs. weak, noble birth vs. low and despised). Roman culture valued polished rhetoric and regarded the message of a crucified Messiah as folly.

Gospel solution. “Christ crucified” is the power and wisdom of God (and confounds Roman values). God uses church teachers to plant and water the church, but God alone gives the growth. So don't boast in particular church teachers because they are merely servants of Christ. Boast in the Lord.

Issue 2 (1 Cor. 5:1–13)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were tolerating incest.

Gospel solution. Purge the evil person from among you because Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed.

Issue 3 (1 Cor. 6:1–11)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were bringing lawsuits against one another.

Gospel solution. Don't wrong and defraud your own brothers, because the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God. Unrepentant sin formerly characterized your life, but God washed, sanctified, and justified you in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by God's Spirit.

Issue 4 (1 Cor. 6:12–20)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were excusing sexual immorality because it occurs outside the body.

Gospel solution. Your body matters, because God will raise it up like he raised the Lord. Your body is a member of Christ, so

you shouldn't make it a member of a prostitute. You don't have the right to do whatever you want with your body, because God owns it, and he owns it because he redeemed you at the cost of his Son's life. So glorify God with your body by not committing sexual immorality.

Issue 5 (1 Cor. 7:1–40)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were misguided about marriage and singleness.

Gospel solution. God graciously gives singleness to some and marriage to others. Lead the life the Lord has assigned to you. (And don't become a bondservant of men because God bought you with a price: Christ crucified.) If you marry, marry "only in the Lord."

Issue 6 (1 Cor. 8:1–11:1)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were eating food offered to idols in a way that did not build up their neighbors or in a way that participated with demons.

Gospel solution. Don't make your brother stumble, because Christ died for that brother. Be willing to give up your rights for the sake of the gospel. You can't participate with both (1) the blood and body of Christ and (2) demons.

Issue 7 (1 Cor. 11:2–16)

Problem. The Corinthian Christians could wear (or not wear) head coverings in a way that defiantly flouted God's beautiful design for husbands and wives.

Gospel solution. The husband is to the wife what the Father is to Christ. That is, the husband-wife relationship reflects the Father-Christ relationship with reference to authority and submission.

Issue 8 (1 Cor. 11:17–34)

Problem. Some more affluent Corinthian Christians were abusing the Lord's Supper by marginalizing poor Christians.

Gospel solution. Jesus gave his body and blood for the church, so don't despise it. When you celebrate the Lord's Supper, you proclaim his death until he comes. So sacrificially share food

with one another when you celebrate how Jesus sacrificed his life for you.

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Issue 9 (1 Cor. 12:1–14:40)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were prioritizing less valuable spiritual gifts and failing to use their gifts to edify the body of Christ in love.

Gospel solution. Pursue love (which the gospel embodies) by earnestly desiring and using spiritual gifts that build up the Spirit-baptized body of Christ.

Issue 10 (1 Cor. 15:1–58)

Problem. Some Corinthian Christians were denying that God will bodily resurrect believers.

Gospel solution. Christ died for our sins, and God bodily resurrected him. If God will not bodily resurrect believers, then

he didn't bodily resurrect Christ. But he did bodily resurrect Christ and therefore will bodily resurrect believers.

Gospel Cure

The way Paul approaches sin problems in the Corinthian church is a model for how we should approach sin problems in our churches today.

When you have a sin problem, the gospel solves it.