

FIRST CORINTHIANS BIBLE STUDY

Introduction

The church at Corinth was a troubled one, living in the midst of a very permissive society. Because the church was so troubled, Paul covers a wide variety of subjects in First Corinthians - divisions (1 Cor.1-4), sexual morality (1 Cor.5-7), asserting one's rights (1 Cor.8-10), the role of women, together with the Lord's Supper (1 Cor.11), the use of gifts (1 Cor.12-14), and the resurrection body (1 Cor.15). So there are plenty of issues to deal with!

Paul had founded the church at Corinth, and he spent 18 months there (Acts 18:11). Later, while at Ephesus on his third missionary journey, Paul heard about the situation at Corinth from some of Chloe's household (1 Cor.1:11; also 5:1; 11:18) and from a letter which the Corinthians themselves had written (e.g. 1 Cor.7:1; also 8:1; 12:1; 16:1). These two sources provided Paul with the basis for him to write First Corinthians in order to try to set the situation right in the church.

Corinth was a strategic location, situated in Achaia, in what we would call the south of Greece. It was a seaport, with a reputation for worldliness, immorality, and entertainment. The Isthmian Games were held there whereas the Olympics were held at Athens. Aristophanes (c.450-385 B.C.) coined the verb *korinthiazō*, meaning 'to act like a Corinthian' or 'to fornicate'. Strabo said that a thousand temple prostitutes plied their trade at the temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love. Gordon Fee says that it was 'at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world.' Throw in King's Cross, and you probably get the idea.

Called out from the World (1 Corinthians 1:1-9)

1. How does Paul introduce himself? (1:1) How did he become to be an apostle? Who is identified with Paul as an author of this letter? _____

One can only assume that Sosthenes is the former synagogue ruler who received such a hard time there (Acts 18:17)

Gordon Fee on Paul's view of his own authority: 'On the one hand, he can be completely self-effacing in terms of his own person or personal role; on the other hand, he can be absolutely unyielding when it comes to his ministry as such.'

2. To whom was Paul writing? (1:2) How does he refer to them? How are Christians described? (note what Stephen does in Acts 7:59) _____

Those who call on the name of Christ have first been called by God the Father. They are sanctified, meaning they are set apart by God. They are called to be holy (NIV) or called to be saints (ESV, NKJV). Paul refers to saints about 60 times in his letters. They are not dead people who have been canonized but living people who are Christians.

3. What does Paul pray for the Corinthians? (1:3) _____

4. What does Paul give thanks to God for concerning the Corinthians? (1:4)
How is this the basis of everything? _____

Gordon Fee says that 'grace' here refers mainly to the giving of the gifts, but while this suits one of the main motifs of First Corinthians, it seems not to be the best way to understand verse 4.

5. What has God given to the Corinthians in Christ? (1:5) _____

6. What does this verify for Paul? (1:6) How have Paul's proclamation of the gospel and the Corinthians' reception of it gone together? _____

These people may have been caught up before in some of the near eastern mystery religions such as the cult of Cybele (the Great Mother where one was baptised in the blood of a bull), Isis (the Egyptian mother goddess who was served by priestesses) and Mithras (the Persian god of light, the cult of whom demanded the killing of a bull; only males could become members). In addition, the Roman emperor himself was considered to be a god. Then they heard that the one true God had sent His eternal Son into the world to die in place of sinners and to rise from the dead to defeat death itself. They saw their sins and their mortality and hence they saw their need of Him who has overcome sin and mortality. They believed in Jesus Christ as Lord. Paul's testimony of Christ was confirmed in their experience.

7. What has been given to the Corinthian Christians as they await the coming of the Lord Jesus? (1:7) Are they lacking in anything? _____

That does not mean that everybody had all the gifts, but that as a body, they lacked nothing. Arthur Stace once said that he couldn't have spelt 'Eternity' for a hundred quid, but somehow he was able to inscribe it over 500,000 times on the footpaths of Sydney. That was God's gifting to him, and God used him to touch many in ways we cannot know about this side of eternity.

J. B. Lightfoot on the gifts: 'St Paul here gives thanks for their use: he afterward condemns their abuse.'

8. Of what is Paul assured about God's preserving of His people? (1:8-9; see Phil.1:6; 1 Thess.5:24) What is the consummation of all things? _____

I once had a wild time at a university when speaking on 'The Bible and Abortion'. In the audience were four hostile people. After the meeting, one of them said he used to be a Christian but was not now. The Bible would say he never was really a Christian.

Sinful divisions (1 Corinthians 1:10-17)

Harry Truman used to say that if you want a friend in politics, buy a dog. Some people's experience of the church might lead them to say the same thing. At Corinth there were serious divisions in the local church. Paul does not call in a mediator or deliver a series of platitudes. He tackles this sin from a Christian basis.

1. What does Paul appeal to the Corinthian Christians to do? (1:10) On what basis? I once read a letter in *New Life* which called on Archbishop Peter Carnley to resign because of his acceptance of same-sex unions. Was the writer guilty of this sin? Is Paul writing of true and false Christians or of a party spirit? _____

The same word is used there as is used in Matthew 4:21 to describe James and John and Zebedee mending their nets. The church is to be mended together, with no frayed edges, and restored to usefulness.

2. How did Paul find out about what was going on? (1:11) _____

3. Into how many groups had the Corinthian church split? (1:12) Is it a matter of preaching four different gospels or following four different personalities? _____

Probably the first group was converted under Paul, the second group was then impressed by the eloquence of Apollos, the third group wanted the link with Jerusalem and the original twelve apostles through Peter, and the fourth group was the most pretentious of them all - it claimed to be the only true spiritual church.

*To live above with saints in love,
O! that will be glory;
To live below with saints we know ...
That's a different story.*

4. What is the point of the three questions that Paul asks in verse 13? _____

One head cannot sit on four bodies. The greatest evangelist in England's history was George Whitefield. In one sermon he once raised his eyes upward to heaven and cried: 'Father Abraham, whom do you have in heaven? Any

Episcopalians?' 'No!' 'Any Presbyterians?' 'No!' 'Have you any Independents or Baptists?' 'No!' Have you any Methodists there?' 'No! No! No!' Then whom have you there?' 'We don't know those names here. All who are here are Christians - believers in Christ - those who have overcome by the blood of the Lamb and the word of their testimony.'

5. Why does Paul thank God that he only baptized Crispus and Gaius? (1:14-15) _____

For Crispus, see Acts 18:8; for Gaius, see Romans 16:23, although they were fairly common names.

6. What does Paul suddenly remember in verse 16? (note too John 4:1-2) What is the significance of his having baptized so few? What is the significance of the reference to the household? (see Acts 16:15, 33) _____

Almost certainly, this letter was dictated, perhaps to Stephanas, and this is a very human touch. The divine inspiration of Scripture does not obliterate the human authors. Paul is kept from all error, but he is not made omniscient. He is struggling here to remember whom he baptized.

7. What is the relationship between baptism and the gospel? (1:17) Does baptism confer the Holy Spirit? Where is the emphasis? Was Paul a wonderful orator? (see 2 Cor.11:6) What conclusion are we meant to draw from that? _____

8. What is the solution to divisions between true Christians? _____

George Whitefield: 'I truly love all that love the glorious Emmanuel, and though I cannot depart from the principles which I believe are clearly revealed in the book of God, yet I can cheerfully (sic) associate with those that differ from me, if I have reason to think they are united to our common Head.' Then he asked: 'What is Calvin or what is Luther? Let us look above names and parties; let Jesus ... be our all in all.'

The folly of the cross (1 Corinthians 1:18-25)

We easily forget what Isaac Watts wrote:

*Forbid it, Lord, that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God;
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.*

Paul's governing principle of Scripture is found in 1:25. In 1:26-31 this is applied to the Corinthians themselves, and in 2:1-5 it is applied to the apostle Paul himself. The cross seems foolish and weak, but it is God's means to save; it is true wisdom and power.

1. How does the cross divide all humanity? (1:18) How is it regarded by those who are perishing? What about by those who are being saved? (see too 2 Cor.2:16; Luke 2:34; John 3:36) _____

2. What does God do with the finest of human wisdom? (1:19; see Isa.29:14)

The Greek mind loved wisdom - the philosophers like Plato, Aristotle, Epicurus, Seneca (Acts 17:18).

3. Paul engages in rhetoric himself. What is the point of his questions in verse 20? How did the world not know God, and how did God save His people? (1:21) Why does Paul call this 'folly' or 'foolishness'? _____

John Donne said that knowledge without Christ is 'an elaborate and exquisite ignorance'.

John Knox, in his last letter to the General Assembly in 1572, wrote: 'Above all things, preserve the Kirk from the bondage of the Universities.'

Michael Foucault lived a 'liberated' homosexual lifestyle, argued in favour of pederasty, experimented with hallucinogenic drugs, and died of AIDS. Jacques Derrida argued in favour of deconstructionism - that literature has no inherent meaning, so in 1992 Cambridge University conferred an honorary doctorate of literature on him, the one who proclaims, in an incomprehensible way, the end of literature! Aldous Huxley came to the end of his life, and his parting words were: 'It is a bit embarrassing to have been concerned with the human problem all one's life and that at the end one has no more to offer by way of advice that "Try to be a little kinder."'

4. Speaking generally, what do the Greeks seek after, and what do the Jews

seek after? (1:22; for the Jews, see Matt.12:38-39; 16:1; for the Greeks and wisdom, see Proverbs 14:12) What does Paul preach, and how do Greeks and Jews regard that? (1:23) _____

5. What is Christ to those - whether Jews or Greeks - who believe in Him? (1:24) _____

6. What does all this show? (1:25) _____

The folly of God's call (1 Corinthians 1:26-31)

To understand the mind of God, we need to recall the basic principle of 1 Corinthians 1:25.

Friedrich Nietzsche attacked Christians as weaklings and fools. Essentially, the Bible agrees. Nietzsche's problem was that he thought that he was somebody.

1. What does Paul say about the sort of people God called at Corinth to become Christians? (1:26) Why did God choose Israel? (Deut.7:7-8) What does Jesus say about whom God calls? (Matt.11:25) _____

In the 18th century Lady Huntingdon mused: 'Saved by an *m*. Paul did not say, *not any*, but *not many*.'

2. Why did God choose the foolish and the weak? (1:27) Why did He choose the despised and the 'nothings' of this world? (1:28) Why does He not choose the pick of the crop? _____

In the second century the philosopher Celsus made fun of the Christians: 'Their injunctions are like this. "Let no one educated, no one wise, no one sensible draw near. For these abilities are thought by us to be evils. But as

for anyone ignorant, anyone stupid, anyone uneducated, anyone who is a child, let him come boldly." By the fact that they themselves admit that these people are worthy of their God, they show that they want and are able to convince only the foolish, dishonourable and stupid, and only slaves, women, and little children.'

3. Why does God choose whom He chooses? (1:29; see too Ps.18:27; Rom.3:27-28; Eph.2:8-9) _____

A woman once told John Newton that God must have loved her before she was born, because there was nothing to love in her afterwards.

In the words of Isaac Watts:

*When I survey the wondrous cross
On which the Prince of Glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.*

4. Before God where is our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption? (1:30) What does each term mean? _____

This may mean that our wisdom, righteousness (justification), holiness (sanctification) and redemption is found in Christ or that our wisdom consists of righteousness, holiness and redemption (NIV). Gordon Fee takes the latter interpretation and writes that 'True wisdom is to be understood in terms of the three illustrative metaphors, which refer to the saving event of Christ.' But the former reading seems more convincing.

5. Where, therefore, is our boasting? (1:31) Paul is referring to Jeremiah 9:23-24. What does his doing this reveal about the person of Christ? _____

*I am not skilled to understand
What God has willed,
What God has planned;
I only know at His right hand
Stands one who is my Saviour (Dorothy Greenwell).*

The folly of preaching (1 Corinthians 2:1-5)

1. How did Paul preach at Corinth? (2:1) Was he eloquent in the tradition of the great Greek and Latin orators? _____

2. In summary, what was Paul's message? (2:2) What does this teach us about gospel preaching? (see too 2 Cor.4:7) Reconcile this with Acts 20:27. ___

Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones began his ministry by preaching on this verse (1 Corinthians 2:2) in 1926, and when he died in 1981 he had it inscribed on his tombstone, so that even in death he would be proclaiming it.

3. How was Paul feeling when he came to Corinth? (2:3; Acts 18:1, 7-11) Was he a physically impressive and self-confident figure? (see too 2 Cor.10:10: 11:6) _____

There is a second century description of Paul as 'a man small of stature, with a bald head and crooked legs, in a good state of body, with eyebrows meeting and nose somewhat hooked, full of friendliness; for now he appeared like a man, and now he had the face of an angel'.

4. Was Paul a born orator? (2:4; see Acts 20:7-9 for an occupational hazard) Where was the power in his preaching located? (see too 1 Thess.1:5) _____

Down through the ages there have been great preachers who were also great orators - John Chrysostom was 'John with the golden mouth'; Augustine of Hippo was professor of rhetoric at Milan before he became a Christian; the actor David Garrick said he would give 100 guineas to be able to say 'Oh!' like George Whitefield, and claimed that Whitefield could move people just by the way he pronounced 'Mesopotamia'.

But these are exceptions. Richard Sibbes had a lisp and a stammer, Thomas Chalmers had a provincial accent, rarely moved, and used to follow his manuscript with his finger, and even Jonathan Edwards - at least early in his career - would stare at the bell-rope at the back of the church.

5. What was the purpose of all this? (2:5) On what should our faith *not* rest and on what should it rest? _____

Henry Martyn: 'All my clear arguments are useless; unless the Lord stretch out his hand, I speak to stones.'

A drunk came up to Rowland Hill one day, and introduced himself as one of Hill's converts. Hill replied to him: 'Right you may well be. If you were God's convert, you wouldn't be in your present condition.'

*My sinful self my only shame,
My glory all, the Cross.*

True Christian wisdom (1 Corinthians 2:6-16)

Human wisdom does not explain the way of salvation (1:18) nor does it explain whom God calls to Himself (1:27) nor whom God uses to make known the gospel (2:4-5).

When Timothy McVeigh was executed on 11 June 2001 as the Oklahoma City bomber who took 168 lives, he quoted W. E. Henley's words: 'I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul.' That is human wisdom which trusts in itself. But there is a true Christian wisdom, which comes from the Holy Spirit.

1. Why does verse 6 begin with 'Yet' (ESV)? What are the two wisdoms that he refers to? What is said about the wisdom of this age? Who are the rulers of this age? _____

Tertullian is famous for saying: 'I believe because it is absurd', which has been much criticised, but he seems only to have meant that Christianity is beyond any human invention.

C. K. Barrett thought the rulers of this age were demons, while Oscar Cullmann said they were demon-inspired, but Gordon Fee says that this interpretation 'needs finally to be laid to rest'. It is surely just the human rulers like Pilate and Caiaphas.

2. How does Paul describe the wisdom which he imparts? (2:7) From when was it planned and when was it revealed? For what purpose? _____

3. Who did not understand what God was doing? (2:8) How did they show that they did not understand? How is Jesus described? _____

4. Verse 9 is a rough amalgam of Isaiah 64:4; 65:16. Recalling the argument

in verses 6-8, what is it saying? _____

Verse 9 is not referring to the wonders of heaven so much as the wonders of revelation, although the two are connected.

5. What has God done through the Spirit? (2:10-11) Since God is an infinite being, what does this imply about the Spirit? (see Isa.40:13-14) How is this comparable to the thoughts and the spirit of a person? _____

Only the Spirit knows the thoughts (NIV, ESV) or things (NKJV) of God. In the complete and absolute sense, only the Son and the Spirit can know God (Matt.11:27). Blaise Pascal: 'God alone can speak truth about God.'

Charles Wesley in his hymn to the Holy Spirit:

*God through Himself we then shall know,
If Thou within us shine,
And sound with all Thy saints below,
The depths of love divine.*

6. What is said about the spirit of the world and the Spirit who is from God in verses 12-13? Are the 'we' the apostles or all Christians or both? What is the task of the Spirit? (see too John 15:26; 16:14; 1 Cor.12:3) _____

The idea seem to be 'explaining the Spirit's message by means of the Spirit's words'.

7. Can the natural person understand the Word of God? (2:14) Where is the blockage? What does he/she think about the Christian faith? Is the Christian faith inherently offensive? _____

Voltaire: 'Every sensible man, every honourable man, must hold the Christian sect in horror.'

8. What does Paul declare about the spiritual person? (2:15) In the context of 1 Corinthians 1-4, what point is Paul making? _____

Gordon Fee: ‘Here is another sentence that, taken out of its context, has suffered much in the church. There are always some who consider themselves full of the Spirit in such a way as to be beyond discipline or the counsel of others.’

9. Who on earth has the mind of Christ? (2:16) Who are the ‘we’? _____

A deaf man cannot listen to Handel's *Messiah*; a flea cannot understand a dog; and a person without the Holy Spirit cannot understand the gospel.

In 2001 the Victorian government passed a law against racial and religious intolerance. It nowhere defines what is offensive, but says: ‘the reasonable observer test has the benefit of reflecting changing community standards as to what is considered highly offensive.’

Working Together (1 Corinthians 3:1-9)

Back in 1956 Nikita Khrushchev denounced the cult of personality associated with Joseph Stalin. In the West we have our own cults of personality, usually associated with sporting heroes and pop and movie stars. Paul is warning against such a mentality in the church.

1. How could Paul not address the Corinthian Christians? (3:1) How does he describe them? Are the two aspects significant? _____

According to some evangelicals, Paul is chiding a group of carnal Christians who accept Jesus as Saviour (He died on the cross for them) but not as Lord (they refuse to obey Him as King). There is no such beast in Scripture (Matt.7:21-23; Acts 16:31). The Bible never proclaims a half-Christ, - Saviour but not necessarily Lord.

2. How did this affect his teaching of them? (3:2) How does he evaluate them, and what does he do accordingly? _____

3. What characterises their behaviour and what does this show? (3:3) _____

4. What are they doing, and what does this reveal? (3:4) What do these kind of divisions in a church show us? _____

5. Is growth meant to be a normal part of the Christian life? (Heb.5:12-14; Ps.1:3; John 15:5; 2 Pet.1:5-7; 3:18; Phil.1:9-11) In what areas? _____

6. How are Paul and Apollos to be viewed? (3:5) How were the Corinthians viewing the various Christian leaders? (cf. 1:10-17) _____

Paul goes on to use a number of analogies - a field (3:5-9), a building (3:10-15), and the temple (3:16-17) - to illustrate his point.

7. In the founding of the Corinthian church, what were the different tasks of Paul and Apollos? (3:6) What was God's role? (see Mark 4:26-27) _____

8. Therefore, where does the glory go? (3:7) How are the evangelists to be regarded? _____

George Whitefield: 'what is Calvin, or what is Luther? Let us look above names and parties; let Jesus ... be our all in all.'

9. How are true ministries viewed - as competitive or as mutual? (3:8) What will happen to each labourer in the field? _____

10. What, then, are Paul and Apollos? (3:9) Who owns the church? _____

Gordon Fee: 'the emphasis is decidedly on God's ownership, not on Paul's and Apollos's working with him in Corinth'. That is, they are fellow workers under God.

Building on a firm foundation (1 Corinthians 3:10-15)

In verse 9 Paul begins to switch the image from God's field to God's building.

1. What does the Bible tell us about judgment by works? (Matt.16:27) _____

Regarding 1 Corinthians 3:10-15, Robert Lewis Dabney, Charles Hodge, and Don Carson say that this passage particularly refers to pastors who are themselves converted but who allow unconverted people into the church. That is the immediate application, but it obviously has implications for all of us.

2. Who founded the church at Corinth? (3:10) What happened after that?

What warning is given? _____

3. Who is the true foundation of the church? (3:11; see 1 Pet.2:4-5) _____

As the hymns put: *Christ is made the sure foundation,/ Christ the Head, and Cornerstone, and My hope is built on nothing less/ Than Jesus' blood and righteousness.*

4. What does it mean to build on the foundation? What six building materials are used upon this foundation? (3:12) Which ones are perishable and which are imperishable? What point is Paul making? _____

5. What will happen in the Day of Judgment? (3:13) What will the fire do to the building materials? _____

6. What is said of those whose works are not burned up? (3:14) What is the reward? (see Matt.25:20-21) _____

7. Is Paul referring to the judgment of unbelievers? (3:15) How can a Christian be saved but suffer loss? Are there varying degrees of glory? _____

This is not the Roman Catholic doctrine of purgatory. Purgatory is supposed to be a place which a believer enters at death to purify him/her for heaven. Verse 15 refers to the Last Judgment. The person who is a genuine Christian, who has built on the foundation of Christ, but who has not built well, will suffer loss but not a loss of salvation.

8. How can we build badly? What have you learnt from verses 10-15? _____

All things are yours (1 Cor.3:16-23)

1. In what way is the church described? (3:16; see 2 Cor.6:16; Eph.2:21; Ps.114:2; Ezek.43:9) _____

It is possible to translate this as referring to 'a temple of God' but it is far more likely that Paul is referring to 'the temple of God' i.e. the temple in Jerusalem, which is fulfilled in the church.

The Holy Spirit indwells the individual Christian (1 Cor.6:19). But here in chapter 3, the 'you' is plural.

2. What warning is given against anyone who defiles (NKJV) or destroys (NIV, ESV) the temple (the church) (3:17)? What reason is given for the warning? Is Gordon Fee right in saying that 'In most Protestant circles one tends to take the local parish altogether too lightly'? _____

To destroy the church means to divide it with unnecessary divisions and human wisdom. Of course, you cannot destroy the Church triumphant, that for which Christ died (Matt.16:18). But you can destroy local congregations or even whole denominations. The seven churches in Revelation 2-3 have been dead and buried for many, many centuries.

3. Where have the Corinthians been going wrong? (3:18) How is this a deception? What warning does Paul give? _____

4. How does Paul reinforce his point? (3:19-20; citing Job 5:13 and Psalm 94:11) _____

In 1 Corinthians 1:18-25 the wisdom of God is foolishness to the world; in 1 Corinthians 3:19-20 the wisdom of the world is foolishness to God.

The Cambridge philosopher, Stephen Hawking, wrote *A Brief History of Time* in 1988 where he was optimistic that man would come up with a theory which explained 'why it is that we and the universe exist. If we find the answer to that, it would be the ultimate triumph of human reason - for then we would know the mind of God.' That is folly.

In 1937 Victor Gollancz visited Russia. At this time Russia was suffering under the brutal dictatorship of Josef Stalin. But Gollancz wrote: 'For the first time I have been completely happy ... while here one can forget the evil in the rest of the world.'

Simone de Beauvoir: 'One is not born a woman, one becomes one.'

It is very hard to reply to stupidity like that.

5. What should be our conclusion to this? (3:21a) _____

6. Paul surprises us in verses 21b-23. He has been scolding the Corinthians, but now his tone changes. What does he tell the Corinthians about their privileges as Christians? Given the context, why does he say this? _____

Gordon Fee writes about being 'free from the tyrannies of one's own narrowness'. That has limits but there is truth in it. To be in Christ is to possess all things. Hence the Christian ought to see through all personality cults.

Judging a ministry (1 Corinthians 4:1-5)

How do we evaluate what we ought to be doing? What standard can we use? The Corinthian church had known the ministries of Paul and Apollos, and perhaps Peter (Cephas) too had been there (if John Wenham is correct). Pastors evaluated the congregations and the congregations evaluated the pastors.

1. How should the Corinthians regard or evaluate their pastors? (4:1) What do the two descriptions mean? What does the word 'mysteries' mean? (Rom.16:25-26) _____

2. What is the first requirement of a steward? (4:2) What matters - success or faithfulness? Just as a matter of interest, Tim Keller adds the issue of fruitfulness. What do you think of that? Are there any dangers in thinking that we are faithful when numbers are down? _____

Remember that Jonah preached with great success while his heart was far from God; Jeremiah battled on for over forty years without seeing thousands of people clamouring to listen to what he had to say.

Robert Murray M'Cheyne: 'It is not great talents which God blesses so much as great likeness to Jesus.'

3. What does Paul say about being judged by others? (4:3a) Is Paul saying that he could not care less what other people think? (1 Cor.8:13; 9:19; 10:33) _____

Literally, it is by a human 'day' as opposed to the day of the Lord.

4. Of what worth is it to exonerate ourselves? (4:3b-4) Is a good conscience a good thing? (Acts 20:26-27; 24:16) Is it infallible? (1 John 3:20) Why does Paul tell us to examine ourselves? (2 Cor.13:5) Did Paul have a good conscience with regard to his apostolic duties? (4:4) _____

I was at a meeting once at a Christian high school, and one fellow was saying how he was pressing on with the Lord. Then the principal asked him about something to do with the weekend, and he replied that he would be away at a Madonna concert. Our consciences are not infallible.

'To thine own self be true' from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* is real and important but has its limitations as understood - or misunderstood - in the modern sense.

5. Who alone has right of judgment? (4:5) Can we judge to any degree at all? (see 5:12; 6:5) How does Paul describe the day of judgment? What will happen then? _____

I was involved with a Salvation Army officer once as a Christian school was discussing whether to expel a student. The father of the student was terrible indeed. He belittled his son and called him a good for nothing. It was soon obvious that the father was more of a problem than the son. I thought we should ram in a few home truths to the father, but the Salvation Army officer was strangely quiet. I found myself becoming angry with him - after all, he was the family's pastor, not me. But later I realised what he was doing - the boy's mother had bruises on her, where she had been beaten by her husband. The Salvation Army officer was not wanting to make it any worse for her. He had good reasons for doing what he was doing, and I had misjudged him.

Pride overdoes it (1 Corinthians 4:6-13)

1. What is the basic sin that Paul is confronting? (1 Cor.4:6c, 7c, 18-19; see Ps.138:6) _____

The NKJV translates it as 'puffed up' in verse 19.

2. What happens when we go beyond Scripture? (4:6; see 14:36; Deut.4:2;

Prov.30:5-6) Can you think of examples today? _____

Paul was fond of quoting the Old Testament - he does so seventeen times in First Corinthians. Often he uses the formula 'it is written', meaning 'it is written in the Old Testament' e.g. read 1:19, 31.

3. How do we explain the differences between Christians? (4:7; John 3:27; 1Cor.12:11) Why is boasting so out of place? _____

This was a verse which greatly affected Augustine as he contemplated all its implications.

When Thomas Scott, the renowned biblical commentator, was dying in 1821, he was visited by Daniel Wilson (who later became the Anglican bishop of Calcutta). With the best of intentions, Wilson told Scott what a great benefit he had been to the Church. Scott had to stop him: 'Now this is doing me harm,' said Scott, "'God be merciful to me a sinner" is the only ground on which I can rest.' Wilson wanted to encourage Scott as an achiever; Scott knew that before God he was only a receiver.

4. Why is Paul so sarcastic in verse 8? How are the Corinthians thinking of themselves? (see too Rev.3:17) _____

5. As a contrast, how does Paul portray the apostles? (4:9) _____

The Romans used to have gladiatorial games where men fought men, and sometimes women fought women, to the death. Paul as an apostle compares himself to one in the arena, a spectacle (we get our English word 'theatre' from this word) to the whole world, and condemned to death.

6. List the ironic contrasts that Paul makes in verse 10. _____

The herald of the king of kings is treated as the refuse of the world!

7. What is the lifestyle of the apostles? (4:11-12a; see 2 Cor.4:8-9; 6:4-5, 8-10; 11:23-29; 12:10) How does this compare with the health and wealth gospel? _

8. How does Paul respond to all this? (4:12b-13a; Matt.5:43-48) How did the world view Paul? (4:13b) Where do pride and self-pity fit in? _____

When we think we are something, we get it all wrong, like the rooster which thought the sun rose to hear him crow.

Gordon Fee: 'one feels a certain sense of personal dissonance commenting on it while sitting at a word-processor surrounded by books and other modern conveniences'!

Spiritual fatherhood (1 Corinthians 4:14-21)

1. Why had Paul written to the Corinthians? (4:14) What does Paul not want to do, and what does he want to achieve? After all his savage irony, why does he now call them his beloved children? _____

The NIV has 'my dear children' but it is actually 'my beloved children'. This is love in tough circumstances, when the Corinthians are not very lovable.

2. How can Paul be regarded as their father? (4:15; recall 3:6, 10) What does he mean by this? _____

3. What does he urge upon the Corinthians? (4:16; 11:1; Phil.3:17) _____

4. Why did Paul send Timothy to Corinth? (4:17) Should we expect Paul's letters to fit together as a coherent whole? _____

1 Corinthians 16:10-11 implies that Paul was uncertain as to how the Corinthians would receive Timothy. J. B. Lightfoot thinks that Timothy never arrived since he is not mentioned in 2 Corinthians 12:17-18, and it is implied there and in Acts 19:22 that he only reached Macedonia.

There is not one gospel for one people and another for other people. The *Sydney Morning Herald* on 21 August 2001 claimed that in 'a multi-god society', 'It is arrogant and dangerous ... for anyone to assume a right or duty to convert others.' Corinth was a multi-god society in the first century, but Paul said the same things there that he said elsewhere.

5. What is the problem with some of the Corinthians? (4:18) _____

6. What does Paul intend to do? (4:19) Is this certain? (cf. 1 Cor.16:7; James 4:15) What does this have to say to us about guidance? What does Paul intend to do when he reaches Corinth? _____

7. What is the kingdom of God about? (4:20) In the context, what does this mean? _____

People have interpreted that to mean that the kingdom is not about preaching but miracles. That is not what Paul is saying.

8. How does Paul confront them in verse 21? What are the two possibilities open for the Corinthians when Paul gets there? Does God love? Does He discipline? _____

When Paul talks of a rod (NKJV, ESV) or a whip (NIV), he obviously means it figuratively.

Ros Brennan, the former president of the Parents and Citizens Federation of NSW: 'The idea that violence can be administered with love is the most blatant piece of adult sophistry I've ever heard.' Is it? (Heb.12:6; Rev.3:19)

The man who wrote so eloquently about love in 1 Corinthians 13 wrote about discipline in 1 Corinthians 5 - the same man in the same epistle to the same people.

Augustine: 'the rod has its own kind of charity'.

Put out the wicked man (1 Corinthians 5)

I can remember as a boy in my local liberal Presbyterian church when the church organist took off with some woman. Nobody knew quite what to do, and eventually nothing much was done. The result was a vague feeling of dissatisfaction and uneasiness.

Demosthenes: 'Mistresses we keep for the sake of pleasure, concubines for the daily care of the body, but wives to bear us legitimate children.' The permissive society is not modern!

Calvin on church discipline: 'a Church cannot retain its true condition without observing this ordinance'.

1. What great sin is present in the Corinthian church? (5:1; see Lev.18:7-8; 20:11; Amos 2:7) What does he say about how this is regarded? What does this imply about the law of God being written on our hearts? _____

A professing Christian is having sexual relations with his father's wife, presumably his stepmother. We can assume the woman was not a member of the church because she is not mentioned for discipline.

Cicero on a woman who married her son-in-law: 'Oh! to think of the woman's sin, unbelievable, unheard of in all experience save for this single instance!'

2. What does Paul say about the Corinthians, about what they ought to do themselves, and about what they ought to do with the sinner? (5:2) _____

3. What is Paul's response? (5:3) What does this mean? _____

4. What does he command the Corinthians to do? (5:4-5) Under whose authority and in whose presence? (see too Matt.18:15-17; Rev.2:20) _____

In 2001 John Marsden, the homosexual lawyer, was planning his funeral, and said that he wanted a requiem mass with soloists singing *Ave Maria* and six homosexual pallbearers dressed in Mardi Gras outfits. He also wanted a bottle of Black Label whisky and a joint on top of his coffin. He wrote: 'I am a Catholic, I do believe in an afterlife, in a God'. So did this man in 1 Corinthians 5.

Paul is not talking of an inquisition with burning at the stake, but protecting the Lord's Supper.

5. Why is the man to be excluded from the Lord's Supper? (5:5; see 1 Timothy 1:20) What does 'the flesh' refer to - suffering, death or sin? Assuming that 2 Corinthians 2:3-11 refers to the same man, was this discipline ultimately successful? _____

Augustine: 'We must always keep charity in our hearts, even when we are obliged to do outward things which seem harsh to men, and to strike them with rough but salutary severity; for their profit must come before their pleasure.'

In the early fourth century the Synod of Elvira excommunicated for life those guilty of idol worship; a second case of fornication; slandering a cleric; adultery and abortion; or sexually abusing a boy. They were never to be readmitted to the church. That is to forget grace.

6. What is the second reason for discipline in the church? (5:6; see too Gal.5:9-10) Is sin ever a private matter that only affects the sinner? _____

When I was still at school, a fellow came to visit us from the Health Department. He showed us a graphic film on what can happen to your lungs if you smoke. Then he made some comment about the film being so upsetting that he needed a cigarette. He proceeded to light up in front of us. The message of salvation will not be taken seriously if a little leaven is left to leaven the whole lump, or one rotten apple to affect the whole barrel.

7. How is Christ our Passover lamb? (5:7-8) How are we to keep the feast? (note Ex.12:15) _____

Some say that keeping the feast or the festival is referring to the whole of the Christian life, but there is surely a reference here to the Lord's Supper.

Alexander Pope:

*Vice is a monster of so frightful mien,
As to be hated needs but to be seen;
Yet seen too oft, familiar with her face,
We first endure, then pity, then embrace.*

8. What had Paul written in an earlier letter (which we do not have)? (5:9) __

9. Did he mean that we are to avoid all great sinners in the world? (5:10) What, then, did he mean? (5:11; see Jude 12) How did the Corinthians misunderstand his earlier letter? _____

W. L. Knox and J. C. Hurd maintain that this misunderstanding of Paul was deliberate, but it is hard to see how they could know that.

10. Is the church dealing first and foremost with those outside the body or inside? (5:12) What are the implications of this when it comes to Christian social policy? _____

11. Who deals with those outside the church? (5:13) What is the church's task? Why is it important for Christians to be members of a church? What is the church's obligation towards unrepentant members who are guilty of serious sin? _____

A litigious society (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)

There is a cartoon where God at Mt Sinai says to Moses: 'Well, what will it be? Ten commandments or a hundred lawyers?' As a society, we have chosen 100 lawyers. New South Wales is now second only to California so far as litigation is concerned. Over the last decade or so a part-time masseuse has sued her employer because her clients' whingeing made her depressed. She was awarded \$26,000. I know a woman doctor who fell over walking down a laneway. She sued the local council because the surface was uneven, and won \$40,000 in an out of court settlement. Before the 2000 Olympics fifty Australian athletes appealed against their exclusion through sports tribunals; doctors in some places cannot pay the insurance costs needed to keep a practice operating; and people born with disabilities are suing doctors for not aborting them.

1. What are the Corinthians doing which Paul says they should not be doing? (6:1) Is it ever right for a Christian to go before a pagan court? (cf. Acts 16:37-39; 25:10-12) _____

2. Of what does Paul remind them? (6:2; see Dan.7:22; Matt.19:28; Rev.3:21) What is the obvious lesson to draw from this? (6:2) How does Paul reinforce the argument in verse 3? _____

When we do not look at life through God's perspective of eternity, we become very trivial and petty in our outlook.

3. What is Paul's point in verse 4? _____

4. How does Paul seek to shame the Corinthians? (6:5-6) What is the Corinthians' behaviour implying about the church and the world? _____

The Talmud forbade Jews to go before Gentile judges.

5. How is the situation already a defeat? (6:7) What is more Christian - to demand justice or to suffer injustice? (see Matt.5:39-41) _____

For a Christian to take another Christian to court is already a defeat (ESV, NIV) or 'utter failure' (NKJV).

Love does not retaliate and is willing to suffer. Standing up for your rights can sound very noble but I do not see it advocated too often on the pages of

Scripture.

6. In fact, the Corinthians were not even just guilty of demanding justice. What else were some of them doing? (6:8) _____

Litigation destroys community; there are more points of law, more cases of law, more lawyers, vaguer laws, but less decency and less law and order. Christians need to remember who they are, what God has promised them, and Christ's example of suffering. What matters most is the cause of Christ and the law of love.

Law and gospel (1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

It is impossible to make sense of the Bible unless we are clear on what is law and what is gospel.

Martin Luther: 'The law reveals the disease; the gospel ministers the medicine.'

Samuel Bolton: 'The law sends us to the Gospel, that we may be justified, and the Gospel sends us to the law again to enquire what is our duty being justified.'

Gordon Fee says that this section is connected with verses 1-8, but Kenneth Bailey is more convincing in saying that it is the introduction to verses 12-20.

1. How can we be deceived on the issue of holiness? (6:9; see too 1 Cor.15:33; Gal.6:7) List the types of habitual sins which would indicate that a person is outside the kingdom of God (6:9-10). How obligatory is holiness? (Heb.12:14) _____

2. Zane Hodges and Charles Ryrie, two fundamentalist theologians, have argued that there are no moral demands made in the gospel or else it would not be all of grace. What would you say in response to that? _____

3. Can any sin disqualify us from the kingdom of God? (6:11) _____

What three things happened to those who became Christians? (6:11)

(a) see Tit.3:5; Ezek.36:25-27 _____

(b) see Luke 7:44-48 _____

(c) see Rom.3:21-26 _____

I heard the story of a man who got on the bus, and only had a fifty dollar note for a fare of \$2.60. The bus driver did not have change, and asked him to wait until the next stop when he hoped he would have change. However, the passenger did not have enough English to know exactly what was happening. The passenger behind the first one offered to pay the \$2.60 but the driver said that it was not allowed. Apparently, the law is that it is illegal to pay for someone else, although you could give him the money to pay for the fare himself. That is human law for you. No substitutes allowed - you cannot directly pay for someone else. But God's grace has provided us with a divine substitute. Christ did pay the penalty for His people, so they can walk through the gate and make their way to the Celestial City. Truly, His law is holy but His grace is amazing.

Sex and the body (1 Corinthians 6:12-20)

It is remarkable that Paul does not simply cite the seventh commandment about not committing adultery. Remember that most Greeks thought that the spirit came from God, and the body was either evil or irrelevant. If your body does not come from God, some things follow: you either battle your body as your enemy or you say it does not matter what you do with your body. Corinth had a temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, and her priestesses were prostitutes. Apparently, some of the church members at Corinth were still visiting this temple. Add the Greek view to some superficial slogans about freedom, and you have a recipe for trouble. The slogans are 'All things are lawful ('permissible' in NIV) for me' (twice in verse 12; also in 10:23) and 'Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them.' Paul Barnett says the slogans are distortions of sayings of Jesus. Whatever the case, Paul accepts that freedom is good, but he modifies the slogan. Christian freedom is not a freedom to sin - see 2 Peter 2:19. Jonathan Edwards compared physical desire to a fire in a house: 'very useful while kept in its place, but if left to take possession of the whole house, soon brings all to destruction.'

Dietrich Bonhoeffer: 'The liberation of man as an absolute ideal leads only to man's self-destruction.' To the Corinthians, the body was not from God, and freedom was what it is about; to the Christian, the body is from God, and freedom must not be misused.

1. What slogan is being cited by the Corinthians? (6:12) How does Paul qualify, and virtually negate, the slogan? Can you think of other areas of life where these qualifications need to be made? _____

2. What is the meaning of the slogan in verse 13a? Is sex like eating? _____

Eating is physical, so too is the sexual act, but the two are not comparable. Dr Alex Comfort tries to be clever, and says that 'chastity is no more a virtue than malnutrition'. His marriage broke down.

3. How is the resurrection of the body connected to the need to walk purely in the matter of sexual relations? (6:13b-14; see Luke 24:39-43; Phil.3:20-21)

To the Greek mind, the spirit would escape the body at death as a bird flees its cage. But the Bible teaches the resurrection of the body.

4. How does Paul connect Genesis 2:24 with the Christian's relationship with Christ? (6:15-17) _____

The slogan in Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* is 'Everybody belongs to everybody else.'

5. What does Paul tell the Christian to do with regard to sexual immorality? (6:18; see Gen.39:7-12 and compare to Proverbs 7:18-23) How are sexual sins different to other sins? What applications might we draw from this?

6. What does Paul tell each individual Christian about his or her body? (6:19) What divine attribute is said to be true of the Holy Spirit (as of the Son of God in Matt.18:20)? _____

Paul asks six times in this chapter: 'Do you not know?' This is one of those things which we are expected to know. The Spirit indwells the believer in Christ, and the Spirit is holy. You do not use a temple in the same way that you would a garbage dump.

7. What does Christ's death on the cross have to do with our sexual morality? (6:20a; 1 Pet.1:18-19) _____

Paul is not dealing with redemption from slavery, as we find in Galatians 3:13; 4:5; Revelation 5:9; 14:3, but a slave being bought by Christ to serve Him. Both concepts are true.

8. What is Paul's negative application to this chapter (6:18) and what is his positive application? (6:20b) _____

Notice how Christian doctrine and ethics are intertwined, and we cannot have one without the other.

Sexual relations (1 Corinthians 7:1-9)

Paul now takes up a number of issues that the Corinthians had written to him (7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1; 16:1, and perhaps 16:12) as well as an issue that he had heard about (11:17-34).

If God is not the creator of everything, He is not the creator of the body, and there are two options:

(a) the permissive option. The body does not matter so I can do what I like with it - drink, drugs, commit immorality;

(b) the ascetic option. The body needs to be beaten into submission. When the monastic movement broke out in the fourth century, it was common for monks to reject sexual relations, food, sleep, and bathing - anything that was seen as pandering to the body in any way.

1. What had the Corinthians written to Paul about? (7:1) What was the view of some of them? _____

The NIV is wrong: 'It is good for a man not to marry'. Paul is not writing to people who are thinking of getting married but to those who are already married. Some of the Corinthians thought that it was good for a man not to touch a woman, meaning touch her sexually.

2. How Paul see this view? (7:2) What reason does he give? _____

Gordon Fee thinks that this is not just a danger, but Corinthian men were actually visiting prostitutes.

3. The Bible does not readily adopt a unisex approach but it what does it say on this issue in verses 3-4? (see too Gen.2:25; 26:8; Prov.5:15-19; the Song of Songs) _____

In a rather earthy way, Louis Armstrong got it right in 1949 when Pope Pius XII asked him if he and his wife had any children. 'Not yet,' replied the jazz musician, 'but we're having a lot of fun trying.'

It is not to be the scene of battles in the marriage where there are grudges, headaches, and cold shoulders.

4. What special circumstances does Paul mention? (7:5) What warning does he give? What concession does he make? (7:6) What does he mean by this? _____

The greatest mind in the Church of the third century, Origen, castrated himself. He thought he was being spiritual, like these Corinthians here, but in fact, he was being stupid.

5. Is Paul commanding people to get married or remain unmarried? (7:6-7) What are the different gifts of the married and the single? Would you understand Paul's wish in a literal hard-nosed way in the sense that he realistically wanted to see everybody unmarried as he was? (see Num.11:29; 1 Cor.14:5a for other possible examples) What are some occasions when the single state is called for? (see Matt.19:12) What about the married state? (1 Tim.5:14) Given Paul's lifestyle, what was appropriate for him? What about Jeremiah? (Jer.16:1-2) _____

John Wesley got married later in life, and it was the worst mistake of his life. John Stott and Dick Lucas never married, and made the choice not to marry in order to concentrate on preaching the gospel.

6. What advice does Paul give to the unmarried and the widows? (7:8-9) Do you have any suggestion as to why he differs here in his advice from what he says to younger widows in 1 Timothy 5:14? _____

Gordon Fee says the unmarried are widowers while John MacArthur Jr says they are divorced. Paul was a bachelor or a widower or perhaps his wife left

him when he became a Christian. He is telling us what he has decided to do. 'Better to marry than burn' means 'burn with passion', not 'burn in the judgment'.

Divorce (1 Corinthians 7:10-16)

1. What command does Paul give to the married? (7:10) Who actually gives this command? (note Mark 10:11) What are the options for the separated Christian? (7:11) _____

Gordon Fee says that this is not referring to an action that has already occurred; it is a present general principle.

Seneca, the Stoic tutor of Nero: 'Is there any woman that blushes at divorce now that certain illustrious and noble ladies reckon their years, not by the number of consuls, but by the number of their husbands, and leave home in order to marry, and marry in order to be divorced?'

2. What does Paul say to those Christians who are married to unbelieving spouses? (7:12-13) What is the source of this teaching? Why do you think he says 'not the Lord'? _____

3. What is the status of the unbelieving partner married to a believer? (7:14) Does this 'being holy' or 'sanctified' mean 'saved'? (see 7:16) What, then, does it mean? What is the status of the children born of such a union? (contrast Ezra 10) Does this have any implications for infant baptism? _____

Charles Hodge: 'Christian children are not made holy by baptism, but they are baptized because they are holy.'

4. What happens if the unbelieving spouse separates from the believer? (7:15) Why does Paul write this? Is remarriage allowed under these circumstances? _____

5. What reason does Paul give for a Christian's maintaining a mixed marriage if at all possible? (7:16; see 1 Pet.3:1) _____

Some say that Paul expects a negative answer to verse 16, but the context seems against this.

Staying in one's calling (1 Corinthians 7:17-24)

1. What basic principle is set out in verse 17? Is social position necessary to the Christian life? Why does Paul emphasise what is taught in all the churches? (see 4:17; 7:17; 11:16; 14:33) _____

2. How is this principle applied to circumcision? (7:18) _____

3. Why does Paul say this? (7:19) But isn't circumcision a commandment of God in Leviticus 12:3? How would you understand 'the commandments of God' now in the light of the coming of Christ? What three things matter in the Christian life, as compared to circumcision? (Gal.5:6; 6:15) _____

4. Why does Paul repeat the principle in verse 20? _____

5. What is Paul's word to Christian slaves? (7:21) What if they have little hope of gaining their freedom? What if they are able to gain it? _____

Remember that this is slavery under the Roman Empire, not that in the Old Testament where it was mainly designed for thieves to pay off their debts, and could only last for six years. The slavery in the Old Testament is God-ordained; that in the New Testament is not.

6. How is a Christian slave to understand his spiritual standing? (7:22) How is a Christian free man to understand his standing? _____

Martin Luther: 'A Christian is the most free lord of all, and subject to none; a Christian man is the most dutiful servant of all, and subject to everyone.'

7. To whom does the Christian belong? (7:23) By what means? What implication flows from this? _____

8. How does Paul conclude this section? (7:24) Why should our social situation not be our first concern? _____

The single life (1 Corinthians 7:25-40)

1. What is one of the obvious advantages of the married life? (Gen.2:18) Does it have any disadvantages? (e.g. 1 Cor.7:28) _____

1 Corinthians 7 is not the easiest of passages for two reasons:

(1) Paul gives advice, rather than issues commandments (7:25, 35, 40). Usually Paul writes with apostolic authority (e.g. 14:37).

(2) So much is governed by what Paul meant by 'the present distress' (v.26; NIV 'present crisis'; NRSV is wrong with 'impending distress'). Perhaps there was great persecution at Corinth. A few years later there certainly was at Rome. Tacitus records of Christians under Nero: 'Dressed in wild animals' skins, they were torn to pieces by dogs, or crucified, or made into torches to be ignited after dark as substitutes for daylight.' But Bruce Winter has suggested that it could be a famine, and he has been followed in this by Simon Kistemaker. In other words, there are special considerations at work in this situation as Paul gives his advice.

2. Whom is Paul addressing in verse 25? What is the nature of his writing here? (compare to 14:37; 1 Thess.2:13) _____

Some think that Paul is referring to husbands and wives in a 'spiritual marriage' where there are no physical relations. This is in view in verses 1-5, and such 'marriages' were not totally uncommon in the early and medieval period. But Paul is almost certainly referring to virgins or betrothed couples under pressure from 'spiritual' Christians not to go ahead and get married.

3. What trouble is present at Corinth, and perhaps elsewhere? (7:26; see above) From 1 Corinthians 7:7-8; Matthew 19:12; 1 Timothy 3:2, 4-5, what are some of the things that the Bible says about the single life? _____

Some Christians have remained single all their lives - Henry Martyn (who went to Arabia, India and Persia), Charles Simeon (who preached at Cambridge for over fifty years), Amy Carmichael (in India for fifty years). When Dietrich Bonhoeffer was imprisoned by the Nazis, one of the things he expressed a desire for was to get married and have a child.

4. Because of the present distress, what is Paul's advice in verse 27? _____

The NIV refers to the married and not getting divorced, but he is surely referring to the betrothed, and the issue of going ahead with the marriage.

5. Is marriage a sin? (7:28; note 1 Tim.4:1-3) What will those who marry experience in this life? Why is the 'for better or for worse' put in the marriage vow? _____

6. Why is the time short? (7:29) How should a Christian live in such circumstances? (note Matt.24:19 and Jer.16:1-4 for examples) _____

This is not referring to the imminence of the Second Coming but to the real possibility of imminent death.

In World War II the Lutheran theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer became involved in the plot against Hitler. In the middle of all this he became engaged to be married, which goes to show that great men can still do silly things.

It was said of Thomas Carlyle and his wife, that God was good in bringing them together for that way He only made two people miserable instead of four.

Martin Luther once wondered how many arguments Adam and Eve had in their 930 years of marriage!

7. What is the Christian perspective in vv.29-31? Why? (see 1 John 2:17) What are some of the dangers that the pilgrim might face? (Mark 4:19; Matt.22:30) _____

8. What does Paul desire for the Christian? (7:32) What difference can being

married make? (7:32-34) In what spirit does Paul write? (7:35) _____

This is not a matter of sin and holiness, but of claims on our time. It is easy to think: 'I would be greatly spiritual except that the wife wants me to take out the garbage, one youngster wants me to fix his toy car, another is playing *The Three Little Pigs* on the DVD, another has crashed the computer, and the toddler is screaming his lungs out because he is wanting to be fed. If it were not for them, I would be super-spiritual.' The problem, of course, is not the circumstances but us.

Remember that most of the apostles were married (1 Cor.9:5) and most of the prophets so far as we can tell (see Isa.8:3; Ezek.24:15-27).

John Wesley got married at 48, but it was the most disastrous mistake of his life. He continued to preach all over England but his wife never came with him, and when she died, Wesley did not hear about it in time to get to the funeral.

The hymn says: *Take time to be holy.*

9. What if the betrothed man goes ahead with his marriage? (7:36) What is the situation and what is the remedy? What if the situation is different? (7:37) What is Paul's evaluation of the two options? (7:38) _____

The NASB in verses 36-38 assumes that the situation is a father seeking the best for his unmarried daughter. This is almost certainly wrong. Verse 36 has 'let them marry', not 'let her marry'.

10. Is a widow allowed to remarry? (7:39; see 1 Tim.5:14) Whom can she marry? What principle is there for every Christian? _____

11. What advice does Paul give to the widow? (7:40) Why? In what spirit is it given? _____

Verse 26 governs our understanding of what Paul says here. Gordon Fee comments that 'One can only guess what Paul might have said in a different setting.'

The Christian's use of his liberty (1 Corinthians 8:1-13)

Richard Baxter used to quote the old proverb: 'In fundamentals unity, in doubtful things liberty, in all things charity.'

1 Corinthians 8-10 tells us about not pressing for our 'rights'. In Corinth meat was often offered to idols first in one of the many temples. Then it was either eaten in the temple or the pagan priests would sell their share of the meat sacrifices to the meat market. So the question arose: 'Should a Christian eat this meat if it has been offered to an idol first?' The strong party said: 'Yes, go ahead, an idol is nothing.' The weak party said: 'No, it is idolatry to eat meat which has been offered to idols.'

The Corinthians seem to have argued that

- (a) idols are nothing (8:1, 4);
- (b) food is a matter of indifference (8:8);
- (c) the sacraments will protect us (10:1-5);
- (d) Paul may not be a real apostle because he did not accept financial support, and he ate idol food sold in the marketplace (1 Cor.9:1-18).

Paul replies that the sacrificial food should not be eaten in pagan temples (10:1-22), but can be eaten outside as long as it does not lead others astray (10:23-11:1).

1. What subject is then introduced? (8:1) Does a Christian need knowledge? What, however, is the danger of simply having knowledge? What does knowledge require with it? Why? _____

2. Why does Paul issue the warning that he does in verse 2? (see too Isa. 57:15; Ps.34:18) _____

Leon Morris quotes an old commentator: 'Knowledge is proud that it has learnt so much. Wisdom is humble that it knows no more.'

3. What is a needed evidence that we are on the right track? (8:3) _____

Gordon Fee regards the right reading as 'If anyone loves, this one truly knows (or, is known).' This fits the context well, but has little manuscript support.

4. What two propositions does Paul affirm? (8:4; see Acts 19:26) What false conclusion did some of the Corinthians draw from this? (note 10:20) _____

5. How is the pagan and the Christian view contrasted? (8:5-6) What do the Father and the Son do? (8:6; see John 1:1-3; Heb.1:1-3) _____

The Jew in the Old Testament would recite the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4). This is the Christian *Shema*.

There is no real difference between gods and lords (Deut.10:17). 'Lord' is used to describe God in His relation to the world - He is Lord of it, He rules over it.

Gordon Fee: 'The "gods" designate the traditional deities, who are regularly given this appellation in the literature but are seldom referred to as kyrioi ("lords"). The term "kyrios", on the other hand, is the normal title for the deities of the mystery cults.' He adds: 'God the Father is both the ultimate source and the ultimate destiny of all things, including ourselves; the Lord Christ is the divine mediator, through whom God created all things and redeemed us.'

6. What is the danger for those with a weak conscience? (8:7) _____

7. What can be said about food in the strict sense? (8:8; see 6:13; Rom.14:14, 17) _____

Fee says that verse 8 is the opinion of the Corinthians. It undoubtedly is, but in principle Paul agrees with it. The Old Testament food laws have been fulfilled, so we have freedom now as to what we can eat. Paul agrees with the strong party, so you might now expect him to say: 'You cannot worship idols but you can eat meat that has first been offered to idols.'

8. Instead, Paul issues another warning. What is it? (8:9) What is the danger if a 'strong' Christian uses his knowledge in an uncaring way? (8:10-11; see Gal.5:13) _____

Gordon Fee says that Paul is arguing about participating in cultic meals, but this hardly seems to account for all that he says. It would mean that because of what he says here in 8:10, combined with 10:19-22, he would be describing himself as one with a weak conscience! Surely he is describing an extreme case for the sake of argument.

Calvin: 'there is nothing to which we are more prone than this, that every one follows his own advantage, to the neglect of that of others.'

Past associations can be very strong on weaker personalities e.g. those who in the past have been drug addicts, prostitutes, involved with the occult, alcoholics, homosexuals, or addicted to pornography.

9. How serious is this for the Christian? (8:12; see Matt.25:40, 45; Acts 9:4) _____

10. What is Paul's strong resolve on this issue? (8:13) Can you apply this principle to any situations today? _____

It is not a matter of standing up for your rights. It is a matter of using your knowledge in a loving and humble way.

It was John Donne who said that no man is an island.

Paul's use of his rights (1 Corinthians 9:1-18)

At first sight 1 Corinthians 9 does not seem to have much to do with 1 Corinthians 8. Paul had been saying that a Christian has the right to eat meat which has been sacrificed to idols but he must not use this right if it could lead a weaker brother astray. 1 Corinthians 10 returns to the same subject. So 1 Corinthians 9 looks like Paul's mind started to wander. Not so; Paul knew what he was doing. He deals with his not making use of his rights.

In chapter 9 Paul seems to be doing four main things:

- (a) he gives an example of what it means to give up a right that one possesses;
- (b) he defends his apostleship;
- (c) he defends his practice of eating marketplace food (9:19-22);
- (d) he defends his practice of not accepting material support from the Corinthians (cf. 2 Cor.12:13).

1. What is the point of the four questions that Paul throws up in verse 1? Why does he ask them? What was one of the main qualifications for being an apostle? (Acts 1:21-22; 1 Cor.15:8) Can there be apostles today? Was Paul's view of the resurrected Christ a vision or an objective sighting? _____

2. What was the Corinthians' relationship with Paul? (9:1-2; see 3:6, 10; 4:15; note Rom.15:17-22; 2 Cor. 10:13-16) _____

3. What do 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-9; 1 Corinthians 4:12; and Acts 18:3; 20:34 tell us about Paul's means of support? What do you think of faith missions? _____

The reason for Paul's action is not exactly clear, but it seems to be more the need to preach the gospel of free grace freely in a cultural setting not used to that rather than the financial strength or otherwise of the congregations.

4. What does Paul set out to do? (9:3) _____

5. What rights does Paul have? (9:4-5) Who are the 'we'? What do we learn about the other apostles? (9:6) Does the Roman Church have the right to forbid marriage to its clergy? _____

6. Who else has these rights? (9:7) _____

7. How does Paul take the argument further in verse 8? _____

8. What is Paul's argument in verse 9? (see Deuteronomy 25:4) _____

The idea is if God is so concerned with the welfare of oxen - and He is (Ps.147:9) - then He is all the more concerned to pay the pastor.

9. What is the point that he drives home in verses 10-11? _____

10. What had the Corinthians done with other apostles and pastors? (9:12a) Nevertheless, what did Paul do? (9:12b) How might we have a right to do something but not exercise that right? _____

Paul does not mention them by name, but perhaps he has Apollos in mind.

11. How did God look after the Old Testament priests and Levites (who were not given any land to cultivate)? (9:13; see Deut.18:1-4) _____

Gordon Fee says that Paul could be referring to pagan temples too but that is unlikely. New Testament pastors are not priests but the principle remains.

12. What has Christ Himself taught concerning this? (9:14; Luke 10:7-8; see too 1 Tim.5:18) Do you think that the Christians who received Paul's letters must also have had a copy of at least one Gospel (i.e. there was a Gospel written before the epistles)? _____

13. What does Paul suddenly say in 9:15? What does he explicitly disavow? What is his boast? _____

In the original Greek, Paul is so emotional that he does not finish the sentence, although it is obvious what he is saying.

14. Why cannot Paul boast? (9:16; see Gal.1:15-16; Amos 3:8) How is Paul compelled to preach? What if he does not? _____

J. C. Ryle carved 'Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel' on the pulpit at Stradbroke in Suffolk.

15. What, then, is Paul's policy? (9:17-18) Why? How is his conversion and his work both all of grace? What is his policy based on this? (see 9:12b; 2 Cor.6:3; 12:14-16) _____

At the age of 27, Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones gave up his job as assistant to Sir Thomas Horder, the king's physician, and went to pastor a struggling Calvinistic Methodist Mission Church in a depressed area of South Wales. The response of people was quite predictable: some thought that he had taken leave of his senses and others admired his sacrifice. This is how Dr Lloyd-Jones saw it: 'I gave up nothing. I received everything. I count it the highest honour God can confer on any man to call him to be a herald of the gospel.' Only a century after Paul wrote First Corinthians, Justin Martyr recalled how he went from philosopher to philosopher seeking the truth until finally he became a Christian. It is interesting that he left the Peripatetic (Aristotelian) philosopher after he asked for payment.

16. In summary, if we are faced by any issue, we should ask:

(a) Do I have the right to do this?

(b) Should I use this right, even if it is lawful?

Can you think of any modern examples where this would apply? _____

Evangelising in every situation (1 Corinthians 9:19-23)

Paul gives up rights for the sake of evangelising others.

1. What is Paul's general principle? (9:19) How is Paul free yet a slave? What motivates him? _____

Gordon Fee thinks that Paul means he is 'financially independent' but the idea is surely broader than this.

Augustine: 'Man is most free when controlled by God alone.'

Martin Luther: 'A Christian man is a most free lord of all, subject to none. A Christian man is a most dutiful servant of all, subject to all.'

2. How did he approach evangelising Jews? (9:20) Are we under the Old Testament law? How would you reconcile Galatians 5:2-4 and Acts 16:3? How did Paul present the gospel to the Jews in Acts 13 in the synagogue in Antioch in Pisidia? (see especially Acts 13:26, 35, 36-37, 38-39) _____

That is his approach to the Jews - show that Jesus is the Messiah from the Old Testament.

3. What was Paul's approach to Gentiles, those without the law? (9:21) What sort of law is the Christian under and what sort of law is he or she not under? How did Paul present the gospel to the Athenians in Acts 17:16-34? (note especially Acts 17:26, 28, 30-31) What if he had swapped the two sermons in Acts 13 and Acts 17? Would they have worked? _____

In the seventeenth century in China the Jesuit missionaries tried to use this passage to justify combining Catholicism and Confucianism.

4. In what way did Paul become all things to all people? (9:22) Who are the weak? (Gordon Fee says they are the weak in society; C. H. Dodd says they were non-Christian Jews who were 'morbidly scrupulous') What did he mean by this? How can this slogan be abused? How would you reconcile it with

Galatians 1:8-10? _____

James Hudson Taylor in China wore pigtails, while Amy Carmichael in India wore a sari. Young Rudyard Kipling once questioned General Booth of the Salvation Army about the practice of playing the tambourine at gospel talks. Booth told Kipling: 'Young man, if I could win one soul to God by - by playing the tambourine with my toes, I'd do it.'

I once had a long discussion on the deity of Christ and His death on the cross with a Muslim lass. I was amazed how open she seemed to be. At the end of nearly an hour and a half, I gave her a Bible. She looked at me, and commented that I had a beard (which I had at that time) - she saw it as spiritual. 'O no,' I said, 'this is a result of laziness on holidays.' The beard may have helped me get 90 minutes of New Testament study with her.

5. What motivates him in adopting this approach? (9:23) _____

An exercise in self-discipline (1 Corinthians 9:24-27)

To be self-disciplined, we need to give up what might be lawful.

1. Who receives the prize in a running race? (9:24) How does Paul apply this to the Christian life? _____

The ancient world held Olympic games, but every second year the Isthmian games were held near Corinth. Dio Chrysostom mentions six events: racing, wrestling, jumping, boxing, hurling the javelin, and throwing the discus. In fact, Paul would have been in Corinth for the games of A.D. 51. It is possible that he made tents for some of the spectators.

2. What do athletes do, and for what reward? (9:25) For what does the Christian 'compete'? (see also 2 Tim.4:8; James 1:12; 1 Pet.5:4) _____

Paul uses a strong word in verse 25 - 'agonizes for the prize'. According to Plato, athletes in the Olympic Games were disqualified if they failed to go into ten months of strict training. That may have been true also of the Isthmian Games.

3. What do athletes not do? (9:26) What do Christians not do? _____

Runners do not look behind, and for boxers, it is a case of hit or get hit.

4. What place does self-discipline have in Paul's life? (9:27) What warning does he attach to this? What is that saying to us? (see Luke 14:33; Rom.8:13; Phil.3:12-14) _____

Some say that he means that he could lose his reward as in 1 Cor.3:13-15. Others say that Paul is referring to salvation itself, that he would be denied entry to heaven.

It is as Bonhoeffer said, - there is no cheap grace.

No sacramental magic (1 Corinthians 10:1-12)

God gave us the sacraments - baptism and the Lord's Supper - to strengthen and confirm faith in Jesus Christ. But so often they are misused - some people ignore them, others treat them like magic. The Corinthians seem to have been in the latter category (see 1 Cor.15:29). In 1 Corinthians 8-10 the problem seems to have been that some Corinthians thought nothing of eating meat in pagan temples, because they thought that the Christian sacraments would save them.

1. What did Paul want the Corinthians (who were Greeks) to know about their Israelite forefathers? (10:1-4) What is the connection between Israel and the Church? Are the sacraments of the Old Testament vastly different to those of the New, or in essence very similar? Why is 'all' mentioned five times? Who led the Israelites through the Red Sea, guided them in the cloud, and fed them with manna, and provided them with water? (10:4; see Josh.5:13-6:2)

The rabbis told of a rock which followed the Israelites (see Deut.32:4, 15, 18,

30, 31). Paul says that rock represented Christ, which naturally implies the deity of Christ.

2. In spite of all these spiritual privileges, what happened? (10:5) _____

They received a type of baptism and ate a type of Lord's Supper, but that did not save them. Apart from Joshua and Caleb, and those under twenty years of age (Num.14), the Israelites wandered in the desert for forty years and perished outside of the Promised Land.

3. Why should we pay attention to what happened with the Israelites on their way to the Promised Land? (10:6) _____

4. What went wrong?

a. 10:6 (see Num.11:4-6) _____

b. 10:7 (recall Exodus 32) _____

c. 10:7-8; see Numbers 25 _____

The NKJV and the ESV have 'they rose up to play' in verse 7 while the NIV has 'indulge in pagan revelry'.

The incident is found in Numbers 25 where the Israelites became involved immorally with the women of Moab, and finally bowed down to the Baals. In the ensuing plague, 24,000 were killed (Num.25:9) or 23,000 (1 Cor.10:8) - both are round figures, of course.

d. 10:9 (see Num.21:4-7) Who was put to the test? What is this saying about who led Israel as well as who leads the Church? (remember 10:4) _____

e. 10:10 (Num.14:1-31; 16:41; Phil.2:14) _____

Clearly, the sacraments do not work like magic.

5. How does Paul connect the Old and New Testaments? (10:11) _____

6. What does Paul warn against in verse 12? (see Prov.16:18-19; Luke 22:33-34) _____

Calvin: 'any man is deceived who thinks anything more is conferred upon him through the sacraments than what is offered by God's Word and received by him in true faith.'

Handling temptation (1 Corinthians 10:13)

Oscar Wilde: 'I can resist anything except temptation.' It sounds like Wilde - witty but not wise.

1. What does Paul say about all temptations? (11:13a) How does that help us?

2. What does he say about God's nature? (11:13b) _____

3. What does this mean for us when we are tempted? (11:13) _____

4. What do the following verses tell us about sin and temptation?

James 1:13-15 _____

Ex.8:32; 9:12 _____

Ps.51:3 _____

Spurgeon: 'It is easier to kill the egg than the serpent.'

Martin Luther: 'We cannot stop the birds from flying over our heads, but we must take heed lest they build their nests in our hair.'

Gen.39:7-12 _____

Prov.4:14-15 _____

Heb.2:18; 4:15 _____

Thomas Chalmers: 'The best way of casting out an impure affection is to admit a pure one; and by the love of what is good to expel the love of what is evil.'

It is as the old hymn says: *Each victory will help you some other to win.*

Flee idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)

1. What does Paul command in verse 14? How does he appeal to their better judgment in verse 15? _____

The NIV and ESV have 'sensible people', but it is literally 'wise ones'.

Gordon Fee: 'But he does not mean "judge for yourselves" as to its rightness

or wrongness. They are to judge for themselves that Paul is right!

2. What do Christians do in the Lord's Supper? (10:16) What does this mean?

It is not like looking at an old photograph album, and wishing the person were still with you.

The Council of Trent in 1551 declared: 'If any one denies that in the venerable sacrament of the Eucharist the whole Christ is contained under each species and in each separate part of each species: let them be anathema.' Paul is not saying that the bread becomes the body of Christ or that the wine becomes His blood but that in the Lord's Supper we together fellowship with Christ.

3. What is the point of the one bread in verse 17? What does this mean for our celebration of the Lord's Supper? _____

4. What happened at the Israelite meals? (10:18; see Deut.14:22-23) _____

5. Does it then work the other way? (10:19-20) How could 1 Corinthians 8:4 be misused? What happens at pagan sacrifices? (see Deut.32:17) What is the Christian response? Can we take part in Hindu worship or an aboriginal smoking ceremony? What about a local school trying to push all, including Muslims, into a combined Christmas celebration of customs, beliefs and practices? Is it bigoted not to join in? _____

6. What cannot the Christian do? (10:21) Why does he say 'cannot' and not 'must not'? If we come to the Lord's table, what cannot we do? _____

7. What is said about God's character? (10:22; see Ex.20:5) What is the point of Paul's final question? _____

Christ does not only claim our worship but our exclusive worship. Patrick White called himself 'a religious bowerbird'. Was Paul?

Father William Boteler from Maryknoll Fathers in the United States: 'Christ said, "I am the way, the truth and the life" for us. We cannot deny that for

us. God desires that some of us be Christians and not others. That is a mystery. But there are other paths to arrive to God.' Compare that to Acts 4:12.

More than any other issue perhaps, this is the one which is threatening and pressing upon Christians today.

Not giving offence (1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1)

What about eating meat which has been offered to an idol, sold on the meat market, and then offered to you at your friend's 21st birthday, outside the pagan temple? Is that to take part in idolatry?

1. How does Paul qualify what is apparently a Corinthian slogan? (10:23; see 6:12) _____

Freedom is important but it is not the only issue. We must seek to do what is helpful (NIV; 'beneficial') and what will edify or build up (NIV; 'is constructive').

2. What should motivate the Christian in this matter? (10:24; Phil.2:4; Rom.15:1-3) _____

3. What can be done lawfully by the Christian? (10:25) What is he or she not to do? _____

4. Why, in principle, can anything be eaten by the Christian? (10:26; see Ps.24:1; also Mark 7:18-23) _____

5. What possible situation does Paul envisage in verse 27? Whose choice is it as to whether to go or not? What does this tell us about guidance? What are you to do if you do go to the pagan's place for dinner? _____

Professor John Murray, who was raised in the Free Presbyterian Church of Scotland but came to teach Systematic Theology at Westminster Theological Seminary in the USA. On one occasion a mother and her young lad came up to Murray, and the little fellow presented him with a carefully decorated Easter egg. As a member of the FPCS, Murray had never kept so-called holy days like Christmas and Easter, let alone had eggs and all that. Some of Murray's students saw Murray accept the egg with hearty thanks and hug the child. When the child and his mother were out of ear-shot, the students collared their professor: 'How can you accept the gift of an Easter egg when you oppose all these religious holidays? If this not compromise?' Murray

replied: 'Receive all things with thanksgiving, asking no questions for conscience's sake.' And he walked away with the egg.

6. However, what is the Christian to do if he is told that the meat has been sacrificed to idols? (10:28) _____

Verses 27-30 refer to what takes place in a home, not a pagan temple. In a pagan temple, the answer is 'No' - remember verses 20-21.

7. Whose conscience is Paul talking about? (10:29a) How important is conscience? (cf. Acts 24:16) _____

8. Why is Paul so quick to defend his actions in verses 29b-30? _____

Paul had apparently eaten meat that had been sold in the market and which had previously been sacrificed. For this, he had received some criticism.

Paul seems to be saying is that the Christian is free to eat in principle even if in practice he abstains.

9. What is to be the first motive of the Christian? (10:31) What does this mean for us? _____

10. What three groups are Christians not to offend? (10:32-33) How would you reconcile this with 1 Thessalonians 2:4 and Galatians 1:10? (note the contexts) Why has Paul adopted this policy? (10:33b) _____

Gordon Fee explains: 'To *give offence* ... does not so much mean to *hurt someone's feelings* as to behave in such a way as to prevent someone else from hearing the gospel, or to alienate someone who is already a brother or sister.'

11. What is Paul's final exhortation to the Corinthian Christians? (11:1) How are we meant to do this? _____

Should I leave my hat at home? (1 Corinthians 11:2-16)

In the first half of the 20th century it was common for women to wear hats to church, and insofar as that went back to Scripture and not to fashion, this is the passage which was the basis of that practice. But there are two problems to think out:

(a) The Christian woman at worship is to have her head covered, but with what? The RSV assumes that it is a veil, but it could be a prayer shawl. It is not wise to be dogmatic here - Rebekah's covering indicates modesty in Genesis 24:65 but Tamar's covering indicates shame in Genesis 38:14-15. Dio Chrysostom says that an adulteress on Cyprus would have her hair shorn. James Hurley has argued that the covering in 1 Cor.11 is long hair. Verse 15 says that the woman's long hair is given 'for' (NKJV) or 'as' (NIV) or 'for' (ESV) a covering. The usual meaning of the preposition ἀντὶ is 'instead of'. The covering could simply be long hair, or hair that is longer than men's hair.

(b) Is Paul basing his arguments on a natural order, which would be still binding, or on a custom of the day, which may not be still binding? In our culture, men do not kiss one another (1 Cor.16:20) and we do not wash each other's feet (John 13:14), but we ought to try to keep the principles behind those commands. Into what category does this passage fall?

There are probably four possible answers:

- (1) The passage has no applicability today.
- (2) The head covering is long hair.
- (3) The head covering is applicable today, either for all women at public worship or for women who pray or prophesy publicly.
- (4) The head covering is a meaningful symbol, which requires something similar but not identical today (Daniel B. Wallace).

1. Why does Paul commend the Corinthians? (11:2) What does he mean by traditions? How can traditions be either bad (e.g. Mark 7:1-8) or good (e.g. 2 Thess.2:15; 3:6)? _____

2. Verse 3 is clearly the key text to this section of Scripture. What does it say? What does it mean? Is it possible to have ontological equality and functional inequality? (compare John 10:30 to John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38; 14:28; Phil.2:6-11; 1 Cor.15:28) Can we interchange the roles of men and women in the way our unisex world wants to? _____

The ESV and Paul Barnett say that it refers to a husband and wife (remember that the Greek word for 'man' and 'husband' are the same, and the Greek word for 'woman' and 'wife' are the same).

The 'father' of modern feminism is Simone de Beauvoir who wrote *The Second Sex* in 1949. The first line of the second volume is: 'One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman.' It is supposedly nurture, not nature.

Kevin Giles has fiercely contested that the Son and the Father are equal in the Godhead, and men and women in humanity. He claims that those who

reject women's ordination are therefore anti-Trinitarian and heretical.

3. How are the differences between men and women to be reflected in how we dress and what we do in public worship? (11:4-7; note Deut.22:5) Can women pray or prophesy? If so, under what conditions? _____

The men have their heads uncovered (no shawl or short hair or both); the women have their heads covered (a shawl or long hair or both). I was walking along the river front street of Macksville once, and saw someone coming the other way - wearing a black singlet, tattoos, stubby in one hand, a gorilla-like lumber. I looked up as we passed in order to say hello, and saw that it was a girl.

4. What is the relationship between the two sexes? (11:8-9) How is this to be reflected in the family, the church, and even society? _____

5. Why is the woman (or wife) to have a symbol of authority (either a covering or long hair) on her head? (11:10; see 1 Tim.5:21) What do you make of this today? _____

The Living Bible has 'So a woman should wear a covering on her head as a sign that she is under man's authority.' The RSV introduces the word 'veil' when the Greek may only be referring to a covering, and the long hair may be that covering.

Gordon Fee says the authority is the freedom to choose, which she may not necessarily use, but this hardly fits the context.

Bruce Winter says the angels are messengers from the Roman authorities sent to spy out what the churches are doing. 'Angels' in Greek can mean 'messengers' at times, but this makes it a very definite reference.

6. How interdependent are the sexes? (10:11-12) _____

7. What do you make of the appeal to private judgment in verse 13? _____

8. What does nature teach? (11:14) What does it teach for the woman or wife? (11:15) _____

Calvin used to wear a skullcap as he preached, and he saw this as a custom which he maintained. In the 18th century men often wore wigs, and so George Whitefield often preached in a wig.

Gordon Fee tries to translate 'nature' here as 'custom'. It is 'nature' but it hardly seems iron-clad - remember that the Nazirites such as Samson wore their hair long (Num.6:5; see Acts 18:18). By the way, these verses seem to undermine the usual picture of Jesus with long hair.

The long hair for the women could be 'instead of' a covering. It is possible that Paul is arguing against the need for women to wear any head coverings.

9. What is Paul's final appeal in verse 16? Are the churches meant to be essentially similar in doctrine and practice? _____

What do we do today?

(a) we must maintain the principle of equality of essence but inequality of function in man-woman roles. Men and women are different but complementary.

(b) some of the customs may not be applicable to us today.

Paul appeals to their sense of shame, their sense of propriety, to the natural order, to custom in the world, and to church practice. Whether women wear a covering on their heads is comparatively trivial, but the principles behind it are crucial.

Celebrating the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

In the New Testament the Lord's Supper was either a full meal of bread and wine or was celebrated at the end of the agape or love-feast. This latter view is implied in the writings of many of the early Church Fathers.

1. How does Jude 12 help us with context for the Lord's Supper? _____

2. How can the Lord's Supper not be celebrated for our good? (11:17) How can the sacraments do harm? _____

3. What was the first problem at the Lord's table at Corinth? (11:18-19) How inevitable are these in the Christian life? How is the Lord's Supper to be an expression of unity? (see 10:17) _____

Gordon Fee says they were not the same divisions as those in 1:10-12, but this seems unrealistic.

Augustine called the sacrament 'the bond of love'. But not at Corinth!

4. What does Paul say about the Lord's Supper at Corinth? (11:20) How

drastic is that judgment?! _____

5. What is happening at the Supper at Corinth? (11:21) How different is this from the communions at virtually all churches today? _____

Matthew Poole says that this may only mean 'well drunk', not necessarily drunken, but it usually means 'to be drunk'. Apparently, when the Corinthians gathered together to celebrate the Lord's Supper (a supper at night), those who arrived first got started, ate and drunk too much, and forgot about the latecomers (probably slaves) missed out. Pagan writers like Juvenal, Martial and Pliny all refer to divisions at dinners where the 'have-nots' did not receive the same meal as the 'haves'.

6. Why is Paul so indignant? (11:22) What is going on? What is the Supper about? _____

7. Where did Paul get his information about the Lord' Supper from? (11:23) What did Jesus do at the Last Supper? (11:23-25) What does the bread represent? What does the cup represent? What would you say in reply to Catholic claims that the 'is' must be literal? (see John 10:7, 9; 1 Cor.10:4; Gal.4:25) Why are we to celebrate the Supper? (11:24-25) What is behind the Supper? (Ex.12; 24:8; Jer.31:31-34) _____

Paul follows the account in Luke more closely than those in Mark or Matthew.

8. What else does the Supper do? (11:26) How often are we to celebrate it? For what period of history is it appropriate? Why is it no longer needed when

Christ comes again? (note Rev.19:7-9) _____

The sacrament is what Augustine called it 'a visible word'. Here we taste and handle things unseen, as Horatius Bonar puts it.

9. What guilt is attached to abusing the Lord's Supper? (11:27) _____

Gordon Fee: 'His concern is not with the bread and cup in themselves, but with how through these the participants *remember* Christ.'

10. What are we called upon to do before joining in the Supper? (11:28)
Should the Supper be indiscriminately handed out to all? _____

This verse does not disprove the claim that covenant children can come to the Supper, but it certainly is an issue to be raised against that practice.

11. What happens if we do not discern the body? (11:29) _____

The body in verse 29 probably means the bread but it could refer to Christ's body or to His people as the body of Christ (Gordon Fee opts for this last view). All three views make sense.

12. What has happened to many of the Corinthians? (11:30) Why? _____

13. How could this have been avoided? (11:31) _____

14. What is our condition if we accept the Lord's judgment and discipline? (11:32) _____

15. What practical commands does Paul issue in verses 33-34? Is the Lord's Supper just a meal? _____

16. On what principle does Paul operate in verse 34b? _____

With most problems it is usually better to tackle the main issues first, and then work out towards the less vital matters.

17. How are we to come to the Lord's table? _____

The diversity of spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-11)

This is a new section in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians. In verse 1 he writes ‘now concerning’ spiritual gifts (ESV, NIV, NKJV) or, less likely, spiritual persons (F. F. Bruce). Literally, it is the ‘spiritual’ as an adjective with either a masculine or neuter noun understood. The problem in the Corinthian church was, as even the Pentecostal scholar, Gordon Fee, says, ‘almost certainly an abuse of the gift of tongues’. Paul is writing not to praise what is going on, but to restrain and control a wrong view of gifts.

1. What topic does Paul raise now? (12:1) _____

2. What were the Corinthians like as pagans? (12:2) Did they know what they were doing? Compare that to the Christian approach in 1 Corinthians 14:29, 32. How impressed ought you to be if someone says: ‘I was led by the Spirit; my mind was taken over’? _____

Here are some typical pagan comments. Plato: ‘No one in possession of his rational mind has reached divine and true exaltation.’ Lucian: ‘A sort of god carries us away wherever he wills, and it is impossible to resist him.’

3. What is the first and most obvious test laid down for discerning between spirits? (12:3) What has the Spirit come to do? (John 16:14) _____

Gordon Fee thinks that this is either hypothetical or something that happened in their pagan past. But perhaps it happened in a Christian gathering.

A charismatic Lutheran pastor, Larry Christenson: ‘Although one does not know what he is saying as he speaks in tongues, he does have a clear sense that he is praying to God.’ That is to emphasise the manner (how), not the content (what). It is precisely the opposite of Paul’s approach. It is not super-spiritual to not know what you are saying.

Peter Jeffery tells of one American pastor who taught his pet parrot to recite the first three questions of the Shorter Catechism, which probably did nothing for the parrot.

A woman once wrote to Griffith Thomas about the fullness of the Spirit. Griffith Thomas replied: ‘What is Christ to you? If He is little you have not the fullness of the Spirit. If He is Chief among ten thousand and Altogether Lovely, you have the fullness of the Spirit.’

4. How are the three Persons in the Godhead involved in the right use of gifts in the Church? (12:4-6) What point is Paul making here? _____

5. Why are the gifts given? (12:7; see 1 Pet.4:10) How should this affect how

you look at the use of gifts? What ought we say to someone who says of a true gathering of Christ's people: 'I didn't get anything out of it'? _____

In verses 8-10 there are nine gifts listed. Explain what you think each one means:

a. the word of wisdom _____

b. the word of knowledge _____

c. faith _____

This cannot be saving faith because every Christian has that. It must mean extraordinary faith. In the 18th century, Moravian missionaries worked with lepers and caught the disease, and even sold themselves into slavery in order to preach the gospel to slaves.

d. gifts of healings (plural) _____

e. the working of miracles _____

f. prophecy _____

g. discerning of spirits _____

I have met very godly Christians who seem to me to misjudge things and people, and lack discernment.

h. tongues _____

These are languages, but it is difficult to avoid the notion that there is some kind of ecstatic overtones to what was going on in Corinth.

i. the interpretation (or translation) of tongues _____

B. B. Warfield thought that all the miraculous gifts were apostolic to authenticate the claims of the apostles. That seems to go too far, but it is still true that prophecy, for example, is finished.

This list is not exhaustive - there are more lists in 1 Corinthians 12:28-30; Romans 12:4-8, Ephesians 4:11, and 1 Peter 4:10-11.

6. How are these gifts distributed? (12:11) Who distributes them? Who else distributes the gifts? (Eph.4:8; Rom.12:3; 1 Pet.4:11) How should this affect our understanding of our gifts? _____

We can all work on the gifts which we have, but none of us possesses all the gifts.

One body, many gifts (1 Corinthians 12:12-26)

The problem of unity and diversity is one for any society - how do you maintain unity without imposing an unrealistic uniformity? Paul gives God's answer - there is unity in the Spirit in the one body, but a diversity of gifts. Not for nothing did Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones regard First Corinthians as the most obviously relevant part of the Bible for the late 20th century and, naturally, the early 21st century. John Wesley said that there is no such thing as solitary Christianity. To be a Christian means to be a part of the body of Christ.

1. How many churches are there? (12:12) How is the church the body of Christ? _____

'So it is with Christ' must be short for 'So it is with the body of Christ'.

2. Who has incorporated Christ's people into this body? (12:13) Who baptizes in the Spirit? (Matt.3:11) What does baptism in the Spirit mean here in 1 Corinthians? Is it the same as conversion or after conversion? Who has received this baptism? What point does Paul make in verses 12-13 by using the word 'all' three times - all the members, all baptized, and all drinking of the one Spirit? Can we have Christ without the Spirit or the Spirit without Christ? (Rom.8:9; John 7:37-39)? _____

Despite what the NKJV and the NIV say, it is not baptism *by* the Spirit but *in* the Spirit.

Pentecostalism teaches that this takes place after conversion, and Dr Martyn Lloyd-Jones thought that a Christian could have many baptisms of the Spirit.

3. Of what does the body consist? (12:14) What does this have to do with the church? _____

4. What attitude is out of place in the body (church)? (12:15-16) Why is it out of place? _____

5. Taken to its logical conclusions, what would this attitude lead to? (12:17-20) Apply this to the church. What would a church be like if all its members were treasurers, pastors or musicians? Are there any useless parts of the body?

6. What other attitude is out of place? (12:21) What happens in the body (church) when this attitude takes over? _____

7. How is Paul's point in verses 22-24 true in the body and in the church? Upon what parts of the body do we naturally concentrate yet they may not be so vital? How can this be true also in the church? _____

Paul may have circumcision in mind, where the sign of God's covenant with His people in the Old Testament went to an unrepresentable part.

Joni Eareckson-Tada has completely lost the use of her legs, and virtually lost the use of her arms, but she still functions. Spiritually speaking, she is a most useful member of Christ's people on earth.

What about your liver? What could be less attractive, but what could be more necessary?

8. How is the church meant to work? (12:25-26) Apply this to the body and the church (note 2 Cor.11:28). _____

Getting the gifts right (1 Corinthians 12:27-31)

1. What does Paul say about the Corinthians in verse 27? _____

2. What sort of ranking is given in verse 28? _____

Explain each one of the eight listed here:

(a) apostles (Gal.1:1 John 19:35; 1 Cor.9:1; Acts 1:21-26; 2 Cor.12:12) _____

(b) prophets (Acts 11:27-28; 13:1; 21:8-9) _____

(c) teachers _____

(d) miracles (that is literal, but he obviously means 'workers of miracles' as the NIV has it) _____

(e) gifts of healings _____

B. B. Warfield said that they were for the apostles to authenticate their mission, and that therefore they died out when the apostles died out. There is a lot of truth in that, but notice that they are in separate categories in this list. Many fraudulent claims have been made by the likes of Benny Hinn and Kenneth Copeland, but there have been occasional miracles down through the ages. It is not wrong to pray for a miracle, and God may grant it. In apostolic times, God poured out miracles, so to speak, to authenticate the Messianic age. That reason has gone, but He is still able and may well intervene in this world in a miraculous way.

(f) helps (NIV - 'those able to help others') _____

John Calvin and Charles Hodge say this refers to the deacons, but it is surely to anybody who is able to help others in the cause of Christ in any way.

(g) administrations _____

John Calvin and Charles Hodge say this refers to the elders. No doubt, but again it can be broader than that.

(h) tongues _____

Gordon Fee says that it is mentioned last not because it is least but because it is the problem at Corinth. However, Paul is correcting the Corinthians who have gone overboard on the gift.

3. What is the point of the seven rhetorical questions that Paul fires at the Corinthians (and at us) in verses 29-30? What answer is demanded? _____

4. What does Paul tell us to do in verse 31a? _____

John MacArthur Jr says that it is an indicative, not an imperative, and that Paul is criticising the Corinthians for pursuing what they think are the higher gifts. That makes sense, and it may be read that way, but is unlikely. Paul is telling them what to do, not criticising them for what they are doing.

5. What does Paul promise at the end of verse 31? What is the difference between a gift and a fruit of the Spirit or a way of the Spirit? (see Gal.5:22)

Love is the way (1 Corinthians 13)

We need to remember the context which is not a wedding but Paul’s seeking to correct an over-valuation of the gift of speaking in tongues. It is thus in part polemical. Gifts are fine, but love is the most excellent way.

I think that it was Karl Barth who suggested that the reader should substitute the word ‘Christ’ for ‘love’.

1. What are five things which we may possess, but have nothing without love? How do these indicate the worth of love? (13:1-3)

(a) _____

(b) e.g. Jonah 4:1-3, 10-11 _____

(c) Mark 11:23 _____

(d) _____

(e) _____

Dickens’ Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House* fussed about everywhere but it was all self-aggrandisement.

2. Everyone is likely to fall for the slogan that ‘love makes the world go round’. We need more detail than that. List the characteristics, both negative and positive of love from verses 4-7. Comment on each one. Could we define Christian love as ‘self-giving holiness’?

A woman’s boyfriend told her that he loved her so much that if she did not marry him, he would kill himself. Her pastor, Alan Redpath, told her to do nothing: ‘Such a threat isn’t love; it is pure selfishness.’ James McAuley: ‘It isn’t in the flash of thunder/ But in the silent power to give.’

There is an old Jewish story of the after-life. All people were given long-handled spoons with which to eat. Those in hell could not feed themselves, and so were always hungry. Those in heaven solved the problem by feeding each other.

Pride is big-headed; love is big-hearted.

Love changes nappies, puts out the garbage, forgets the wrong done last week, and selflessly carries on doing what will benefit others, even though that wins no applause from the world.

3. How is love never-ending in a way that prophecies, tongues and knowledge are not? (13:8-12) Compare the here and now (Heb.11:1) with what is to come (1 John 3:2). _____

B. B. Warfield is one who says that the coming of the perfect refers to the completion of the canon, but it is surely the coming of the new heaven and the new earth. Jonathan Edwards: 'Heaven is a world of love.'

In ancient Corinth mirrors were made of polished brass.

4. How is love greater than faith and hope? (13:13) _____

Leon Morris: 'The commentator cannot finish writing on this chapter without a sense that clumsy hands have touched a thing of exquisite beauty and holiness.'

Love is worth more than any gift, love is humble and holy and self-giving, and love is forever, for all eternity.

What about speaking in tongues? (1 Corinthians 14:1-19)

Paul compares two gifts - prophecy and tongues. Abraham Kuyper defined prophecy as 'animated preaching, wherein the preacher feels himself cheered and inspired by the Holy Spirit.' We should go further than that, and define it as a direct utterance from God.

Today's tongue-speaking seems to be what Lewis Carroll might have called jabber-wocky.

The greatest preacher in the period of the early Church was John Chrysostom, who died in A.D. 407: 'This whole place is very obscure; but the obscurity is produced by our ignorance of the facts referred to and by their cessation, being such as used to occur but now no longer take place.'

In these opening nineteen verses, Paul looks at edification and intelligibility. Gordon Fee says that tongues ‘can be used privately as much as one pleases, but in the community only in the context of edification, which requires intelligibility.’ However, the question then becomes: ‘Why should private tongues be edifying if they are not intelligible?’

1. What are we to pursue? (14:1) But in terms of gifts (love is not a gift as such) what are we to earnestly desire? _____

2. In essence what happens when someone speaks in tongues? (14:2) _____

3. How is this different to prophecy? (14:3) _____

4. What, then, is the contrast between tongues and prophecy? (14:4) What is the purpose of the gifts? (see 12:7) Is Paul being sarcastic when he says that the tongue speaker edifies himself? _____

5. What does Paul wish for the Corinthians? (14:5) Will this actually happen? (see 12:29-30). Is it like when Moses said that he wished that all the Israelites would be prophets? (see Num.11:26-29) What is tongues interpreted and understood equal to? (note how Joel 2:28-32 is picked up in Acts 2:6, 11, 16, 18) _____

A Christian might say: ‘I wish everybody was saved.’ That is a biblical desire, provided you do not say that everybody is saved.

6. How useful is tongues without revelation, knowledge, prophesying or teaching? (14:6) _____

7. To what can tongues without interpretation be compared? (14:7-8) How is this so? _____

There is a certain member of the Barnes family who plays the recorder like this. It is anybody’s guess as to whether it is *London Bridge* or *Happy Birthday*. Speaking in tongues without interpretation is like that.

8. What is religious activity without intelligibility? (14:9) _____

In the eleventh century the church in Bohemia wanted the mass to be in a

language understood by the Bohemians, in the old Slavonic ritual, and not in Latin. Here is Pope Gregory VII's reply: 'Having frequently searched the holy scriptures, we have discovered that it has pleased, and still pleases, Almighty God to direct His worship in a hidden language.' Is that so?

In the fifteenth century, Bishop Reginald Pecock told the Lollards that 'thou shalt not find expressly in Holy Scripture, that the New Testament should be written in English to laymen'.

True enough, I suppose, but it misses Paul's point here.

9. Does speaking in tongues mean speaking in an ecstatic, meaningless language? (14:10) How is listening to unintelligible tongues like listening to someone speak in a foreign language? (14:10-11) _____

The Greek word for 'foreigner' in verse 11 is *barbaros*. To the Greek, anyone who could not speak Greek was a barbarian; he spoke *barbar*. If you do not understand me and I do not understand you, the result is, as verse 9 says, 'speaking into the air.'

10. What does Paul exhort the Corinthians to in verse 12? Why, and what would this imply? _____

Gordon Fee (a Pentecostal!) still says: 'Utterances that are not understood, even if they come from the Spirit, are of no benefit, that is, edification to the hearer.'

11. What should a person who speaks in tongues do? (14:13) _____

12. What is lacking if someone simply prays in a tongue? (14:14) _____

13. How does Paul want to pray and sing? (14:15) _____

14. What is the problem with untranslated tongues? (14:16) _____

In Eastern religions, people will chant *Om* for hours. It does no good because nothing is understood. In fact, there is nothing to understand.

Edward Irving was defrocked by the Church of Scotland in 1833. He has been called 'the forerunner of the charismatic movement.' Irving was a gifted preacher, but he came to bizarre views in doctrine and practice, and used to advise people: 'Keep your conscience unfettered by your understanding.'

15. What are the tongues speakers doing but what would be happening to anyone listening? (14:17) _____

16. Is Paul heartily endorsing speaking in tongues in verse 18? What is his motive? What does he mean? _____

Surely Paul is saying: 'I am not belittling something because I do not have that gift.'

17. What is the relative worth of tongues and intelligible preaching at public worship? (14:19) _____

10,000 is the highest numeral that could be expressed in Greek.

Tongues are a sign (1 Corinthians 14:20-25)

In verses 20-25 Paul says that tongues are not very useful for evangelising outsiders.

1. What does Paul call upon the Corinthian Christians to be like? (14:20) _____

He seems to have a saying of Jesus in mind (Matt.10:16; see too Eph.4:14-15).

F. C. Godet: 'It is indeed the characteristic of the child to prefer the amusing to the useful, the brilliant to the solid. And this is what the Corinthians did by their marked taste for glossolalia.' (Glossolalia is speaking in tongues).

2. What does the law say on this issue? (14:21; see Deut.28:49-50; Isa.28:7-10, 11-12) What does speaking in tongues refer to in the two Old Testament passages? Of what is it a sign? (14:22) Compare that to prophecy. _____

Tongues are a sign 'to' (NKJV) or 'for' (NIV, ESV) unbelievers. John MacArthur writes: 'The gift of tongues was attached irretrievably to one point in history, and that point has long been passed.' From what Paul says in verse 21, he argues that it is a sign of God's curse on Israel for its rejection of its Messiah. In terms of history, tongues are hardly known from the end of the first century to the beginning of the twentieth.

3. What effect does tongues have on an unbeliever? (14:23) Of what use are tongues in evangelism? On the day of Pentecost, did people understand what was being said? (Acts 2:8-15) _____

The cults of Dionysius and of Cybele had meetings where people raved. Kenneth Hagin: 'We don't understand the Bible with our mind.'

4. On the other hand, what effect might prophecy have on unbelievers? (14:24-25) How does Paul describe conversion? (see Acts 8:30-35) How does the new convert view the church? _____

Calvin says that 'it is only the knowledge of God that can bring down the pride of the flesh.' Plato declared that 'No one in possession of his rational mind has reached divine and true exaltation.'

To have the Spirit is to understand the truth:

*Holy Spirit, truth divine,
Dawn upon this soul of mine;
Voice of God, and inward light,
Wake my spirit, clear my sight.*

Decently and in order (1 Corinthians 14:26-40)

1. What happens when the church meets together? (14:26) What is to be one of the aims of meeting together? (cf. 12:7; 14:2-4; Heb.10:24-25) _____

It is for 'edification' in the NKJV; 'the strengthening of the church' in the NIV; and 'building up' in the ESV.

2. What regulations does Paul lay down for speaking in tongues? (14:27-28) What is the main point of these regulations? Should tongues descend into a collective babble? _____

3. How many prophets are to speak? (14:29) What are the hearers to do? _____

4. Can all prophesy at once? (14:30-31) Why not? Do you think that there are prophets today? _____

Wayne Grudem has suggested that New Testament prophecies were not like Old Testament prophecies in that they could be wrong and need to be tested. His thesis has trouble with the natural reading of verses like Ephesians 2:20 and Revelation 1:3 which put prophets in with the apostles.

Augustine in his sermons on First John says of tongues: 'That thing was done for a betokening, and it passed away.'

5. How does the Spirit interact with the prophet? (14:32) What happens and what does not happen? _____

The Bible has about forty different human authors for its 66 books, and yet it has one divine author (see e.g. Matt.22:43). Psalm 110 was written by David in the Spirit - both aspects are important. So, for example, the authors write in different styles.

6. How is the public meeting to reflect the character of God? (14:33) Is it spiritual to be disorderly in worship? Is there a danger in the opposite direction also? (see 1 Thess.5:19-20) _____

In Virgil's *The Aeneid* there is a description of the priestess Sibyl at work. It is a picture of frenzy and disorder. Sibyl spoke in no mortal tones, says Virgil, for 'her bursting heart was wild and mad.'

7. To what principle does Paul appeal in verse 33b? How important is this? _____

8. What does Paul teach about women in verses 34-35? What are they to do and what are they not to do? To what authority does Paul appeal? _____

There could be women prophets (e.g. 11:5), so it seems that Paul means that women are not to evaluate the prophets.

Gordon Fee (supposedly a conservative!) thinks that these verses are not authentic even though they are found in all known manuscripts (thousands of them).

The charismatic and Pentecostal movements have often used women preachers such as Kathryn Kuhlman and Aimee Semple McPherson. We should realise that Paul is not writing as a man of his age. At Corinth there was an Aphrodite cult with priestesses, but Paul still wrote what he wrote.

By 'law', Paul may mean Genesis 3:16, and the fact that in the Old Testament there were no women priests or elders (but there were prophetesses!)

9. Why are the Corinthians to fall into line with other churches? (14:36) Is there a place for sarcasm in the Christian life? What about innovation? _____

10. What will a true prophet or spiritual person recognise about Paul's authority? (14:37; see 1 Thess.2:13) Can one be a Christian and reject Paul's apostolic authority? What is Paul's sentence of judgment on those who reject him? (14:38) _____

'Let him be ignorant' in NKJV; 'he himself will be ignored' in NIV; in the ESV it is 'recognised'.

11. Given the Puritan maxim 'Be much in the main things,' how are tongues and prophecy to be compared? (14:39) _____

12. What is Paul's final word on this issue? (14:40) _____

13. Can you sum up the main points of 1 Corinthians 12-14? _____

The fact of the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:1-11)

The *Histories* of Herodotus record that on one occasion, King Xerxes of Persia (Esther's husband) reviewed his army, then initiated a rowing match which the Phoenicians of Sidon won. Xerxes was enjoying himself, and congratulated himself as a lucky man. But almost immediately, his uncle, Artabanus, found Xerxes weeping, and asked him the reason. Xerxes replied: 'I was thinking and it came into my mind how pitifully short human life is - for of all these thousands of men not one will be alive in a hundred years' time.' The only way Xerxes could cope with it was to put aside his gloomy thoughts. That is how most people cope with those fleeting intrusions of

insight into the human condition.

Paul only raises it because there is a problem in the Corinthian church (15:12) which was probably not a denial of Christ's resurrection, but a commitment to Plato's immortality of the soul.

1. What does Paul say about the subject in hand? (15:1) Where did it come from? What does it do to us? (15:2) What are the conditions? Is there a possibility of false belief? _____

2. What is 'of first importance'? (15:3-4) Is the gospel what we do or what God has done? What are its central facts? How are history and theology connected? On what authority is it proclaimed? _____

John Bacon was a sculptor and a Christian. On his epitaph, he had inscribed: 'What I was as an artist seemed to me of some importance while I lived; but what I really was as a believer in Jesus Christ is the only thing of importance to me now.'

3. Bertrand Russell said that the Christian faith was 'built on the ground that fairy-tales are pleasant'. A letter in the *Sydney Morning Herald* pontificated that 'faith ..., by definition, disregards evidence'. What can we say to that? What Scriptures might Paul have in mind? (Isa. 53:10-12; Ps.16:10; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:21-22) _____

4. Paul lists six resurrection appearances. What are they?

He leaves out the appearances to the women, which were the first. Women were not always allowed to appear as independent witnesses in court, so that the fact that they are the first eyewitnesses to the resurrected Christ has all the hallmarks of authenticity over it.

(a) 15:5a _____

(b) 15:5b _____

Matthias had replaced Judas.

(c) 15:6. What does Paul say about most of these brethren in the year A.D.55? _____

(d) 15:7a; see John 7:5 _____

(e) 15:7b _____

(f) 15:8; see Acts 9 _____

5. Given Deut.19:15, what might be said about the resurrection of Christ as

history? (Acts 26:22-23, 26) What is missing in the chorus:

*He lives! He lives! Christ Jesus lives today:
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way.
He lives! He lives! Salvation to impart.
You ask me how I know He lives.
He lives within my heart.*

6. What does Paul call himself? (15:9) Why? _____

7. What is the explanation for the change in Paul? (15:10) What does Paul say about this grace? _____

8. Did the apostles teach different messages, and celebrate their diversity? (15:11) What is to be our response to the apostolic message, whoever delivers it? _____

In 1937 Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote: 'the fact that Jesus Christ was raised from the dead is the sole ground of my hope that I, too, will be raised on the day of judgment.' On 9 April 1945 at Flossenburg, a month before the war ended, Nazi prison guards came to take him out to be hanged, on Hitler's special order. He scribbled a note to George Bell, the Anglican bishop of Chichester in England: 'This is the end - for me, the beginning of life.'

What if Christ was not raised? (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)

1. What is being believed by some at Corinth? (15:12) _____

Almost certainly, they were clinging to the Greek view that at death, the soul escapes the body which is left to rot. The Stoic philosopher Seneca in the first century said that at death 'I will leave my body, and myself I will give back to the gods.'

2. What would follow if there is no resurrection of the dead?
vv.13, 16 _____

A. C. Swinburne was a second-rate poet who lived from 1837 to 1909. He spent his life writing against the Christian faith, and even wrote of 'the supreme evil, God'. He also wrote that 'dead men rise up never'.

Barbara Thiering thinks that Christ never died on the cross, and recovered in

the tomb. Some say that the disciples stole the body and put out the story that Jesus had risen from the dead.

v.14b _____

v.14c _____

Their preaching would be empty (NKJV), useless (NIV) or in vain (ESV) because it would not coincide with reality.

v.15 _____

v.17 (note Rom.4:25; 5:10) _____

v.18 _____

3. If Christ is not resurrected, what is the only conclusion that we could come to about the Christian faith? (15:19) _____

1 Corinthians 15:12-19 uses the verificationist approach to apologetics - it draws conclusions from two or more models. There is no middle ground in this. If there is no resurrection, Christianity is not just a little bit wrong; it would be totally wrong.

Christians who trust in Christ for everlasting life would still be in their sins. Johann Sebastian Bach wrote *Come, Sweet Death*, but that would be folly of the first order.

C. S. Lewis: ‘Aim at Heaven and you will get earth “thrown in”: aim at earth and you will get neither.’

Here are two ridiculous unbelieving statements. Professor G. W. Lampe: ‘Jesus’ bones ... cannot be supposed to be elsewhere than in Palestine. That question is of little importance.’ Bishop J. A. T. Robinson: ‘the truth of the Resurrection is a present experience.’

The firstfruits of a great harvest (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

1. What in fact has happened, and what does it mean for believers? (15:20; for the firstfruits, see Lev.23:10-11) _____

Gordon Fee: ‘By calling Christ the “firstfruits”, Paul is asserting by way of metaphor that the resurrection of the believing dead is absolutely inevitable; it has been guaranteed by God himself.’

2. How has death come into the world? (15:21-22; Gen.2:17; 3:19; Rom.5:12, 18) Was Adam a real man? How has the defeat of death come into the world? (see too Col.1:18) _____

Thomas Goodwin: ‘In God’s sight there are two men - Adam and Jesus

Christ - and these two men have all other men hanging at their girdle strings.'

3. What is the order of the resurrection? (15:23-24) _____

Alfred Lord Tennyson wrote a poem *In Memoriam* which has the lines:

*Behold, we know not anything;
I can but trust that good shall fall
At last - far off - at last, to all
And every winter change to spring.*

That is the kind of *hope so* approach that is common today.

4. From Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:6, what does Paul say about Christ? (15:25)

5. What is the last enemy to be defeated? (15:26) _____

John Donne:

*Death be not proud, though some have called thee
Mighty and dreadful, for, thou art not so ...*

He concludes:

*One short sleep past, we wake eternally,
And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die.*

6. Who is excepted in what is explained so far? (15:27) Why? _____

7. What is the final victory? (15:28; see Rom.11:36; Phil. 2:10-11; Rev.21:3-4)

What if it's not true? (1 Corinthians 15:29-34)

In the Christian faith, everything is connected to everything else. If there is no resurrection, there is no judgment, Christ did not rise, He is not divine, and you and I have no reason to follow Christian morals.

1. What follows if there is no resurrection from the dead? (15:29) _____

This is the most contested verse in the whole of the New Testament. Simon Kistemaker and Gordon Fee spend pages on this, and then admit that they do not know. In fact, a man called Mathis Rissi has written a whole book on this verse, but we are not much the wiser for it.

Here are just a few possibilities:

(1) Beza says that Paul was only referring to those who washed the dead for burial. Good try, but it says 'washed for the dead', not 'washed the dead'.

(2) Calvin says it refers to catechumens on the point of death who requested baptism.

(3) Some take the baptism to be metaphorical as in Mark 10:37-39. But the context is against its being metaphorical.

(4) John MacArthur says it refers to those who were baptized because of the dead, i.e. because of the brave testimony of Christians who died.

(5) It may possibly mean 'baptized in order to see the dead' i.e. to see their dead relatives or friends who died as Christians. When he was dying, Henry Venn told his children and grandchildren: 'if anything could make heaven not heaven to me, it would be the not having you with me there.' It had a deep impact on those who heard.

(6) Paul may be referring to a practice of baptism for the dead which he does not endorse but refers to for the sake of argument. John Chrysostom says the idea is fit for 'people out of their mind'. The Mormons practise it but sometimes a preacher will let something go for the sake of a more important issue.

Your guess is as good or as bad as mine on this one. Gordon Fee: 'But finally we must admit that we simply do not know.' For what it is worth, I think number 6 is the best option. 1 Corinthians 11:34 shows that Paul did not raise every issue involved in a problem. For example, in debating with a Muslim, I would not press that he believes that Adam lived in Paradise in heaven before he was cast down to earth because of his sin. The big picture of the Fall is more vital than the details, at least to begin with.

2. Will we risk anything for Christ if there is no resurrection of the dead? (15:30) _____

3. Why is Paul able to live the that he does? (15:31; 2 Cor.4:8-11; 11:23-28)

4. What advantage would Paul have in doing what he did at Ephesus if there is no resurrection? (15:32a) _____

Paul fought with the beasts at Ephesus. That is a proverbial expression, like saying 'I spent last week in the lions' den'. Paul was not literally thrown to beasts but he did nearly die at Ephesus - see Acts 19:23, 29-32; 2 Cor.1:8-10.

5. If the dead do not rise, what is the logical way to live this life? (15:32b)

Gordon Fee describes life without a resurrection hope as 'a constant round of nothing.'

6. In verse 33, Paul cites the Greek poet, Menander. What is his point? _____

7. What does Paul tell the Corinthians to do? (15:34) Why? What is the link between belief in the life to come and this life? (see Luke 12:19; 2 Peter 3) _____

Thucydides says that when the plague came to Athens, people thought the end was near so they indulged in all sorts of vice and crime. They did not believe in any resurrection, so they tried to extract as much pleasure out of this life as they could.

Charles Wesley:

*Soar we now where Christ has led,
Following our exalted Head;
Made like Him, like Him we rise;
Ours the Cross, the grave, the skies.*

The resurrection body (1 Corinthians 15:35-49)

The words for 'body' (*soma*) and 'flesh' (*sarx*) are found all through these verses. Christ redeems the whole person, not just the soul or spirit but the body too.

1. What question does Paul guess someone will ask? (15:35) _____

What if the person is burnt to death? Or run over by a steam roller? Or eaten by a shark? Or what if the corpse has just rotted in the grave? How can the body be put back together and be raised from the dead?

2. What is Paul's response? (15:36a) _____

It is more than 'How foolish!' (NIV) Paul calls the person, not the idea, a fool.

3. What illustration does he give from nature? (15:36-38; see John 12:24) Who looks after the natural order? (15:38) Why does Paul mention this? _____

The plant is in the seed. This is some sort of illustration of the resurrection body. The body you are lugging about now is like the seed, but the resurrection body is like the full plant. There is both continuity and discontinuity between the seed and the plant, the body here and the resurrection body. We have one life in two modes - one before and one after death and resurrection.

4. What is another illustration from nature? (15:39) _____

5. What is yet another illustration? (15:40-1) _____

Martin Luther: 'Our Lord has written the promise of the resurrection not in books alone, but in every leaf in springtime.'

6. How does the earthly body compare with the resurrection body:

(a) v.42 _____

When Richard Baxter was dying, someone asked him how he was. He replied: 'Almost well.'

(b) v.43a; Phil.3:20-21 _____

(c) v.43b _____

(d) v.44 _____

What do you think a spiritual body is? _____

Note that vv.36-41 deal with the continuities between this body and the resurrection body, while vv.42-44 deal with the discontinuities.

7. What is the difference between Adam and Christ? (15:45-47; note Gen.2:7)
 What came first with the creation of Adam? (15:46) _____

Gordon Fee: 'Believers are said to share both kinds of existence, that of Adam through their humanity, that of Christ through their resurrection.'

8. What conclusion does Paul draw from this for all humanity? (15:48-49; see Rom.8:29) _____

James McAuley wrote a hymn which says: 'By your kingly power, O risen Lord,/ All that Adam lost is now restored.' Actually, it is more than that - in Christ we receive more than Adam lost.

Victory! (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)

When G. K. Chesterton's sister, Beatrice, died at the age of eight, her grief-stricken father turned her picture to the wall, got rid of all her possessions, and forbade the mention of her name. Chesterton's father was sympathetic to Christianity but not really a Christian.

Thomas Gray referred to death as 'the inevitable hour'.

There is a contrast between the Christian and the unbelieving approach to death - see Hebrews 2:14-15.

1. Why cannot flesh and blood inherit the kingdom of heaven? (15:50) _____

Calvin: ‘our flesh will be a participant in the glory of God, but it will be as renewed and quickened by the Spirit of Christ.’

2. What needs to take place and how shall this happen? (15:51-52; 1 Thess.4:16) What does he mean when he says that we shall not all sleep? (remember Enoch and Elijah for a starter) _____

A mystery is something that we could not know except that God has revealed it.

All this will take place in a moment. The Greek word is *atomos*, from which we get ‘atom’, the smallest body.

The Jehovah’s Witnesses say that Christ returned invisibly in 1914. Not so - the trumpet will sound to announce it all. That is why John MacArthur suggests that this part of Scripture should be sung rather than preached.

3. What will take place, and what will be the result? (15:53-55; note Isa.25:8; Hos.13:14) Why does he taunt death? _____

Death is like the schoolyard bully who has received a hiding. Paul taunts him. When he was dying, Francis of Assisi sang. When John Bradford was sentenced to be burnt at the stake in July 1555, he stated: ‘Be of good comfort, brother; for we shall have a merry supper with the Lord this night.’ In 1963 C. S. Lewis was dying, and he called it ‘solemn fun’.

In 1542 Martin Luther’s daughter, Magdalene, died. Luther had prayed that she would be spared, but she died in his arms. Then we read: ‘As they laid her in the coffin he said: “Darling Lena, you will rise and shine like a star, yea, like the sun ... I am happy in spirit, but the flesh is sorrowful and will not be content, the parting grieves me beyond measure ... I have sent a saint to heaven.”’

4. What makes death so terrible? (15:56) How does this work? (see Heb.10:31) _____

5. Why does Paul give thanks? (15:57) _____

The verb is in the present tense - the victory is even now.

Dark, dark indeed the grave would be

Had we no light, O God, from Thee!

6. How does this transform the way we live now? (15:58) Why does Paul begin this verse with ‘therefore’? Explain each of the verbs. _____

It is extraordinary that after spending 57 verses on the resurrection, Paul did not conclude with something like the victory set out in Revelation 21:4. Instead, verse 58 concentrates on this life. The heavenly minded are of the most earthly use! Nevertheless, the present is driven by our view of the end. At the end of his *City of God*, Augustine contemplated the glory to come: ‘There we shall be still and see; we shall see and we shall love; we shall love and we shall praise. Behold what will be, in the end, without end! For what is our end but to reach that kingdom which has no end?’

Collecting for the saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-4)

1. What is behind the collection that Paul is taking up? (see Acts 11:27-30; Gal.2:9-10; Rom.15:27; 2 Cor.8-9) _____

2. Who has raised this issue? (16:1a; note 7:1, 25; 8:1; 12:1) What had Paul done in Galatia and what does he tell the church in Corinth to do? (16:1-2) When? In what spirit? (see Luke 21:1-4) Why collect this on Sundays? What was done in the Old Testament? (Deut.14:28-29) How is the principle behind this to be continued? _____

Whatever happened to fund-raising experts?

The inscription on the tomb of Robert of Doncaster: ‘What I gave, I have; what I kept, I lost.’

3. How will Paul get the money to Judea? (16:3-4) What does this show about his trust of the Corinthians and the need to be circumspect in money matters? _____

The Greek is ambiguous - the NIV and NASB say that Paul is to write a letter of introduction while the NKJV and ESV say that the Corinthians will write the letter.

In 1776 the English tax commissioners audited John Wesley. They accused him of hiding plate from them, and so failing to pay excise tax on it. Wesley wrote back that he possessed four silver spoons, and had no intention of

possessing more while so many around him were lacking bread. When he died in 1791, it was found that he had earned about 30,000 pounds in his lifetime (mainly from writing books), but had given most of it away. The only money he possessed were a few coins in his pockets and dresser drawers.

In the 120s or 130s Aristides in Athens wrote of the life of Christians, and presented this to the emperor (perhaps Hadrian): ‘They walk in humility and kindness, ... and they love one another. They despise not the widow and they grieve not the orphan. He that has, distributes liberally to him that has not ... But when one of their poor passes away from the world and any of them see him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability. And if they hear that any of their number is in prison or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for their needs. And if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy and they have not an abundance of necessity, they will fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with his necessary food.’

Making plans (1 Corinthians 16:5-12)

1. What does Paul plan to do? (16:5-6) How flexible are these plans? Can we make definite plans in this life? (Prov.16:9) _____

Nothing is set in concrete, and it actually seems not to have worked out that way, and Paul is forced to be defensive - see 2 Corinthians 1:15-17.

2. What does Paul plan, and what is the caveat? (16:7; Acts 18:21; Rom.1:10; 1 Cor.4:19; James 4:13-15) _____

All his life, David Livingstone wanted to be a missionary in China, but he ended out in Africa.

3. Why does Paul plan to remain in Ephesus? (16:8-9) In what two ways does Paul describe the situation in Ephesus? What does this teach us? _____

Pentecost was about May-June.

4. What instructions does Paul give the Corinthians regarding Timothy (whom he had already sent to them)? (16:10-11; see 4:17) How should we treat Christian workers? _____

5. What had Paul urged upon Apollos? (16:12) Could he use his apostolic authority to command him? What does this reveal about Paul and about his leadership skills? _____

Final words (1 Corinthians 16:13-24)

Near the end of a number of his letters, Paul is prone to break into staccato exhortations - e.g. 2 Cor.13:11; 1 Thess.5:15-22.

1. List what Paul expects from the Corinthians, and us, and explain what each means (16:13-14) _____

In verse 13. Paul is saying: 'Be firm in the faith'. Also, the KJV has 'quit you like men', literally, 'play the man', probably meaning 'be mature'.

2. How does Paul describe the household of Stephanas? (16:15; recall 1:16) _____

3. What does Paul tell the Corinthians to do with respect to Stephanas and the other leaders? (16:15-16) How important is this? (cf. 1 Thess.5:12-13; Heb.13:7, 17) How are church leaders described in verse 16? _____

4. What do verses 17-18 reveal about Paul's capacity for fellowship? _____

5. What three greetings are found in verse 19-20a? How important is this? _____

6. What is part of ancient greetings? (16:20b; see 1 Thess.5:25; 2 Cor.13:12; Rom.16:16; 1 Pet.5:14) What aspect of this is binding today? (see John 13:14-15 for another example) _____

7. What does Paul do in verse 21? (note Gal.6:11; 2 Thess.2:1) _____

8. What is Paul's parting shot at his opponents? (16:22) What does *anathema* mean? (cf. Gal.1:8-9) How does Paul view the Second Coming? _____

'Love' here is *phileo*, not *agapao*. Also, *maranatha* is Aramaic, but Paul is writing to a Gentile Church. Jesus is obviously referred to as *Lord* from the beginning. His Lordship is not a Gentile invention!

9. What are Paul's final words to this letter? (16:23-24) _____

Gordon Fee: 'To write as he has does not mean he loves them less, but more.'