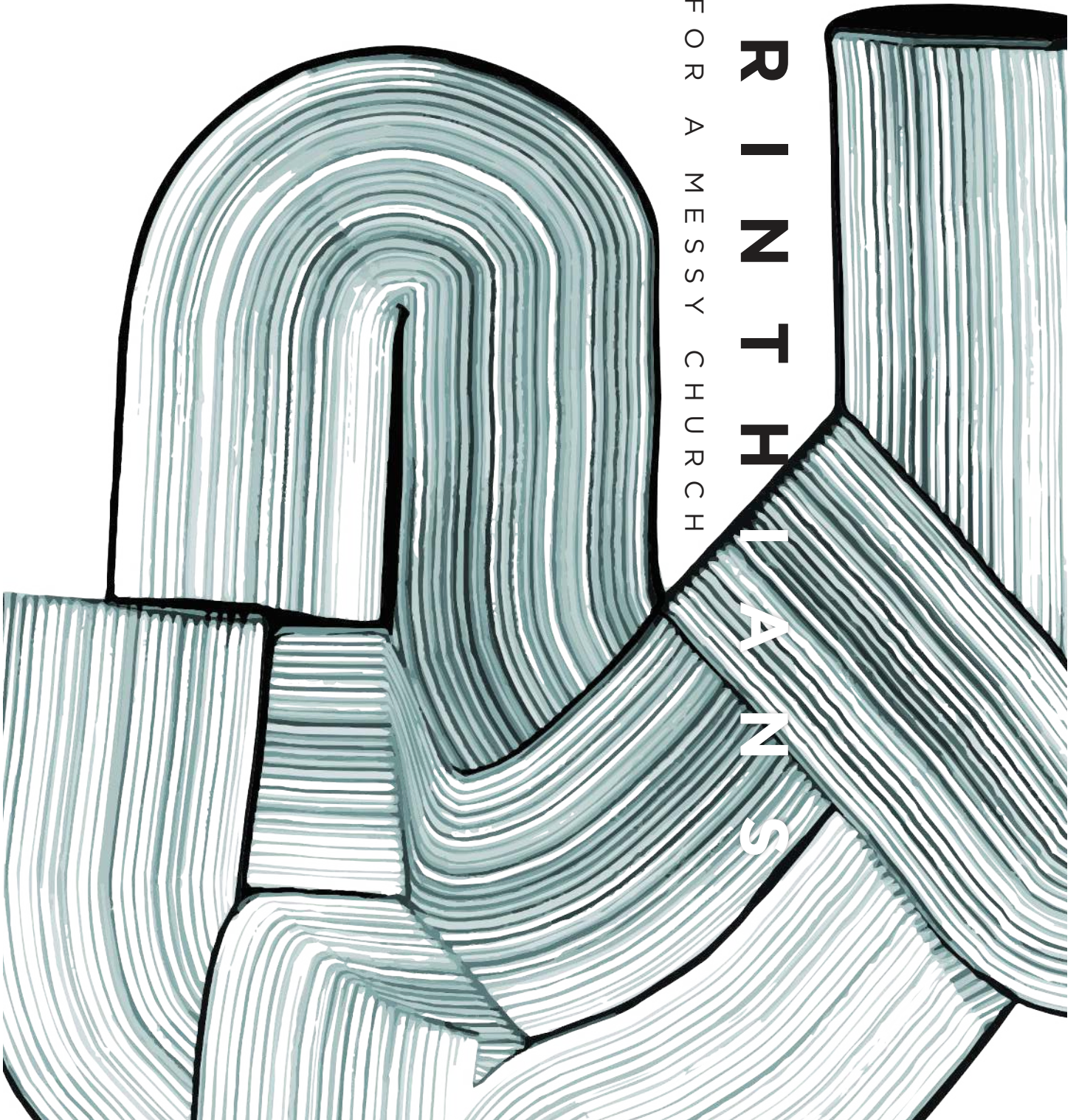




ST FAITH'S ANGLICAN CHURCH

**1 CORINTHIANS**  
GOOD NEWS FOR A MESSY CHURCH





# THE BOOK OF 1 CORINTHIANS

## Part 1 | Chapters 1-10

Ancient Corinth, like contemporary Sydney, was a cosmopolitan city where prosperity and hedonism were celebrated. The Apostle Paul planted a church there (Acts 18), and sadly the surrounding culture of the city left its mark on the church community. Instead of unity and clarity around how the Corinthians should live as God’s gathered people, there was a diversity of perspectives about what it looked like to live acceptably as followers of Jesus. This led to significant problems within the church - it was messy!

Paul’s correspondence in 1 Corinthians addresses those problems by pointing God’s people back to the gospel. The gospel solves each issue Paul addresses in 1 Corinthians because it is the gospel that informs how Christians should live.

Ultimately, that is what makes 1 Corinthians **good news for a messy church** - even a messy church like ours - it reminds us of the gospel! And in doing so, it challenges us to see every area of our lives through a gospel lens (whether that’s sexual ethics, conscience issues, doctrine, or even how we disagree).

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Note: At the end of each study, you will see the following box:

**Faith • Hope • Love**

This is to remind us that as we pray for each other to grow in spiritual maturity, we should pray that we will grow in these ways:

- **Faith:** That we will learn to trust God in every situation and in all things.
- **Hope:** That we will grow to set our hearts on the treasure that we have in Jesus.
- **Love:** That we will grow in self-giving love - that puts others before ourselves.

# Study One

## 1 Corinthians 1:1 - 2:5

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*What are some of the issues or problems that can cause division in a church?*

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9*

1. Who is this letter written by and who is it written to?
2. How does Paul describe this church in his opening greeting (v2-9)?
3. Do you think the positive descriptions of the Corinthian church are true of every church? If so, to what extent?
4. Look up 1 Cor 3:1-2; 4:14-21; 5:1-2; 6:7-8; 11:17-18; 15:33. From these passages, how would you describe the condition of this church that Paul is writing to?
5. What do you make of the contrast between these positive and negative descriptions of the Corinthian church?

*Read 1 Corinthians 1:10 - 2:5*

6. What problem in the church does Paul specifically raise in vs10?
7. How do you think this attitude problem may have arisen?

⇒ *Do you think this can still be a problem in churches today? How so?*

8. How does this attitude "empty the cross of Christ of its power"?

9. In Paul's day, what kinds of things did Jews and Gentiles find more impressive than the gospel ("the cross of Christ")?

10. In what sense does the gospel message seem weak and foolish?

11. How did Paul's own behaviour demonstrate the power of the gospel?

⇒ *How might Paul's reminder about the "foolishness" and "weakness" of the cross help to address the problem of divisions in the Corinthian church?*

⇒ *Are there things which people today find more impressive than the gospel (or want to add to the gospel to make it seem more impressive)? How could these things empty the cross of Christ of its power?*

⇒ *How can this passage help us to guard against quarrels in our church?*

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# Study Two

## 1 Corinthians 2:6-16

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*What is the "job" of the Holy Spirit? Discuss.*

*Read 1 Corinthians 2:6-16*

1. In verses 6-10, Paul compares the wisdom of the world with the wisdom of the gospel. How is God's wisdom different from the wisdom of this age?
2. Why are "secret" and "hidden" good words to describe God's wisdom?
3. What sorts of things demonstrate that people don't understand God's wisdom? (check out vs8)

⇒ *What are some examples of where we see people "not understanding" God's wisdom today?*

4. If God's wisdom is secret, how can we come to know it? (check out vs10-12)
5. According to verses 11-13, God's Spirit enables us to "know" and to "accept" this wisdom. What do these two aspects of the Spirit's work look like?

6. When it comes to understanding God's wisdom, how does the person without the Spirit contrast with the spiritual person (vs14-16)?

⇒ *What should these verses lead us to expect when it comes to popular opinions about the gospel (and other aspects of Christian living)? What difference should this make for us?*

⇒ *What implications does this passage have for the quarrels and factions that exist in the Corinthian church?*

⇒ *What implications does this passage have for our attitude to the bible?*

⇒ *What implications does this passage have for the importance of prayer?*

⇒ *When are you tempted to listen to the wisdom of the world rather than the "foolishness" of what God has revealed by his Spirit?*

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# Study Three

## 1 Corinthians 3:1-23

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*What attributes do you think make a good leader? Discuss*

*Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-23*

1. Why does Paul call the Corinthian church “not spiritual” but “worldly”, and “mere infants in Christ”?
2. In the following sections: what image of Christian leadership/ministry is used, and what main lesson do we learn from the image?

|         | Image of Christian leadership | Main Lesson |
|---------|-------------------------------|-------------|
| vs5     |                               |             |
| vs6-9   |                               |             |
| vs10-15 |                               |             |

3. What image does this chapter use to describe the church?
4. What is the only foundation on which a church may be built?



5. What is “the Day” that will bring each person’s work to light?

6. What warnings does this chapter give for Christian ministry and leadership?

7. What impact should this have on the boasting that was going on in the Corinthian church?

⇒ *Where do we face the danger of being impressed by influence, prestige, or personalities?*

⇒ *How do we avoid falling into this error?*

⇒ *How does this chapter affect your view of ministry/serving in church (for yourself and others)?*

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# Study Four

## 1 Corinthians 4:1-21

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*What are some of the ways that we are assessed and judged in various parts of life (e.g., work, study, relationships)?*

*Who determines the "assessment criteria" in each case?*

**Read 1 Corinthians 4:1-21**

1. Who are the "us" in v1?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What criteria does God set for those to whom he has given a responsibility?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Whose opinion of "Christ's servants" matters most?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What does this say to the Corinthians who are squabbling over which leader is better?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. How have Paul and Apollos been an example of "not going beyond what is written"?

  - a. How does this contrast with the Corinthians?

6. In the table below, list the comparisons Paul makes between himself and the Corinthians in vs8-13.

| Corinthians | Paul |
|-------------|------|
|             |      |

7. Why does Paul make these comparisons?

8. What do you think he might be hoping to avoid? What does this show us about how Paul feels about the Corinthians?

⇒ *Is God more concerned about “faithfulness” or “fruitfulness” as we serve in Christian ministry? What does this chapter contribute to this question?*

⇒ *Where might this challenge some of our own wrong thinking about what we value in church?*

⇒ *Where do you find it hard to be faithful in the ways that you serve?*

⇒ *Does this chapter challenge any wrong motives in the ways that you serve (or when you don't serve)?*

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## Study Five

## 1 Corinthians 5:1 - 6:20

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Discuss what do you think about the following statements:

*“Being comfortable with sin (my own and others’) is good because it shows how confident we are in God’s forgiveness.”*

*“What I do with my body doesn’t matter that much. God is going to give me a new one anyway.”*

### **Read 1 Corinthians 5:1-13**

1. In Chapter 5, Paul moves from divisions over impressive personalities to begin addressing a new issue. What issue has he moved on to and what specific case does he use to raise the issue?
2. How had the Corinthian church been dealing with this situation so far? How does Paul feel about this?

⇒ *What strikes (or shocks) you about Paul’s approach to the “immoral brother” in the Corinthian church? Why?*

⇒ *How can this be seen as a loving act?*

### **Read 1 Corinthians 6:9-19**

3. In 6:9-10, Paul mentions various kinds of people who “will not inherit the kingdom of God”. Who do you think he is referring to?

4. Why do you think he mentions this here and tells the Corinthians to “not be deceived” about this?

⇒ *What impact should the reminder in vs11 have on them (and in turn, us)?*

5. “All things are lawful for me” and “Food for the stomach and the stomach for food” are probably quotes of what the Corinthians were saying. What might this tell us about their attitude to sexual ethics?
6. How might this help us to understand why the Corinthians might have been proud about the sexual immorality that was going on amongst them?
7. Paul gives two reasons why “sexual appetite” is not the same as eating food (vs13 & 14). What are they? (Note: “and God will destroy them both” is most likely part of what the Corinthians were saying, rather than a part of Paul’s response)
8. What does Paul mean that, “your bodies are members of Christ”? (see 12:27) What difference should this make when it comes to sexual immorality?

⇒ *What specific, practical things can we do to help us to “flee from sexual immorality”?*

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# Study Six

## 1 Corinthians 7:1-40

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*What does our society say is better: being single or being married?*

*What about in our current Christian culture?*

***Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-16***

1. Why is Paul raising the issue of marriage and singleness?
2. What reasons does Paul give for the goodness of "sex within marriage"?
3. Given Paul's argument in 6:15-20, what is striking about Paul's affirmation of sex in marriage here?

***Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40*** (Don't fret, we'll come back to 17-24!)

4. What reasons does Paul give for the goodness of being single?
5. What do you think is meant by "the present crisis" (check out vs26 & vs29-31)?
6. In what sense can Paul say that "he who marries does right, but he who does not marry does better" (vs38)?

***Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24***

7. What would you say is the main idea of this section?

8. In the context of singleness and marriage, what does vs19 mean?

9. How does this section contribute to the discussion of marriage and singleness in this chapter?

*(Choose a few scenarios below to discuss) What does this chapter say to:*

⇒ *The single person struggling with singleness?*

⇒ *The single person who is considering whether or not to marry?*

⇒ *The married person who feels that his/her marriage is a burden that makes their life difficult and complicated?*

⇒ *The couple or family that seeks/finds their "fulfilment" in their family?*

⇒ *It can be easy to blame our circumstances for our problems. How is this chapter a good corrective for this? In what areas do you find yourself using your circumstances as an excuse to be ungodly?*

⇒ *Does our church culture here at Narrabeen reflect a biblical view of marriage and singleness?*

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# Study Seven

## 1 Corinthians 8:1 - 9:23

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*Can you think of a time where you have disagreed with another Christian on an issue that you (or they) considered to be a matter of freedom? How did the discussion proceed?*

***Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-13***

1. Why do you think Paul has started to talk about idols?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What question do you think the Corinthians might have asked him?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. What two different governing principles does Paul identify in order to discuss the issue of idols?
  - a. Which of these do you think the Corinthians were advocating?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
4. What is the Corinthians “knowledge” about idols? Does Paul agree with them?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
5. Does Paul encourage/discourage/allow eating meat that has been sacrificed to an idol? What is the basis for his judgment on this?

***Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-23***

6. How does Paul apply the principle from chapter 8 to himself here in chapter 9?



7. What is Paul's attitude to "rights" and "freedom" in this chapter?

8. How does 10:23-33 summarise the general approach that Paul is advocating?

⇒ *In what situations today might this teaching about idols apply for us?*

⇒ *In what other situations today should we apply the same principles to more general issues?*

⇒ *"It is possible to do something that is 'perfectly fine', and yet still sin in doing it". Do you agree with this? Why/why not?*

⇒ *Are there any particular issues where you might need to change what you do because it could cause others to stumble? Share and discuss.*

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# Study Eight

## 1 Corinthians 9:24 - 11:1

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*Do you tend towards over-confidence or under-confidence in your standing with God? What evidence do you see of this in your actions/attitude/thoughts?*

*Read 1 Corinthians 9:24 - 11:1*

1. What does Paul want the Corinthians to not be ignorant about?
  - a. What impression are we supposed to get about Israel's "spiritual standing" with God following the "exodus"? (check out 10:1-4)
  - b. What was the end result for these Israelites? Why?
  - c. So what point is Paul making about the example of Israel's history in 10:1-5?
2. What particular things does the example of Israel's history teach us NOT to do?
3. Were the Corinthians over-confident or under-confident in their faith (for examples, see 3:1-3; 4:8-10; 5:1-2; 10:14-22)?
  - a. What is Paul worried that this is leading to for the Corinthians?

4. What contrast do you notice between vs12-13?

a. What does this tell us about God's sovereignty and our responsibility in persevering as Christians?

b. How does this make you feel?

⇒ *What is the warning of the passage for Christians?*

⇒ *What is the encouragement (and challenge) of this passage for Christians?*

⇒ *Look again at the list of things that Israel's example warns us against. Are there any areas where you need to heed the warning to not let your confidence lead to a relaxed attitude to sin?*

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# pedals!

## What's your next step in pedals!

| Nome | Friend | Next Step |
|------|--------|-----------|
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |
|      |        |           |



**Pray** for their salvation. "Please soften .....’s heart so they accept you as their saviour".



Pray that God gives you an **Evangelistic Opportunity**.  
"Please give me an opportunity to talk about You with ....."



**Do** they know you're a Christian? If not, **Drop** a Christian word in a sentence. "How was your weekend?.... I went to church...."  
Do they know any other Christians? If not, **WHO** would be a good person to introduce them to? **Who** might they get along with? And **HOW** would you introduce them? For a social, coffee, beer, BBQ...? **WHEN** could you arrange this?



**Ask.** Have you asked them what they believe? If they've had any church experiences?  
If it seems too soon for a spiritual convo, have you asked them what their interests are? Have you asked them **WHY** they like those interests? Have you asked them deeper questions? Have you shown a deeper and genuine interest in them?



**Listen.** Have you listened to their points of view? Their interests? Their struggles? Their loves? Their hates? Their beliefs? Their issues with Christianity?



**Share.** Have you shared with them why you're a Christian? What it means to be a Christian? The difference that Jesus has made in your life?



**Invite.** Have you invited them to hear more? What do you think would be best for them? Alpha? Read the Word 121? Read a book or listen to a podcast in their own time? Come to church?