

# Hitchhiker's Guide to the CHURCH



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**1 Corinthians 1-4**  
INTEGRATED BIBLE STUDY GUIDE

## i

**How to get best value out of these studies...**

Welcome to a new series of 'Hitchhikers Guide To The Church' in the book of **Corinthians**. These studies were originally authored by Paul Harrington, Holy Trinity City. These Study Guides are designed in a FIVE part format...

- 1 **i** NTRO questions to get you thinking ....
- 2 **R**EAD it (tip: try reading the passage out loud)
- 3 **E**XPLORE it (Investigate what the Bible is saying)
- 4 **A**PPLY it—this section prompts you to reflect on what you've looked at and consider how it will change you and those in your group.
- 5 **P**RAY it—A chance to turn what you've learnt into prayer asking God to 'correct, teach, rebuke and train you in the way to think and live that is glorifying to God.

**If you're using these Guides in a Small Group**, it is vital that you have done preparatory work *before* you get to your meeting. This will be of great benefit not only to you, but to the other members of your group.

**If you're doing these studies individually**, make sure you let someone know you are doing so, and arrange a time to meet with them when you've finished (or even before) to let them know how your life is being changed by God's Word.

If you're wanting to dig deeper

**Recommended Reading:**

**John Stott**                    *Calling Christian Leaders (IVP)*  
**Paul Barnett**                *1Corinthians - Holiness and Hope of a rescued people. Focus on the Bible commentary*

- 6 What is Paul hoping to avoid in verses 18-21? Why?

**APPLY...**

- 7 What does faithful Godly leadership have to with the problems of disunity and division often experienced in churches?
- 8 At the end of this chapter, Paul finishes addressing the problem of quarrelling and boasting (in people) in the Corinthian church. Look back over the previous studies and list some of the encouragements and challenges that God has raised for you and your church.

Why not talk to your church leader or pastor about what you've learnt?

**PRAY...**

Use what you have learnt as a guide to writing out a prayer for your church and the people who lead you to pray regularly.

## 5 Study 5 : FAITHFULNESS in God's Church

### 1 Cor 4:1-21

#### INTRO...

- 1 When do you find it hardest to be faithful to God? How can we help each other during these times?

#### READ 1 Cor 4:1-21

#### EXPLORE...

- 2 What is the connection between the last part of chapter 3 and 4:1-7? How do verses 1 and 2 summarize some of Paul's points from chapters 2 and 3?
- 3 What are the characteristics of Christian leadership that Paul identifies in 4:1-7? What does God require of those whom he entrusts with a duty?
- 4 What issues is Paul tackling in verses 8-13? See also 1:5, 13:1?
- 5 Why does Paul need to warn the Corinthians? See verses 14-17. What does Paul want the Corinthians to do? What has he done to help them achieve this? (vv16-17)

## 1

### Introduction to 'Hitchhiker's Guide To Church'

What images come to mind when I say the word, 'Church'? Church can evoke all sorts of feelings for different people. For some church is boring, stifling and full of awkward people. For others, church brings to the surface memories of conflict, cold shoulders or worse still, abuse. For more and more Australians though, church is a word that means little, being largely irrelevant to them. Yet, for a minority, church is great being one of the high points in their week. How do you feel about your church?

But, how does God feel about church? What does the Bible have to say about 'church'? What is 'church'? Who is 'church' for? 'What on earth are we meant to do in 'church' and how are we meant to behave?' 1Corinthians is a helpful book because it helpfully answers many of these questions. In particular we learn just how precious 'church' is to God and therefore how we should treat it with great care.

### The Background to Corinthians...

The church in Corinth was established in about 50AD when Paul arrived from Athens. Liking up with Aquila and Priscilla, Paul stayed there for 18 months preaching and teaching. God brought much fruit from this ministry. You can read about it in Acts 18.

Corinth was an important port and the centre of trading routes. As a result of business there was a growing wealthy class. Corinth was also a cosmopolitan multicultural city. It was under the rule of the Roman empire but was heavily influenced by its Greek heritage, as well as by eastern culture brought by traders. The synagogue demonstrated there was also an important Jewish community in the city.

Corinth also had a multitude of gods and faiths with their many temples. Some temples involved ritual prostitution. In fact, historically Corinth had a reputation for sexual license.

Commercially prosperous, multicultural and a supermarket of spiritual options, Corinth of the first century and Australians of the 21st century have many similarities. Can you pick them I wonder?



# 4 Study 4 Lasting LEADERSHIP in God's Church?

**1 Cor 3:1-23**

## INTRO...

- 1 Write a definition of what a leader is?
  
- 2 What do you think are the characteristics of a good leader?

**READ 1 Cor 3:1-23**

## EXPLORE...

- 3 Why does Paul describe the Corinthians as not 'spiritual', but 'of the flesh, as infants in Christ'? (vv1-4)
  
- 4 What image does Paul use to describe Christian leadership in v5? What do you think is the main lesson from this?
  
- 5 What image does Paul use in verses 6-8 to describe Christian leadership? What do you think is the main lesson from this?

**Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17**

- 5 Look at v10-17. Why was the church at Corinth divided?
  
- 6 In v13, Paul asks three questions. What issues do they highlight about the centrality of Jesus?
  
- 7 Cyprian was a bishop in the early church (249-258AD). He taught that the bishop was the focal point of church unity, especially in leading the Lord's Supper. What do you think of this view in light of the passage?
  
- 8 Look again at vv 1-9. Is the church at Corinth holy? Why or why not?
  
- 9 Underline each reference to Jesus and God in verses 1-9. How does this help us understand the nature of church?

## APPLY...

- 9 How does Paul treat the Corinthians as he deals with their problems? What model does this provide for use?

9 What would be the “not negotiables” for working alongside other Christians (e.g. involvement in beach mission)?

10 According to vv4-9 (question 4) God’s people have a lot to be continually giving thanks for. How does this compare with your current attitude to your church?

**PRAY ...** Give thanks for your church family which you are a part of. Ask God to protect your church from quarrelling and destructive gossip.

7 What is the relationship between God’s word, God’s spirit and God’s apostles?

8 When it comes to understanding God’s wisdom, how does the person without the Spirit contrast with the spiritual person (v. 14-16)? How is it possible to know God?

### **APPLY...**

9 Why is it unhelpful and indeed unbiblical to separate the work of the Spirit and Scripture? What is a ‘spiritual person’?

10 What implications does this passage have for the quarrels and factions that exist in the Corinthian church and often exist in churches today?

11 What implications does this study have concerning the importance of prayer?

### **PRAY...**

Give thanks for the wonderful gift of God’s Spirit. Pray that the Spirit will provide you with insight into the thoughts of God himself.

## 3

**Study 3: WISDOM in God's Church****1 Cor 2:6-16****INTRO...**

- 1 When has the Bible been most "alive" for you?
  
- 2 What words would you use to describe the Holy Spirit?

**READ 1 Cor 2:6-16****EXPLORE...**

- 4 Underline the verbs (doing words) which tell you what the Spirit does. Any thoughts on what you discovered?
  
- 5 In vv 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? Why are 'secret' and 'hidden' good words to describe God's wisdom?
  
- 6 What place do the apostles have in God revealing His plans?

## 2

**Study 2: POWER in God's Church****1 Cor 1: 17 – 2:5****INTRO ..**

- 1 Why is it that we are sometimes embarrassed to talk about Jesus Christ and his death on the cross? How much of our difficulty has to do with the message itself?
  
- 2 If there was one area of life in which you could be more powerful, what would it be? Why?

**READ 1 Cor 1:17 – 2:5****EXPLORE**

- 3 Draw up two columns. Under column 1, write down all the "strong and powerful" words used in the passage. In column 2, write down all the "weak" words.

- 4 Any thoughts or comments about the lists?
- 5 Look at Isaiah 29 and Jeremiah 9. What is the thrust of these chapters in their original context? Why does Paul quote from them as he speaks to the Corinthians?
- 6 In verse 23, “stumbling block” is literally “scandal” and “foolishness” comes from the word “moron”. Why is a crucified Messiah a scandal (to Jews) and moronic to Greeks?
- 7 What reasons does the passage give for God choosing to work the way he does?

### APPLY ...

- 8 Why are Christians all morons for trusting in Jesus?
- 9 Do you “like to be liked”? How does this passage shape our expectations of popularity?
- 10 What would we as a church be tempted to boast in? What should we repent of?

- 11 The Koran says “they did not slay him (Jesus), neither crucified him, only a likeness of that was shown to them”. Why is the cross foolishness to Muslims? How would you answer a Muslim’s friend’s objection to the cross?

**PRAY** for specific people whom you have opportunity to share the gospel with. Ask for courage and confidence in the power of the gospel message. Pray also for your church. Pray they would trust only in the power of the gospel for salvation.