

“Welcome to Messy Church”

1 Corinthians 1¹⁻¹⁷; Acts 18

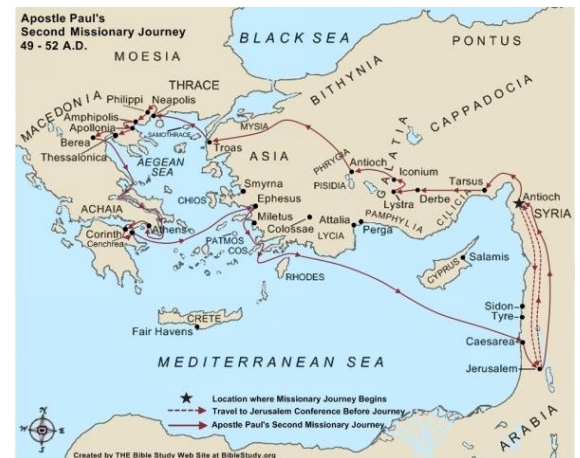
Have you ever found a Christian group that doesn't have any problems? If so, don't join it—you'll ruin everything! The church in Corinth was far from perfect. Paul had heard a long list of complaints about this eager but misguided flock. As he attempted some long-distance pastoring, where would he begin? Paul's starting point is very relevant for problem groups and individuals today.

Opening Question

- It's been said that “a corpse has no problems.” How does this saying help you understand the everyday life of your church or fellowship?

Discussion Questions

- 1) **Read Acts 18:1-18.** What do you discover about the beginnings of the church in Corinth?
 - a) Founding missionary team (vv.1-3, 5)?
 - b) His church planting strategy¹ (vv.4, 7)?
 - c) His message (vv.5, 13)?
 - d) The responses (vv.6, 8, 12, 17)?
 - e) Time spent planting & growing the church (v.11)
 - f) Church converts/members named (vv.7-8, 17)²
- 2) What do you know about the beginnings of your church (or small group)? Where have you seen or heard evidence of God's hand at work in starting or growing your church/group?
- 3) **Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9.** In the opening verses, Paul reminds them of his calling (v.1) and there's (v.2). What is God's purpose for each of them? For us?
- 4) The greatest cause for thanksgiving by Paul is the evidence of God's grace at work in the Corinthians. What blessings has God given others around you that you could thank him for?
- 5) **Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.** What area of their lives is still far from God's goal of them being “blameless” (v.8)? How has Paul become aware of the problem?
- 6) What seems to have caused or sparked “the quarrels” among them (vv.11-12)? What does Paul say and do here to try and help restore unity?
- 7) How did the unifying common experience of Christian baptism become a point of division?
- 8) How do we know when other loyalties (e.g. to a person or leader, to a mode of baptism, to a denomination, to a political party, to a union, to a team or group, etc.) might be out pacing a Christian's primary loyalty? What should we do if/when that is happening?



¹ Corinth's importance as a Roman colony, capital of the province of Achaia, economic hub of travel and trade, made it, in spite of its corruption, a good place to plant the gospel.

² Notice Crispus (v.8) is mentioned in 1 Cor. 1¹⁴ and Sosthenes (v.17) is mentioned in 1 Cor. 1¹.