

# Youth Teaching Resources

November 29, 2020



## The Right Stuff

Matthew 23:1-12—“The Right Stance”

Matthew 25:1-13—“The Right Preparation”

Matthew 25:14-30—“The Right Investment”

Psalms 100—“Good God!”

## Christmas Letters

**1 Corinthians 1:1-9—“Every Good Gift”**

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# “Every Good Gift”

1 Corinthians 1:1-9

## YOUTH Teaching Guide

by Jeremy Colliver

This youth teaching outline is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Baptists Today*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Baptists Today* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Baptists Today* so they can prepare before the lesson.

### SOCIAL MEDIA CHALLENGE

*Throughout the season of Advent, the social media challenge will be centered around the weekly themes of Advent.*

On Sunday, post a picture of one, purple candle that is lit. On Monday, post the word “HOPE”. On Tuesday through Saturday, post images or phrases that provide you with hope.

### TEACHING THE LESSON

#### Fellowship

Begin your session by showing the clip “I Hope to See You Again” from *About Time*. If you are unable to show the clip, summarize it to the best of your ability, and then facilitate a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) Why are each of them hesitant?
- 2) What does he hope for?
- 3) What does she hope for?
- 4) How have you experienced hope in this past year?
- 5) How does your faith provide you hope?

#### Information

Transition to the next section of the session by reading 1 Corinthians 1.1-9. Allow the students to ask any initial questions they have about the text. As you answer their questions, you may want to provide some of the information found in Tony’s commentary to answer their questions. When the students have had an opportunity to share their initial thoughts, continue the discussion by facilitating a discussion using questions like the following:

- 1) What do you know about the people of Corinth? Why is it important to know the setting before reading the passage?
- 2) Why were there different factions within the church at Corinth? How did this trouble the church?
- 3) With the factions and the trouble, why did Paul still refer to them as sanctified?
- 4) Why does Paul praise God in his introduction to the church at Corinth?

## Information *continued*

- 5) How is this a passage about hope?
- 6) How does this letter relate to you? Is it applicable to you? Explain.

If your group would like to dig deeper in their discussion, share some of the insights that Tony provides in the “Digging Deeper” portion of his commentary. You may want to use some questions like the following to facilitate your discussion:

- 1) What was the significance to Corinth during this time?
- 2) How would Paul have had contacts in Corinth?
- 3) Who was the Corinthian church made up of?

You may also want your group to discuss “The Hardest Question” if they would like to continue their discussion on this passage. Tony poses the following question to consider as “The Hardest Question”: What does it mean to be called?

## Transformation

Conclude your time together by introducing the social media challenge for the week:

On Sunday, post a picture of one, purple candle that is lit. On Monday, post the word “HOPE”. On Tuesday through Saturday, post images or phrases that provide you with hope.

Allow the students time to share things that provide them with hope.

Close with a prayer thanking God for hope, even in a year when there were times when there seemed to be no hope.

## Digging Deeper

by Tony Cartledge

Digging Deeper is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. Watch for the “shovel” icon in the THE BIBLE LESSON, and then reference that item in this Digging Deeper resource. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

**Corinthian history**—The Corinth that Paul knew was built upon the ruins of an ancient Greek city called Ephyra. As a leading Greek city, it had survived much of the Roman world’s expansion including the Peloponnesian Wars (461-446, 431-404) and the Corinthian War (395-387), but it was destroyed in 146 BCE by the Roman proconsul Lucius Mummius, who razed the city, killed the men, and sold the women and children into slavery. Mummius did such a thorough job that Corinth lay in ruins for a century, until Julius Caesar ordered that it be rebuilt in 44 BCE and populated it at first with former slaves who were granted both freedom and land as a reward for military service.

**Corinthian significance**—Corinth was an important city for a variety of reasons.

*Geographically*, it was located on a narrow isthmus (4 mi. X 10 mi.) between Greece proper and a large peninsula called the Peloponnesus. This made it an important stop on the trade route from the East, and a bustling trade city that controlled two ports. In Paul’s day, it was much harder.

Goods or even smaller ships brought into the port of Cenchreae through the Saronic Gulf from the Mediterranean side of the isthmus could be carted across the narrow land corridor on a stone track called the *diolkos*, then ship out again from the port of Lechaion and sent into the Corinthian Gulf, allowing faster access to points west. In the late 19th century, a canal was cut across the isthmus, but it is rarely used, because modern ships can easily go the long way around.

*Politically*, Corinth was the center of Roman government for the province of Achaia.

*Economically*, Corinth was considered the “Fourth City” of the Roman Empire.

*Ethnically*, Corinth was an eclectic, cosmopolitan city, no longer Greek, but settled by many former Roman soldiers who were given land, along with immigrants from all over, including Jews from the diaspora. The city was known as a rowdy place, famous for its immorality and wantonness. The phrase “to Corinthianize” has been used to mean “to become immoral.”

*Religiously*, Corinth harbored a variety of belief systems, including adherence to the old Greek gods, to the Roman gods, mystery religions, Judaism, and an incipient form of



## Digging Deeper *continued*



of the temple to Apollo are pictured at left). Eastern and Egyptian deities also had adherents in the city. Thus, Christians in Corinth had to contend with many well-established and very tempting religions. Issues raised in the letter provide evidence that rituals of their pagan neighbors had a strong influence on the church's worship.

Gnosticism that would prove to be a serious threat to the early church. Idolatry was common, and citizens were encouraged to participate in the imperial cult and worship the Roman emperor. Temples to Poseidon-Neptune (Greek and Roman names for the same god), Aphrodite-Venus, Demeter-Ceres and Kore-Persephone were established, along with temples to Apollo and Asklepius (the remains

**Corinthian immigrants**—The edict of Claudius expelling Christians from Rome is mentioned in Acts 18:2 is also known from other sources including the writings of Josephus, Suetonius, and Dio Cassius. Josephus, a Jewish-Roman historian who would have been a contemporary to the event, said the edict took place in the ninth year of Claudius' rule. Suetonius, who was born after the events, researched and wrote biographies of Rome's first 12 emperors.

He said of Claudius: "He expelled from Rome the Jews constantly making disturbances at the instigation of Chrestus." (Suetonius, *Claudius*, 25; from Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, *St. Paul's Corinth: Texts and Archaeology* [Liturgical Press, 1983], 138–39).

Scholars typically assume that "Chrestus" is an alternate spelling for "Christus," but it is not clear whether Claudius was concerned with Jews who were agitating against Christ-followers, or if the work of Christian missionaries had led to an uprising.

**A Corinthian date**—Paul's first visit to Corinth is the most securely dated encounter in his known missionary career. The account in Acts 18 says that Paul was brought before proconsul Lucius Junius Gallio (Acts 18), a brother of the famed rhetorician and writer Seneca the Younger. An inscription found in Corinth independently dates Gallio's rule to either 50-51, 51-52, or possibly 52-53 CE. When Paul was brought before Gallio on charges of unlawful activity, Gallio dismissed the charges, showing little regard for the concerns of the Jews (Acts 18:12-17).

**Corinthian contacts**—An awareness of Paul's contacts with the church offers a guide to understanding the letter's basic structure: chapters 1-6 seem to deal mostly with problems Paul had learned about from "Chloe's people" who had visited him, while sections of chapters 7-16 relate directly to issues raised in the church's letter requesting his advice.

**A Corinthian correspondent**—In the opening lines of the letter, Paul sent greetings from "our brother Sosthenes." This person is unknown to us, unless he happened to be a

## Digging Deeper *continued*

converted synagogue leader. A Jewish spokesman named Sosthenes had brought charges against Paul before the proconsul Gallio (Acts 18:17). He would have had to undergo a conversion as remarkable as Paul's to have become a companion in ministry, but it is possible, because another synagogue leader named Crispus did become a believer, according to Acts 18:8, and Paul himself baptized him (1 Cor. 1:14). Whether the Sosthenes credited with contributing to the letter is this person or not, Paul would not have mentioned him if he had not been someone the Corinthian community would have known and respected.

**The Corinthian church**—The word Paul uses for church is *ekklesia*, the root of our English words like “ecclesiology” (the study of the church), “ecclesiastical” (relating to the church or its clergy), and “ecumenical,” referring to fellowship or activities involving different faith groups.

The word *ekklesia*, which means “gathering,” was typically used in Greek versions of the Old Testament to translate *qahal*, used to describe the congregation of Israel during the wilderness wandering or in gatherings at the temple. This is why the Hebrew Bible's book of Qohelet (a participle formed from *qahal*, meaning “one who gathers”) is called Ecclesiastes in English Bibles.

The church at Corinth was known for dissension, sniping, and misbehavior among the members. When I was in seminary, the late professor Malcolm Tolbert once quipped that it must have been a Baptist church, because the only way for a church to get in such bad shape was to have total freedom, and to totally misuse it.

# The Hardest Question

by Tony Cartledge

The Hardest Question is designed to support THE BIBLE LESSON by Tony Cartledge, printed in *Nurturing Faith Journal*. You can subscribe to either the digital or print edition of *Nurturing Faith Journal* to access the lessons. Please also ensure that each person in your class has a copy of *Nurturing Faith Journal* so they can prepare before the lesson.

## What does it mean to be “called”?

Paul often used the language of calling, and nowhere more clearly than in today’s text. Paul said he was “called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God” (v. 1). He asserted that the believers in Corinth were sanctified in Christ Jesus and “called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (v. 2). By the faithfulness of God, he continued, they were “called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 9).

Language about calling reappears in 1:26, and is particularly prominent in chapter 7, where Paul urged the believers to remember the state in which they were called and to be faithful in the new relationship with Christ to which they had been called.

Paul did not provide a comprehensive statement about his theology of calling, but it is clear that he believed the Christian’s calling originates with God and is mediated through Christ.

In modern thought, we often think of “calling” as a sign of belief that God has chosen someone for a particular type of ministry: we say someone is “called to preach” or “called to the mission field.” While this individualistic concept has validity with reference to one’s seeking a vocational direction that pleases God, professional ministers are no more “called” than any other believers.

Paul reminded the Corinthians that they were “called into the fellowship of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord” (v. 9). The word translated as “fellowship” by the NRSV is *koinonia*, which emphasizes the sense of community: Christ-followers are called to be part of the corporate body of Christ that we think of as the church universal. As Paul put it, believers in Corinth and elsewhere are “called to be saints, together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours” (v. 2).

Calling, then, has both personal and corporate components. Paul, perhaps because he expected Christ to return soon, emphasized the importance of living out one’s call in whatever station of life one found himself or herself, even if it was the life of a slave (7:17-24). Paul acknowledged that one’s life circumstances could change (slaves could become free, for example), but the exercise of one’s calling as a faithful believer was not dependent on changing one’s station in life.

Our calling is not so much to *do* something as to *be* the person God has in mind, whatever our life situation. The Corinthians, Scott Nash has written, “were not called to follow a script; they were called to *be* someone . . . For Paul, this calling *in* life was also a calling *into* a certain quality of life” (*1 Corinthians*, Smyth & Helwys Bible Commentary [Smyth & Helwys, 2009], 71).

## The Hardest Question *continued*

Nash goes on to cite Frederick Buechner's frequently quoted observation about calling: "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet" (*Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC* [Harper & Row, 1973], 95). That place might be among the ranks of professional ministers, but it may just as well be expressed in the love of friends or co-workers, through community ministries, through public service, or by whatever means we engage the world around us. Our calling is not just to do things, but to be who we truly are.