**Selections in 1 Corinthians**

**Providence Church, Gary T. Meadors, Th.D.**

**Session One: The Structure and Meaning of 1 Corinthians 1-4**

The time and context of our study in 1 Cor only allows me to choose a few significant items (in my opinion). 1 Cor provides the modern Christian insights into the struggles and challenges of the earliest Church. Many of these examples are analogous to our situations today but not exactly the same. To be fair with Scripture, it is out task to discover the difference, glean the common aspects, and move forward.

Since we are only doing selections, you may want to view the “full meal deal” at [www.biblicalelearning.org](http://www.biblicalelearning.org) under 1 Corinthians and my name. A series of sermons on 1 Cor by another person has been added to my location... I have not viewed this series and cannot endorse it at this time. My lectures on 1 Cor go with a nearly 300 page note package that can be downloaded. The lectures work best if you listen with the notes in front of you.

MY METHOD will illustrate to you how YOU can study the Bible by establishing CONTEXT, comparing English TRANSLATIONS, and the NEED to research (which comparing translations will usually bring to your attention) by illustrating texts. Every Christian is responsible to study the Bible for themselves. Each of us can do that at different levels...but each of us must progress in our ability to do so. For many, my suggestion to read a Bible Dictionary article (Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible) a day will also achieve this goal.

In light of our time, I will skip all introductory matters and proceed immediately to the text.

Chapters 1-4 are a literary unit (cf. **1:10**-12 and 4:14-21; cf. **5:1** and **7:1**). Units convey a “big idea” and they usually do so with their structure.

**The content flow of chs. 1-4 as a unit:**

1:10-31 2:1-5 **2:6-16** 3:1-23 4:1-21

Competition are in and ignore which and needs to be replaced

And Divisions contrast to Paul’s results in by a more accurate view

Paul’s way “status” self-deception of Paul and his work

**Brackets of 1:10 and 4:18ff.**

1:10ff. = a Call to unity in knowing 4:10, the charge of arrogance = thinking outside

apostolic teaching (Cf. 14:37-38)

At the center of Paul’s argument in chs. 1-4 is 2:6-16. In this text Paul basically says that his teaching (which some in Corinth push against) is NOT his own bright ideas. Rather, they are revealed (2:10) truth to Paul and the apostolic community (cf. 14:37-38).

**Salient content points:**

* **The “party spirit” needs to be understood in 1st century terms.** 
  + The term “disciple” is not a Jewish or Christian invention. It comes from what secular Greek teachers called their students. In our culture, “apprentice” would be the term.
  + It was used in the life of Jesus to describe his students. While the term continued as Acts shows (Acts 30xs out of 250 uses), it (noun) is NEVER used in any epistles (verb once in 1 Cor 4:6).
  + The characteristics of teachers/pupils in the 1st century was (Winter, *Corinth*, 32ff.):
    - Teacher/Pupil respective status was observed
    - High competition between the teachers and therefore their students as well
    - Pupils demonstrated loyalty to their teachers by putting down other teachers and exalting their own.
    - **1 Cor 3:3b** captures what we see in chs. 1-4 (**READ VERSIONS BELOW** to see)

**English Translations Compared**

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| Greek | KJV | ESV | NIV84 | NIV2011 | NLT |
| **3:3** ἔτι γὰρ ⸀**σαρκικοί** ἐστε. ὅpου γὰρ ἐν ὑμῖν ζῆλος καὶ ἔρις⸆, οὐχὶ ⸁**σαρκικοί** ἐστε καὶ **κατὰ ἄνθρωpον περιατεῖτε;** 4 ὅταν γὰρ λέγῃ τις· ἐγὼ μέν εἰμι Παύλου, ἕτερος δέ· ἐγὼ Ἀpολλῶ, ⸂**οὐκ ἄνθρωpοί⸃ ἐστε⸆;** | 3 For ye are yet **carnal**: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are ye not **carnal**, and **walk as men?** 4 For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; **are ye not carnal?** | 3 for you are still of the **flesh**. For while there is *f*jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the **flesh** and **behaving only in a human way**? 4 For *g*when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” ***h*are you not being merely human**? | 3 You are still **worldly**. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not **worldly**? Are you not **acting like mere men**? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,” **are you not mere men?** | 3 You are still **worldly**. For since there is jealousy and quarrelinga among you, are you not **worldly**? Are you not **acting like mere humans**? 4 For when one says, “I follow Paul,” and another, “I follow Apollos,”a **are you not mere human beings?** | 3 for you are still **controlled by your sinful nature**. You are jealous of one another and quarrel with each other. Doesn’t that prove you are **controlled by your sinful nature**? Aren’t you **living like people of the world**? 4 When one of you says, “I am a follower of Paul,” and another says, “I follow Apollos,” **aren’t you acting just like people of the world?** |
| The 3:3 phrase **κατὰ ἄνθρωpον περιατεῖτε;** “**acting like mere humans”** is ***best rendered: “operating in a secular fashion” or “walking in a secular way.” This is the essence of “worldliness.”*** The Corinthians were acting just like the world they knew rather than being transformed into a new one. These Corinthians were living more like their “old,” pre-Christian, world than their new one. Paul points out in various places that their actions, morals and class struggle was an evidence of “no change.” **COMPETITION REIGNED** at every level of 1st century life...it is the human condition. | | | | | |

* **Central point of 2:6:16: Paul’s message is not his but revealed truth, 2:10 (**cf. to 14:37... if you think you are spiritual....)
* The **concept of a “spiritual” person** is presented in contrast to a “worldly” person (3:1-4)**.** The author/audience understood that these terms represented characteristics.
  + Illustration: Who here is saved? (raise hands) Who here is spiritual? (raise hands)
  + “Spiritual” only occurs 23 times in the NT, never in the OT Greek (LXX).
  + “Spiritual” is an adjective. It **describes** (unless it is substantized).
  + Spiritual is at most only applied 4 times to a person: 1 Cor 2:15; 3:1; 14:37; Gal 6:1
  + The term “spiritual” is used in the modern world in many ways. It may describe a Hindu or a Christian! So the term requires definition. Furthermore, one term does not a theology make.
  + **READ VERSIONS BELOW...conclusions are there....**

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| **“SPIRITUAL” DESCRIBING A PERSON ... ONLY 4 IN THE BIBLE**  (**READ DOWN not across**) | | | |
| 1 Cor 2:15 | 1 Cor 3:1 | 1 Cor 14:37 | Gal 6:1 |
| 15 ὁ δὲ pνευματικὸς ἀνακρίνει ⸂[τὰ] paντα⸃, αὐτὸς δὲ ὑp’ οὐδενὸς ἀνακρίνεται.  KJV: 15 But **he that is spiritual** judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.  NIV84: 15 **The spiritual man** makes judgments about all things, but he himself is not subject to any man’s judgment:  NIV2011: 15 **The person with the Spirita** makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments,  NLT: 15 **Those who are spiritual** can evaluate all things, but they themselves cannot be evaluated by others. | Κἀγώ, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἠδυνήθην λαλῆσαι ὑμῖν ὡς pnευματικοῖς ἀλλ̓ ὡς ⸀σαρκίνοις, ὡς νηpίοις ἐν Χριστῷ.  KJV: And I, brethren, could not speak unto you **as unto spiritual**, but as unto carnal, even as unto babes in Christ.  NIV84: Brothers, I could not **address you as spiritual** but as worldly — mere infants in Christ.  NIV2011:  Brothers and sisters, I could not address you as people **who live by the Spirita** but as people who are still worldlyb—mere infantsc in Christ.  NLT: Dear brothers and sisters,a when I was with you I couldn’t talk to you as I would to **spiritual people**.b I had to talk as though you belonged to this world or as though you were infants in Christ. | Εἴ τις δοκεῖ pροφήτης εἶναι ἢ pνευματικός, ἐpi γινωσκέτω ἃ γράφω ὑμῖν ὅτι ⸂κυρίου ἐστὶν ἐντολή⸃·  KJV: **If any man think himself to be** a prophet, or **spiritual,** let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.  NIV84: 37 **If anybody thinks he is a prophet or spiritually gifted**, let him acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.  NIV2011: **If anyone thinks they are a propheta or otherwise gifted by the Spirit,b** let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord’s command.  NLT**: If you claim to be a prophet or think you are spiritual**, you should recognize that what I am saying is a command from the Lord himself. | Ἀδελφοί, ἐὰν καὶ pρολημφθῇ ⸀ἄνθρωpος ἔν τινι pαρατώματι, ὑμεῖς οἱ pνευματικοὶ καταρτίζετε τὸν τοιοῦτον ἐν pνεύματι pραΰτητος, σκοpῶν σεαυτὸν μὴ καὶ σὺ pειρασθῇς.  KJV: Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, **ye which are spiritual**, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.  NIV1984:  Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, **you who are spiritual** should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted.  NIV2011: Brothers and sisters, if someone is caught in a sin, **you who live by the Spirita** should restoreb that person gently. But watch yourselves, or you also may be tempted.  NLT: Dear brothers and sisters, if another believera is overcome by some sin, **you who are godlyb** should gently and humbly help that person back onto the right path. And be careful not to fall into the same temptation yourself. |

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| For the moment, let’s observe what the term itself, in its respective contexts, can contribute to answering the question, “Who is a spiritual person?”  1. A spiritual person is a believer who exercises their capacity for spiritual growth by a right relationship to apostolic teaching.  1 Cor 3:1 (with 2:6; 2:15)  2. A spiritual person is a believer who recognizes apostolic teaching as the very word of God and obeys it.  1 Cor 14:37-38  3. A spiritual person is a believer who acts spiritually within the Christian community. Acting spiritually is an objective alignment with biblical values not a subjective process.  Gal 6:1 in the context of 5:13-6:5  Conclusion: The term “spiritual” is used to indicate a believer who recognizes, knows, and practices in community, God’s Word. Interestingly it is never used for the so-called “spiritual disciplines,” although these biblical practices are a *product* of obedience to God’s Word and would be part of the broader definition of spirituality. But the *foundation* of spirituality is a proper understanding and application of Scripture.   **NOTE:** One word does not a theology make. For example, the term is never used of Abraham, Moses, Daniel, Jesus, John, Peter or Paul. The term is only an entrée into the idea. BUT it provides the foundation to all else, **spirituality is judged by correlation with authoritative teaching.**  So the answer to the question, “Are you spiritual?”, relates to your “understanding and obedience barometer.” |

* **“Do not go beyond what is written” (4:6-7)**, what does this seemingly Pauline slogan mean?
  + **READ VERSIONS BELOW**
  + This dictum occurs nowhere else in the Bible or extra-biblical literature (per my current search). So it is most likely Paul’s or a slogan of the Corinthians to which Paul is responding. There is no evidence that it was a proverb in that period of time.
  + The structure “written” consistently refers to Scripture teaching.
  + The difficult question of this dictum is **“what Scripture and what kind of departure from Scripture Paul had in mind?** is not crystal clear.” Reconstructions that answer the question vary.

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| Translations of 1 Cor 4:6 | | | | | |
| Greek | KJV | ESV | NIV84 | NIV2011 | NLT |
| Ταῦτα δέ, ἀδελφοί, μετεσχημάτισα εἰς ἐμαυτὸν καὶ Ἀpολλῶν δἰ ὑμᾶς, **ἵνα ἐν ἡμῖν μάθητε τὸ μὴ ὑpὲρ ⸀ἃ γέγραpται⸆,** ἵνα μὴ εἷς ὑpὲρ τοῦ ἑνὸς φυσιοῦσθε κατὰ τοῦ ἑτέρου. | 6 And these things, brethren, I have in a figure transferred to myself and to Apollos for your sakes; **that ye might learn in us not to think of men above that which is written,** that no one of you be puffed up for one against another. | I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers,*1* **that you may learn by us not to go beyond what is written,** that none of you may *u*be puffed up in favor of one against another. | Now, brothers, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so **that you may learn** from us the meaning of **the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.”** Then you will not take pride in one man over against another. | Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so **that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, “Do not go beyond what is written.”**a Then you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.b | Dear brothers and sisters,a I have used Apollos and myself to illustrate what I’ve been saying. **If you pay attention to what I have quoted from the Scriptures,b** you won’t be proud of one of your leaders at the expense of another. |
| There are no less than 7 major proposals to answer the question. The most direct answer is “that it refers to what Paul has quoted as scripture already in this epistle” (Thistelton, 352, for Hooker, Fee, et.al.). These texts are in 1 Cor are 1:19, 31; 2:9, 16; 3:19, 20. The point of these texts is “to boast exclusively in the Lord (not in human leaders) and to recognize the unity of the people of God.” (Ciampa and Rosner, 176) | | | | | |