

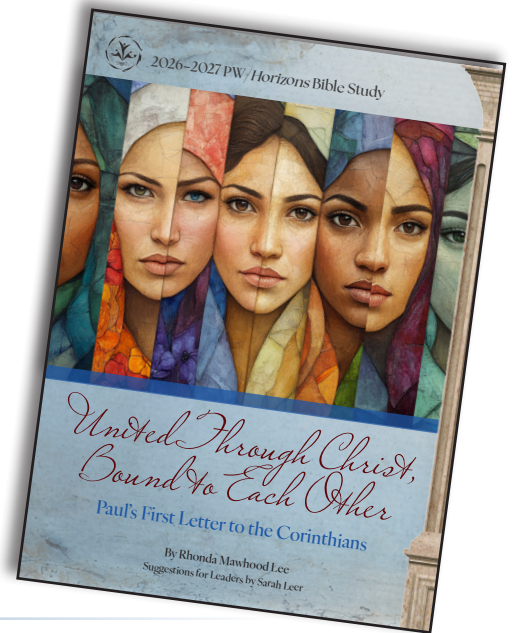
Workshop for Leaders

Rev. Dr. Rhonda Mawhood Lee



United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians

2026–2027 Presbyterian Women/*Horizons* Bible Study



What Is This?

A lesson plan for leaders who introduce this Bible study in your congregation or any group.

Who Will Find the Workshop Helpful and Why?

The Workshop for Leaders is written for Bible study leaders who are preparing to lead study groups, pastors and educators who will encourage and prepare others to lead, and presbyteries introducing the study to their congregations. This resource provides a foundational background for the content of the study, an outline of the lessons, suggested activities, and a list of additional resources.

What Can You Expect Participants to Learn?

Participants will have an opportunity to

- consider the fact that First Corinthians was a letter written to a church in conflict
- think about how to lead a study of a letter that was written by Paul, an apostle about whom many have strong feelings, and that contains controversial passages
- explore the lessons and themes of the study
- gain an appreciation of the importance of preparing to teach the study.

Room Set Up

The room set up depends on the number of people present, though it is helpful to set up the room with chairs and tables. Participants at the tables will have their study material and

note pad, or tablets or electronic devices for taking notes in front of them. If you have a larger group, you may have six to eight chairs at a table, for example. Then, the table groups can also serve as small groups for discussions and activities.

Determine the time you have set, what your objectives are, and what you want the participants to learn and discover. Select the resources you want to highlight and the activities you will use from this workshop.

Materials Needed

- A copy of the Bible study for each participant
- Bibles
- Pens, note pads, or electronic devices for taking notes
- A white board and dry erase markers, an easel and pad with markers, or a computer with note-sharing capabilities, or a way to project comments of the group

Workshop Lesson Plan

Welcome and Introductions

Begin by welcoming participants and introducing yourself. Ask participants to pray the opening prayer together.

Opening Prayer (unison)

God of love, you called us into one body through your son Jesus Christ. As we immerse ourselves in your word, help us to remember that you are with us, working through our various gifts to make us a blessing to your world. Amen.

Opening Activity

Quiz

- All but one of these questions are objective, meaning they have a correct answer.
 - The final question is designed to elicit thoughts and feelings about Paul.
 - Have participants answer the quiz on their own; give the correct answers for questions 1 through 9; then have them discuss all their answers at their tables.
 - After a short time for discussion, ask a representative from each table to report.
 - Which of the questions did members get consistently right or wrong?
 - Did any answers surprise them?
 - Was there any consensus in their group about question 10?
1. Paul was a Roman citizen. True/False [True]
 2. Paul was a disciple of Jesus during Jesus' earthly life. True/False [False]
 3. Paul founded the church in Corinth. True/False [True]
 4. Biblical scholars generally agree that Paul wrote the First Letter to the Corinthians. True/False [True]
 5. Biblical scholars generally agree that Paul wrote the First and Second Letters to Timothy. True/False [False]
 6. Paul's wife accompanied him on his missions. True/False [False; Paul was unmarried]
 7. In his letters, Paul named women among his colleagues in ministry. True/False [True]
 8. Paul wrote more than two letters to the church in Corinth. True/False [True]
 9. Which of these quotes is/are drawn from the First Letter to the Corinthians? (You may choose more than one.) [Answer: b, d, e]
 - a. "Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God." [1 John 4:7]
 - b. "Love is patient, love is kind." [1 Cor. 14:4]
 - c. "If God is for us, who is against us?" [Rom. 8:31]
 - d. "For the message about the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." [1 Cor. 1:18]
 - e. "I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took a loaf of bread." [1 Cor. 11:23]

10. Which of these statements best expresses what you think/how you feel about Paul?
 - a. I thank God for him and cherish his words in the Bible.
 - b. Who is Paul?
 - c. I've heard of Paul, but I have only a vague idea what he wrote.
 - d. Some of his writings touch my heart, and some of them irritate me.
 - e. I wish I'd never read him.

A Letter to Christians in Conflict

When twenty-first-century Christians think of Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians, what comes to mind is often his hymn to love in the thirteenth chapter: "Love is patient, love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude."

Some people might know this letter also includes discussion of spiritual gifts in chapters 12 and 14. And some might know that the words of institution for the Lord's Supper come from its eleventh chapter (verses 23–24).

Pause for discussion, either in the whole group or in small groups reporting back to the whole.

- What verses or words, if any, come to mind when participants think of First Corinthians?
- Where have they heard these snippets of the letter?
- How and when do they come up in worship, prayer, or conversation?

Christians who hear pieces of First Corinthians read in worship, or who pray with some of its verses, may not realize it was written to a church in conflict. Members of the Corinthian church wrote to Paul more than once to ask him about theological and other disagreements they were having. The letter we call "First Corinthians" was at least Paul's second letter to this church; we know this because in 5:9 he writes, "I wrote to you in my letter." Discussions about the Lord's Supper, sexual ethics, and the centrality of the resurrection to Christian faith went on, among the Corinthians and in their correspondence with Paul.

Activity

Look again at First Corinthians with conflict in mind

- Either in the whole group or in small groups reporting back to the whole, have participants read 1 Cor. 11:17–27, which includes the words of institution for communion.
- Give the group some background information (the Bible study offers more detail in lesson 6). When the Corinthian church gathered to celebrate the Lord's Supper, they would eat a meal first and then share the bread and wine in Jesus' name. Due to class divisions in the church, food was unevenly distributed and some participants literally went hungry, while others ate their fill.
- Ask the participants to discuss
 - o Do the words of institution in 11:23–25 resonate differently with them after reading Paul's reprimand in verses 17–22?
 - o How does their church share food beyond the communion table, e.g. in congregational fellowship meals, community breakfasts, food drives?
- Tell the group that this Bible study will invite participants to reflect on conflicts within their own congregations (past or present). One takeaway from the study will be that conflict has been present in the church from the beginning. If it is addressed in a constructive way, conflict can lead to greater unity in Jesus.

Paul: The Apostle Many Love and Many Love to Hate

Participants in this year's Bible study will bring a variety of knowledge of and attitudes about Paul to their reading of First Corinthians. Members of the same study group may love him or hate him; some groups might generally agree about their assessment of him, while disagreeing with the consensus among another group. Some groups may have never considered not liking verses of scripture or the person who wrote them. Some might ask, "Paul, who?"

The goal of leaders will be to guide participants to be as open-minded and open-hearted as possible, while recognizing that different readers of the letter will reach some different conclusions about certain challenging sections.

Activity

Consider one controversial/diversely-interpreted passage

- Either in the whole group or in small groups reporting back to the whole, have participants read 1 Cor 6:9–10, in which Paul includes in the list of people who "will not inherit the kingdom of God" "fornicators" or "the sexually immoral" (depending on the translation used) and "sodomites" or "men who engage in illicit sex" (again, depending on the translation).
- This Workshop for Leaders is not the time to engage in deep exegesis or interpretation of these verses. It's a time for leaders to realize their Bible study group will be reading some passages that have been interpreted in different ways at different historical moments, and that some of these interpretations have caused pain to Christians and turmoil in the church.
- Ask participants
 - o Do the prohibited behaviors in these verses mean something different to them than they would have to their parents or grandparents, or than they do to their children or grandchildren?
 - o Have these verses caused them pain, or caused pain to people they know?
 - o Have some behaviors in these verses received more attention from the church than others?
 - o Do they see some of the behaviors as more problematic than others?
 - o Has this passage, and the church's interpretation of it, influenced their view of Paul?

Structure of Bible Study Lessons

Lead participants through the Summary of Lessons included with this workshop and found in the Contents section of the Bible study.

Tell the group that each lesson includes

- Opening prayer and introduction
- Overview of the scripture text from First Corinthians
- Reflection questions
- Takeaway
- Suggestions for Leaders

As you explore the titles, scriptures, and main ideas of each lesson, ask the group to consider

- One important difference between an epistle and the narrative books of the New Testament (e.g. the

Gospels) is that in an epistle, much of the action takes place “off stage.” Participants will have to use their imaginations to flesh out the stories Paul presents.

- Paul names a number of co-workers in this epistle. Some of them, we know about from other sources; some, we hear of only in this letter. All of them invite us to consider how we might be remembered within the church.
- How does Paul connect theological beliefs to the practice of Christian discipleship?
- Where does conflict appear in this lesson?
- Where does unity appear in this lesson?
- How do the issues Paul addresses relate to your church and your practice of discipleship?
- What, in each lesson, is familiar or comforting to you? What is new, intriguing, or uncomfortable?
- What prayers does the lesson spark in you?

Ask participants to find the Suggestions for Leaders pages for one of the lessons and review them.

Study Resources

Look at the Contents page to find

- About the Bible study and Suggestions for Leaders authors
- Introduction
- About the Art and Artists in the Bible study
- Annotated Bibliography that contains brief descriptions of books and why the author finds them helpful. You might discover a book that will offer you more information about the first-century church or about Paul, or give a different perspective on

this letter. These books may be helpful for you as a Bible study leader, and they may help participants delve deeper into the world in which the Corinthian Christian community and this letter came to be.

🔗 Concluding Our Time Together

Ask the large group to share their answers to the questions.

1. What will help you the most to prepare to lead (or participate in) this study?
2. Name something you read or heard that is new to you or that you would like to explore further.

After the last person has spoken, thank the participants for coming, share the additional resources listed below, and conclude by asking all to pray the closing prayer in unison.

Closing Prayer

Redeeming Christ, thank you for calling us to be your disciples, each of us unique, and yet united in your one body. When we forget that you are the source of our unity, help us to remember you love us all and you call us to love each other. When we fall short, give us grace to return to you and to witness to your love, which is stronger than anything that divides us, even stronger than death. Amen.



Learn more, purchase, and find additional resources for this study by visiting presbyterianwomen.org/bible-study/unity

Additional Resources



- *United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other, Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians* is published in **English, Spanish, ecumenical, audio, and large print** versions.
- **Companion DVD/Download**, which includes lesson introductions presented by the Bible study author. Groups can use the author's introductions to begin their study sessions, to highlight a certain part of the lesson, or to supplement the lessons.
- **Promotional flier** and **poster** for sharing information about the study.
- **Bulletin covers** for worship in a church or mid-council, for a group event, or a PW gathering, like an installation service.
- Beginning August 2026, **monthly blogs** written to accompany each of the study's lessons at presbyterianwomen.org/blog.

2026-2027 Presbyterian Women/Horizons Bible Study

United Through Christ, Bound to Each Other

Paul's First Letter to the Corinthians



Summary of Lessons



Lesson One: Unity in Christ, Wisdom from God

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 1–2

Main Idea: Opening this letter to a Corinthian church experiencing division for a variety of reasons, Paul reminds his friends of the fundamental conflict between the wisdom found in the world and the wisdom we encounter through the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

Lesson Two: Connected in Christ

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 3–4

Main Idea: Through our baptism in Christ, we have all the gifts we need to live well, grow spiritually, resolve conflicts, and care for each other as members of one family.

Lesson Three: Freedom in Christ

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 5–6

Main Idea: The purpose of the freedom we have in Christ is for our lives to be a sign of God's victory over death. Through the saving grace of Jesus Christ, we are set free to make choices that benefit each other.

Lesson Four: Living Freely and the Responsibility to Care

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 7 and 11:1–16

Main Idea: Paul's writings on human relationships and societal norms emphasize living in an ordered way and showing loving concern for others.

Lesson Five: For the Good of the Community

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 8–10

Main Idea: Paul invited the Corinthians to show gratitude for Christ through their self-sacrifice. When individual

members remember Jesus' gift of himself on the cross and behave accordingly, the whole community benefits.

Lesson Six: "Now You Are the Body of Christ"

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 11:17–34, 12

Main Idea: In the life of a church community, united through baptism and at the Communion table, we are called to reject divisions and to seek to embody God's abundant love for every person.

Lesson Seven: Christian Love

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 13–14

Main Idea: More than a human emotion, Christian love is a verb. When we practice love, we grow in our understanding of Christ's sacrifice for all and in our ability to live according to his way.

Lesson Eight: Hope in the Resurrection

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15

Main Idea: While physical resurrection is hard for us to imagine, we trust in God who raised Jesus from the dead. As we recognize the reality of God's saving grace and show gratitude through our words and actions, our ongoing transformation in Christ continues.

Lesson Nine: Connected by God's Love

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 16

Main Idea: Conflicts within the Corinthian church endured, just as they do today, but Paul's letter urges everyone to treat each other as the siblings we have become in Jesus Christ, and to let love guide all we do.