Doctrinal Design of 1 Corinthians

the overall doctrinal design, purpose, and structure of that epistle

A 2-Lesson Study by Keith Blades | Enjoy the Bible Ministries®

Study Overview & Lesson Summaries

About This Series

These two lessons belong to a camp whose title is “More About the Word of God Which Effectually Worketh Also in You That Believe.” Keith calls this an introductory lesson to the doctrines to be examined, and wants you to have an appreciation for the overall doctrinal design, purpose, and structure of I Corinthians. Moving from the general into the particular, Keith introduces four major doctrines in the first half of I Corinthians, designed by their effectual working to materially change the way you think about four hallmark features of this world’s value system: the wisdom of this world, the filth of this world, the fornicators of this world and the fashion of this world. Romans teaches your identity in Christ — justification, sanctification and exaltation. I Corinthians emphasizes the saints’ sanctification and falls into three major sections because sanctification has three components; each section deals with one of the three components of godliness. The three sections deal with problems of ungodly thinking (I Corinthians 1:1 – 4:21), ungodly living (chapter 5 through the end of chapter 10) and ungodly labor (11:1 – 16:24). From II Timothy 3:16–17 Keith shows that doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness are put in a very specific, purposeful order. Paul follows that order from beginning to end in I Corinthians, and the doctrine doesn’t effectually work unless you follow the order.

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Lessons at a Glance

Lesson	Core Focus
L1	Doctrinal Design, Purpose, and Structure of I Corinthians — Four hallmark features of this world’s value system; sanctification, godliness and doctrine (Romans 1, 6–8, 12–13)
L2	Design for the Effectual Working of Corrective Doctrine — Three major sections of I Corinthians; II Timothy 3:16–17 and the formula for correction

Lesson Summaries

L1 **Doctrinal Design, Purpose, and Structure of I Corinthians** *Four hallmark features of this world’s value system; sanctification, godliness and*

doctrine (Romans 1, 6–8, 12–13)

From the General into the Particular

- Last year's camp covered very basic and general principles about the last part of I Thessalonians 2:13; this weekend moves from the general into the particular, confined pretty much to the first half of I Corinthians

Four Hallmark Features of This World's Value System

- Four major doctrines in I Corinthians are designed by their effectual working to materially change the way you think about four things — hallmark features of this world's value system
- I Corinthians 1:17 through the end of chapter 3 deals with the wisdom of this world; 4:8–17 changes how you think you ought to be treated by this world; as Paul says, you're gonna be considered the filth of this world
- A Christian can often easily tolerate the fornicators of this world (chapter 5); 7:29–31 is designed so you are not so easily swayed by the fashion of this world
- The Corinthians were affected by all four; the end result when we leave here Sunday afternoon is to have that doctrine effectually working within you, so you have no affection for the wisdom of this world

Romans: Your Identity in Christ

- Every epistle Paul writes states in its opening its doctrinal design and purpose, and where it is placed from Romans to Philemon also says something about it
- Romans, which precedes I Corinthians, establishes you in the doctrines of grace and teaches your identity in Christ: justification (chapters 1–5), sanctification (6–8) and exaltation (9–11)
- The Holy Ghost baptized you into Christ's death, burial and resurrection, making you dead to sin and alive unto God; sanctification's three components: dead to sin, alive unto God, and you're a son — treated by God as an adult, not a little child

Godliness and Ungodliness (Romans 1)

- Godliness means God-likeness: God created man to be a godly creature — not a god himself, able to create — with three components: think like God does, live like God does, and labor with God in what He's doing
- God designed those components to be produced through the effectual working of His Word; the first term showing man worthy of His wrath is the exact opposite, ungodliness: by nature you do not think like God does, live like God does, or labor with God

Sanctification and the Corinthians' Problem

- Your sanctification is designed so you can be godly; it gives you the capacity to do the exact opposite of what Romans 1 told you that you were by nature
- Paul writes to believers who already learned Romans truth; the Corinthian saints were ungodly Christians, no different from us, with the same sanctified position in Christ
- Instead of laboring together with God in that local church, they were doing more for the adversary's work in Corinth; the epistle's three sections deal with ungodly thinking, ungodly living, and not laboring together with God

What the Word Doctrine Means (Romans 12–13)

- Doctrine means "a body of information designed to materially affect the way in which you think about something, and thereby the way in which you live, and thereby the way in which you spend your time" — the three components

of godliness

- Romans 12:3 changes how you think about yourself; verses 4–5, how to live in cooperation with other members of the body of Christ; verses 6–8, laboring together with God in that assembly with the gifts in effect at that time
- Romans 13:1–2 changes how you think about the powers that be; paying your taxes, you are laboring together with God in supporting the powers that be that He ordained

L2

Design for the Effectual Working of Corrective Doctrine *Three major sections of I Corinthians; II Timothy 3:16–17 and the formula for correction*

Three Major Sections of I Corinthians

- I Corinthians deals with problems Christians can have putting their sanctification into practice; its three major sections each deal with one of the three components of godliness
- I Corinthians 1:1 – 4:21: problems of ungodly thinking — one of the biggest causes being that the Corinthians were operating upon the wisdom of this world, which is foolishness with God
- Chapter 5 through the end of chapter 10: Paul correcting problems of ungodly living, starting with a brother in fornication; 11:1 – 16:24: problems of ungodly labor

Godliness and the Four Hallmark Features

- Of the four hallmark features of this world's value system to be studied, two pertain to ungodly thinking and two to ungodly living; this weekend the laboring issue has to be skipped
- Approach the doctrines realizing they are specifically designed to accomplish something, not just there to fill up a page; the chapter 4 doctrine is designed to change your thinking so you will not shy away from being thought of as the filth of this world

II Timothy 3:16–17: A Specific, Purposeful Order

- In II Timothy 3 Paul summarizes the matter: doctrine, reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness are put in a very specific, purposeful order, not a random, haphazard one
- Doctrine affects the way you think, live and spend your time — matching the three components of godliness; if it is not producing those three things, you need reproof, correction and instruction in righteousness
- In I Corinthians Paul follows that order from beginning to end: he states the ungodly thing for what it is, reproves it, corrects it, and instructs you in righteousness in connection with it

Examples: I Corinthians 11 and 12–14

- I Corinthians 11:17–34, used only as an example of ungodly labor: verses 17–22 identify and reprove it; 23–32 are the correction, so they no longer think about the Lord's table as they had
- Verses 33–34 are the instruction in righteousness, as to how to handle the situation now until Paul gets there
- Chapters 12–14 deal with ungodly labor through the abuse and misuse of spiritual gifts: 12:1–3 identify and reprove it, 12:4 through chapter 13 is the correction, and chapter 14 the instruction in righteousness

Follow the Order

- Every one of the problems follows the formula for correction — reproof, correction, instruction in righteousness — the exact same pattern throughout the entire epistle
- The doctrine doesn't effectually work unless you follow the order: you can't put the instruction in righteousness into practice unless the correction has already been taking place
- If a doctrine doesn't seem to effectually work within you, you probably haven't followed the order; God has not put His Word together in a random order

Why These Issues: They Plague the Body of Christ

- The wisdom of this world often influences a Christian far more than God's word does; reluctance to be unpopular and thought of as the filth of this world stops more Christians from witnessing than just about anything else
- Tolerance for the fornicators of this world and being easily influenced by the fashion of this world is a big problem; unless corrected, these issues cause problems in advancing in your edification — over in Ephesians, Philippians and Colossians

Key Doctrinal Distinctions

Your Identity in Christ (Romans)

You live in a brand-new dispensation called the dispensation of the grace of God; you are not a spiritual Israelite. Justification tells you where you will spend eternity; sanctification tells you how you will live right now. You have not only received the forgiveness of sin; you have been made dead to sin. Baptized into His death, you were made the holiness of God in Him — that is your sanctification.

Doctrine vs. Teaching

Keith asks, "What's the difference between the word doctrine and teaching? Is doctrine simply teaching?" His definition: doctrine means a body of information designed to materially affect the way in which you think about something, and thereby the way in which you live, and thereby the way in which you spend your time — the three components of godliness. If you're not involved in doing what God is doing, you're just wasting your time.

Godliness vs. Ungodliness

God-like does not mean man is a god himself, able to create; God created man to think like He does, live like He does, and labor with Him in what He's doing. Man by nature is an ungodly creature; sanctification gives you the capacity to do the exact opposite of what Romans 1 told you that you were.

Laboring with the Adversary vs. Laboring with God

Instead of laboring together with God in that local church, the Corinthians were doing more for the adversary's work in Corinth. In chapters 12–14, instead of laboring together with the adversary in Corinth, they can labor together with God in that assembly.

I Corinthians 4:8–17 vs. Philippians

I Corinthians 4:8–17 is the doctrine designed to make you willing to be thought of as the filth of this world; Philippians is designed to teach you how to handle it when it happens. If being thought of as the filth of this world troubles you, Philippians is not an epistle you can handle yet.

Not a Random Order

Romans through Philemon have not been put together in a random, haphazard order; they take you from a babe in Christ to a perfect, fully mature man in that very order. The Thessalonians did not have their work of faith, labor of love and patience of hope because their education system was better; Paul gave them doctrines that effectually worked within them and produced those things.

Key Scripture References

Genesis 1–3	God created man to be a godly creature; the three components of godliness
Romans 1:18 to the end of the chapter	"ungodliness" — the first term showing man worthy of God's wrath; three times God gave them up, not three points in time
Romans 1:21–25	Man by nature does not think like God does
Romans 1:26–27	Ungodliness in the second component: living like God does
Romans 1:28	Following the course of this world the adversary charted, instead of laboring with God
Romans 6:1–4	Not only justified unto eternal life but sanctified unto functional life; "walk in newness of life" (verse 4) — live entirely different now
Romans 6:11	"dead indeed unto sin, but alive unto God" — the first two components of sanctification
Romans 8:14–15	"ye have received the Spirit of adoption" — sonship, the third component of sanctification
Romans 12:1–2	Putting your identity in Christ into practice; "be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind"
Romans 12:3–8	How you think about yourself (3), how you live (4–5), laboring together with God with the gifts then in effect (6–8)
Romans 13:1–2 and following	How you think about the powers that be; then how you live under those powers
Romans through Philemon	Not a random order: from a babe in Christ to a fully mature man

I Corinthians 1:1–3	Paul emphasizes their sanctification, not their justification
I Corinthians 1:1 – 4:21	First major section: problems of ungodly thinking
I Corinthians 1:17 to the end of chapter 3	The wisdom of this world in all its manifold forms
I Corinthians 4:8–17	How you ought to be treated by this world; willing to be thought of as the filth of this world
I Corinthians 5–10	Second major section: problems of ungodly living, starting with a brother in fornication
I Corinthians 5:9–10	“the fornicators of this world” — changing an attitude like the Corinthians had
I Corinthians 7:29–31	“the fashion of this world passeth away” — not so easily swayed by it
I Corinthians 11:1 – 16:24	Third and final major section: problems of ungodly labor
I Corinthians 11:17–34	Example: 17–22 reproof, 23–32 correction, 33–34 instruction in righteousness
I Corinthians 12–14	Abuse of spiritual gifts: 12:1–3 reproof, 12:4 through chapter 13 correction, chapter 14 instruction in righteousness
Philippians	Teaches you how to handle being thought of as the filth of this world when it happens
I Thessalonians 2:13	The camp theme: “the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe”
II Timothy 3:16–17	“profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness” — a very specific, purposeful order