



DAILY FAITH PRACTICES

Second Sunday after the Epiphany (C) – 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

Focus: *To the Church of God*

word of life

“To the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, 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...” (1 Corinthians 1:2-3 NRSV)

Read 1 Corinthians 1:1-9

The Apostle Paul began his letter to the Corinthians, like so many of his other letters, with a salutation introducing himself to his intended audience. This was the typical way to begin a letter in the first century.

To understand Paul and his theology is to grasp the deep sense Paul understood himself to be called by God—especially to be called to be an apostle. Paul does not elaborate on the specifics of his calling, but the story of his conversion on the road to Damascus is well-known and radical. By the grace of God, he was transformed from one who vehemently persecuted Christians to one who passionately inspired followers of Christ. (To learn more about Paul’s conversion to Christianity, see Acts 9.)

1. *Summarize the story of God’s call to Paul as he traveled on the road to Damascus.*
2. *How helpful might it have been to Paul to have such a deep, clear sense of a call? Explain.*

Paul writes to the church of Corinth, not about frivolous matters, but as one who has a deep sense of being called by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus and only by the will of God. He is not alone. Although we do not know any details about Sosthenes, the companion of Paul, it is helpful to realize Paul did not live out his ministry in isolation. Paul often mentions and thanks those who accompany him on his missionary journeys. Paul refers to Sosthenes as a brother—not a biological kin, but one brought into a family relationship because of Christ.

3. *What is the importance of Paul not being alone in his work?*
4. *What might change in us if and when we view others in the church as our brothers or sisters?*

Once Paul has established his identity, he then clarifies to whom the letter is addressed. Again, this is a common formula used by the author and others in this time period.

First, the letter is addressed “to the church of God that is in Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...” (1 Corinthians 1:2 NRSV) As the letter progresses, Paul will address the conflicts, misunderstandings and divisions within the church of Corinth. But at least in the salutation, Paul reminds his audience about the essence of their being. They are a unique church of God established in specific location (Corinth) and, most importantly they are called by God. Their calling is to be saints—holy people set apart by God for the sake of Jesus Christ.

5. *How might Paul’s words help to unify the divided church of Corinth?*

Paul’s words are addressed to more than just the church in Corinth. He writes to all “who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours.” (1 Corinthians 1:2 NRSV) This ecumenical tone invites Christians throughout the globe to learn from Paul as we give thanks to God who extends grace and peace. (Note: Since the lectionary also uses 1 Corinthians 1:4-9 on the First Sunday of Advent, Year B, see *Daily Faith Practices* for that reflections on that part of the text.)

Word among us

Take a moment to imagine that you are given an opportunity to write a letter to your congregation. You are not asked to write an email or text, but a full letter to the church of God where you regularly worship. But there is one more stipulation. Your letter is to follow the same formula used by Paul in his letters written in the first century. Here is a guideline:

Paul's Version: Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus, by the will of God
YOUR VERSION: Your Name, called to be an _____ of Christ Jesus, by the will of God

Paul's Version: To the church of God that is in Corinth...
YOUR VERSION: To the church of God that is in _____

Paul's Version: to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints...
YOUR VERSION: to those who are _____
(Can you use the same formula? Why or why not?)

Paul's Version: together with all those who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours
YOUR VERSION: together with.....

Paul's Version: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
YOUR VERSION: Grace to you and peace....

Take a moment to reflect on what it would have been like for Paul to have the authority granted by God to write to a struggling congregation in Corinth and to all those who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Share your reflections concerning what it might that have been like for Paul to write letters to the early churches.
2. What did you learn as you filled in the blanks and wrote the salutation to your congregation?

faith practice in daily life

Live among God's faithful people

God has called and gathered faithful people to be the church in diverse settings. Every congregation has a unique opportunity to pursue the mission of Jesus Christ in a specific place and time. Every congregation—no matter its context—has a mission to fully become the church of God.

3. How does your congregation boldly reflect its identity as "the church of God"?
4. What are the unique opportunities for your congregation to be the church of God in your specific locale? Take time to answer this question.

Prayer

God of grace, you have called and brought the church into being. Give us wisdom and courage to be the church. Amen

last word

Take time to daily pray for your congregation as it discerns ways to BE the church of God in its unique setting.

Daily Faith Practices

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