

“One Body, One Spirit”
An Orthodox Christian Sunday School Curriculum based on the Books of I and II Corinthians
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Education Ministry

Feedback on this lesson plan is welcome and encouraged [HERE](#).

Title of Lesson:	Lesson Number:	Key Verse(s)	Grade Level
Divisions in the Church	3	1 Corinthians 3	PreK K-1st Grade 2nd-3rd Grade 4th-6th Grade Junior High ✓ Senior High

Lesson Length: 30 minutes (main) + 15 minutes (extension)

Key Ideas in this Lesson:

- Christ is the foundation and the Church is the Body of Christ
- The Body of Christ all work together for one purpose in Christ
- Divisions, envy, and cliques hinder spiritual growth and maturity in faith
- Divisions can be healed when individuals in the Church see Christ in everyone

Key Vocabulary in this Lesson:

- Unity - Joined together as one whole unit, specifically through love and shared purpose and faith in Christ.
- Foundation - The solid ground that a building is constructed upon. In particular, it refers to Christ as the solid ground on which the Church is built.
- Body of Christ - A metaphor St. Paul uses to illustrate how members of the Church work together like parts of the body.

Suggested Essential Question(s) for this Lesson:

- How does choosing a ‘side’ or a ‘clique’ limit our own spiritual growth and the strength of the whole Church?
- How does our behavior towards one another at church reveal whether we are acting as ‘spiritual adults’ or ‘spiritual babies’?

To prepare for this lesson, you will need:

Audio/Visual	Printed Materials	Craft/Activity Materials
(Optional) “The 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians” song, lyrics and recording	Orthodox Study Bible	

Opening Prayer:

Open with prayer. Suggestions include **The Lord’s Prayer** or the **Prayer Before Reading Scripture**.
 “Illumine our hearts, O Master Who loves mankind, with the pure light of Your divine knowledge. Open the eyes of our mind to the understanding of Your gospel teachings. Implant also in us the fear of Your blessed commandments,

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that trampling down all carnal desires, we may enter upon a spiritual manner of living, both thinking and doing such things as are well-pleasing unto You. For You are the illumination of our souls and bodies, O Christ our God, and unto You we ascribe glory, together with Your Father, Who is from everlasting, and Your all-holy, good, and life-creating Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.”

Opening Activity: (10 mins)

Unity Scenarios

As a class discussion, in groups, or role-playing students will discuss scenarios involving common divisions today and apply the principles of unity, humility, and Christ-centeredness from 1 Corinthians 3 to find constructive solutions.

Read 1 Corinthians 3:1-11 as a group before moving into the scenarios.

Scenario 1: A new student joins your friend group, but your old friends start excluding them in group chats.

Scenario 2: There's a debate on social media about a controversial topic, and your friends are taking sides and criticizing others.

Scenario 3: Within the church youth group, some kids only hang out with people from their school, making others feel left out.

If the scenarios were done in groups, have each group share their scenario and their Christ-centered solution.

Ask:

1. What are the “carnal” elements in this situation, as St. Paul describes?
2. How does this scenario mirror the divisions in Corinth?
3. What would it look like to respond to this situation with Christ as the foundation, rather than human pride or worldly wisdom?

Lesson Instruction: (15 mins)

A. Initial part of the lesson

Ask the students to think about a typical hallway in their school. You see the athletes, the gamers, the theater kids, and the “main character” cliques. Every group has its own unspoken social hierarchy and gatekeeping rules. What happens when these cliques clash? Or more importantly, what happens when we bring that same “us versus them” energy into a space that’s supposed to be unified, like the church?

St. Paul dealt with this exact drama in the Corinthian church. These believers were fresh out of a culture obsessed with status, and they brought that baggage into their faith. They started picking sides based on their favorite influencers, claiming “I’m with Paul” or “I’m with Apollos.”

When we let our loyalty to a specific group or person outweigh our identity in Christ, we’re missing the point. Let’s break down St. Paul’s urgent call regarding the danger of division and the actual meaning of unity.

B. Second part

Ask for a volunteer to re-read 1 Corinthians 3:5-8.

St. Paul uses a great analogy to humble both the leaders and the followers. He explains that he planted the seeds and Apollos watered them, but only God gave the increase. In our Orthodox tradition, every priest, bishop, deacon or teacher is simply a fellow worker in God’s field. We do not belong to a “celebrity” priest or a specific parish brand; we belong to God.

Ask for a volunteer to re-read 1 Corinthians 3:9-13.

St. Paul insists that no one can lay any foundation other than Jesus Christ. He warns that we build on that foundation with different materials. Some are lasting like gold and silver, while others are cheap like wood or hay. If our faith is built only on “feeling included” or “liking the social scene,” it is just straw. It won’t survive the fire.

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Ask for a volunteer to re-read 1 Corinthians 3:16-17.

This leads to the most important point of the passage. St. Paul asks if you know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you. St. Paul is saying that together, we are that sacred space. When we gossip, exclude people, or create divisions, we are not just being mean. We are actually defiling the temple. In Orthodoxy, our holiness is communal. You cannot be holy while hating your brother or sister. Your relationship with the person sitting next to you directly affects your relationship with God.

For us, unity is not just about getting along; it is about what we are. There is one cup to show the unity of Christ's blood. When we receive Communion, we are being fused into one body. The Church is a hospital where we are all patients. It is ridiculous for one patient to judge another for being sick. We are all here for the same cure and same goal: theosis (union with God).

How do we stop being "carnal" in a high school world? It starts by checking your allegiance. Ask yourself if you define yourself by your friend group, your GPA, or your "Orthodox aesthetic" more than your actual relationship with Christ. We kill the clique when we intentionally bridge gaps at church events. Our journey to God is a team sport because we do not get to the Kingdom alone. When we stand together, rooted in Christ rather than our own egos, we stop being mere human and start becoming the Temple of God. Let's stop building with straw and start building something that can stand the fire.

Closing Activity: (5-10 mins)

Identity Map

1. On a whiteboard, draw a large circle in the center and label it "My Identity in Christ".
2. Around this central circle, draw smaller circles and ask the students for identity labels for each circle (i.e. student, friend, athlete, gamer, sibling, friend group, etc.)
3. Now connect lines from the "My Identity in Christ" to the smaller circles and ask students to consider how their faith influences or should influence each of the smaller circles.

Ask:

1. Which of these identities sometimes clash with your identity with Christ?
2. How can focusing on Christ as your ultimate foundation help you navigate the pressures and divisions that come from these other identities?
3. How does this exercise help us understand why divisions like those in Corinth are "carnal"?

Optional: Review the 12 Lessons of 1 Corinthians song for Lessons 1 and 2; add Lesson 3.

To extend this lesson for additional time...

Additional activity ideas:

1. *Creative Scripture Reading.* Divide the class into three groups.
Team 1: St. Paul
Team 2: Apollos
Team 3: Christ

Now read 1 Corinthians 3. As you read the text out loud, have the groups stand up and cheer only when their leader's name is mentioned. When you reach verse 11 ("for no other foundation can anyone lay than... Jesus Christ"), everyone must sit down and go silent. This illustrates that the followers of human leaders can get very noisy and be distracting if not all are focused on the Foundation.

2. *Essential Questions.* Discuss the essential questions from the beginning of the lesson plan.

Background Resources for Teachers:

- Teachers may find General Teaching Strategies and Classroom Considerations included in the back of this

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packet to be a beneficial resource while preparing for this lesson.

- St. John Chrysostom, Homilies on First Corinthians (Homilies, [VIII](#) and [IX](#)).



- The Whole Counsel of God podcast by Fr. Stephen De Young ([1 Corinthians 2 and 3](#), [1 Corinthians 3 and 4](#))

