

**Conversations on
1 Corinthians 1:3–9**

Discuss this passage in light of the commentary below.

Idea! Watch the scene in *Chocolat* (2000; PG-13) toward the end of the film in which the young priest, who has been bullied into fighting against the chocolate shop, delivers an Easter sermon (bit.ly/FOWChocolatSermon). How does the sermon’s message echo 1 Corinthians 1:3–9?

WHAT is important to know?

The letter’s thanksgiving (1:4–9) telegraphs to readers at the outset the basic concerns of the writer. In this case, Paul’s concerns are several related issues pertaining to the welfare of the house churches in Corinth: their charismatic giftedness (vv. 4, 7), their wealth—particularly but not only in terms of speech and knowledge (v. 5), the revelation of Christ in glory on the Day of the Lord (vv. 7, 8), and the faithfulness of the God who has called them (v. 9). Each of these subjects recurs throughout 1 Corinthians. (*E. Elizabeth Johnson*)

- ✪ “The Day of our Lord Jesus Christ” is a Christian adaptation of the prophets’ announcement of the Day of the Lord (Yahweh). See Amos 5:18 and Joel 3:14.
- ✪ An old saying has it that “Some people are so heavenly minded that they’re no earthly good.” Adapt that saying to reflect Paul’s views of the Corinthians’ exercise of faith.

WHERE is God in these words?

This text points to one of the unique characteristics of the Christian religion: the intimate relationship between God and the Christian community that God bestows in and through Jesus Christ. Christianity gives witness to an intimate relationship among God, creation, and, in particular, the Christian community. This relationship is contextual: in other words, it takes its life and its shape from the particular terms of people’s cultures. Hence, Jesus is our brother, our Lord, our ancestor, our beloved one, our enlightened spirit. Paul reasserts that the Christian community will be sustained in this spiritual continuum for one crucial reason: “God is faithful” (v. 9). (*Carlos F. Cardoza-Orandi*)

- ✪ In what ways do you see the intimate relationship between God and creation played out in your community? Creation and church? God and church?
- ✪ What do you think are the most significant aspects of Christianity’s “witness” to the intimate relationship described above? How does this affect your local church?

SO WHAT does this mean for our lives?

Paul proceeds to bless the Corinthian congregation. He has some urgent matters to take up with them, but those can wait for a time. Instead, Paul begins by offering a gift of blessing. It is an offering that, in itself, reminds his readers of the bonds they share. This passage invites us to offer thanks to God, not for material gifts, but for spiritual gifts found in the church. It might also serve as a reminder that the gathered body, the body of Christ, is itself intended to be a feast of abundance laid out for the sake of the world. (*Martin B. Copenhaver*)

- ✪ Discuss whether participation in the church is optional to living an authentic Christian life.
- ✪ In what sense is your church a “feast of abundance laid out for the sake of the world”?
- ✪ How would your relationships with other Christians be different if you started every conversation with a blessing for each other?

NOW WHAT is God’s word calling us to do?

The grace of Jesus Christ, which is the source of the community’s faith and life, undercuts all divisions in the community based on human accomplishments or status. Grace here has radical social implications; it is not simply a word spoken to individuals or a power at work in individuals. Grace creates a new kind of community. Paul invites the Corinthian church—and the contemporary church—to become an odd, new people in the context of a culture divided between superior and inferior, honored and shamed, insider and outsider. The grace of Jesus Christ is the source of that new kind of community. (*Charles L. Campbell*)

- ✪ How do you express gratitude for the gifts and witness of other churches, even those that are conflicted?
- ✪ Name ways you have perceived the grace of Jesus Christ undercutting all divisions in your church.

Thank God for the Spirit’s presence in the witness of the church.