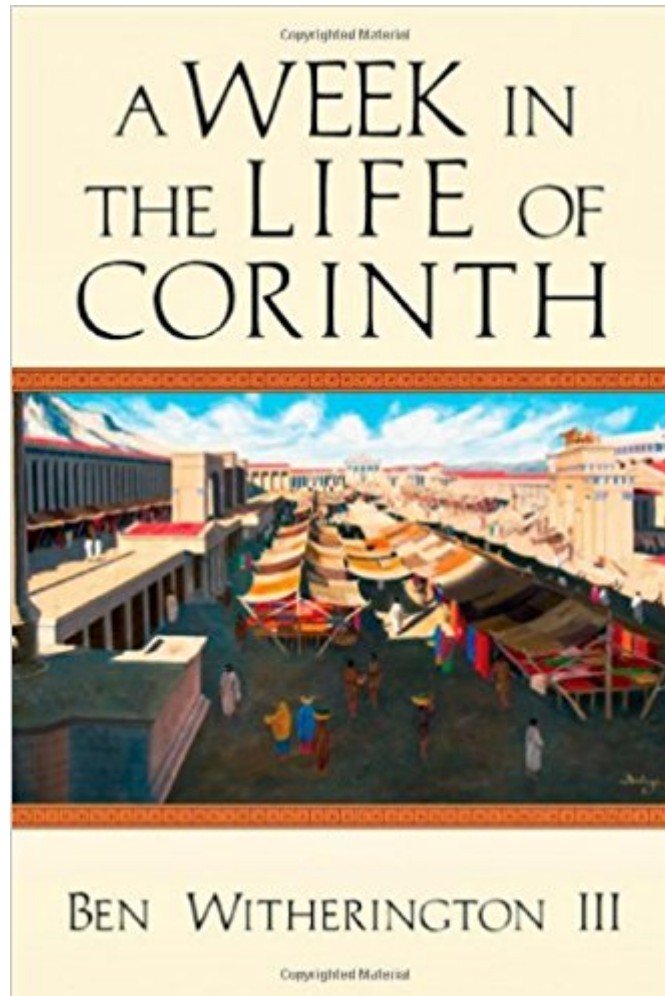




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A Week In The Life Of Corinth



Synopsis

Ben Witherington III attempts to reenchant our reading of Paul in this creative reconstruction of ancient Corinth. Following a fictitious Corinthian man named Nicanor through an eventful week of business dealings and conflict, you will encounter life at various levels of Roman society--eventually meeting Paul himself and gaining entrance into the Christian community there. The result is an unforgettable introduction to life in a major center of the New Testament world. Numerous full-page text boxes expand on a variety of aspects of life and culture as we encounter them in the narrative.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"This is historical fiction at its best." (World Magazine, October 27, 2012)"Ben Witherington III, a good creative writer and accomplished NT scholar, has given us a treat in his short novel *A Week in the Life of Corinth*. Rather than providing a list of facts about life and culture in NT times, Witherington has composed an interesting story in which we can see and learn this information along the way. This will be a fun way to enhance our understanding of the world in which the NT takes place--and it would be helpful for preachers to read some good fiction along the way!" (Ray Van Neste, *Preaching*, November/December 2012)"The book would be an ideal introduction to a course on 1 Corinthians, or to a course on Paul and his mission. It is easy to read, but very well informed by Witherington's scholarship." (David Wenham, *Journal for the Study of the New Testament*, 35(5))"As I have been teaching on 1 Corinthians, I found this work very beneficial. Not only is the storyline intriguing, but this book also presents itself as a pedagogical tool. Here students

can 'feel' what life must have been like in first century Graeco-Roman society – a culture foreign to many of us today. Witherington's book brings biblical times alive and is thus a wonderful gift to the church. It brings us closer to our spiritual ancestors and their experience of the risen Lord in a society hostile to the gospel." (Benjamin Marx, Trinity Journal, Spring 2013)"[T]his is an appealing view of the social world of Paul and Corinth. I have no doubt that it will arouse the interest and capture the imagination of readers." (Sarah Whittle, Evangelical Quarterly, 86.2 (2014))"Whether you're well acquainted with Paul's letters to the Corinthian church or are encountering them for the first time, this book will bring the biblical text to life." (Matthew M. Whitehead, Bible Study Magazine, September/October 2012)"Like the valley of dry bones being covered once more with sinews and flesh, Corinth rises from its overgrown ruins to its former vibrancy, color and intrigue, allowed to re-live one week of its history. Witherington masterfully mingles the pleasant and the useful as he introduces readers to the social institutions, household customs and civic life of the Roman colony of Corinth by telling a delightful story centering on the attempts of one Erastus to win a public office and one Paul to prepare for his trial before the Roman proconsul, Gallio. I know of no other introduction to the Greco-Roman environment of Paul's mission that could also qualify as entertaining 'beach reading.'" (David A. deSilva, Trustees' Distinguished Professor of New Testament and Greek, Ashland Theological Seminary)"I highly recommend this fresh approach to familiar territory: it will illuminate as well as entertain!" (Michael A.G. Haykin, Credo Magazine, May 2012)"This very readable – indeed, gripping – book gives us an imaginative insight into the Greco-Roman world of Paul's mission to Corinth. The details of everyday life for Paul and those he met are set in their historical context by an expert scholar who knows the New Testament and its background very well. I recommend it to all who want to understand the setting in which early Christianity grew and flourished." (Alanna Nobbs, professor of ancient history, Macquarie University)"If you want to know what it would have been like to live in ancient Corinth, spend a week in the life of a freedman, traverse the olive groves and cobblestone streets, survive the cutthroat politics of a Greek city, encounter pagan priestesses and converse with a Jewish tentmaker named 'Paulos,' then Ben Witherington has written the book for you. This short novella, with pictures and explanations of customs in ancient Corinth, provides a window into the world of Paul's Corinthian letters. Witherington creatively brings the setting of Paul's Corinthian ministry to life with historical rigor and narrative artistry. Witherington brings to us the sights, smells, sounds and culture of Corinth as the apostle Paul knew it." (Michael F. Bird, Crossway College, Australia)"This book provides a uniquely enjoyable way to learn about ancient culture and Paul's mission in Corinth by immersion. Although I found the story delightful and intriguing, I could also see

behind it careful research on a large array of details." (Craig Keener, author of 1-2 Corinthians (Cambridge) and Acts: An Exegetical Commentary (4 vols.; Baker Academic)) "This imaginative narrative brings the New Testament world to life by following the freedman Nicanor around ancient Corinth, relating his encounters with religion, gladiators, politics, domestic life and the nascent Christian movement (including several biblical characters). Though it may not solve all the riddles of the Corinthian correspondence, here is an engaging and informative introduction to Corinth and the wider cultural context of the first-century Roman Empire." (Brandon D. Crowe, assistant professor of New Testament, Westminster Theological Seminary)

Ben Witherington III (PhD, University of Durham) is Jean R. Amos Professor of New Testament for Doctoral Studies at Asbury Theological Seminary. A prominent evangelical scholar, he is also on the doctoral faculty at St. Andrews University in Scotland. Witherington has written over forty books, including *The Jesus Quest* and *The Paul Quest*, both of which were selected as top biblical studies works by Christianity Today. His other works include *The Indelible Image*, *Women and the Genesis of Christianity*, *The Gospel Code*, *A Week in the Life of Corinth* and commentaries on the entire New Testament. He also writes for many church and scholarly publications and is a frequent contributor to Patheos and Beliefnet. Witherington is an elected member of the prestigious *Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas*, a society dedicated to New Testament studies. He is a John Wesley Fellow for Life, a research fellow at Cambridge University and a member of numerous professional organizations, including the Society of Biblical Literature, Society for the Study of the New Testament and the Institute for Biblical Research. He previously taught at institutions like Ashland Theological Seminary, Vanderbilt University, Duke Divinity School and Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. An ordained pastor in the United Methodist Church and a popular lecturer, Witherington has presented seminars for churches, colleges and biblical meetings around the world. He has led numerous study tours through the lands of the Bible and is known for bringing the text to life through incisive historical and cultural analysis. Along with many interviews on radio and television networks across the country, Witherington has been seen in programs such as 60 Minutes, 20/20, Dateline and the Peter Jennings ABC special *Jesus and Paul*. *The Word and the Witness*.

This is the sort of thing more Christians need. Forget that mushy Christian romance crap that is more popular than it needs to be. Unlike myself, most people don't like reading textbooks and scholarly works on the history and culture of the New Testament world (or Old Testament). Books

like this would be the perfect compromise. You have a basic story that gets the job done. Nothing too fancy and nothing too complicated. In addition, you also get a large dose of information regarding the way people lived back then. It really puts things into perspective. I'll discuss the educational content and the story itself separately.

Story: I'll be honest, I didn't buy this book for the story and wasn't expecting an award winning novel with deep characterization. The story didn't really exceed my expectations. The story didn't grab me and propel me further. The characters were not that deep, story seemed to be your standard non-christian-becomes-christian-by-the-end story. Now, despite these criticisms, I did enjoy the story for what it did. It illustrated Paul, Priscilla and others in the socio-cultural context of which they lived. In that regard, I kept reading to see how the characters would interact in a time period so different from my own. In the end, story was nothing special, but not exactly terrible either.

3/5 Educational Content This is the reason I bought the book: to see how a scholar would construct a world from all the cultural, historical and political facts we know of that era. Within the story, the author inserts textboxes illustrated certain aspects about that time. You have a few blurbs on slavery, a few on politics, some on favors, the baths, etc. I really enjoyed reading this info and then seeing it illustrated within the story. I applaud Mr. Witherington for this. Granted, the story isn't very long so the information isn't exactly detailed and in depth. You have just bits and pieces. Some might complain about the lack of more detailed info, but then again, that isn't the point of this book. If you want a detailed treatment of slavery in the Roman Empire or How grace and favor worked within the New Testament, look elsewhere. This book functions as a small introduction to these issues and the lack of detailed info isn't a negative in my opinion.

5/5 Conclusion: I greatly enjoyed reading this. The juxtaposition of info with story allowed me to see the information Mr. Witherington provides play out in the story. The story is a tad lacking, but most buying this book are buying it for the information contained, not the story. Hopefully, future books like this would focus on story as well as content.

It's an unusual idea for a Christian academic book - use the form of the novella to tell a story. That's what Ben Witherington, American New Testament Scholar at Asbury Theological Seminary, did with "A Week in the Life of Cornith." He wrote a novella, and made life in Corinth at the time of St. Paul come alive. Corinth is one of the "cities of St. Paul," and one where the apostle lived for an extended period. In Witherington's story, St. Paul is a character, but not the major character. That title belongs to Nicanor, a freedman, who is establishing his various business activities, making alliances, developing contacts and networks. He's a former tutor in the family of Erastos, a wealthy landowner who has come to follow the new religion called Christianity. (Erastus - with a u - and Nicanor are two

names belonging to two of the original seven deacons appointed by the early church in Jerusalem; they served with the more well known Stephen.) Wrapped all around the story are sidebars about aspects of life in Corinth and the Roman Empire. They include factual information of gladiators and gladiatorial schools, slavery, Corinth's destruction and rebirth as a Roman colony, Paul's physical appearance, how patronage functioned in Roman society, the role of money and bartering, the education of children, the Roman baths, food establishments, and many other subjects. Also included are photographs, city maps and diagrams of Roman homes, villas and other structures. All of this factual information supplements how Witherington integrates historical understanding into a fictional narrative. And it works, and works well. While not the main character, St. Paul is a character, living with a couple from Rome (the Prisca or Priscilla and Aquila of the Bible) and working as a tentmaker to support himself. He is facing a trial before the proconsul Gallio (a real person and a brother of Seneca the Younger, the Roman philosopher and statesman). And he will also play a critical role in the lives of both Erastos and Nicanor. What "A Week in the Life of Corinth" does is to make Roman history and early Christian history approachable and understandable. It also gives history the sense of immediacy, that the reader is right there with the characters, both fictional and real, whether it's the smell of the streets in the Corinth slums or the gluttony of a rich men's banquet. It's life as St. Paul and the early Christians experienced it.

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