

THEREFORE, **my beloved**

BE **steadfast**

immovable

ALWAYS **excelling**

IN THE WORK
OF THE LORD,
BECAUSE YOU
KNOW THAT IN
THE LORD,

**your
work is
not in
vain.**



SANTA BARBARA
CHURCH
COM
1 **corinthians**
2020-2021

SBCC'S VISION FOR HOMEGROUPS

What is a homegroup?

Homegroups meet weekly in groups of 6-18 to:

- Read and study Scripture along with the sermon series
- Pray and worship together
- Build friendships, encourage and care for one another
- Encourage each other in ministry, service and evangelism

Our vision for homegroups is that as we do these things, members will experience:

Minds shaped by the Word of God

Maturing disciples increasingly understand the person of God, the glory of God, and humanity's need for grace as a result of dedicated time spent in the Scriptures.

Q: How has your time in the Scriptures led you to delight in God, repent of sin, relish forgiveness, or give thanks for grace?

Q: What questions have you grappled with as you seek to understand and be shaped by God's Word?

Hearts shaped by the character of God

Maturing disciples increasingly evidence character consistent with the life of Jesus.

Q: What practices are helping you align your heart with God's heart?

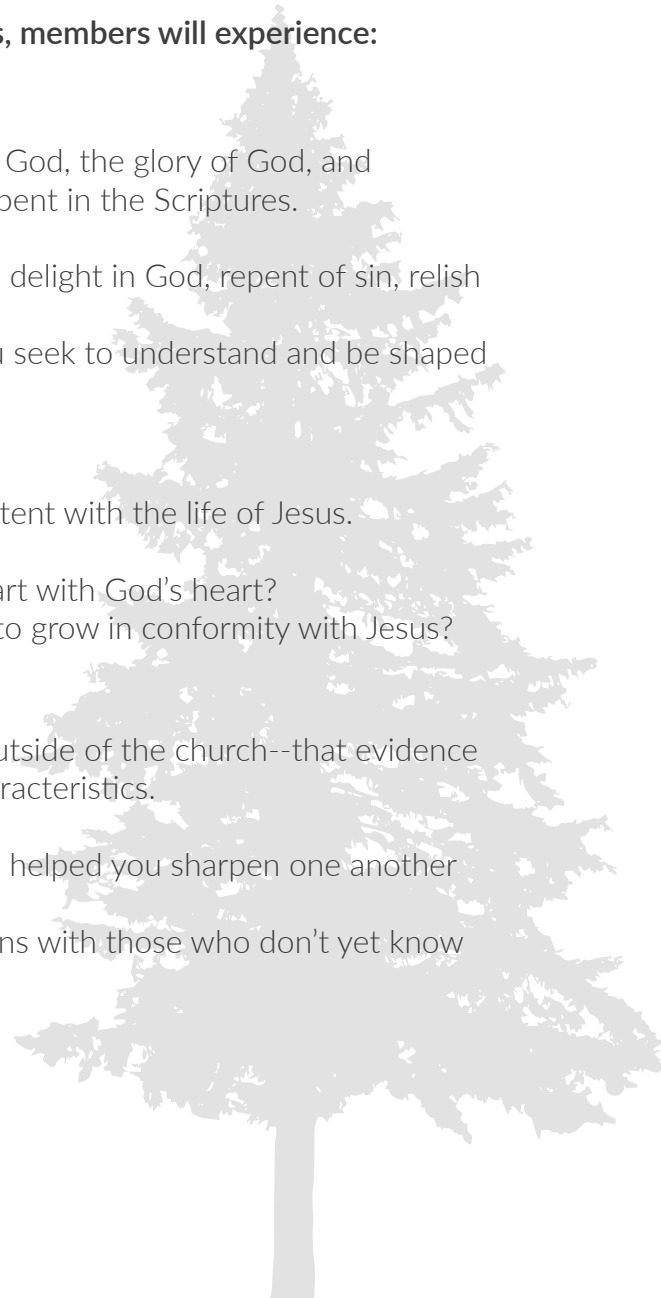
Q: Where are the places that God is calling you to grow in conformity with Jesus?

Relationships shaped by the kingdom of God

Maturing disciples have relationships--both within and outside of the church--that evidence commitment to God's kingdom and its principles and characteristics.

Q: How have friendships within the family of God helped you sharpen one another into the image of Christ?

Q: How have your prayers, speech, and interactions with those who don't yet know Jesus pointed to the grace of God?



Priorities shaped by the mission of God

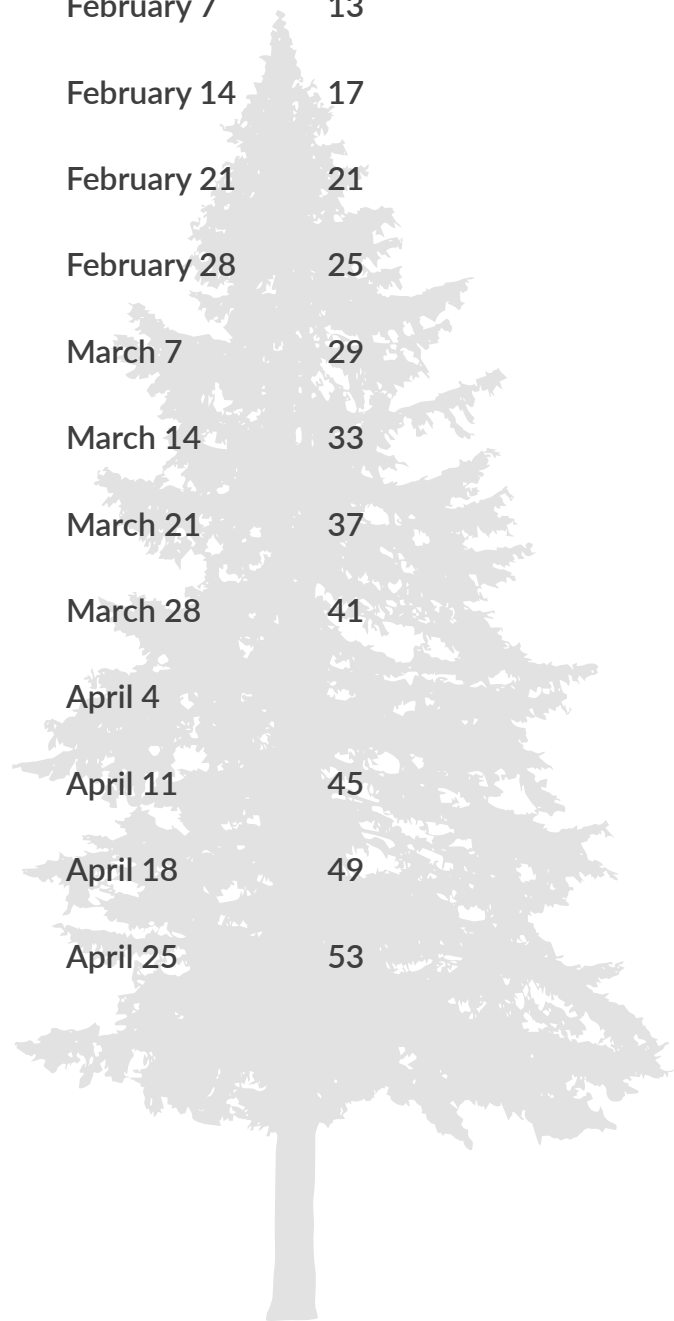
Maturing disciples increasingly orient their daily lives around the spread of God's glory both near and far.

Q: How have your time, abilities, and finances been used for the sake of Jesus' renown?

Q: How have your decisions reflected the priorities of God's mission?

Calendar

Study Week of	Study No.	Passage	Sermon	Page
January 17	10	1 Cor 8:1-13	January 24	5
January 25	11	1 Cor 9:1-27	January 31	9
February 1	12	1 Cor 10:1-13	February 7	13
February 8	13	1 Cor 10:14-22	February 14	17
February 15	14	1 Cor 10:23-11:1	February 21	21
February 22	15	1 Cor 11:2-16	February 28	25
March 1	16	1 Cor 11:17-34	March 7	29
March 8	17	1 Cor 12:1-31	March 14	33
March 15	18	1 Cor 13:1-13	March 21	37
March 22	19	1 Cor 14:1-40	March 28	41
	None	Easter	April 4	
April 5	20	1 Cor 15:1-34	April 11	45
April 12	21	1 Cor 15:35-58	April 18	49
April 19	22	1 Cor 16:1-24	April 25	53



Sources and Abbreviations

Barclay	William Barclay, <u>Letters to the Corinthians</u> , Westminster, 1954.
Barrett	C. K. Barrett, <u>A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians</u> , A. & C. Black, 1968.
Blomberg	Craig Blomberg, <u>1 Corinthians The NIV Application Commentary</u> . Zondervan, 1994.
Bruce	Bruce, F. F., <u>Paul, The Apostle of the Heart Set Free</u> . Eerdmans, 1977.
Calvin	John Calvin, <u>1 Corinthians</u> Eerdmans, 1960 (originally published in 1546).
DNTT	<u>Dictionary of New Testament Theology</u> , ed. Gerhard Kittel. Eerdmans, 1976.
Fee	Gordon Fee, <u>The First Epistle to the Corinthians</u> , Eerdmans, 1987.
Hodge	Charles Hodge. <u>1 Corinthians</u> . Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1972.
KJV	King James Bible
MacArthur	John MacArthur, <u>1 Corinthians</u> , Moody Press, 1984.
Mare	Mare, Harold W. 1 Corinthians, volume 10 of <u>The Expositors Bible Commentary</u> . Zondervan, 1981.
Morris	Leon Morris, <u>The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians</u> , Eerdmans, 1958.
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NEB	New English Bible
NIDNTT	<u>New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</u> , ed. Colin Brown. Zondervan, 1975.
NIV	New International Version
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
Prior	David Prior. <u>The Message of 1 Corinthians</u> . Inter Varsity Press, 1985.

This study guide was written by Erin Patterson including material adapted from one written by Reed Jolley. Graphic design and layout by Carolee Peterson.

...We preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

1Corinthians 1:23-24

Listen carefully and you will hear, from time to time, a yearning among twenty-first-century Christians to go back to the early church. The first-century church is often idealized, romanticized and held up as the model to emulate. However, Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian church should cure any illusions we might have about the perfection of the New Testament church. Here we find a church torn by divisions, affected by sexual immorality, and involved in intra-church lawsuits. The Corinthian church lacked discipline, had a sizeable anti-Paul contingent within the membership, and included those who showed up drunk for public worship. There also appears to have been a questioning of the doctrine of the resurrection and, perhaps, a loveless spirit among the rank and file of this body of believers.

1 Corinthians is a pastoral letter—i.e., an open letter from the apostle to all members of the church that he established on his second missionary journey in about March of 50 A.D. As far as we can tell, Paul spent about eighteen months in Corinth before moving on to Jerusalem and then to Ephesus for an extended stay lasting for about two and a half years.

It was during his time in Ephesus that Paul wrote four letters back to the Corinthian church. Our Bibles contain the second and fourth of these letters. 1 Corinthians is a letter of deep pastoral concern. Paul sees the threat to Corinthian church life as coming from within the church itself. The Corinthian believers were in trouble at almost every imaginable level. They had come to know Christ in the context of an exceedingly decadent society and, not surprisingly, they brought much of their former way of life into the church. Our letter contains the loving yet firm urgings of a missionary-pastor who is desperate to restore the spiritual life of a particular body of believers.

Corinth

Corinth was a strategically located city with a colorful history. Look at a map and you'll notice Greece is divided into two parts. In the south is the Peloponnesus, which is attached to the north by a four-mile-wide isthmus. Corinth was located on this isthmus, with all overland traffic passing through. Time and danger also made Corinth a bustling seaport, as ships would avoid the treacherous waters to the south and save 250 miles of sailing by pulling into one side or the other of Corinth. There they would unload their cargo, carry it across the isthmus and reload it on another ship. Smaller vessels would be dragged across on rollers. So dangerous was the long way around the peninsula that mariners had a saying, A sailor never takes a journey around Malea until he first writes his will.



Corinth had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. After a one hundred-year period of dormancy the city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar as a Roman colony in 44 B.C. By the time of our letter, the city of Corinth contained a population of about 250,000. Corinth was populated by former slaves who had attained their freedom and was truly a Greco-Roman city. It had Roman laws, culture and religions, yet Greek influences were present in these same areas. Corinth was a wealthy city which “lacked a landed aristocracy” (Fee, p. 2); it was a city of opportunity, a place to go and make money.

As a center for trade, travel, entertainment and cultic practices, Corinth was the San Francisco, Los Angeles or London of the ancient world. With the hustle and bustle came vice and degeneracy. Aristophanes coined the term korinthiazō (= to act like a Corinthian) to describe those whose life was characterized by fornication. Though the oft-quoted statistic that Corinth had one thousand prostitutes serving at the temple of Aphrodite is probably in error, this city boasted a decadence in public life which would make most of us blush.

J. C. Pollock sees Corinth as a strategic city from a missionary point of view.

Corinth was the biggest city Paul had yet encountered, a brash new commercial metropolis.... It squeezed nearly a quarter of a million people into a comparatively small area, a large proportion being slaves engaged in the unending movement of goods. Slaves or free, Corinthians were rootless, cut off from their country background, drawn from races and districts all over the empire...a curiously close parallel to the population of a 20th Century “inner-city”...

Paul had seen a Christian church grow and flourish in the moderately-sized cities he had found in Macedonia. If the love of Christ Jesus could take root in Corinth, the most populated, wealthy, commercial-minded and sex-obsessed city of eastern Europe, it must prove powerful anywhere.¹

The Church

In this cosmopolitan context Paul planted a church which, in one way or another, reacted to its immediate cultural and religious surrounding.

[F]resh from their immersion in the many pagan religions of the community, most of the Corinthian Christians had not adequately broken in numerous ways from the immorality of the prevailing culture that surrounded them. And, although this culture

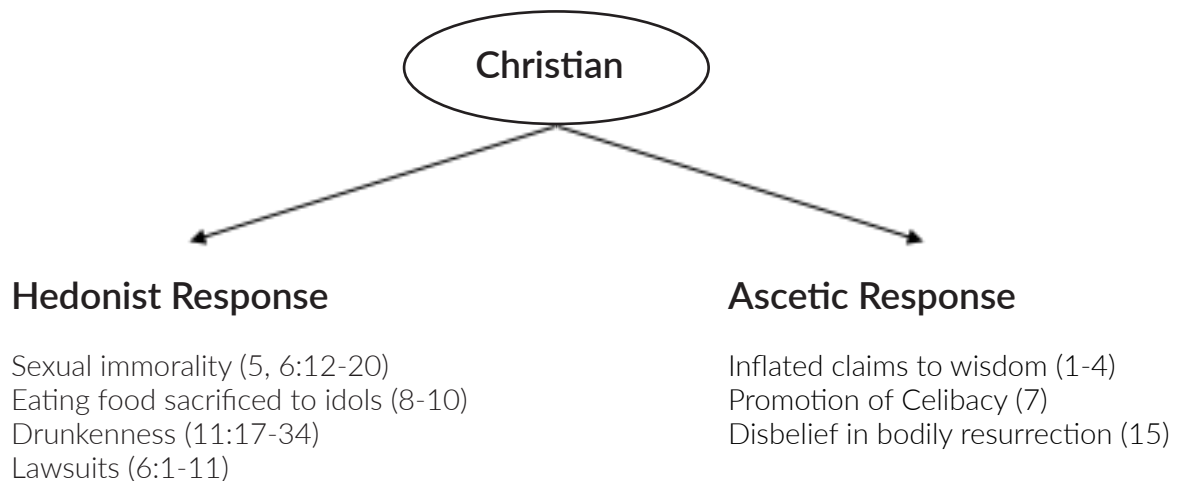
and these religions reflected stunning diversity, certain perspectives predominated across the board in the Greco-Roman world. (Blomberg, p. 24)

¹ J. C. Pollock, *The Apostle*, cited in Prior, p. 13.

The most important of these perspectives is called dualism. This Greek philosophy held the world of matter to be inferior and therefore evil. The world of spirit was good and to be sought after. This worldview led to two views of one's bodily appetites. First there were the hedonists (pleasure seekers) who said, Since the body doesn't mean anything, pursue any pleasure which feels good. At the other extreme were the ascetics who sought to deny the body any and all of its cravings.

Many in the Corinthian church brought their Greco-Roman orientation to life with them after they became believers.

All of the major problems of the Corinthian church can be viewed as stemming from one or the other of these two outworkings of dualistic thought—either asceticism or hedonism. (Blomberg, p. 25)



Gordon Fee, in his massive (880 pages) and magnificent commentary on our letter, argues that Paul's posture in this epistle is combative. The letter shows, perhaps more acutely than any other in the New Testament, the conflict inherent in a people who profess faith in Jesus, yet live as pagans. However, to some extent, the Corinthian church had turned on Paul. Accordingly, the apostle has to reestablish his spiritual authority as a basis for addressing the behavior of these new Christians. But beyond correcting sinful attitudes and actions, as Fee observes, Paul is ever concerned with addressing the theology which gives rise to inappropriate behavior. (Fee, pgs. 6-7)



Outline

- Introduction (1:1-9)
- Paul's Response to Reports from Chloe's Household (1:10–6:20)
- Paul's Response to a Corinthian Letter (7:1–16:12)
- Concluding Comments (16:13-24)

Ancient direction for the contemporary church

In many ways, life in ancient Corinth closely parallels life in increasingly post-Christian 21st century America. Do not be surprised to find great contemporary relevance in this letter to a beloved-but-often-struggling Christian community seeking to figure out the implications of faith in Christ in the midst of a culture gripped by other narratives and living along different trajectories. It is our hope that over the coming months as we investigate this letter to a church marked by doctrinal error, interpersonal conflict, and divided hearts, we will have our own hearts turned afresh to the God whose kingdom of love, grace, wisdom, and power reigns supreme in places like Corinth and—even more significantly—in the hearts of those who belong to his family by grace through faith in Jesus.

As you embark on your time in 1Corinthians, receive this blessing from the Apostle Paul:

...to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ—their Lord and ours: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (1Corinthians 1:2-3).

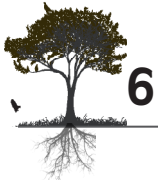
Study Ten

1Corinthians 8:1-13

For most of us, we are jumping back into 1 Corinthians after a couple of months' break. Others are joining in for the first time. Take a few minutes to look back over the first seven chapters of the book and remember the context, using this table to help you.

Why is Paul writing this letter to the church in Corinth?	
Based on clues in the text, what is the culture in the city of Corinth like?	
Up to this point in the letter, Paul has done a lot of responding to reports that he's received regarding this church community. What are some of the things that have been going on?	
What themes does Paul keep coming back to?	
What are some of the things you think Paul would like to see happen in the Corinthian church?	

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.



Eating is often a social ritual. Food is passed, stories are told, manners are learned, each member's turn is taken. But what if you live in a society where food is tied to the worship of pagan gods? What if the equivalent of going out to eat is having a meal at the pagan temple? Such was the dilemma for the Corinthian church. Paganism and dining often went together.

Sacrifice to the gods was an integral part of ancient life. It might be of two kinds, private and public. In neither case was the whole animal consumed upon the altar. Often all that was burned was a mere token part of it as small as some of the hairs cut from the forehead of the victim. In *private* sacrifice the animal, so to speak, was divided into three parts. First a token part was burned on the altar. Second, the priests received as their rightful portion the ribs, the ham and the left side of the face. Third, the worshipper himself received the rest of the meat. With the meat he gave a banquet. This was specifically the case at times like weddings. Sometimes these feasts were in the house of the host; sometimes they were even in the temple of the god to whom the sacrifice had been made. (Barclay, p. 80)

The section of 1 Corinthians between 8:1 and 11:1 deals with the topic of things sacrificed to idols. Three specific questions are at the forefront of Paul's concern.

- Purchasing idol food in the marketplace
- Eating idol food in a friend's home
- Participating in cultic meals in an idol temple

Behind the scenes, we can sense the parties favoring legalism versus license. Some in Corinth seem to be saying, "We're all free in Christ! Eat whatever you want!" Others, perhaps, argued in the other direction: "This food is tainted. Stay away from all of it!"

We can outline these three chapters in the following manner.

- The principle of love over knowledge (8:1-13)
- Paul's example of this principle (9:1-27)
- A warning to avoid idol worship (10:1-11:1)

Consider...

1. Zooming back in to this week's passage, 8:1-13, can you identify what the "knowledge" is that Paul refers to?
2. Reflect on the statement that "knowledge puffs up, but love builds up." How might the way of knowledge lead to an undesirable result in Paul's mind? How might the way of love respond differently to the question of whether or not to eat food offered to idols?
3. How could you connect this passage with what has come before in 1 Corinthians? Think back especially to the first few couple of chapters and the principles discussed there about worldly and godly wisdom, maturity and immaturity.
4. Read Romans 15:1-2. Paul deals with this same issue (rights vs. deference to the weak) in Romans 14-15. Notice Paul's guiding principle. We behave "not to please ourselves." What application can we make to our own lives from this principle? Describe a situation in which you might need to limit your Christian freedom for the sake of a "weaker" brother or sister.



5. Consider your own life. What might believers around you do that would cause you to struggle? Share a time you have experienced this. How can we care for one another in our areas of weakness?

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Eleven

1Corinthians 9:1-27

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

Last week, we explored the themes of love versus knowledge and freedom versus giving up one's rights for the sake of others. This week's passage expounds on these principle with an illustration from Paul's own life.

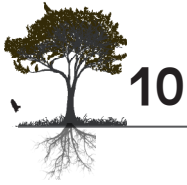
- The principle of love over knowledge (8:1-13)
- Paul's example of this principle (9:1-27)
- A warning to flee pagan idolatry (10:1-11:1)

Paul's illustration contains no fewer than 16 rhetorical questions intended to build to an unusual conclusion.

After an opening salvo in which Paul reasserts his apostleship (vv. 1-2), he sets out to defend himself against those who are calling him into question (v. 3). The "defense" turns out to be a vehement insistence on his "rights" to their material support (vv. 4-14). With every kind of available argument he contends that "If others have the right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more?" (v. 12a). Yet after all that, the conclusion in vv. 15-18 is not that they should therefore support him; it is the precise opposite—an explanation, indeed defense, of his policy of not accepting that for which he has just argued so strenuously. That is unusual argumentation under any circumstances. (Fee, p. 392)

We have seen that one of the issues for Paul was the crisis of his authority in the church of Corinth.¹ Paul's prohibition against eating in pagan temples has been challenged with theological arguments and with the questioning of his apostolic authority.

¹ See 4:1-5; 5:3-5; 9:1-27; 14:36-37.



The theological arguments were dealt with in chapter 8:

We all possess knowledge (8:1).

We know that an idol is nothing at all (8:4).

We know that food doesn't bring us closer to God. Nor does it distance us from God (8:8).

In chapter 9, Paul answers his detractors. He seems to be addressing two specific charges: first, that his failure to accept financial remuneration for his work has been used to diminish his authority; and second, that the inconsistency of his dietary habits (he ate like a Jew when he was with Jews and like a Gentile when he was with Gentiles) showed he was a hypocrite.

You will notice the athletic metaphors in 9:24-27. Corinth was the home to the Isthmian Games every two years. The event made the city a haven for athletes in training. Paul concludes this chapter with a warning against spiritual flabbiness. It seems that the believers of Corinth had gotten lazy in the disciplines of the Christian life. Here, as elsewhere, Paul encourages strong effort! This idea can be challenging for some Christians to balance with the knowledge that grace and salvation are not acquired by our own efforts. Fee points out that "Paul keeps warning and assurance in tension" (p. 440). Dallas Willard puts it this way:

The path of spiritual growth in the riches of Christ is not a passive one. Grace is not opposed to effort. It is opposed to earning. Effort is action. Earning is attitude. You have never seen people more active than those who have been set on fire by the grace of God. Paul, who perhaps understood grace better than any other mere human being, looked back at what had happened to him and said: "By the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me" (1 Corinthians 15:10).¹

Consider...

1. The topic of financial support for those in vocational ministry (9:7-14) can be an awkward one for Christian leaders to discuss. What are Paul's main arguments here?

¹ Dallas Willard, article, "Live Life to the Full." CHRISTIAN HERALD (U.K.) 14 APRIL 2001, <https://dwillard.org/articles/live-life-to-the-full>.

2. How could the receiving of financial benefits be a hindrance to ministry (v.12)?
3. In verses 12, 15 and 19, Paul returns to the idea of intentionally not taking advantage of all his rights and freedoms. As you've reflected on this concept from last week (chapter 8) and discussed it with your homegroup, are there any new insights you've gained?
4. In 9:23 Paul concludes this section with a statement of the passion of his life. What is one way in which your life reflects a passion for the gospel?
5. Reflect on Paul's description of his efforts in verses 19-27. What is a goal or vision you have worked extremely hard to achieve in your life? Describe the process of how you got there.
6. Towards what goal, specifically, do you think Christians are being encouraged to work hard in verses 24-27?



7. Previously in our study of 1 Corinthians, we have discussed habits and disciplines that help us mature in our faith. This passage gives us another opportunity to consider how we have set up our lives with Kingdom purposes in mind. In recent weeks or months, what is one pattern of life you've adopted--maybe as a result of your time in 1 Corinthians-- that is helping to train you for godliness?

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Twelve

1Corinthians 10:1-13

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

In this chapter we find some of the severest warnings of the New Testament. Paul is concerned for the spiritual survival of some in the Corinthian church. The apostle writes not to the weak, but to the supposedly strong, to those in the church who are confident in their wisdom and super-spirituality. By now we have seen that many in the Corinthian church are spiritually puffed up, flaunting their freedom with great pride and little wisdom.

Chapter 10:1-13 is a commentary on the warning we saw last week in 9:27. The apostle is deadly serious: the Corinthians are to avoid flirtations with idol worship, lest they be "disqualified for the prize." This week's passage is a history lesson from Israel's past, so prepare to take some time to learn or review the events Paul is referring to here.

In 10:11, Paul sees the experiences of Israel and the narrative of Scripture as pointing toward the new people of God, the Church. Therefore, the Corinthians' participation in idolatry is all the more unthinkable.

Take the time to read each of these passages from the Exodus story (or if you have time, the whole section from Exodus 13:3-17:7. Jot down any notes.



History Lesson	Old Testament Text
Guided by God in the cloud	Exodus 13:21-22
Crossed the Red Sea	Exodus 14:22-29
Ate manna and quail in the desert	Exodus 16:4, 35
Received water as a miracle	Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20:11
“Overthrown in the wilderness”	Numbers 14
Idolatry	Exodus 32:1-6
Sexual immorality	Numbers 25:1-9
Testing the Lord	Numbers 21:4-9
Grumbling	Numbers 16:41-50

Consider...

1. With all this in mind, look at verse 6 again. What do you think Paul meant by the evil that Israel desired?

2. The first four verses in this section recount some of the blessings received by God's people. Unfortunately, they were more characterized by grumbling over what they did not have than by gratitude for how God provided for them. Spend some time making note of what you have to be thankful for and be ready to share with your homegroup.
3. Read verses 11-13. What practical effect does Paul hope these examples and warnings will have on his hearers?
4. We often talk about encouraging one another. We like being encouraged and it feels good to offer encouragement to others. But we may be less comfortable warning another person who is heading in the wrong direction. Have you ever received or given a word of warning to a fellow believer? How was it received?
5. What comfort does Paul offer in verse 13? How have you experienced this in your life?



16

YOUR **work in the lord** IS NOT IN VAIN

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Thirteen

1Corinthians 10:14-22

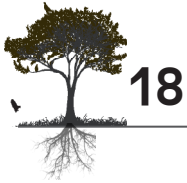
Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

As we've seen the last few weeks, the section of 1 Corinthians from 8:1–11:1 deals with the topic of food sacrificed to idols. Three specific issues are at the forefront of Paul's concern.

- Participating in cultic meals in an pagan temple.
- Purchasing food in the marketplace that may have been dedicated to an idol.
- Eating food in a friend's home that may have been dedicated to an idol.

This section deals with the first point. The second two points (as we've seen in chapter 8, and more on these next week) encourage the hearers of this letter to consider principles such as wisdom and sacrifice for the sake of others when making their ethical decisions. Notice in our passage this week that Paul is much more prescriptive with his instructions about participating in cultic meals at the temple. To Paul, this is a very different matter than purchasing or eating meat that may have been sacrificed to an idol.

Paul's argument here rests on comparing the ritual temple feasts to the sacred meal of the Christians – the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper. The communion cup is a "participation in the blood of Christ" (and so also the bread as Christ's body). The Greek word used is *koinōnos*, from which we get our word *fellowship*. Fee draws attention to the understanding that Yahweh was present at the meal (Deuteronomy 12:7 for example). So also, in paganism the god was thought to be present. And, in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, Jesus was present. He hosted the first "Lord's Supper," and the early church understood him to be present when the church gathered (1 Corinthians 5:3-5).



But what does this mean for us? What are we doing when we celebrate the Lord's supper? John Calvin is helpful:

It is true that believers are bound together by the blood of Christ, so that they become one Body. It is also true that a unity of that kind is properly called a *koinônos* or communion.... For it is necessary for us to be incorporated, as it were, into Christ in order to be united to each other. Besides, Paul is discussing here not a mere human fellowship, but the spiritual union between Christ and believers, in order to make it plain from that, that it is an intolerable sacrilege for them to be contaminated by communion with idols. Therefore from the context of this verse we can conclude that the *koinônos* or communion of the blood is the alliance which we have with the blood of Christ when He ingrafts all of us into His body so that He may live in us, and we in Him. (Calvin, p. 216)

There are spiritual forces at play here, and Paul wants his hearers to be very aware of this. Another commentator puts it bluntly:

The devils make use of men's readiness to worship idols. Thus, when people sacrifice to idols, it cannot be said that they are engaging in some neutral activity that has no meaning. They are in fact sacrificing to evil spirits, like the people spoken of in Deuteronomy 32:17. To share food is to establish fellowship. Thus they are entering into fellowship with devils. (Morris, p. 147)

Consider...

1. What can we learn from this text about the reality of an unseen spiritual world?

2. Some cultures have a much more vivid awareness of the spiritual forces at work in the world than others do. Why do you suppose this is the case?

3. The theme of meals occurs over and over in the Bible, often with great spiritual significance as a symbol of God's fellowship with humans. If you're familiar with the biblical story, what instances in the Bible can you remember in which a meal carried spiritual meaning? Share these stories amongst your homegroup.¹

4. How could these verses inform us of the way we approach the Lord's Supper week by week? In light of your reflections, what changes might you make in your preparation for celebrating the Lord's Supper?

5. How else might the principles we've wrestled with in this passage apply to our own time and place? Think of some possible parallels and compare notes with your homegroup (celebrating Halloween? Attending or participating in the Solstice parade? Wearing a crystal? Looking at horoscopes? etc.)

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

¹ If you need some hints: Exodus 12:14-17, Isaiah 25:6-9, John 21:1-14, Revelation 19:6-9



YOUR **work in the lord** IS NOT IN VAIN

Sermon Notes

Study Fourteen

1Corinthians 10:23–11:1

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

This section of verses is a summing up of all of Paul's teaching from 8:1-11:1. To recap, Paul is helping his friends to think through three scenarios:

- Participating in cultic meals in a pagan temple.
- Purchasing food in the marketplace that may have been dedicated to an idol.
- Eating food in a friend's home that may have been dedicated to an idol.

Last week's passage dealt with the first question. Here, he deals with the second and third questions, and drives home the principle that the freedom of the believer must work right alongside the believer's obligation toward his or her neighbor.

Apart from the unique instance of eating during pagan worship, believers have the freedom to partake so long as it is for God's glory and others' well-being. Verse 23 restates 6:12 almost verbatim ("Everything is permissible..."), except that here Paul substitutes 'but not everything is *constructive*' at the end. Now he is thinking more of the corporate than of the individual effects of exercising freedom in Christ. Still, his "Yes, but" approach to the Corinthian slogans remains unchanged. Verse 24 amplifies the qualification. Christians are free to serve others above self. (NIVAC, p. 202)

We find repetition here of what has come before in the letter as Paul strives to help this church to apply gospel principles to everyday life situations. Take note of the life principles he provides as he closes this extended passage of his letter.



The major new item in this section is Paul's tipping of the scales in verses 25-30 in favor of freedom over abstinence. God has created the material world for human enjoyment, though we must not abuse it (Gen. 1:28). Above all else, Paul wants as many men and women as possible to come to a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus (v. 33b) . (NIVAC, p. 204)

Consider...

1. Look up Matthew 22:37-40. How do Paul's words in this week's passage reflect Jesus' words?
2. What is it about the two scenarios Paul gives in verses 27-28 that leads to Paul's different advice for each occasion? What is Paul's concern in each instance?
3. As Paul wraps up this section on idol food, what concluding directives or commands can you find in this passage that could be applied to a variety of situations?
4. Consider what it might look like to "do all to the glory of God." Make a list of some of the things you do during a typical day. How could you do these things "to the glory of God?" Share ideas with your homegroup.

5. Look up Psalm 24, which is quoted in verse 26. Take some time to read it slowly, soaking up the beautiful words. How does this Psalm provide context for what we've been learning in chapters 8-10 of 1 Corinthians? Consider memorizing this Psalm.

6. Look again at verse 33. Human selfishness, combined with an individualistic culture, often encourages us to seek our own advantage over that of others. Think of some examples of times in the last week when this has been the case for you, and confess these in prayer.

7. In 11:1, Paul urges his friends to imitate his life even as Paul imitates Christ. Is there a person in your life whom you would like to emulate, because they resemble Jesus? What is it about their life that you are drawn to imitate?

8. Obviously none of us are perfect imitators of Christ, but do you have anyone specific in your life for whom you are trying to provide a good model of what it looks like to follow Christ? How does this impact the way you live your life?



9. As you are processing this passage, if you feel the Holy Spirit nudging you to change your thoughts or behaviors in any way, or if a particular person comes to mind that you would like to model Jesus for, share this with your homegroup. What will you do to follow God's lead in this?

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Fifteen

1Corinthians 11:2-16

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

After the weeks we've spent considering matters related to food, idol worship, and the believer's freedom, here we come to an abrupt shift. Paul now turns to another matter in which the Corinthian church needs correction and encouragement.

To start with, what images spring to mind when you hear the word *worship*? Do you picture a 75-minute service with some songs, a sermon, some more songs, and a benediction? Or just the musical part of that service? A stadium filled with people singing along with a Christian band? Or maybe a session of singing and prayer alone in your car?

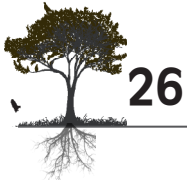
We don't have to think too long or too hard to realize that Christian worship gatherings happen in many forms and many styles. The Corinthians' worship was, predictably, a mess. When they gathered together as a community, this evidently included drunken revelry, class distinctions, jealousy, people talking over each other, and perhaps some sexually suggestive behavior.

Paul will devote four chapters to correcting three areas of difficulty.

- The issue of attire when praying and prophesying (11:2-16)
- The proper observance of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
- The use and abuse of spiritual gifts in public worship (12-14)

1 Corinthians 14:40 summarizes Paul's chief concern:... "all things should be done decently and in order." Keep this in your mind as you study over these next few weeks.

This week's passage dives right in with a verse that will most likely baffle you. You're in good company. Charles Hodge writes, "There is scarcely a passage in the New Testament which has



taxed the learning and ingenuity of commentators as this. After all that has been written, it remains just as obscure as ever"! One commentator pieces together the situation as follows:

Because of their new found freedom in Christ, women in the Corinthian church were praying and prophesying (v. 5a). Christian tradition from Pentecost on had approved of such practice (Acts 2:18), and it readily fit Paul's own emphasis on freedom. But these women were not merely speaking in worship but doing it in a way that unnecessarily flaunted social convention and the order of creation. So Paul has to encourage them to exercise restraint. As in chapters 8-10, knowledge must be tempered with love. (NIVAC p. 208)

Even though there is much that is confusing in this week's passage, it seems clear that some women in the church were breaking with social norms in ways that were distracting others during worship. For some historical context, ordinarily women wore a veil in public. Mistresses of men who were prominent in society, along with temple prostitutes, appeared in public without a veil. Slave women had their heads shaved. Accordingly, we can conclude that Paul wants worshippers to show proper respect for the Lord, and to refrain from distracting others, by heeding the social customs of their time and place. Blomberg states: "all of the [interpretive] options boil down to one of two issues: what the Corinthians did with their heads mattered because of either the sexual or the religious implications of their appearance (or both)." (NIVAC p. 215)

It is worth noting that 11:3 has been used to teach a strict hierarchy in marriage, i.e. Jesus gets his orders from God the Father, the man gets his orders from Jesus and the woman gets her orders from the man, etc. Fee's interpretation of this passage provides a helpful alternative to this point of view:

...Paul's concern is not hierarchical (who has authority over whom), but relational (the unique relationships that are predicated on one's being the source of the other's existence). Indeed, he says nothing about man's authority; his concern is with the woman's being man's *glory*, the one without whom he is not complete (vv. 7c-9). To blur that relationship is to bring shame on her "head." This means that the middle clause [in verse 3], "the man is the head of woman," refers to the creation account also alluded to in vv. 8 and 12. "The man" would refer to Adam, and "the woman" to Eve; thus "the man is the source of the woman's life." But as v. 12 makes plain, that is only part of the story; in a much more significant way, "all things," both man and woman, "come from God." (Fee, p. 504)

Consider...

1. If we believe this is God's word, it must have something for us, but that doesn't mean it will always be plain and clear. What is your impulse when you come to a text that seems difficult to understand? Moving right along...? Consult an expert (book/person)? Pray for insight? Slow down/dig in and try to figure it out?
2. What assumptions and expectations of men's and women's roles did you grow up with? (Consider what you saw in your family of origin, your friends, your church, etc.) Have your views on the roles of men and women changed? How and why?
3. On the issue of the roles of men and women, both in church life and in marriage, there is likely some disagreement among us. How can we seek unity in Christ even when we may disagree about some issues like this?
4. Re-read vv. 8-12 and consider the following comments from Gordon Fee. What is in mind here? How does the woman's coming from the man in the creation story make her his glory?

...Paul really is reflecting the sense of the Old Testament text to which he is alluding [Gen. 2:18]. Man by himself is not complete; he is alone, without a companion or helper suitable to him. The animals will not do; he needs one who is bone of his bone, one who is like him but different from him, one who is uniquely his own "glory." In



fact, when the man in the Old Testament narrative sees the woman he “glories” in her by bursting into song. She is thus man’s glory because she “came from man” and was created “for him.” She is not thereby subordinate to him, but necessary for him. She exists to his honor as the one who having come from man is the one companion suitable to him, so that he might be complete and that together they might form humanity. (Fee, p. 517)

5. Paul is addressing the church at Corinth regarding issues specific to their cultural norms which interfere with community worship. What things could distract a person in the context of worship today?

6. This passage assumes that our clothing and appearance can send messages to others about our relationships and values. Is this principle still true in our culture today? How? Discuss this with your homegroup.

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Study Sixteen

1Corinthians 11:17-34

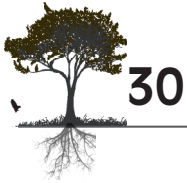
Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

There are a number of things that a church does when we gather together. We greet each other, we have announcements related to our family life together, we sing, we share encouragement and scripture verses with each other. But the two high points of Protestant corporate worship are the proclamation of the Word and the sharing of the Lord's Supper. Symbolically, we eat and drink Christ as we confess our sins and celebrate our forgiveness as Jesus himself taught his disciples to do.

For the early church, the celebration of the Lord's Supper appears to have been at the conclusion of a meal. The meal and the *eucharist* ("thanksgiving") were so intertwined that sometimes it is difficult to ascertain whether the phrase "breaking bread" refers to the meal or to the Lord's Supper (see Acts 2:42, 46; 20:7, 11).

In the Corinthian church the observation of the Lord's Supper was fraught with problems. Since they gathered for worship in each others' homes, those with larger homes would provide meeting places for the body of believers to assemble. Corinthian homes of the wealthy had a dining room and an atrium or a courtyard. The dining room was relatively small while the courtyard could seat 30 to 50 guests. These verses suggest that the wealthy were providing meals for their closest friends in the dining room while the poor—who wouldn't have been able to arrive until after work—waited in the atrium and remained hungry.

Not surprisingly then, this passage contains a serious warning. The way the Corinthians were partaking in the Lord's Supper had serious spiritual implications. What does it mean to eat and drink "in an unworthy manner"? This cannot mean that to be a sinner is to be unworthy. Those who know they are sinners are, in fact, the only people qualified for the Lord's Supper. Two hints to help with your answer: consider the comment below by Gordon Fee and consider the context of verses 17-22.



The Lord's Supper is not just any meal; it is *the* meal, in which at a common table with one loaf and a common cup they proclaimed that through the death of Christ they were one body, the body of Christ; and therefore they are not just any group of sociologically diverse people who could keep those differences intact at this table. . . . To fail to discern the body in this way, by abusing those of lesser sociological status, is to incur God's judgment. (Fee, p. 564)

Consider...

1. Read through this week's passage again and see if you can discern a three-part outline of Paul's argument about the Lord's supper. What is the main point of each section?
2. If you had never heard of the Lord's Supper before, what could you discern from this passage about its purposes for Christian practice?
3. Take a few minutes to remember or learn what Jesus meant when he said that the cup is "the new covenant." Read the following passages and take note of anything that stands out to you.
 - Jeremiah 31:31-34

- Matthew 26:26-30
 - Hebrews 8-9
4. Look again at verses 24-26 in our passage. Notice the backward and forward look from the communion table. When you celebrate the Lord's Supper which view is most prominent in your thinking? How could having both views in mind (looking to the past and looking to the future) enrich your understanding of the experience?
 5. In Corinth, the Lord's Supper was taken in the context of a group meal that brought to light the social differences of the people. Reflect on our church culture. What habits or practices have the potential to highlight our differences in a way that undermines our spiritual unity?
 6. Verses 27-30 may give you pause as you study. What is your interpretation of these verses in the context of the whole passage?



7. As you ponder this passage this week, think about the bonds of love and unity that God calls a church family to share. Is there a step you could take to grow those bonds between you and others at SB Community, even during a pandemic? Think of a few ideas and discuss with your homegroup. Pick one step to take, no matter how small.

Pray

Michael Green created this outline to sum up Paul's theology of the Lord's supper in these verses. Use it to pray for yourself as a worshipper and as a member of the body of SB Community, and for the body as a whole.

Look back (to Christ's death)

Look in (self-examination)

Look up (fellowship with God)

Look around (fellowship with each other)

Look forward (to Christ's return)

Look outward (to proclaim God's word to others)¹

Sermon Notes

¹ Blomberg, NIVAC page 236.

Study Seventeen

1Corinthians 12:1-31

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

Have you ever felt inadequate because another believer seems more gifted than you in some area? One can talk about Jesus to friends and strangers with ease, one seems tireless in serving others, one is brilliantly able to retain and synthesize Bible knowledge, one seems to always have a profound word of insight into a situation, and perhaps their giftedness seems just to highlight your own insecurity. This week's passage will challenge that premise, hopefully allowing each of us to come to a fresh appreciation for the value of each uniquely gifted person—when they are working together as one community. Elton Trueblood expounds:

Much of the uniqueness of Christianity, in its original emergence, consisted of the fact that simple people could be amazingly powerful when they were members of one another. As everyone knows, it is almost impossible to create a fire with one log, even if it is a sound one, while several poor logs may make an excellent fire if they stay together as they burn. The miracle of the early church was that of poor sticks making a grand conflagration. A good fire glorifies even its poorest fuel. —Elton Trueblood

And not only is each believer gifted differently, but The New Testament writers insist upon the absolute indispensability of every member of the Body of Christ. 1 Corinthians 12 is the high watermark of New Testament teaching on this subject. Consider the various New Testament lists of gifts. We find 20 gifts listed (more about this to follow). None of these lists match exactly. The point seems to be simply that God empowers his people for ministry. To put it another way, God does not call believers to a particular endeavor without equipping someone in the community with a corresponding gift.

To fit this week's passage into context, you will remember that since 8:1 Paul has been wrestling with the Corinthians over their practices of worship. As we noted in Study 15, he moves from his absolute prohibition of participating in pagan festivals to three other areas of concern related to worship:



- The issue of attire when praying and prophesying (11:2-16)
- The proper observance of the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)
- The use and abuse of spiritual gifts in public worship (1 Corinthians 13:12-14) forms something of an interlude.

Paul takes a break from this argument by putting first things first, i.e., the necessity of love to govern every aspect of the Christian life. The abuse of the gift of tongues comes up several times in these chapters. Paul does not forbid the use of tongues in public worship, but he insists that all spiritual gifts be used for the building up of the body of Christ and that they are used "for the strengthening of the church" (14:26). Spiritual giftedness is not an opportunity for showing off or creating hierarchies of spiritual status, but rather a call to serve and edify others in a way that strengthens our community relationships for the sake of God's Kingdom. Craig Blomberg puts it more starkly:

All of Paul's emphasis on unity within diversity calls into question the behavior of growing numbers of Americans who claim to be religious, believe in God and even Christ, and yet drop out of organized church life or at least fade to its periphery. In a land still heavily influenced by a heritage of rugged individualism, believers need to work ever harder to demonstrate that Christianity is not a merely personal religion but fundamentally corporate. Even evangelical language for conversion betrays this bias: a "*personal* relationship with Jesus Christ." That is the necessary starting point, but we dare not stop until that relationship leads to intimate *interpersonal* relationships with other Christians. (NIVAC, p. 221)

Consider...

1. Based on the last few passages we've looked at and what we know about the Corinthian church, what kinds of situations do you think were happening among them that warranted these instructions?

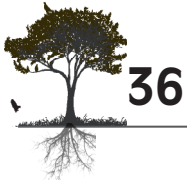
2. What can we learn about the Holy Spirit from this passage?

3. Look up some other biblical passages about the gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jot down all the specific examples of gifts you can find. (1 Corinthians 12:7-11, Romans 12:6-8, Ephesians 4:7-11, 1 Peter 4:7-11)

4. What are some examples of ways that a member of SB Community can exercise their gifts—whether within the family life of the church, or in our broader community (even during a pandemic)?

5. How can our church family as a whole encourage a culture of “every member ministry”?

6. After spending time in this passage, how would you describe a truly “spiritual” person? How might this be different from the way our culture would describe a spiritual person?



7. Take some time to consider your own spiritual giftedness. Perhaps you already know your strongest areas of giftedness and perhaps you don't, but jot down one or more ways in which you think you are equipped to bless others. When you gather as a homegroup, be ready to encourage each other in this area.

8. As you ponder this passage and its implications, is there an area in which you sense that God may be inviting you to take a step forward? A place where you may be led to contribute your Spirit-given gifts? Pray and consider.

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Eighteen

1Corinthians 13:1-13

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

1 Corinthians 13 has been lauded, honored, read at weddings, posted in picturesque frames, tattooed, memorized. New Testament scholar Henry Alford said of this passage, "[It is] a pure and perfect gem, perhaps the noblest assemblage of beautiful thought in beautiful language extant in our world." Adolf von Harnack understood the chapter as "the greatest, strongest, deepest thing Paul ever wrote." Billy Graham once claimed to read this chapter every day before he began his work.

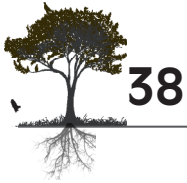
A great study of 1 Corinthians 13 could read as follows:

- Read and memorize these verses.
- Spend the rest of your life putting them into practice.

The context of this chapter is highly significant. It comes right in the middle of Paul's correction of Corinthian worship. Paul is not setting love over spiritual gifts; he is saying that spiritual gifts exercised apart from love are useless!

Gordon Fee sets this chapter in the context of the letter.

At issue have been opposing views of "spirituality." They speak in tongues, to be sure, which Paul will not question as a legitimate activity of the Spirit. But at the same time they tolerate, or endorse, illicit sexuality, greed, and idolatry...They spout "wisdom" and "knowledge"; but in the former they stand boldly against Paul and his gospel of a crucified Messiah, and in the latter they are willing to "build up" a brother by destroying him (8:10-11). In short, they have a spirituality that has religious trappings (asceticism, knowledge, tongues) but has abandoned rather totally genuinely Christian ethics, with its supremacy of love. (Fee, p. 627)



The word “love” in our language can mean a great many things. Often it is understood in its romantic or emotive sense: to love means to feel. This is not what Paul has in mind. Paul uses the Greek word *agape*. The word, one of four from the Greek language which are translated simply as “love,” was not used for sexual or romantic love, nor was it the word used for friendship. Leon Morris defines *agape* as

...love for the utterly unworthy, a love which proceeds from a God who is love. It is a love lavished upon others without a thought of whether they are worthy to receive it or not. It proceeds rather from the nature of the lover, than from any merit in the beloved. (Morris, p. 181)

As Fee puts it, “Love is not an idea for Paul, not even a ‘motivating factor’ for behavior. It *is* behavior. To love is to act; anything short of action is not love at all.” (Fee, p. 628)

Consider...

1. Think through the chapter in the context of the whole letter. How does this chapter fit with Paul’s overall concerns for the Corinthian church?

2. Think back to last week’s discussion about gifts. What do you think it would look like for you if you were to exercise your spiritual gift(s) without love?

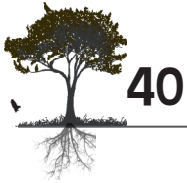
3. List the attributes of love you can learn from this passage (positive and negative). Which are strongest in your life? Which of these do you need to develop in your life?

Love does...

Love does not...

4. What is Paul's point in verses 8-12? Remember back to last week to put it all in context.

5. Look again at 13:4-7. Write your own paraphrase of these verses. Define in your paraphrase "patience," "kindness," "envy" etc. Paraphrases are usually longer than the original. Go ahead and have some fun with this ("Love means that when my two-year-old son stamps his feet and spills his milk on purpose I treat him with gentleness rather than rage"). Be prepared to read your paraphrase to your group.



6. We have all experienced a broken world's interpretation of love, or the absence of Christlike love from fellow humans. Ponder the perfect love of Christ as you conclude this study. Read and marvel at the following verses. Ask God to give you a deeper awareness of his love, and empower you to love others as you yourself are loved by him.

Ephesians 3:14-21

Romans 5:1-8

Romans 8

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Nineteen

1Corinthians 14:1-40

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

Chapter 14 is the climax of the concerns Paul began in 11:2. Throughout this section the apostle has argued for orderly worship. In chapter 12 his emphasis was on the diversity of gifts; in chapter 13 he stressed the unity of love. All of this has been building to chapter 14. As you study this chapter, notice the running contrast Paul draws between two gifts, tongues and prophecy.

Chapter 14 falls into three paragraphs or sections.

- Paul compares and contrasts the gifts of tongues and prophecy (vv. 1-25).
- Paul gives guidelines for the use of both gifts in public worship (vv. 26-36).
- Paul warns the “super-spiritual” in the church of Corinth (vv. 37-40).

One of the gifts of the Holy Spirit in the New Testament is that of “tongues.” The Greek word used is *glôssa*. It can be translated either “tongue” or “language.” In Acts 2, when the Holy Spirit descends upon the church in a unique way, the manifestation of the Spirit's presence is people's ability to spontaneously speak in foreign languages and dialects they previously did not know, and those who heard required no interpretation.

As noted in Study 17, the abuse of the gift of tongues seems to be one of the major faults of the super-spiritual elite at Corinth. The gift referred to here seems to be different than the phenomenon Luke refers to in Acts. In Acts, the gift of languages was used to preach the gospel. Conversely, Paul's concern for Corinth is that in this case, tongues are preventing the preaching of the gospel. The “tongues” used here are more like a prayer language (14:6-12) addressed to God than a voice preaching intelligible words to other worshippers. In Corinth, then, if one speaks in tongues during a worship service, an interpretation is required.



And what is the gift of prophecy? Michael Green, a pastor-scholar, gives a simple definition: prophecy is “a word from the Lord through a member of his body, inspired by his Spirit and given to build up the rest of the body.”¹

Verses 34-35 can be challenging to interpret. At first glance, they don't seem to fit with what Paul has already taught in 1 Corinthians. It may sound as though he is forbidding women to pray and prophesy, yet in 11:5 the apostle gave instructions to women concerning *how* to pray and prophesy in a worship setting. It is likely that Paul is simply saying, “Stop chattering. Be quiet.” A word of prophecy was uttered and the women, who may have been seated together separately from the men after the pattern of a Jewish synagogue, began to discuss it among themselves, adding to the general chaos. It's also important to observe that the same instruction to “keep silent” (ESV) also shows up in verses 28 and 30, directed at any person who is speaking out of order.

Prior acknowledges the difficulties of this section but offers a helpful comment.

It seems the principle of submissiveness was being ignored (*they should be subordinate*, 34), that a spirit of defiance was uppermost (*it is shameful...*, 35), and that an isolationist tendency was turning these wives into arbitrators of their own church and even doctrine (*Did the word of God originate with you?*, 36). In other words, these married women were the source of some of the arrogance in the Corinthian church which Paul has already had cause to castigate (4:7ff.; 5:2ff.; 6:1ff.; 8:1; 13:5). (Prior, p. 252)

Consider...

1. As you read, make a list of what Paul says about each of the gifts of tongues and prophecy. Toward the end of the chapter, verses 22-39, look especially for the purpose of these gifts for the church, and the effect of these gifts with regard to the nonbeliever.

Tongues

Prophecy

1 From “To Corinth With Love” (Hodder, 1982), 74. The gift of prophecy is the most frequently mentioned gift in the New Testament. Elsewhere Green points to the widespread mention of this gift...not only in Jerusalem and Caesarea, but in Antioch (Acts 11:27, 13:1), Corinth, Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians. 5:19, 20) and the churches of Asia Minor (Rev. 1:3). Both Luke and Matthew indicate that Jesus anticipated a continuation of prophecy among his followers (Matt. 10:41f.; Luke 11:49). (“I Believe in the Holy Spirit” (Eerdmans, 1975), 169.

2. Notice again the words used in verses 3, 4, 12, 17 and 26 to describe Paul's primary concern when it comes to worship gatherings. Compare different Bible translations. In your own words, what is Paul's main metric for evaluating Corinthian worship practices?

3. With Michael Green's definition of "prophecy" in mind ("a word from the Lord through a member of his body, inspired by his Spirit and given to build up the rest of the body"), work through 14:29-33. Put into your own words what Paul is saying to the Corinthian church. What safeguards does Paul place around the use of this gift?

4. How and where have you seen the gift of prophecy manifest in SB Community? How do Paul's safeguards apply to our context?

5. Are there any worship practices of SB Community that have the potential to be distracting to the point of preventing visitors and nonbelievers from hearing the gospel? Consider this and compare notes with your homegroup, especially listening to those who are newer to the faith and/or the church family.



6. Read back through the passage again, paying particular attention to the subject of the church's witness to outsiders/nonbelievers. Even during the pandemic, our church has enjoyed a steady influx of visitors and newcomers. How can we as members of this church continue to grow in our mission to invite, welcome, and include new people?

7. If you have time, do a little extra reading about women leaders in the early church and how Paul interacts with them: Romans 16:5-9, Acts 18:18, 18:26, Romans 16:3, 1 Corinthians 16:19. Note your observations.

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Twenty

1Corinthians 15:1-34

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

We have just had the joy of celebrating Easter, and in this week's passage we get to keep on celebrating. Paul reminds his friends about the point of all they've been discussing, which is the gospel message! And central to the gospel is the resurrection of Christ, which makes new life possible for all believers; without it, their faith is pointless.

The idea of resurrection can be a major stumbling block for modern people; it doesn't fit with our everyday experiences of how the world works. It was no different for people in New Testament times, whose cultural beliefs always included some kind of afterlife but who had no context for the idea of bodily resurrection. Paul found himself in a good deal of trouble because he affirmed both the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth and the future resurrection of believers.

When defending himself against Agrippa, Paul asked, "Why should any of you consider it incredible that God raises the dead?" (Acts 26:8). Before Felix and the Sanhedrin, as well, the resurrection had been a central topic: "It is concerning the resurrection of the dead that I am on trial before you today" (Acts 24:21).

Belief in resurrection was also a troubling issue in the Corinthian church, as our passage this week makes clear. Why would some in the church deny this teaching? There are several possibilities.

- Perhaps these were Jewish believers in the church who carried the thinking of the Sadducees—a religious group who denied the idea of the resurrection of the dead—with them into the Christian life.
- Those denying the resurrection might have been Greeks (or influenced by Greek philosophy) who saw the soul as entrapped by the body. The goal in Platonic (Greek) thinking was to get away from the body, not to be eternally tied to it.



- A third possibility is that the church was infiltrated by Gnostic ideas, including an outright denial of the resurrection of Jesus.
- Possibly, some in Corinth had what is called an “overly realized eschatology,” arguing that the resurrection had already happened spiritually (see 2 Timothy 2:17-18).

In any case, Paul’s point in this passage is crystal clear—the resurrection means everything. In the words of Craig Blomberg,

Paul does not permit a perspective on Jesus that views him merely as a good, moral teacher or on Christianity that considers it simply an admirable collection of proverbial truths about how to live. If the resurrection is false, Christianity is worthless.

Verse 29 may give you pause. Here we find Paul speaking of “being baptized on behalf of the dead.” The practice has no New Testament support, nor does the theology of Paul, with its emphasis on personal faith as the means of justification, allow for the legitimacy of the practice. However, some early church fathers wrote about such practices among Gnostic groups, and as we have seen, some Corinthian Christians were influenced by Gnostic thinking. Most commentators believe Paul is using this example of an inappropriate practice of the Corinthian church to further his argument for the resurrection. The ceremony would be meaningless, he points out, if there was no future resurrection of the dead.

Teaching about the resurrection continues into next week’s passage as well. This outline of the whole chapter may help you as you go along.

- The Fact of the Resurrection (15:1-11)
- The Centrality of the Resurrection (15:12-19)
- The Consequences of the Resurrection (15:20-34)
- The Nature of the Resurrection Body (15:35-50)
- The Time of the Resurrection (15:51-57)
- The Implication of the Resurrection (15:58)

Consider...

1. Verses 3-8 contain the heart of Paul’s gospel. First, notice the little phrase, “For what I have received I passed on to you...” What do you think Paul’s purpose is in this statement, and all the references to witnesses?



6. Verses 32-34 might seem like a surprising conclusion to the argument so far in this section. How could your beliefs about resurrection—that of Jesus, as well as the future resurrection of believers—affect your moral behavior? (Remember back to chapters 5 and 6!) Reflect on this question and then read 2 Peter 3.

Was there anything about your celebration of Easter this year that stayed with you particularly? Maybe something you heard in the sermon struck you in a new way, or maybe God met you in worship in a way that comforted you or gave you new hope. Share with your homegroup.

Pray

Next week, our study will go into more depth concerning how Jesus' resurrection points to the future resurrection of believers. In preparation for that, end your study this week by meditating on and praying through Romans 8:18-25. As a homegroup, remember together the suffering and struggles of this past year—on a personal as well as a global level. Let this passage from Romans, as well as this week's study of 1 Corinthians, lead you to pray with bold and eager hope.

Sermon Notes

Study Twenty-One

1Corinthians 15:35-58

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

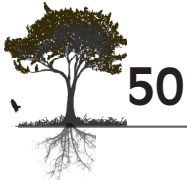
In this section of chapter 15, Paul continues the conversation on resurrection by responding to the question, "How are the dead raised?", which is "probably not so much a genuine question but a way of mocking the whole notion of bodily resurrection" (NIVAC, p. 315).

In 15:44 Paul describes our bodies with two adjectives, "natural" and "spiritual" (the latter term, multiple commentators believe is better translated as "supernatural"). Fee explains.

It is "spiritual," not in the sense of "immaterial" but of "supernatural," as he will explain with the help of Scripture in v. 45, because it will have been recreated by Christ, who himself through his resurrection came to be "a life giving Spirit." (Fee, p. 786)

Unquestionably Paul is using these adjectives for shock value. *Psychikos* (natural) and *pneumatikos* (spiritual) are both used to modify *sôma* (body). Throughout this letter Paul has been addressing the self-identified *pneumatikos*, the "super-spiritual" Corinthians who saw no need for a body. 1 Corinthians 15 teaches neither reincarnation (a completely different existence after death) nor obliteration (the end of existence at death). Instead, there is resurrection, involving a degree of both continuity and discontinuity between this life and the next life.

There is tremendous hope here for the believer, and Paul ends on a very practical note. How does a deep understanding of these truths fuel the everyday life and work of the believer? Verse 58 brings the conversation full circle to where he started at the beginning of the chapter. From Craig Blomberg:



Sooner or later we will die, and some of us will suffer quite a bit before we do. We need to recapture the longing for the life to come, which enabled Paul to declare confidently even in his most difficult moments: “I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18). Or again, “for our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all” (2 Corinthians 4:17). (NIVAC, p. 311)

Consider...

1. Begin your reflection on this week’s passage by thinking about what beliefs you have observed—or absorbed—from our surrounding culture related to life after death.
2. How does 1 Corinthians 15:35-58 differ from your observations of American culture, or challenge your previous assumptions?
3. Read verse 58 in light of 15:1-2, noting the symmetry of the passage. Write a sentence or two to summarize this whole chapter.

4. Beyond this passage, the accounts of the resurrected Jesus in the gospels might help to give us a clue as to what our resurrection bodies will be like. Read Luke 24 and John 20-21 and take notes on what you notice is true about Jesus's resurrection body.

5. In what ways do you expect you, as an individual, will be the same after the resurrection? How might you be different?

6. In what ways might a deeper understanding of the future resurrection affect the way you live your life now?

7. Spend some time reflecting on verse 58. Try to memorize it. What is one way you might live out this mandate this week?



YOUR **work in the lord** IS NOT IN VAIN

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?

Sermon Notes

Study Twenty-Two

1Corinthians 16:1-24

Before reading ahead in this study, read through this week's passage slowly and attentively. Pray for a heart that is open to receiving whatever God has for you here. Jot down any initial observations and questions you have.

Paul had planted the church at Corinth, Apollos nurtured it, and God has caused it to grow (3:6). But throughout the letter of 1 Corinthians, we have seen this church often struggling to translate the gospel into everyday life circumstances. We have detected conflict between the church and Paul as he battles to keep them on course. Chapter 16 forms the epilogue.

Before signing off, Paul addresses two more questions which he had received from the party of Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus (16:17). The first is a question about the need for financial assistance to the Jerusalem church (16:1) and the second has to do with the impending visit of Apollos to Corinth. Each of these responses begins with the familiar words, "Now about..."

In closing, Paul gives final warnings to his antagonists within the church and then concludes with a single Aramaic word which captures the tension of the ages, Maranatha. The word is delightfully ambiguous. What does it mean? The Aramaic has been transliterated into Greek and then again into English by the time we read it. The translator has to make a decision on how to break up the consonants and vowels. Marana tha means "Our Lord come," while Maran atha means "Our Lord has come." Obviously, both are rich with significance. And Paul, throughout this letter has sought to have the Corinthians appreciate both implications. The believer is living between the times, between the first and second coming of Christ!

When all is said and done, we might summarize Paul's desire for the Corinthian church with the following words: the apostle wanted these believers' faith to make a difference. Instead of merely reflecting Corinthian culture and the paganism which was so pervasive in Greek society, Paul wanted the church to have an identity shaped by the first and second advent of Christ. The Lord had come. Jesus was "the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1:24). But Jesus is coming again. The Corinthians would have to wait for the fullness of their blessing in Christ. In the between times, Paul yearned for this church to live as those who had been redeemed.



Consider...

1. One of Paul's concerns during this period of his life was the poverty of the Jerusalem church and how other churches could help to support it. Read the following verses. How do they inform our sense of responsibility to local churches who are struggling financially as well as churches we support around the world?
 - Acts 11:27-30
 - Acts 24:17
 - Romans 15:25-28
 - 2 Corinthians 8:11-14
2. Consider 16:2. Also look up 1 Timothy 6:17-18. What can you learn about giving from these verses?
3. Why, how, and to whom should a Christian give money? When and how much? This can be a bit awkward as a conversation topic, but the Bible is clear that what we do with our money reflects the state of our hearts. Sum up your thinking and compare notes with your homegroup.

4. What is Paul's tone and concern as he discusses travel plans for himself and Timothy?
5. Write your own expanded paraphrase of verses 13-14, expressed as words of encouragement and exhortation to your homegroup as you wrap up this season together. Read them to each other during your group time.
6. Take a moment and thumb through the pages of this study guide. Think about your study of 1 Corinthians over the past weeks and months. How has Paul's letter to this first-century church been of benefit to your relationship with Jesus? With the family of God? What changes has this epistle inspired? How has God been at work in your life? In our church?

Pray

- What do you find in this passage that gives you reason to rejoice?
- Is there anything here that prompts you to repent?
- What requests do you have for God this week?



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Sermon Notes