

A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS 7-16

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ABOUT THIS STUDY

We are excited to journey through 1 Corinthians together in community. This study is designed to help you further understand the good news of Jesus and apply the gospel to your life and the lives of those around you. We believe – and have seen over and over again – that hearing God's Word preached, studying God's Word privately and encouraging one another through God's Word in community results in freedom in the gospel and lives changed more and more into the image of Jesus.

Each week the study is broken into various sections to help you understand, apply and pray through God's Word, both alone and in community. We encourage you to work through the studies individually, which will then prepare you to help others grow through discussion.

SECTIONS OF THE STUDY

OVERVIEW - This section gives a basic overview of what the passage is seeking to teach, how it points to Jesus and how it applies to the way we live our lives.

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION - This section gives space to write things you learned, thought were helpful or had questions about from the sermon and as you read the text. In community groups, use these notes and questions to help one another grow in understanding and application of what was taught.

PASSAGE QUESTIONS - This section encourages you to study the Bible on your own. Through study, we grow in our desire and ability to understand the written Word of God – how it points to Jesus, how it connects to our lives and how it fuels us to live as a community of contribution.

AS YOU GO... - This section is meant to help you apply the text to your life. These questions and ideas can be discussed the night of the group as well as throughout the week. It is intended to provoke thoughts and conversations with your kids, friends, spouse, or anyone else you spend time with in the everyday things of life. Think along the lines of Deuteronomy 6, where the call is to talk of the things of God when "you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise."

PRAYER / PRAYER REQUESTS - This section reminds us of our dependence on God and how God uses others in our lives to serve and care for us. It allows us to specifically be praying that we will live for the Kingdom of Heaven and that others may experience that life as well.



"I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building." - 1 Corinthians 3: 6-9

1 CORINTHIANS OVERVIEW (READ 1 CORINTHIANS)

OVERVIEW

God used the Apostle Paul to start the church in Corinth (3:6) with the message of the gospel through the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul says in 1 Corinthians 2:2 that, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified." 1 Corinthians 15:3-5 says, "For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve."

It is through faith in the message of this gospel that one becomes a Christian and grows as a Christian. Those who believe this message and follow Jesus are part of his family, his body, the church.

Because it is made up of people who acknowledge they are broken and sinners,

the church is a mess. Paul's first letter to the church at Corinth addresses their unity issues, authority issues, theological issues, and personal issues, among many others. The church was affected by the sin both in and around its members. Gordon Fee put it this way, "Although they were the Christian church in Corinth, an inordinate amount of Corinth was yet in them, emerging in a number of attitudes and behaviors that required radical surgery without killing the patient. This is what 1 Corinthians attempts to do."

The radical surgery Paul prescribes consists of reminding them of the gospel and applying it to the attitudes and behaviors that aren't in line with it. He reminds them that, though they are a mess, they are beautiful because of their new life in Christ. Throughout the letter, Paul points to Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit to empower them (and us) to grow into the beauty that Jesus intends for his church.

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. As you read / scan 1 Corinthians, where do you see the church being a "mess"? Write down some examples.

2. How does this push against the tendency (both in the church and in society) to think that Christians and the church need to have it all together?

3. In 1 Corinthians 2:2, Paul says he "decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified," yet he goes on to cover topics of unity, authority, relationships, sexuality, how to live, idolatry, communion, spiritual gifts, love, worship, and the resurrection, among others. How does this reveal that the gospel applies to all areas of life?

4. What area of your life do you feel is a mess right now? How can the message of the gospel remind you of your beauty in Christ and victory over your struggle (15:57)?

5. Throughout 1 Corinthians, we see that we all have a role to play in the building up of Jesus' church (3:9, 9:19-27). What are practical ways you can be a "servant of all" and "become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some" this fall? (In the church, your group, your community, vocation, etc.)?

AS YOU GO...

- Look back over your life and reflect on what Jesus has delivered you from and where you have found victory over sin. Share with the group.
- What is one area of life where you are struggling? Share with the group so that they can encourage you and pray for you this fall.
- What is one step you can take to help build others up and serve others in your group this fall?

PRAYER

- Pray that God's Spirit would reveal areas in our lives and in our church where we are not living in light of the gospel.
- Pray that we would be a church where people can acknowledge they are a mess and rest in the beauty of the gospel.
- Pray that God would help us all see and empower us to pursue avenues to build one another up in love.





"Do not deprive one another, except perhaps by agreement for a limited time, that you may devote yourselves to prayer; but then come together again, so that Satan may not tempt you because of your lack of selfcontrol." – 1 Corinthians 7:5

1 CORINTHIANS 7: 1–16

OVERVIEW

Chapter 7 begins a new section of the letter in which Paul addresses issues that the Corinthians had These written to him about. included issues of marriage, food sacrificed to idols, public worship, the resurrection, and the collection for other Christians. In Chapter 7, Paul dives into some practical matters concerning marriage: Who should marry? Who should remain single? How do husbands and wives relate to one another? What does the Bible teach about divorce?

Just like in our culture, there was confusion surrounding the purpose of marriage and what it should look like. There was a group in the church that claimed that it was good for a man not to marry (or have sexual relations) (v. 1). This was quite the opposite of another group within the church that had justified prostitution (6:12-20). This passage shows that marriage and sex are sacred, good gifts from God that should be pursued and enjoyed. He also shows they are not ultimate, and there is meaning, value and worth in singleness and for those who have experienced brokenness in marriage.

In a culture that is shifting further and further from the biblical view and call of marriage and singleness, those who follow Jesus and are obedient to what the Scriptures call for will both conflict with culture and stand as a compelling and beautiful contrast to a confused world. Jesus brings healing to the mess and brokenness of our relationships, and he creates beauty as we reorient our relationships around him and his ways.

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Where do you see confusion about marriage and divorce in our culture and the church? What questions do you have about what the Scriptures teach on marriage and divorce?

2. How do verses 1-9 (and all the Scriptures) show the beauty and value of both marriage and singleness? Where have you experienced that? Where do you struggle to see that?

3. How does a right understanding and application of the gospel give the right motivation to sexual relations in marriage (vv. 3-5)?

4. Read 1 Corinthians 7:10-16. Why are the Scriptures so adamant against divorce (Malachi 2:13-16, Mark 10:1-10)? Where have you experienced hurt from the effects of divorce?

5. 1 Corinthians 7:15 says that "God has called you to peace." Read Colossians 1:19-23. How does Jesus "making peace by the blood of his cross" bring freedom to us despite the ways we have failed sexually and maritally?

AS YOU GO...

- Talk about the view of sexuality and marriage in our culture today. What are the challenges to living according to God's Word?
- How does what this passage teaches on singleness and marriage apply to your life today What do you need to repent of? Grow in? Celebrate?
- How can God use your relationship status and/or history to know him more and serve others this week?

PRAYER

- Pray that we would have an understanding of marriage and singleness that would honor God and bring us joy in the midst of a culture that differs.
- Pray that the gospel would compel us to serve and love one another in our marriages and relationships.
- Pray that we would find freedom from our sin through Christ and power to live in freedom from sin's bondage.





"You were bought with a price; do not become bondservants of men. So, brothers, in whatever condition each was called, there let him remain with God." -1 Corinthians 7: 23-24

1 CORINTHIANS 7: 17-40

OVERVIEW

Paul broadens from focusing on marriage to discussing what God calls people to in general. Richard Pratt summarizes this principle by saying, "it is important to remember that Paul did not suggest that believers should never change their status (v. 21). He is saying that they should seek to know how God has called them, and to retain the places God has assigned them. His general rule was: Christians should remain as they are in relationships and service unless God assigns them new tasks."

We all have particular circumstances and seasons in life, and what we see is Jesus meeting us in those realities. His story intersects with ours when we become Christians.

Paul's encouragement is to continue in the circumstances you are in (unless

something that provides a better opportunity to serve the Lord comes up) and know that God is with you in them (v. 24). He unpacks this in detail concerning the Corinthians' current situation.Hesaysinlightoftheir"present distress" – many commentators think there was a famine in Corinth – it is best for them to stay as they are.

This passage suggests that we will continue to find ourselves in challenging times as "the present form of this world is passing away" (v. 35). The hope for Christians is to have "undivided devotion to the Lord" in whatever circumstances or season of life we are in. We should go to the Scriptures and to others in the church to help us navigate and know what it looks like for us to trust in and be devoted to Jesus in the messiness of the world we live in.

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What are some of your current circumstances or seasons of life (stage, marital status, location, etc.)? What is encouraging about them? What is challenging?

2. How does knowing "you were bought with a price" (1 Timothy 2:1-6) and that you are "with God" (1 Corinthians 7:23-24) bring peace and hope regardless of your circumstances?

• Paul is speaking specifically to the "present distress" (v. 26) the Corinthians were facing. What were some of their struggles, and how does Paul encourage them?

3. What do you find confusing about Paul's advice and encouragement in 1 Corinthians 7:17-40?

4. Where do you feel anxiety concerning your current circumstances or season? What decisions can help you have "undivided devotion to the Lord" in the midst of them? (See Acts 17:24)

5. Paul is encouraging the church and seeking to connect God's story to their story. What steps are you taking to help you connect your story to God's story and help others do the same (daily, weekly)?

AS YOU GO...

- Discuss your current circumstances or season. How do you think God is shaping you through it? Encourage one another with ways to "remain with God" during this season.
- Identify a specific situation that is causing you to feel anxious. Encourage one another with biblical truth of who God is. He has power over this situation pray for one another to believe it.
- Write down daily and weekly habits that help you to have an "undivided devotion to the Lord."

PRAYER

- Pray that our current seasons would allow us to know Jesus and trust him more. (Acts 17:27)
- Confess areas where we are putting our hope in our circumstances, and ask for power to turn to God and trust him.
- Ask God for wisdom in navigating current challenging circumstances.





"For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth — as indeed there are many "gods" and many "lords" yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist." – 1 Corinthians 8:5–6

1 CORINTHIANS 8: 1–13

OVERVIEW

While this passage may seem out of place in our culture, the theological and ethical thrust behind it is incredibly pertinent to our lives as Christians today. To understand this text (like all other texts), we have to understand the cultural and historical background of it. In 1st century Corinth, almost all of the meat that was sold in the marketplace was leftover meat from the temple sacrifices. If you could afford to buy meat, you'd buy the meat that was previously sacrificed to idols, which was generally the only option for meat that you had. This is where our exploration of the text takes off.

In a letter that some in Corinth had written to Paul (see 1 Corinthians 7:1), they brought up the issue of eating meat that was sacrificed to idols. Those who wrote this letter claimed that they could eat the meat because they knew that "there is no God but one" and that the idols weren't real deities to be worshipped, but rather fictitious manmade things that "have no real existence." Their understanding was right, their consciouses were clean, and technically they could have continued in this practice.

The problem was that they didn't see how their actions affected other believers. For many of them, worshipping idols in the temple and eating the sacrificed meat was very much a part of their former life and deeply imbedded in their pre-Christian past. So when the stronger believers ate this meat, it could and would have caused those who were weaker in the faith to revert to their old ways. It was a stumbling block for them, and therefore Paul writes, "if [this] food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat [this] meat, lest I make my brother stumble." These individuals' deep knowledge of the one true God brought them freedom to eat this meat, but acting upon this freedom did not show care or love for their fellow believers.

For the Christian, our freedom should be exercised through the lens of love for God and for one another. Love is the deciding factor in how our freedom should be used.

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the contrast between knowledge and love in this passage. How can knowledge without love lead to sin? Why does true knowledge of God lead to love and right living?

2. Paul reinterprets and reimagines the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6:4) in verse 6 by stating, "there is one God, the Father... and one Lord, Jesus Christ." In the present passage, how do these particular Corinthians fail to live for God? How does "existing through Jesus" transform the way we live and breathe? 3. The way we live out our freedom in Christ should never cause anyone else to stumble. How does this passage urge us to understand the struggles of those in the church? How does this lead us to be vulnerable with one another and push us further into unity with one another?

4. What are some common struggles that Christians should be aware of and sensitive to when living in community with one another? Think of some things you struggle with and talk about how your community group can live alongside you through those struggles.

5. How does limiting our freedom reflect the life of Christ and honor God and one another? See Philippians 2:1-11.

AS YOU GO...

- Discuss the meaning of "this knowledge puffs up" but "love builds up." Where have you experienced this?
- Talk about why it is difficult to be vulnerable and have unity with those you are in community with.
- Think of how the church would be different if we were sensitive to the struggles of others what would that tangibly result in?

PRAYER

- Pray that our knowledge of God and the gospel would lead us into lives characterized by love.
- Pray that we would be vulnerable with one another about our struggles and that we would be sensitive to the struggles of others.
- Pray for unity among the body of Christ, both locally and globally.





"For though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them." - 1 Corinthians 9:19

1 CORINTHIANS 9: 1–27

OVERVIEW

The letter continues with a theme similar to that of chapter 8, showing love and service to others as more important motivators than dogmatic doctrinal issues. In a culture that values personal freedom above all else, Paul lays out how the gospel compels and motivates us to die to our personal freedom and rights for the sake of others knowing Jesus - "for though I am free from all, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win more of them." (v. 19) "I have become all things to all people, that by all means I might save some." (v. 22)

Paul uses his position as an Apostle and "proclaimer of the gospel" as an example. He shows that, according to the scriptures, he should earn a wage for his work as a leader in the church (v. 14). However, he has chosen to make "no use of any of those rights" (v. 15) so that it does not become "an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ" (v. 12). Paul is willing to lose his rights and freedoms so others may know and believe the gospel.

Paul follows in the steps of and points us to Jesus who "emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross" (Philippians 2:7-8). Jesus gave up the beauty of heaven to join the messiness of humanity and, to make us beautiful, took on the sin and death we caused. As we look and cling to Jesus, we follow him in giving up our rights so others may know and experience him.

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



2. What does Paul have, and what is he willing to give up? Why? What would have been challenges for him?

3. What are rights / things that you have that may be an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ for others (v. 12)? (Think about your lifestyle, your freedoms as a Christian, your use of resources, etc.)

4. How does the gospel – that Jesus became a servant through his life, death and resurrection – bring freedom (v. 19)?

5. What does it mean to be "a servant of all" and to be "all things to all people"?

6. Think about the various spheres of your life and people in your life. What are tangible ways to die to your rights and serve them "for the sake of the gospel"?

AS YOU GO...

- Talk about the importance of both knowing your freedom in Christ and also the freedom to give up your rights for the benefit of others knowing Christ.
- Who is someone who has questions about Christianity who you can move toward and become like so that they may understand and believe the gospel? Pray for them as a group.
- What are tangible steps you can take to "discipline yourself" this day/week/month/ year so you can fight to keep the prize of knowing Jesus and his love for you?

PRAYER

- Pray that we would know the freedom we have in Christ because of his love.
- Pray that we would be a church that sacrifices our preferences for the sake of others.
- Pray that we would have the desire to be servants of others so they may know Christ and that we would act on this desire.





"So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God." – 1 Corinthians 10:31

1 CORINTHIANS 10: 1-11: 1

OVERVIEW

In this passage, Paul is using the example of the Israelites to warn the Corinthians about the potential to fall into idolatry and their former ways. Even though the Israelites were God's chosen people and he brought them up out of Egypt, gave them the law, and provided for them, many still fell away during their time in the desert and in the following years. Paul is writing this in order that history might not repeat itself (v. 11). Even though the Corinthian Christians had been baptized, become a part of a spirit-filled community, and partaken in the bread and wine of communion, they still had work to do. They still had to be on guard against the temptation of idolatry and sexual immorality. In the previous

sections of the letter (most notably in chapter 9), Paul has been urging the Corinthians to live lives of restrained freedom and to focus their lives around the good news of Jesus. If we focus too much on our agendas and desires, we can easily fall back into our former ways of living and bring others down with us.

That is why the crescendo of this passage centers on the idea of doing all things for God's glory and for the benefit of others. "So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved."

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. How can we learn from the example of Israel and the Christians that have come before us? Why is it important to see how God has been working in the midst of human history despite people's sinfulness?

2. What are some ways in which you think you are impervious to falling into idolatry? How can you reflect on your past failures to look toward a hopeful future? How has God been faithful despite your shortcomings? 3. One of the key questions posed by the passage is, "will you take the God-given way out of idolatry when you need it?" How can we train our hearts and minds to be alert to these ways out of temptation?

4. What does Paul teach about fleeing from idolatry in vv. 14-22? How does he point to Jesus and the gospel?

5. In what ways are you tempted to abuse your freedom and do things that are idolatrous and self-serving? What does it mean to do everything to "the glory of God"?

6. We often think of our actions as only affecting ourselves, but that is not the case and Paul knows this. Paul rounds out the section by noting that he always tries to do what is best for others, not himself, and that he learned this from Jesus (Romans 15:1-3). Why does Paul couple this idea with doing all things for the glory of God? How does recognizing that your actions affect those around you shape the way you live for God's glory? What does it require, and why is that difficult?

AS YOU GO...

- Where do you feel tempted in your life currently? What does it look like to endure and escape through God's faithfulness?
- Discuss the ways that others' actions have negatively or positively affected your faith.
- Talk about what it looks like to live for God's glory in the everyday moments of life.

PRAYER

- Pray that we would be open to learning from those who came before us from their journeys and relationship with God.
- Pray that we would be conscious of those around us and see how our actions affect their faith as well as our own.
- Pray that we would trust in the faithfulness of God despite our own unfaithfulness.





"If anyone is inclined to be contentious, we have no such practice, nor do the churches of God." - 1 Corinthians 11:16

1 CORINTHIANS 11: 2–16

OVERVIEW

There is a whole lot going on in this passage, and most of it isn't very straightforward. Paul touches on the issues of husbands and wives, sexual immorality, gender distinctions, angels, hair, creation, and more. Overall, Paul's main emphasis is that men and women honor one another while embracing and differentiating their genders in the context of the worship service. They are to dress in a way that fits their current cultural norms while also reflecting their uniqueness as Christian men and women. Paul isn't saying that women need to wear head coverings today and that they can't have short hair; those were culturally situated norms that he is encouraging the church to adhere to. Likewise, when we apply the gospel (in our services and lives), we must understand the current cultural norms and seek to honor God and one another in the mist of them. At the heart of this passage, Paul is encouraging the believers in Corinth to worship together in unity, as they were made uniquely male and uniquely female, and to follow the cultural norms to identify oneself as such. N. T. Wright summarizes it this way, "One of the unspoken clues to this passage may be Paul's assumption that in worship the creation is being restored, or perhaps in worship we are anticipating its eventual restoration (15:27-28). God made humans male and female and he gave them authority over the world. And if humans are to reclaim this authority over the world, this will come about as they worship the true God, as they pray and prophesy in his name, and are renewed in his image, in being what they were made to be, in celebrating the genders God has given them God's creation needs humans to be fully, gloriously and truly human, which means fully and truly male and female."

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Why is it important to study the Bible in its cultural, historical and textual context? What dangers can we encounter when we fail to do this? Discuss some helpful resources to consult that offer further context when studying the Bible.

2. Paul pushes against the church (particularly husbands and wives) dishonoring one another. How does the gospel of Jesus motivate and compel us to honor others?

3. In the Roman world, men and women worshipped in segregated parts of the temple or sanctuary. Their distinction was marked off by their physical location, but Paul is calling the church to have men and women worship, pray and prophesy alongside one another. How is this liberating for women? How does this go against the perception of Christianity by some outsiders? How can we encourage both men and women to use their gifts in the church?

4. Paul draws on the created order for some of his reasoning (vv. 8-12). How does the complementary nature of being male and female promote equality? How can we celebrate our unique differences in light of the fact that both men and women are created in God's image and are dependent on one another?

5. Paul is promoting the unity of the body in worship, but also that men and women reflect culturally appropriate distinctions (vv. 4–7, 13–15). How can our culture blur the lines between male and female? What can happen when we fail to acknowledge those distinctions?

6. What is the result of dishonoring others (v. 16)? Where have you seen contentiousness in relationships and in churches? What is Paul's admonishment?

AS YOU GO...

- Discuss how to handle passages that are hard to understand, and share some resources that are helpful.
- What are ways that the gospel and the beauty of the Christian tradition (v. 1) can be communicated and made visible in your particular culture?
- Talk about how you can honor your spouse and others (both when the church gathers and in the everyday).

PRAYER

- Pray for hearts that see the glory of God reflected in both men and women.
- Pray that we would honor God in how men and women use their gifts alongside one another in the church. Repent of areas where we dishonor others.
- Pray that we will be challenged by difficult texts like this and that we will be able to grow through them in a spirit-filled community.





"For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, 'This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.' In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.' For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes." – 1 Corinthians 11: 23–26

1 CORINTHIANS 11: 17-34

OVERVIEW

In order to understand the context of this passage, we must focus on the foundation of Paul's comments, which reflect a church divided. All that follows in this passage arose from the fundamental issue that the church of Corinth had allowed their own self-serving lifestyles to cause division. This is a significant departure from the church we find in Acts 1:14, where it is described as "with one accord...devoting themselves to prayer." When the church was unified by the purpose of serving Jesus and others, and its members humbled themselves before God in prayer seeking his direction for their lives, God released the earth-shattering power of his presence in their midst. The world-changing impact of a church united in Christ is recorded throughout the book of Acts. However, the church of Corinth had lost this, and the consequences were severe. resulted in hunger, both spiritually and physically. The early church celebrated an Agape Feast every Lord's Day, where every members of the church would bring a portion of their own food and drink to the service. At the conclusion of the service, the church would put all of this together to be sure that every member of the church, whether rich or poor, would be able to eat in celebration of what Jesus had done for them. The Spiritual and physical hunger of the church was always supposed to be satisfied on the Lord's Day (Acts 2:42-47).

Paul suggests observing the Lord's Supper (Communion, Eucharist) together in the way that Christ intended as the beginning point for reconciliation. He points out that the purpose of taking communion is to remember Jesus. When we remember the example of Jesus, who gave all for us, we must examine our own hearts, our own actions, and our own willingness to fully surrender to him.

The church's move away from unity

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Paul points out that the church falls away from its purpose and falls into disunity when it ceases to remember Jesus. Why do you think it is important to regularly reflect on and remember what Jesus has done for you? How does this reflection and remembrance change your attitude and actions toward others? (Matthew 18:21-35)

2. Part of taking communion is taking the bread, breaking it, and eating it. This is representative of Christ's body that was broken for us so that we can receive eternal life. As we each eat this bread, it also reminds us that we are partakers and members of Christ's "one" body. Why do you think oneness in Christ is an important principle to understand?

3. How does remembering we are one body in Christ during communion help us fulfill what Jesus has called each of us to do in the church and the world?

4. Why do you think remembering the cost of Jesus' blood being shed for the forgiveness of our sins is important? What is the "cost" of forgiveness to the one forgiving?

5. Considering how far Jesus was willing to go to forgive you, how far are you willing to go to forgive others who have sinned against you?

AS YOU GO...

• Look at the list below of relationship-killing attitudes and determine any dominant attitudes that you think you personally need God to give you victory over in your heart.

Bitterness Divisiveness Antagonism Prejudice Anger Gossip Resentment Judgmentalism Jealousy Envy Hatred Argumentativeness

- This week, look for opportunities to reach out to those you would not normally reach out to. Share the love and forgiveness of Jesus with them through your actions and attitude.
- Read Acts 2:42-47. What impact does a unified church have on its members and others in society?

PRAYER

- Ask God to reveal to you anything in your heart that is creating division in your relationships with others. Ask God to use his Spirit and his Word to wash the divisiveness out of your heart so that you may live free of this condition.
- Thank God for loving you so much that he gave his son Jesus in your place. Give praise to Jesus for being willing to have his body broken and his blood shed so that you can know him and receive his eternal life.
- Ask God to fill you with his Spirit so that you may be able to love others as he has loved you and so that you may be able to forgive others as he has forgiven you.





"Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone." – 1 Corinthians 12:1–11

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 1–11

OVERVIEW

We cannot hope for true unity among diversity unless we first make Jesus the Lord of our lives. Jesus is a reconciler (2 Corinthians 5:18), Jesus is a unifier (1 Corinthians 1:10), and Jesus is a peacemaker (Philippians 4:17). Without humbly submitting our mind, our will, and our emotions to Jesus and allowing him to be fully Lord of our lives, there is no hope that our differences and diversities can culminate in understanding and unity. The confession of the early church says it this way, "if we live, we live to the Lord, and if we die, we die to the Lord. So then, whether we live or whether we die, we are the Lord's" (Romans 14:7-12). Jesus must be Lord.

Many understand the concept that a person in total depravity is incapable of coming to Jesus without the power of God acting on that person's behalf and drawing them to God. Jesus said, "no one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him" (John 6:44). Yet,

while we understand that it is God's great grace and power at work in us that brings us to Jesus in the first place, we often fail to realize that it is also God's great power and grace that enables us to live the new life we have now received through Christ. The issue is not whether or not we have received the Spirit of God, for this happens at salvation (Acts 2:38). The question is whether or not we will "live by the Spirit" and "keep step with the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25) to use the gifts given to us by the Spirit for the common good (1 Corinthians 12:7). Life must be lived by the Holy Spirit.

Paul points out that when Jesus is Lord among his people and when the Spirit of God is allowed to manifest in the lives of his people, it creates a beautiful tapestry of unity in the midst of wide diversity. It turns a cacophony into a harmonious symphony. This is the exciting and exhilarating life that God calls us to individually and as a church. (See also the Appendix at the end of the study guide for more on the various gifts of the Spirit in chapter 12.)
MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. To live in unity as God's church, why is it crucial to recognize Jesus as the Lord and final authority of our lives? How does this empower people to be about the "common good"?

2. Some would think that unity comes when everyone thinks the exact same way, does the same things, and some sort of forced unity is imposed through legislation or dictatorship. Yet, we see God do the opposite by giving a variety of his gifts to different people to use in unity with one another (vv. 4–11). Why do you think God would do this?

Why do you think recognizing the significant value of each individual is so important to God?

3. Read Ephesians 4:10-16. Why do you think God has connected our spiritual "growing up" or our ability to move forward in Christ with how we work together as a church?

Where have you seen personal growth and the church's overall growth through the utilization of everyone's gifts within the church?

- 4. Many people speak of "tolerance" or of "respecting another's opinion." Yet we often witness the violent and visceral, demeaning, and destructive nature of society. What does Jesus bring to the unity with diversity equation that the world without Christ cannot bring?
- 5. Is the presence of the Holy Spirit and the manifestation of the Spirit through spiritual gifts a frightening concept for you? Why do you think many believers seem to be afraid of the presence of the Spirit?

*See the appendix for further exposition of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12.

AS YOU GO...

- Spend some talking about the gifts God has given each of you and discuss how you see God using these gifts in the church and the world.
- Look for at least one opportunity this week to try out one of your gifts. Remember one of the functions of your gifts is to bring unity in the midst of diversity. Is there anywhere where your gifts could bring reconciliation? Is there an argument that could be quieted by your gifts?
- Spend some time in prayer this week in asking God for insight, wisdom, and clarity on the gifts he has given you and how you can begin using them more in your everyday life.

PRAYER

- Ask God to open your eyes to see how he has gifted you and to determine how you might use that gift in the lives of the people at church, in your family, and in your workplace.
- Praise God for his free and wonderful gifts that he has given you through the Holy Spirit who now lives in you. Ask God for wisdom in how to grow in and utilize these gifts.
- Ask God to give you Scriptures from the Bible that will help you know the full purpose of your gifts and how you may use them every day to further his kingdom.

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PRAYER REQUESTS





"Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." – 1 Corinthians 12:27

1 CORINTHIANS 12: 12-31

OVERVIEW

In Genesis 1:27-28 we are told that "God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female...and God blessed them." This powerful truth shows that we are created by a very personal God who calls us his "offspring" (Acts 17:28) and that he has uniquely fashioned each one of us as individuals (Psalm 139:13-14). We are his "workmanship" (Ephesians 2:10) - his "design" or "artwork" – for his eternal purpose. In stark contrast to many eastern religions, a relationship with Jesus does not teach us that we need to become more and more meaningless. Rather, we are called to become more aware of the significance we have to God and what he has ordained for us accomplish (Jeremiah 1:5). to

Why is this important to understand? Because the church of Jesus Christ

is described as the "body of Christ," which is a unified whole made up of very significant differing parts. Though all equally important, Paul points out that a hand is nothing like a foot and an ear is nothing like and eye, yet they all work together to get things done under the direction of the "mind" (head). Paul uses this analogy to help us understand how the body of Christ is meant to operate. Each of us as individuals should not lose our individuality or uniqueness when we become Christians; we should use our God-given individuality and uniqueness to carry out the work of Jesus while working harmoniously with each part of the body under the direction of the "head" (Jesus).

When this occurs, the body appears fully functional both to those who are within the body and to all who are outside the body observing its operation.

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think Paul points out to the church in Corinth that "Jews, Greeks, slaves, free" are now all "one" or "unified" in Christ? What are some of the cultural issues today that might seem divisive from the world's perspective but should be unified in the church?

2. Paul says, "The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I have no need of you,' nor again the head to the feet, 'I have no need of you.'" Unfortunately, we often find ourselves believing that we are either much more self-sufficient than we really are or, conversely, that we are of little use to anyone. The reality is that we need others, and no one in the church is expendable. It is together, with all of our giftings working together in the body, that we reflect the image of God.

• Why do you think that we sometimes believe we don't need anyone else?

• How is the "loner" approach destructive?

• Why is understanding the importance of others necessary for us as Christians?

- 3. Paul points out the communal aspects of both suffering and rejoicing.
 - How do you believe it affects the entire body of Christ when a member of the body is suffering through betrayal, gossip, depression, immorality, or other hardships?

• How do you think envy and jealousy affect our ability to rejoice with others in their times of celebration?

- 4. Our Scripture reading says that "God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues." These could be defined as follows:
 - Apostles: Originally, eye-and-ear-witnesses to the resurrection of Christ who received a personal commission from Jesus himself to start and lead the church. Today, the role of those called to start and lead churches is sometimes called apostleship.
 - Prophets: Those God uses to warn and encourage the church through divine revelation
 - Teachers: Those God uses to educate the church in the knowledge of Christ
 - Miracles: Divine workings of powers that arouse awe and wonder
 - Healing: An expression of divine mercy through physical, emotional, and/or spiritual health
 - Helping: The power to uplift and serve the body of Christ
 - Administrating: The Spirit-given ability to bring order and structure in community
 - Tongues: The ability to speak in spiritual languages either to testify to the church (when an interpreter is present) or to use privately in prayer and worship to God

Are there any of these you believe God has appointed you to do in the church?

5. Where do you feel the Holy Spirit urging you to use your gifts in the church? Which gifts do you desire to grow in? (See 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 as well)

*See the appendix for further exposition of the spiritual gifts mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12-14.

AS YOU GO...

- Talk about the gifts you see in those around you. Make them aware of them, and talk about ways they can be used to serve others.
- Meditate on and discuss how much God values you and your life, how much he was willing to pay for it, and what God wants to do with your life.
- Talk about where you are currently celebrating and where you are currently suffering. How can you suffer and rejoice together right now?

PRAYER

- Ask God to reveal to you any specific giftappointment he has given you for the building up of his church.
- Praise God for making you "you." Thank God for making you specifically to fulfill your purpose here on earth and ask for his guidance to carry out everything he has ordained for you to accomplish in your lifetime.
- Ask God to open your understanding so that you can fully appreciate the value he has placed on you. Thank God for the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus as it is an eternal testimony to how valuable he believes you are.

PRAYER REQUESTS





"Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends." - 1 Corinthians 13:7-8

1 CORINTHIANS 13: 1–13

OVERVIEW

After explaining that unity in Christ will dissolve divisions, unleash gifts, and create significance and meaning for individuals in the church, Paul declares that it is all meaningless without love. He defines love for us with the word "agape." Though translated simply as "love" in English, "agape" speaks of a love that is different from what can naturally be found in society. It is not a simple brotherly affection, it's certainly not some sort of erotic feeling, and it is not an intrinsic family attachment. Rather, it is a love that is patient and kind, a love that does not envy or boast, and a love that is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way, it is not irritable or resentful, and it does not rejoice at wrongdoing. It rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things, and it never ends.

and see relationships where what we called "love" fell far short of the love described here. This is because the love that is described here is the love of God. And it is not simply an emotion of God – it is his very nature. This is why we read plainly and definitively in 1 John 4:8 that "God is love."

The point that Paul makes in this passage is that this "agape" love of God is not only for God, but, when we become believers in Jesus, this same love should now flow through us. In Romans 5:5, Paul writes, "God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." In other words, through the gift of the Holy Spirit, God has now given us the ability to love like he does. Wow! We can no longer complain that we are unable to love someone - for the very love of God Almighty now resides in us. The question becomes - will we love others like Jesus loves us?

Most of us can look back over our lives

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Paul states that, no matter how powerful and mighty the gifts of God may be in us, they are nothing if the love of God is not present. Why do you think love is such an essential element in the use of our gifts?

Paul says "As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when the perfect (Jesus) comes, the partial will pass away." Spiritual gifts serve an important purpose on earth, but, when we are joined with Christ, they will become unnecessary because then we will be like Jesus (1 John 3:2). The love of God, on the other hand, will never pass away. It is as eternal as God himself, for it is his own nature.

2. What does this tell us about using our gifts for the purpose of leading others into the love of God? Should we feel an urgency to use the spiritual gifts as God intended?

3. How can you use your gifts in love? What impact do you think your gifts will have when fully rooted in God's love?

4. Read vv. 4-7. How do you think practicing this type of love would change the relationships in your life (friendships, church, marriage, family, etc.)? How do you think sharing Christ with this kind of love would make a difference to the hearer of the gospel?

- 5. Paul says, "...then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known." This tells us that God knows fully what he has created in us through salvation and what he can accomplish through us. Paul makes this declaration when concluding his discourse on God's love. When you enter into a loving relationship with your God, he can begin to make known to you the great plans he has for your life.
 - How can you be sure that God has specific plans for your life? (Jeremiah 29:11)
 - How can you find God's plans for your life? (Jeremiah 33:3; Matthew 7:7-8)
 - How can you walk in God's plan for your life? (Proverbs 3:5-12)

AS YOU GO...

- Meditate on and talk about God's love for you. How have you experienced God's love as described in this passage? Confess how you have doubted his love.
- Look for opportunities to act in the love of Christ by being patient and kind in the midst of frustration and by offering forgiveness where you might usually feel hurt or resentment.
- How do you think faith, hope and love all work together to allow God to use your gifts in the lives of others? How can you demonstrate this in your life this week?

PRAYER

- Ask God to reveal his great love for you. Ask him to personally assure you of his love.
- Glorify God for being the great demonstration of love. Thank God for revealing his great love for you through the life, death, and resurrection of his son, Jesus.
- Thank God for explaining the difference between his love and the human love we experience. Ask him for the power of his Spirit to release this love in your heart so that you may love others as Jesus would.

PRAYER REQUESTS





"So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church." – 1 Corinthians 14: 12

1 CORINTHIANS 14: 1–25

OVERVIEW

Having written in the previous chapters about unity and the love that binds each of them together, Paul concludes this section of 1 Corinthians by encouraging the church to build one another up (some form of "build" is used five times in these 25 verses).

Paul makes two arguments about how the edification of the body can be achieved. First, Paul argues that the congregation in Corinth must communicate clearly the gospel message they have received (vv. 1-19). Secondly, he encourages the Corinthians to display a loving attitude and maturity that puts aside childish, self-glorifying thinking (vv. 20-25).

Paul begins by arguing that prophecy is more valuable than speaking in tongues, and he gives several examples. Essentially, what they boil down to is the need for clear gospel communication within the congregation and also with outsiders. While he does not minimize the importance of tongues, (vv. 4, 18), Paul argues that prophecy more clearly edifies the church body. Using metaphor (vv. 7-9), a quote from Isaiah 28 (v. 21), and other descriptions of worship (vv. 16-17), Paul states that a prophetic word will be clear and encouraging to the body, whereas tongues, when spoken during a gathering, can cause confusion.

The Corinthians were so busy seeking after spiritual gifts in order to bring glory to themselves that they lost sight of the goal of being one in Christ and building up his church for his glory. Paul encourages their pursuit of the gifts while correcting their motives and redirecting their desires. Speaking in tongues without order impresses one another while causing outsiders to flee, but a prophetic word can cut to the heart, tell of God's love, and invite others to the kingdom (v. 25).

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Paul gives several reasons for why he considers prophecy more important to the gathered church than speaking in tongues. Summarize his arguments from the following verses:

1 Corinthians 14:1-5:

1 Corinthians 14:6-12:

1 Corinthians 14:13-19:

2. Why does Paul say that the one who speaks in tongues "builds up himself" (v. 4)? What might this personal building up look like?

3. Why is Paul so concerned that the congregation seek gifts of the Spirit that will benefit the whole church body? How have others spoken God's Word into your life to build you up?

4. How does the gospel of Jesus demonstrate the ultimate word from God which builds us and others up and allows us to be intimate with God personally?

5. How can you continually and naturally encourage others to grow in maturity through God's Word and his Spirit?

6. What do we learn in verses 23-25 about prophetic words (a word of knowledge, inspired word of scripture, etc.) and how they work in the lives of people who don't know God or have strayed from the church? Where have you seen this happen?

AS YOU GO...

- Discuss avenues you have to talk to God personally and also hear from God through others. What does that look like in your life on a daily or weekly basis? In what ways have you powerfully heard from God but on a less frequent basis?
- How can you continually grow in understanding of God's Word so you can speak words of life to others?
- Think of someone you know who does not believe in God. Pray for God's love to be revealed to them through his Word, through you, and through others.

PRAYER

- Thank God for the gifts of his Spirit that he uses to bless, grow, nourish and correct his people.
- Ask God to give you a bold spirit and discernment to speak his powerful truths with Christlike love.
- Pray that God will show you areas of immaturity in your faith and in the church. Pray that the Holy Spirit will mature us.

PRAYER REQUESTS





"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace." - 1 Corinthians 14:33

1 CORINTHIANS 14: 26–40

OVERVIEW

Paul spent the first two-thirds of chapter 14 laying out the need for unity and maturity in the Spirit, and in this section he outlines how this will be possible for the church in Corinth. We might call them "Paul's house rules for Corinthian order." Even today, many of us bristle at the idea of living under a set of rules or any other mark of authority. Paul emphasized that the rules are about bringing order out of chaos for the benefit of the church. Verse 33 succinctly states the case: "For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."

In examining these house rules, we find important aspects of community that still serve the church today. The first rule is one that many of us rarely think about: Paul tells his flock to come to the weekly meeting with something to share. "All of God's people should come prepared to participate," Paul tells us (v. 26). Very often we arrive on Sunday as a spectator rather than a participant. This mindset prevents the building up and proper functioning of the body. conduct in worship. He touches on order in speaking tongues (vv. 27-28), for those who speak God's Word (vv. 29-33), and the response of women to those who speak (vv. 34-36). Paul is encouraging the wives to honor their husbands and the husbands of other women by keeping silent, even if they disagree with what is said, as opposed to embarrassing them by challenging their prophecies in public. At the time, there was a prejudice against women speaking in public – especially to another woman's husband – so this behavior would have been inappropriate.

Why is Paul so concerned about his? The church as Christ's body should reflect the order and peace that God intended and created from the very beginning (Genesis 1:2). It should reflect the order Christ died to create: the blood of the Lamb allowed peace to rule in the human heart where sin had been master since the Fall. In crossing from death to life (John 5:24), we can have hearts that know the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7). As God has changed our hearts, that change should be reflected in our communities.

The remaining verses cover specific

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?

PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What were some of your house rules growing up? How did they help bring "order from chaos"?

2. What are some of the ways you can be a participant rather than a spectator when the church gathers on Sunday? (Also in your community group and other times you connect with people of the church)

3. Why is Paul is so concerned about maintaining order in the church's worship service? How do his instructions (on tongues, prophecy and women/wives) point to creating order? How do they help the church?

4. What does Paul point to as the authority and motivation to have order (vv. 36-40)? How does knowing God – and his goodness displayed in the gospel – empower us to obey him?

5. Do you think of God as being the God of order and peace? When you think of God this way, what images come to your mind? How can thinking of God as a God of order and not chaos help our daily walk with him?

AS YOU GO...

- Discuss your mindset about how you view gathering on Sunday. How can this passage re-shape how you engage?
- Read Genesis 1 and 2. What do you see about order and peace and God's goodness? How does that shape your worship of him (on Sunday and everyday)?
- Read Genesis 3 and talk about how sin causes disunity and chaos. How have you experienced that in your life and in the church community?

PRAYER

- Thank God for Jesus who has brought life from death and order from chaos.
- Ask God for forgiveness for where you are seeking to be the ruler and authority of your life.
- Pray for the church to have unity and order that reflects the Father, Son and Spirit and points our community to Jesus.

PRAYER REQUESTS





"For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve." -1 Corinthians 15: 3-5

1 CORINTHIANS 15: 1-58

OVERVIEW

Paul moves from issues related practices in the church to theological issues they were having about the resurrection of Jesus. Paul combats the false teaching that there was no resurrection of Jesus and lays out why it is an essential element of the gospel and the Christian faith – "If Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain." (v. 14)

Paul then shows that our physical bodies are an important aspect of who we are and, although they will temporarily succumb to sin and the sting of death, he points to the resurrection and glorification of Jesus as a precursor to the resurrection of our perishable bodies into imperishable, eternal bodies.

In his book Raised with Christ, Adrian Warnock expounds on the significance of the resurrection

both for the future and the present: "When considering if Christianity is true, it all boils down to whether Jesus rose from the dead. The lives of Christians today demonstrate that the resurrection is still changing people. It changes fear into love, despair into joy. The resurrection changes people from beina spiritually dead to being alive to God. It changes guilty condemnation into a celebration of forgiveness and freedom. It changes anxiety into a hope that goes beyond the grave. It can change our sinful hearts so they want to follow the Lord Jesus, and the power of the resurrection is relentlessly killing sin in every true Christian. Because we neglect to emphasize this truth, many Christians have a meager expectation of the extent to which we can today experience resurrection life and victory over sin. The resurrection is far from being something we only benefit from in the future!"

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. Read vv. 1-11. What are the implications of the gospel (15:3-4) being which you received (past), in which you stand (present), and by which you are being saved (present/future) for following Jesus?

What are the "proofs" of Jesus rising from the dead in this passage? Why are they important?

2. What argument is Paul addressing from the Corinthians (v. 12)? What is his response and how does he show that it matters (vv. 13-34)?

3. What are some differences between "earthly bodies" (the perishable) and "heavenly bodies" (the imperishable) (vv. 35-54)? How does this give significance to both the physical and spiritual?

4. Where have you experienced the sting of sin and death in your life (v. 56)? How does the gospel, that sin and death are swallowed up in victory through God's grace in Jesus (vv. 55, 57), bring hope to your experience?

5. "Therefore" (in v. 58) implies a practical application for the doctrine of the resurrection (ESV Study Bible). What are some practical applications for the doctrine of the resurrection (according to this verse and chapter)?

How can the implications of this passage (and chapter) transform your life (in general and day-to-day)? (How does it shape how you view and utilize your time, talent and treasure, etc.?)

AS YOU GO...

- Talk about why it is of "most importance" that Jesus resurrected.
- Discuss the implications of Jesus' resurrection and how it gives us victory over sin through Jesus Christ.
- In what area do you need God's strength and the power of the resurrection in order to be steadfast and abound in the work of the Lord today?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus and the new life that it brings.
- Repent of the ways we still "go on sinning" and living as though the resurrection didn't happen.
- Pray that we will be a people who are "steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain."

PRAYER REQUESTS





"Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." – 1 Corinthians 16: 13–14

1 CORINTHIANS 16: 1–24

OVERVIEW

Similar to leaving someone and communicating last-minute details, Paul's letter to the Corinthian church ends with him wrapping up various topics. He gives instruction on the collection, communicates his plans, plansforotherstovisitthem and how they ought to respond, as well as a final goodbye.

Paul starts by answering a question the Corinthians had about giving. Most believe there commentators was a famine around Jerusalem that Paul is calling them to give toward. Paul encourages them to keep in the normal practice of the church to give in order to further the mission of the church and care for other Christians (in their area and beyond - see Galatians 2:10). He encourages them to give

weekly and that "each of you give" according to their income.

Paul then moves on to let them know he plans on coming to spend time with them in the future and asks that they "may help him on his journey." This communicates that, although there was friction between Paul and the church throughout the letter, Paul loves them, cares for them and wants to invest in them (vv. 5-8, 21-24). He then closes the letter with updates about others to remind the Corinthians that they do not stand alone against the world. God has given leaders and other Christians around the world to support, encourage, pray for, and serve one another. This is a beautiful way to end a letter that reveals both the beauty and messiness that comes with a church united through Jesus.

MESSAGE NOTES & APPLICATION

Write down notes as you listen to the sermon and read the text. What is the main point of the text? What catches your attention, challenges or confuses you?



PASSAGE QUESTIONS

1. What are the final questions from the Corinthians and areas Paul is covering in this section? What does he encourage them to do?

2. What do we learn about giving to the mission of Jesus' church and support of other Christians in this section (Who gives? To what? How often?)

What would it look like for you to practically grow in generosity toward Jesus' mission through his people (what's a next step you can take)?

3. How do we see Paul make plans (vv. 5-7) yet stay sensitive to where God's Spirit is at work (v. 8)?

• What are your plans for investing in others? Where has God opened doors for you to point others to Jesus?

 How does Paul encourage them to respond to other leaders and Christians (vv. 10-24)? Why does he have to do this?

5. In what ways does the gospel encourage faithfulness and power to "be watchful," "stand firm," "act like men," "be strong" and "do all things in love" (vv. 13-14)?

AS YOU GO...

- Talk about what giving looks like for you now, questions you have, and next steps you can take to grow in contributing to Jesus' mission through his church.
- Discuss specific people, places and areas that you feel God has called you to invest now and down the road. Pray for one another.
- Read verses 13 and 14. What is an area of life where you need to trust Jesus and stand firm in him? What would help you to do that?

PRAYER

- Thank God for the ways he has provided for you.
- Pray about how you might be able to use what you have to serve others.
- Ask God to give you the power and strength to stay faithful to Jesus through the challenges of life.

PRAYER REQUESTS





UNDERSTANDING THE SPIRITUAL GIFTS LISTED IN 1 CORINTHIANS 12: 8-10

Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

There are many spiritual gifts listed throughout the New Testament, and they all play important roles in the body of believers. Some, like hospitality or teaching, are gifts that shape our personalities and give us natural abilities that can and should be used for the glory of God. These gifts may grow and change over time, but they don't come and go from day to day or season to season; they're who we are. The gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 are different and sometimes intimidating, so it's important to dig a little deeper into what Paul means when he writes about the "manifestation of the Spirit."

There are nine gifts listed in 1 Corinthians 12:8-10:

- Utterance of Wisdom
- Utterance of Knowledge
- Faith
- Gifts of Healing
- Working of Miracles
- Prophecy
- Distinguishing between Spirits
- Tongues
- Interpretation of Tongues

D. A. Carson and Sam Storms have both written extensively on the gifts in this passage, and these books are great resources for growing in your understanding of the manifestation gifts:

D. A. Carson, Showing the Spirit: A Theological Exposition of 1 Corinthians, 12-14 Sam Storms, The Beginner's Guide to Spiritual Gifts

The following definitions are by no means exhaustive but are included here as a resource to use while studying Paul's encouragement and instruction to the Church at Corinth. Just like in the church today, some people were guilty of using the charismatic gifts of the Spirit in ways that were not honoring to God. An easy response to the dangers of misusing gifts of the Holy Spirit would be to avoid them altogether, but this isn't what Paul instructs. On the contrary, he commands the Corinthians to pursue the gifts, especially prophesy, but to use them with maturity and for the common good. Above all else, they're to be used for the glory of God and to further his kingdom. We serve a living and active God who has given us his Spirit and invited us to participate in his exciting work.

Utterance of Wisdom / Utterance of Knowledge: Supernatural, spontaneous, and revelatory words to be spoken for the edification of the church. It's popular today to define words of wisdom as revelatory words of instruction and to define words of knowledge as revelatory words of information, but Paul never assigns

strict definitions to differentiate between the two terms. They both refer to God revealing information that would not otherwise be known. When God speaks through his children in this way, it is a blessing and an encouragement to the hearer. It's less important to precisely define and distinguish between words of wisdom and knowledge than it is to recognize that God still speaks to us today for the building up of our faith and the benefit of the church.

Faith: Three types of faith are mentioned in the New Testament: conversion faith, continuing faith, and charismatic faith. Conversion faith is the faith by which we are saved. It is our confidence in Jesus' work on the cross as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Continuing faith is the faith that sustains us – the faith that God is good and that he can and will work through our lives and fulfill his promises. Charismatic faith is different in that it is not given to every believer. D. A. Carson states that this faith "enables a believer to trust God to bring about certain things for which he or she cannot claim some divine promise recorded in Scripture, or some state of affairs grounded in the very structure of the gospel." It is the "God-given ability, without fakery or platitudinous exhortations, to believe what you do not really believe, to trust God for a certain blessing not promised in Scripture." This kind of faith is occasional and subject to the will of God. Though the gift of faith will allow someone to trust, with full confidence, that God will bring something about that is not directly promised in scripture (such as healing), it will never contradict with scripture.

Gifts of Healing: Gifts of healings are expressions of divine mercy. Like all gifts of the Spirit, healing is subject to the will of God – just because God wills to bestow on someone the gift of healing at one time doesn't mean that they can always heal. And just because someone seems to be blessed with the gift to pray healing over a certain ailment doesn't mean that they will see similar results when praying over other ailments. In scripture, acts of healing are often tied to faith. We should, in faith, pray for God to heal, knowing that he delights in healing. But do not be discouraged if it is not God's will to heal in a particular situation. He is sovereign and good, and we can rest in his promises even when we do not understand his ways.

Working of Miracles: In Acts 4, the believers prayed for "signs and wonders [to be] performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus," and the whole room shook from the power of the Holy Spirit, and in John 14:12 Jesus states that "whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do." While the full weight and meaning of Jesus' words may be too much for our minds to comprehend, it's clear from scripture that it is good to pray for signs and wonders that will bring glory to God and further his kingdom. In 1 Corinthians 12, this gift is literally defined as "workings of powers." Sam Storms defines miracles as acts that are "sufficiently unusual to arouse awe and wonder and to evoke acknowledgement of God's power and activity." As with the other gifts of the Spirit, the working of miracles encourages believers, builds our faith, and gives glory to the one true God. This gift is also given at the will of God. Sometimes God is most glorified through bold acts of divine compassion, while other times his will is for us to grow through patient endurance.

Prophecy: Like words of knowledge and wisdom, prophecy is a revelatory gift. 1 Corinthians 14:3 explains that "the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement

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and consolation." Later in 1 Corinthians 14:24–25, Paul suggests that prophetic words can bring conviction and disclose the "secrets of the heart." Prophetic words are often a reminder that we are not forgotten. They can also teach and offer direction. As Paul notes, a prophetic word should always be tested by mature believers and should never conflict with scripture. Sam Storms sums up the power of prophetic words in this way: "When people are suddenly confronted with the inescapable reality that God truly knows their hearts and has heard their prayers and is intimately acquainted with all their ways, they are encouraged to press on and to persevere." With this frame of mind, it is clear why Paul would desire that all prophesy – it's such a beautiful way to encourage one another and remind each other of God's goodness, power and love.

Distinguishing between Spirits: The supernatural ability to distinguish between works of the Holy Spirit and works of other, possibly demonic, spirits. Sam Storms explains, "Whereas all Christians are responsible to 'test the spirits to see whether they be of God' (1 John 4:1), Paul has in mind here a special ability that is fundamentally intuitive or subjective in nature. The spiritual gift of distinguishing of spirits or discerning between spirits is probably a supernaturally enabled 'sense' or 'feeling' concerning the nature and source of the 'spirit.'" He continues, "I can't think of another spiritual gift that is so desperately needed in the life of the church today. Consider the many instances when it would prove immensely helpful to know whether or not a sin or an addiction or the breakdown in a marriage or a display of what appears to be mental illness is the work of sinful choices, or biological factors, or emotional wounds from an abusive past, or perhaps the influence of a demonic spirit or perhaps even some combination of all of them."

Tongues: Paul states in 1 Corinthians 14:5, "Now I want you all to speak in tongues...," which tells us that this gift is something we should desire. As discussed further in weeks 12-13 of this study, he also lays out important rules regarding speaking in tongues during a corporate gathering. Tongues is an expression of prayer and worship in the Spirit. It can be described as praying and worshiping beyond what our limited words can express and allowing the Spirit to pray through us. Within a corporate gathering, tongues is not permissible

without an interpreter, because words cannot edify and build up if they can't be understood. In private prayer and worship (or quietly to God during a time of corporate prayer or worship), there are not rules placed on the use of the gift.

Interpretation of Tongues: Interpretation of tongues is the ability, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to translate a public utterance of tongues. This gift brings clarity to the praise, worship, or thanksgiving that was not previously discernable to the congregation as a whole and, therefore, it can be a great blessing to the gathered body of believers.

Sam Storms offers these practical guidelines for moving forward as you seek to walk in the Holy Spirit and use the gifts he has given you for the common good:

- 1. Acknowledge and embrace from the outset that you can do nothing to force God's hand. Whether or not he reveals something to you for the edification of another is entirely dependent on his will, not yours. If God chooses not to bless you with this gift, rest assured he has other, equally important, plans for you and how to use you in the life of the church.
- 2. Make this a specific and consistent focus of your prayers. Cry out to God daily that he would bless you with this gifting (1 Cor. 14:1).
- 3. Monitor your heart's motivation: be certain that your longing for this sort of gifting is your love for the welfare of others and not the notoriety or attention that such a gift might bring to you.
- 4. Learn from others who are already operating in revelatory gifts. Identify who they are, seek them out, ask them questions, listen to their story, learn from their mistakes, and be encouraged by their success. In a word, hang out with people of similar passion and who have a track record of accuracy in this gifting.
- 5. Learn the many ways in which God communicates: dreams, visions, impressions, internal audible voice, symbols, sympathetic pains, providential occurrences, etc. Don't be surprised or put off if what you hear seems weird, but don't be weird just for the sake of being weird!
- 6. Immerse yourself in God's Word. Meditate on who God is, what he's like, and how he communicated to others in biblical history. This will help you discern whether or not

it is God who is speaking. He will never reveal anything to anyone that is inconsistent with his character or his ways.

- 7. Be attentive to the Spirit of God. Listen! Watch! Write down what you think may be the word of the Spirit. Be attentive to the revelatory language that God might choose to utilize for you. He doesn't always make himself known to everyone in the same way.
- 8. If you think God has revealed something to you for the edification of another, first share it in confidence with trusted and mature Christian friends who can help you process what has happened. There is wisdom in the counsel of community.
- 9. Be willing to risk being wrong. Step out in faith and humility: "I may have entirely missed this, but I think God may have put something on my heart for you. If this doesn't make any sense, you won't hurt my feelings by telling me so." Resist the temptation to say: "Thus saith the Lord" or "This is the will of God for your life!"
- 10. Certain things to avoid:

a) be careful about sharing negative or critical words (1 Cor. 14:3)

b) don't assume that every random thought that passes through your brain is from God

c) don't rely on revelatory gifts to make routine decisions in life.