

Table of contents

Preface

2

Introduction

3

1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 25-40

7

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

13

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

19

1 Corinthians 11:20-34

24

Complete Schedule

29

Preface

Welcome to our study on 1 Corinthians! I never want to miss an opportunity to express my joy in serving our Lord alongside each of you at Second Baptist. Every week you go above and beyond to minister to your classes through teaching and fellowship. We have an amazing discipleship ministry and you are the very backbone of that success. So thank you for everything that you do. As Paul says in Philippians 1:3, I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you. Please know that I am weekly praying for you. You are my heroes!

Over the next three months we will walk through every verse of this wonderful letter in our Life Groups and Sunday Morning sermons. You will receive a Leader Guide like this one again in March and in April. At the conclusion of this series, which will carry us through May, we will return to the Explore the Bible curriculum.

This curriculum is built around commentary and discussion questions. The intention of the commentary is to be practical in nature. The focus is not only on what the verses are saying, but more specifically on how we can apply them to our daily lives. Most lessons will include challenges to you and your class to think through how you can put into action the principles you learn each week. Our goal as the discipleship ministry at Second Baptist Church is To Follow Jesus and to Lead Others to Follow Jesus. I believe we achieve that goal through faithful Bible study strengthened by life application resulting in life change. I hope you will find this curriculum to be helpful in encouraging your class and yourself to put into practice what is taught each week.

I would greatly value your input on this curriculum. If you have suggestions for how I can improve the content or how I can make it more practical for you, please contact me at pastorsamcoleman@gmail.com . I want this literature to be as helpful as possible as you prepare to minister to your class each week.

Again thank you for your dedication to your ministry. May the Lord bless you and your class as you walk through the book of 1 Corinthians!

Your brother in Christ,

Sam Coleman

Introduction

From: www.gty.org/library/bible-introductions/MSB46/first-corinthians

TITLE

The letter is named for the city of Corinth, where the church to whom it was written was located. With the exception of personal epistles addressed to Timothy, Titus, and Philemon, all Paul's letters bear the name of the city where the church addressed existed.

AUTHOR AND DATE

As indicated in the first verse, the epistle was written by the Apostle Paul, whose authorship cannot be seriously questioned. Pauline authorship has been universally accepted by the church since the first century, when 1 Corinthians was penned. Internally, the apostle claimed to have written the epistle (1:1, 13; 3:4-6; 4:15; 16:21). Externally, this correspondence has been acknowledged as genuine since A.D. 95 by Clement of Rome, who was writing to the Corinthian church. Other early Christian leaders who authenticated Paul as author include Ignatius (ca. A.D. 110), Polycarp (ca. A.D. 135), and Tertullian (ca. A.D. 200).

This epistle was most likely written in the first half of A.D. 55 from Ephesus (16:8, 9, 19) while Paul was on his third missionary journey. The apostle intended to remain on at Ephesus to complete his 3 year stay (Acts 20:31) until Pentecost (May/June) A.D. 55 (16:8). Then he hoped to winter (A.D. 55-56) at Corinth (16:6; Acts 20:2). His departure for Corinth was anticipated even as he wrote (4:19; 11:34; 16:8).

BACKGROUND AND SETTING

The city of Corinth was located in southern Greece, in what was the Roman province of Achaia, ca. 45 miles W from Athens. This lower part, the Peloponnesus, is connected to the rest of Greece by a 4-mile-wide isthmus, which is bounded on the E by the Saronic Gulf and on the W by the Gulf of Corinth. Corinth is near the middle of the isthmus and is prominently situated on a high plateau. For many centuries, all N-S land traffic in that area had to pass through or near this ancient city. Since travel by sea around the Peloponnesus involved a 250 mile voyage that was dangerous and obviously time consuming, most captains carried their ships on skids or rollers across the isthmus directly past Corinth. Corinth understandably prospered as a major trade city, not only for most of Greece but for much of the Mediterranean area, including North Africa, Italy, and Asia Minor.

The Isthmian games, one of the two most famous athletic events of that day (the other being the Olympian games), was hosted by Corinth, causing more people-traffic. Even by the pagan standards of its own culture, Corinth became so morally corrupt that its very name became synonymous with debauchery and moral depravity. To "corinthianize" came to represent gross immorality and drunken debauchery.

Like most ancient Greek cities, Corinth had an acropolis (literally, "a high city"), which rose 2,000 feet and was used both for defense and for worship. The most prominent edifice on the acropolis was a temple to Aphrodite, the Greek goddess of love. Some 1,000 priestesses, who were "religious" prostitutes, lived and worked there and came down into the city in the evening to offer their services to male citizens and foreign visitors.

The church in Corinth was founded by Paul on his second missionary journey (Acts 18:1ff.). As usual, his ministry began in the synagogue, where he was assisted by two Jewish believers, Priscilla and Aquila, with whom he lived for a while and who were fellow tradesmen. Soon after, Silas and Timothy joined them and Paul began preaching even more intensely in the synagogue. When most of the Jews resisted the gospel, he left the synagogue, but not before Crispus, the leader of the synagogue, his family, and many other Corinthians were converted (Acts 18:5-8).

After ministering in Corinth for over a year and a half (Acts 18:11), Paul was brought before a Roman tribunal by some of the Jewish leaders. Because the charges were strictly religious and not civil, the proconsul, Gallio, dismissed the case. Shortly thereafter, Paul took Priscilla and Aquila with him to Ephesus. From there he returned to Israel (vv. 18-22).

Unable to fully break with the culture from which it came, the church at Corinth was exceptionally factional, showing its carnality and immaturity. After the gifted Apollos had ministered in the church for some time, a group of his admirers established a clique and had little to do with the rest of the church. Another group developed that was loyal to Paul, another claimed special allegiance to Peter (Cephas), and still another to Christ alone (see 1:10-13; 3:1-9).

The most serious problem of the Corinthian church was worldliness, an unwillingness to divorce the culture around them. Most of the believers could not consistently separate themselves from their old, selfish, immoral, and pagan ways. It became necessary for Paul to write to correct this, as well as to command the faithful Christians not only to break fellowship with the disobedient and unrepentant members, but to put those members out of the church (5:9-13).

Before he wrote this inspired letter, Paul had written the church other correspondence (see 5:9), which was also corrective in nature. Because a copy of that letter has never been discovered, it has been referred to as "the lost epistle." There was another non-canonical letter after 1 Corinthians, usually called "the severe letter" (2 Cor. 2:4).

Overview

DATE	LIFE GROUPS	SERMON
April 1	NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Judgment: Yourself
April 8	1 Corinthians 7:1-40 Marriage, Singleness, Divorce	1 Corinthians 8:1-9:18 Freedom: Brings Responsibility
April 15	1 Corinthians 9:19-27 Freedom: Brings Sacrifice	1 Corinthians 10:1-14 Freedom: Brings Reflection
April 22	1 Corinthians 10:15-11:1 Freedom: Brings Concern	1 Corinthians 11:2-19 The Body: Equality
April 29	1 Corinthians 11:20-34 The Body: Remembrance	1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Body: Diversity

1 Corinthians 7:1-16, 25-40

MARRIAGE, SINGLENESS, AND DIVORCE
APRIL 8, 2018

It seems like everyone is a relationship expert. Whether you are single, married, or single-again, there's always someone in your life that has a word of advice. Sometimes it's great advice that you would be wise to follow. Sometimes it's bad advice that you would be wise to ignore.

**WHAT IS SOME OF THE BEST RELATIONSHIP ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?
WHAT IS SOME OF THE WORST RELATIONSHIP ADVICE YOU'VE EVER RECEIVED?**

The church at Corinth had written a letter to Paul asking a number of questions. 1 Corinthians 7 is Paul's response to the Corinthians' questions concerning marriage, singleness, and divorce.

EXPLORE THE TEXT

Marriage

7:1-7: Now in response to the matters you wrote about: "It is good for a man not to use a woman for sex." But because sexual immorality is so common, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband. A husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise a wife to her husband. A wife does not have the right over her own body, but her husband does. In the same way, a husband does not have the right over his own body, but his wife does. Do not deprive one another—except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command. I wish that all people were as I am. But each has his own gift from God, one person has this gift, another has that.

Paul begins by refuting a common Corinthian saying: **It is good for a man not to use a woman for sex.** The thought behind the saying was that the one who practices celibacy could reach a higher spiritual maturity. Some in the church even practiced celibacy within their own marriages. While the intention is for a higher spiritual maturity, the consequences of withholding sex were spouses dealing with unfulfilled needs looking elsewhere for fulfillment. Though Paul was celibate himself, he still recognized that sex within marriage was good **because sexual immorality was so common.** The Corinthian world is not much different from our own world today. Sexual immorality was common then and is common today.

HOW IS SEX IN A MARRIAGE IMPORTANT? HOW CAN WITHHOLDING SEX WITHIN A MARRIAGE LEAD TO CONFLICT WITHIN THE MARRIAGE?

To protect against sexual immorality, Paul commands that **each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman should have sexual relations with her own husband**. God created sex and meant for it to be within the confines of marriage, which is why Paul emphasizes that sexual relations should be with a man's **own wife** or a woman's **own husband**.

Paul saw that it was not good for a married couple to abstain from sex with one another **except when you agree for a time, to devote yourselves to prayer**. There is a time to fast from sex if a couple agrees to it, but Paul warns the couple to **come together again; otherwise, Satan may tempt you because of your lack of self-control**. Sex within marriage provides a godly outlet for sexual desires. If those desires are not fulfilled within the marriage, Satan could use that situation to tempt a spouse to become unfaithful.

Note how Paul speaks to both spouses equally. During biblical times, marriages were arranged and husbands were normally significantly older than wives. Because of this, husbands tended to be the dominant authority figures in the marriage. So it is significant that Paul mentions the responsibility of both spouses to fulfill their marital duties to one another. The proper focus of marriage is not on the needs of your self; instead the proper focus of marriage is on the needs of your spouse.

HOW CAN FOCUSING ON THE NEEDS OF YOUR SPOUSE STRENGTHEN YOUR MARRIAGE?

Singleness

7:8-9: I say to the unmarried and to widows: It is good for them if they remain as I am. But if they do not have self-control, they should marry, since it is better to marry than to burn with desire.

It's important when viewing Paul's teaching to **widows** to know the cultural differences between today and biblical times. Today we may think of a widow or widower as someone who is elderly that has lost a spouse. While that doesn't make the pain of losing a spouse any easier, it may lessen the importance of remarriage. In Paul's time, however, widows were commonly younger. Since women were married at a much younger age often to significantly older men, it was not uncommon for wives to become widows in their 20's. Since women couldn't work and Roman law pressured remarriage within a year of divorce or the death of a spouse in order to receive an inheritance, there was tremendous cultural and financial pressure for singles to marry or widows to remarry quickly. Therefore, for Paul to call on widows to remain unmarried meant a tremendous sacrifice on their part. However, Paul still believes **it is good for them if they remain as he was: single**.

Singleness is not meant to be a burden or punishment. While there may be great pressure from people around you to get married and start a family, God can use a single person for great work in His kingdom. Singleness provides the freedom of time and freedom of distractions to do things for God that married couples cannot.

IF YOU ARE SINGLE, WHAT ARE SOME THINGS YOU COULD DO TO SERVE GOD THAT YOUR MARRIED PEERS CANNOT? IF YOU ARE MARRIED, WHAT IS ONE THING YOU COULD DO AS A SINGLE PERSON FOR GOD THAT YOU CANNOT TODAY?

Divorce

7:10-11: To the married I give this command—not I, but the Lord—a wife is not to leave her husband. But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife.

Paul, pointing to the teaching of Jesus, says **a wife is not to leave her husband. But if she does leave, she must remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband—and a husband is not to divorce his wife.** Throughout this chapter, Paul reflects the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 19:1-12.

HAVE SOMEONE READ MATTHEW 19:1-12

Like Jesus, Paul gives the command that a marriage should not end in divorce. Even if divorce does occur, he teaches that the spouses should remain unmarried or be reconciled to one another. In Paul's culture, this was a difficult subject. In our culture, this can be a difficult subject. But as Jesus illustrated, the result of marriage is two people becoming one flesh. In his other writings, Paul would liken marriage to the relationship of the church and Jesus Christ. Just as Christ and His church can never be separated, so too should a husband and wife not be separated.

HOW DOES PAUL'S AND JESUS' TEACHING ON DIVORCE AFFECT OUR FOCUS IN MARRIAGE?

7:12-16: But I (not the Lord) say to the rest: If any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. Also, if any woman had an unbelieving husband and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce her husband. For the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him leave. A brother or a sister is not bound in such cases. God has called you to live in peace. Wife, for all you know, you might save your husband. Husband, for all you know, you might save your wife.

Another concern raised by the Corinthians was the instance of newly saved Christians that were already married to unsaved spouses. In this case, Paul says **if any brother has an unbelieving wife and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her.** He also says the same to wives married to unbelieving husbands. While a Christian should not seek to enter into marriage with an unbeliever, if the believer is saved after marriage then they should remain in the marriage. By remaining married to the unsaved spouse, **the unbelieving husband is made holy by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is made holy by the husband.** The unbelieving spouse is not saved by the faith of the believing spouse, but the believing spouse can be a holy influence on the unbeliever. The daily life of the believer very well could bring the spouse to salvation.

TAKE A MOMENT AND ASK IF ANYONE CAN SHARE A STORY ABOUT AN EXPERIENCE LIKE PAUL HAS DESCRIBED: A BELIEVING SPOUSE LEADING AN UNBELIEVING SPOUSE TO FAITH IN CHRIST.

7:25-28: Now about virgins: I have no command from the Lord, but I do give an opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is faithful. Because of the present distress, I think that it is good for a man to remain as he is. Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be released. Are you released from a wife? Do not seek a wife. However, if you do get married, you have not sinned, and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. But such people will have trouble in this life, and I am trying to spare you.

In 1 Corinthians 7:17-24, Paul teaches that each person should lead the life that the Lord has assigned to him and to which God has called him. The believers in Corinth did not grow up in church; they were saved as adults. As such, they may have found themselves in situations that they would not have chosen had they been saved earlier. Yet Paul teaches them to be faithful in the situation in which God has placed them. He teaches that **it is good for a man to remain as he is**. Paul is not teaching that the man should remain morally the same, but that he should be a light for the gospel in whichever situation he finds himself in.

WHY WOULD GOD NOT CALL THE CORINTHIANS TO CHANGE THEIR SITUATIONS? HOW CAN A CHRISTIAN BE A POSITIVE INFLUENCE IN A NEGATIVE SITUATION?

7:29-31: This is what I mean, brothers and sisters: The time is limited, so from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none, those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they didn't own anything, and those who use the world as though they did not make full use of it. For this world in its current form is passing away.

Paul's concern was that **the time is limited**. He knew **this world in its current form is passing away**. Paul truly believed that Christ could have come back at any moment. As such, the Corinthians' focus should be on the things of God and not on the things of this earth. Paul's call for urgency still stands today. We are far closer to the return of Christ than Paul ever was. As such, we should live every day in light of the fact that Jesus could return at any moment.

HOW DOES THE ANTICIPATION OF JESUS' RETURN AFFECT HOW WE LIVE OUR DAILY LIVES?

7:32-35: I want you to be without concerns. The unmarried man is concerned about the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord. But the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife—and his interests are divided. The unmarried woman or virgin is concerned about the things of the Lord, so that she may be holy both in body and in spirit. But the married woman is concerned about the things of the world—how she may please her husband. I am saying this for your own benefit, not to put a restraint on you, but to promote what is proper and so that you may be devoted to the Lord without distraction.

Here Paul contrasts the concerns of the married and unmarried. **The unmarried man is concerned with the things of the Lord—how he may please the Lord.** The unmarried man's attention can be fully **devoted to the Lord without distraction.** He does not have to concern himself with pleasing a wife or family, so he can do the work of the Lord at anytime.

In contrast, **the married man is concerned about the things of the world—how he may please his wife—and his interests are divided.** Paul is not speaking out against marriage but is illustrating the advantages of singleness. A man concerned about pleasing his wife is not committing a sin—in fact he is doing his godly duty of being a good husband—but he is unable to put his full attention on building God's kingdom.

This passage is an encouragement for the single person. In church circles there can be great pressure to marry and start a family. A single person may feel unaccepted among married peers. But Paul shows that a single person has great godly advantages over the married: They can fully dedicate their time to the Lord. That doesn't mean they will always be called to be single, but during their single life they can make the most of their time for God.

7:36-40: If any man thinks he is acting improperly toward the virgin he is engaged to, if she is getting beyond the usual age for marriage, and he feels he should marry—he can do what he wants. He is not sinning; they can get married. But he who stands firm in his heart (who is under no compulsion, but has control over his own will) and has decided in his heart to keep her as his fiancé, will do well. So then he who marries his fiancé does well, but he who does not marry will do better. A wife is bound as long as her husband is living. But if her husband dies, she is free to be married to anyone she wants—only in the Lord. But she is happier if she remains as she is, in my opinion. And I think that I also have the Spirit of God.

Paul concludes this chapter with a few more teachings on the benefits of remaining in the situation God has called you to. For the engaged man, he **will do well** if he remains engaged and not married. For the widow, Paul believes **she is happier if she remains as she is.** In both instances, Paul teaches that the one who marries is not sinning. In his opinion, **he who marries his fiancé does well, but he who does not marry will do better.** In each of these instances, it's a matter of focus. As Paul has already taught, the single person can put their full focus on the matters of God. Paul knew he couldn't have done as much as he did for the Lord had he been married. As with each piece of advice given by Paul throughout this passage, he is careful to note that he has **the Spirit of God.** Even in the passages where Paul stated that his teaching came from **I, not from the Lord (7:12)**, his words are inspired by the Holy Spirit and included in the Bible, so his teaching carries the weight of the Word of God. Paul's words carry the authority of God.

WHEN SEEKING ADVICE ON RELATIONSHIPS, HOW DOES THE AUTHORITY OF THE PERSON GIVING THE ADVICE AFFECT HOW YOU RECEIVE IT?

FINAL THOUGHTS

Paul has a little bit of something for everyone in this chapter. For the married, his teachings can strengthen your relationships and remind you of the permanence of your vows. For the unmarried, his teachings can encourage you that God has placed you in that situation to do great work for Him. And for the new Christian struggling with the situation you find yourself in, you can find encouragement to be a great influence on that situation. Here are a few things to remember this week:

1. Look at your situation (married, single, widowed, divorced) as an opportunity to serve the Lord. God has not made a mistake in calling you to serve Him where you are, so seek the opportunities He has provided for you to be faithful.
2. Be mindful of the way you advise others. Often our advice is really just trying to encourage the person that God will change their situation. Instead you should encourage them in their current situation. Build them up for where they are, not where you think they should be.

1 Corinthians 9:19-27

FREEDOM BRINGS SACRIFICE

April 15, 2018

Between chauffeuring kids to school, spending Saturdays at the ball fields, waiting on practices to end during the week, taking kids to church events, and then just generally trying to keep them safe and alive, parenting today can be a busy lifestyle. There are so many activities available today that parents can feel like they never have time for anything other than their kids. While this busyness takes a lot of sacrifice, parents still lovingly carry out their parental duties. Why?

WHY WOULD A PARENT SPEND MOST OF THEIR FREE TIME ON THEIR CHILDREN?

We sacrifice our time for our family because we love them. While parents have the freedom to focus on themselves, they still willingly stay busy because of their love for their children. The parent-child relationship helps illustrate how someone can willingly sacrifice their own freedom for the sake of another. In this week's lesson, Paul teaches how the Christian freely chooses sacrifice, how that sacrifice is for evangelism's sake, and the eternal reason for that sacrifice.

Explore the Text

Freely Choosing Sacrifice

9:19: Although I am free from all and not anyone's slave, I have made myself a slave to everyone, in order to win more people.

In Chapters 8 & 9, Paul laid out a number of Christian freedoms. In Chapter 8, Paul speaks of the freedom to eat food offered to idols with a clear conscience. That freedom must be tempered with care not to become a stumbling block to a brother. In Chapter 9, Paul speaks of his freedom to be paid for the gospel ministry. That freedom he has sacrificed in order to not become an obstacle in the way of the gospel of Christ. Each freedom is tempered with the willing sacrifice for the benefit of others.

For two chapters he has explained how he is **free from all and not anyone's slave**. However, in each instance he has explained his willingness to sacrifice those freedoms and **made himself a slave to everyone**. How can Paul willingly sacrifice his freedoms and become a slave to everyone? He understood what was at stake in his every interaction. When we interact with other people, the result doesn't just affect the present. The way we treat others or the way we are viewed by others will affect their eternal soul. Our actions can either point to Christ and salvation or they can point to Satan and eternal damnation. While that may seem like an oversimplification, it is the reality of our daily lives. We each come in contact with people who have eternal souls that will only end up in one of two places: Heaven or Hell. It is this mindset that allowed Paul to easily set aside his own personal rights.

WHAT ARE SOME FREEDOMS WE HAVE AS CHRISTIANS THAT ARE BETTER FOR US TO SACRIFICE?

In each one of his freedoms, he willingly sacrifices his rights **in order to win more people**. Paul's driving force was his desire to win people to Christ. The thought of winning souls for Jesus should be in the forefront of every decision of ours. When we plan church events, the goal should be to win people to Christ. When we go to the grocery store, the goal should be to win people to Christ and get groceries. When we go to work, the goal should be to win people to Christ and make a living. Winning people to Christ should be our first thoughts.

WHAT ARE SOME WAYS YOU WOULD CHANGE YOUR ATTITUDE IF WINNING PEOPLE TO CHRIST WAS YOUR FIRST PRIORITY?

Sacrifice for Evangelism's Sake

9:20-22: To the Jews I became like a Jew, to win Jews; to those under the law, like one under the law—though I myself am not under the law—to win those under the law. To those who are without the law, like one without the law—though I am not without God's law but under the law of Christ—to win those without the law. To the weak I became weak, in order to win the weak. I have become all things to all people, that I may by every possible means save some.

Paul's sacrifice was not for personal reasons. Instead, Paul's sacrifice was for the sake of evangelism. Paul begins to describe his evangelistic philosophy of not offending the cultural norms of those he was trying to win to Christ. He names four groups: **the Jews, those under the law, those without the law, and the weak**. These groups are most likely Jews, God-fearing Gentiles, pagan Gentiles, and immature Christians, respectively. In each instance, he does not use his freedom to become an offense or stumbling block in their path to faith.

Around Jews he followed the customs of the Jews. Paul knew the ins and outs of Jewish culture and by observing their customs he was able to gain opportunity to share the gospel. Around those under the law he obeyed the commands of the law though he was free from them. In both instances Paul submitted to the restrictions of the law in order to not offend those he was trying to reach. He was free to eat any food laid before him, but if it offended those holding to the law he would abstain. In all reality, his sacrifice was minor in light of his purpose. If abstaining from eating pork would allow him the opportunity share the life giving gospel, then Paul would willingly say no to bacon. Food is only temporary; the impact of his sacrifice was eternal. How can we apply this to ourselves? Many religions today abstain from certain foods yet we as Christians are free to eat anything. If given the opportunity to eat with those with dietary restrictions, the Christian should willingly adhere to the same restrictions so as to not offend their host.

TAKE A MOMENT AND ASK YOUR CLASS IF ANYONE HAS AN EXPERIENCE EATING WITH SOMEONE FROM A DIFFERENT CULTURE.

Around those without the law he acted as one not under the law, though he still acted **under the law of Christ**. Paul is careful to insist that even when he is trying to win souls among the

sinner, he is not participating in the sin. Luke 5:27-32 recalls a time when Jesus attended a great feast at Levi's house where a large company of tax collectors attended. The Pharisees and scribes grumbled at Jesus' association with tax collectors and sinners. Jesus replies to their grumbling by saying:

Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

We must understand Paul's maturity and spiritual commitment when he was around those without the law. Even as we reach out to sinners we must remember we are under the law of Christ. When witnessing to a lost person we must not use our desire for evangelism as a license to sin. Be aware of your weaknesses in those instances and never allow yourself to fall into temptation. Also we must realize that lost people act like lost people: we cannot expect them to follow the Word of God if they do not know the Son of God. Be gracious in your experiences with them.

WHY IS IMPORTANT NOT TO EXPECT LOST PEOPLE TO FOLLOW THE BIBLE'S COMMANDS?

Finally, to the weak he interacted with them as though he was weak. Paul was not spiritually weak, yet he was willing to live as though he was in order to win the weak. Unfortunately, sometimes spiritual maturity can lead to arrogance. Sometimes those who are well versed in biblical doctrines are not well practiced in gracious living. Paul did not allow his mature faith to be a point of pride over the spiritually immature. In their presence he related as best he could to how they believed. We must always be careful not to have a higher view of ourselves than of others.

Paul was willing to sacrifice his freedoms in order to win souls to Christ. His concern is not with what he wants or how he wants things to be. Instead, his concern is to **become all things to all people, that he may by every possible means save some**. Paul became all things to all people. He was willing to adapt to any situation in order to remove any obstacles to sharing the gospel. In our lives we interact with people with different backgrounds, interests, passions, and cultures. Instead of forcing others to conform to our preferences, we should bend our own lives in order to gain the possibility of sharing our faith.

IN WHAT WAYS CAN YOU BECOME ALL THINGS TO ALL PEOPLE? WHAT ARE SOME OF THE OBSTACLES WE FACE IN SHARING THE GOSPEL WHEN WE ARE AROUND OTHERS UNLIKE OURSELVES?

Evangelism can be messy. Most opportunities to share our faith don't come according to our schedule but rather come during everyday circumstances. Having an attitude of evangelism keeps us open to sharing the gospel with anyone in any place in any situation; just as Paul was always ready to share. Also, Paul did all of this in the hopes of saving some. We may sacrifice every day of our lives and only see a few come to faith, but God rejoices over those few! Every soul matters to God! We may never see the fruit of our evangelism, but God will reward us for our obedience.

The Eternal Reason

9:23: Now I do all this because of the gospel, so that I may share in the blessings.

This should be the theme verse of every Christian: **I do all this because of the gospel.** Paul realized that the gospel was the greatest reward possible for his life. Jesus died for Paul's sin. Before Jesus came, Paul was destined to an eternity in hell. But God loved Paul enough to send his Son, Jesus Christ, to die for him. What a beautiful gift! We have experienced that same gift and the more we reflect on what Christ has done for us the more we realize that we need nothing else in this life. Knowing the gospel is all we need to make it through this life and to live forever in eternity. There is other great knowledge that we can long to learn and that is a blessed journey, but we must never forget what first drew us to God: The Gospel. Paul never forgot the gospel and it became the driving force behind his every decision. It should be the driving force behind our every decision.

HOW DOES REMEMBERING THE GOSPEL CHANGE THE WAY YOU INTERACT WITH OTHERS?

9:24-27: Don't you know that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way to win the prize. Now everyone who competes exercises self-control in everything. They do it to receive a perishable crown, but we an imperishable crown. So I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control, so that after preaching to others, I myself will not be disqualified.

Corinth was the home of the biennial Isthmian Games. Much like the Olympic games, these competitions showcased the top Greek athletes competing for prizes. Paul notes **that the runners in a stadium all race, but only one receives the prize. Run in such a way to win the prize.** Most races have a favorite: someone expected to win. Logically, if there's one favorite then there's a dozen or more other competitors that aren't expected to win. However, every competitor races with the hope and belief that they will win. They run their absolute hardest and give their absolute best. God deserves our absolute best. Are we all going to be the greatest Christians the world has ever seen? No, but we should strive to be the best Christians we possibly can be.

WHAT WOULD YOU CONSIDER AS A WIN IN THE CHRISTIAN FAITH? HOW DO WE LIVE OUR FAITH IN A WAY TO ACHIEVE THAT WIN?

The competitors all exercise **self-control in everything.** Successful athletes seek self-control in everything they do: from diet to sleep to hydration. Athletes know that even the smallest factor can change the outcome of a whole race. In our lives we must have self-control in everything or else it can change the outcome of our whole witness. One small slip up at work or in the community can compromise our ability to effectively share the gospel. As with athletes, this takes effort on our part to make sure everything we do is in line with Scripture.

HOW CAN A LACK OF SELF-CONTROL NEGATIVELY AFFECT OUR EFFECTIVENESS IN WITNESSING TO OTHERS? WHAT AREAS DO YOU NEED TO EXERCISE MORE SELF-CONTROL?

Through this sacrifice their hope is **to receive a perishable crown**. If a runner can dedicate himself entirely to his sport in order to gain a perishable crown, then how much more should we be willing to sacrifice our time and lives for the **imperishable crown** given by Jesus? Jesus speaks of the eternal rewards in Matthew 6:19-22:

Don't store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves don't break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The reward for athletic competition is only temporary. The reward for our good works for God is eternal. We must keep those eternal rewards in the forefront of our minds as motivation to sacrifice for the sake of others.

Paul speaks of his spiritual workout regimen in saying: **I do not run like one who runs aimlessly or box like one beating the air. Instead, I discipline my body and bring it under strict control.** The Christian walk involves not only investment in faith through prayer and Bible study, but also the living out of faith through sacrifice and obedience. Paul was willing to sacrifice his freedoms in order win others to Christ. But even those sacrifices can be beneficial to us. Runners and boxers don't eat McDonalds. Some may, but not the best athletes. They monitor what they put into their bodies. While it might sound like a sacrifice to pass up the Big Mac and eat a salad, it really is the more healthy option. In the same way, living our faith the way God would have us live may seem like we are sacrificing behaviors or activities that are really good, but in reality what we give up is the equivalent of spiritual fast food: it was never good for us in the first place.

WHAT ARE EXAMPLES OF SACRIFICES YOU'VE MADE FOR GOD THAT SEEMED IMPORTANT AT THE TIME BUT NOW YOU CAN SEE WERE REALLY BENEFICIAL TO YOUR FAITH?

Final Thoughts

Paul's focus in everything was the gospel. He lived his life not for his own gain but for the opportunity to share the gospel with others. He was willing to give everything up if it meant the opportunity to bring new souls into God's kingdom. How do we apply this today?

1. Pray for God's guidance this week to show you areas of your life that may be a stumbling block to others. When He shows you those areas, seek His discernment on how He would want you to change.
2. Focus on the gospel this week. Every day reflect on the wonderful work Christ has done in your life. Let this be your motivation in every interaction this week.
3. Take one activity this week—one part of your normal routine—and make winning someone to Christ the goal of that activity.

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

FREEDOM BRINGS CONCERN

April 22, 2018

When Jesus had washed their feet and put on His outer clothing, He reclined again and said to them, "Do you know what I have done for you? You call me teacher and Lord—are you are speaking rightly, since that is what I am. So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done for you."

John 13:12-15

On his last night with his disciples before his death, Jesus chose to take the role of servant and wash his disciples' feet. He could have sat back and demanded these men serve Him; instead He chose to show His love and humility and serve them. There is no greater example for us than Jesus. In this lesson, we'll see how Paul teaches the Corinthians to follow the example of Christ by following Paul as he imitates Jesus.

Explore the Text

Concern for God

10:14- So then, my dear friends, flee from idolatry. I am speaking as to sensible people. Judge for yourselves what I am saying.

Paul calls the Corinthians to **flee from idolatry**. He is not simply advising them to resist idolatry or simply avoid it, but rather to actively run from anything with the appearance of idolatry. There are many forms of idolatry in our lives and it's not simply worshipping wooden gods in our homes.

WHAT ARE SOME FORMS OF IDOLATRY IN OUR LIVES TODAY THAT TAKE OUR ATTENTION AND LOYALTY AWAY FROM GOD?

Our natural reaction is to try to be less idolatrous in our lives, but Paul is calling on us to flee completely from it. Earlier in this same chapter, Paul recounts the story of the Israelites during the Exodus. Even though God had worked great miracles in their midst, and even though God had provided for their every need, still they turned to idols. Paul's desire is that the Corinthians do not fall into the same trap of claiming Christianity but living like pagans. The way to avoid that is completely fleeing from anything that could lead to idolatry.

Idolatry and temptation are like a fire: the only way to avoid being burned is to stay away from it completely. In our lives we may try to play with the fire of temptation, to be around it and believing ourselves to be strong enough not to fall into it. Paul warns us to turn and run as far away from it as we possibly can.

HOW DO WE OFTEN THINK TOO LITTLE OF TEMPTATION? HOW CAN WE GET A MORE ACCURATE VIEW OF THE DANGERS OF TEMPTATION?

Paul notes that he is **speaking as to sensible people**. The Corinthians had the ability to reason and judge for themselves what he was saying. The value of what he is teaching is not difficult to comprehend for logical people. Though faith is the reality of what is hoped for, the proof of what is not seen (Hebrews 11:1), much of what Paul is writing is just good common sense.

10:16-17- The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a sharing in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a sharing in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread.

Whereas the pagans ate from the sacrifice of idols, the Christians ate a meal of remembrance of the sacrifice of our Savior. In eating the meal, Paul points out that the Corinthians are **sharing in the blood of Christ** and **sharing in the body of Christ**. The sharing of Jesus' blood and body aligns us together behind His sacrifice. It is Jesus' sacrifice that enables people from all walks of life to put their trust in Him and to find fellowship with other believers. It is the meal that reminds the Christian that **we who are many are one body, since all of us share the one bread**. Our taking of the Lord's Supper is a fellowship of saints saved by the sacrifice of our Savior. Our unity with one another is because of Jesus Christ. The meal we participate in to remember our Savior is also a reminder of that unity.

PAUL ARGUES FOR THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH. IN WHAT WAYS CAN WE AS INDIVIDUAL CHURCH MEMBERS UPHOLD UNITY AT SECOND BAPTIST?

10:18-20- Consider the people of Israel. Do not those who eat the sacrifices participate in the altar? What am I saying then? That food sacrificed to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but I do say that what they sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons! You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot share in the Lord's table and the table of demons. Or are we provoking the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

Paul warns the Corinthians to **consider the people of Israel**. When the people of Israel brought their sacrifice to the temple, they were commanded to eat a portion of their sacrifice. In doing so, they became participants in the sacrifice. Paul uses that illustration to help his readers understand the danger of food sacrificed to idols. Again, he reiterates that he doesn't believe **that food sacrificed to idols is anything, or than an idol is anything**, but he also warns that what **they sacrifice, they sacrifice to demons and not to God**. While no other gods exist, demons certainly exist. While participating in the Lord's table brings unity, participating in the table of demons provokes the Lord to jealousy.

While sacrifices to demons is not common enough in our culture to be a temptation for us, there are ways we sacrifice our time for the things of Satan instead of the things of God. Everything we do is either going to be beneficial to God's kingdom or beneficial to Satan's plan against God's kingdom. How we spend our time can either glorify God or provoke Him to jealousy.

WHAT ARE WAYS THAT WE SPEND OUR TIME THAT COULD BE PROVOKING GOD TO JEALOUSY?

Concern for Others

10:23-24 - "Everything is permissible," but not everything is beneficial. "Everything is permissible," but not everything builds up. No one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person.

When Paul states "**Everything is permissible,**" he is quoting a well-known Corinthian slogan. Here he is not affirming the slogan but rather using it as a teaching point to lead the Corinthians to turn their focus not on personal freedoms but on corporate well-being. With each quote of the slogan he has a rebuttal: **Not everything is beneficial** and **not everything builds up**. He wants the Corinthians to change their focus from what they are individually allowed to do, to what is most beneficial for the community as a whole. The desired outcome is to be focused on others rather than focused on self.

Paul implores that **no one is to seek his own good, but the good of the other person**. Our lives should be spent seeking what is beneficial and what builds up others. How can we put our full attention on the needs of others when we have great needs ourselves? We do not have to worry about our needs: they are already taken care of by God. Jesus already promised our needs will be met in Matthew 6:31-33:

Therefore do not be anxious, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Since our needs are covered by God, we are free to look after the needs of others!

HOW DOES KNOWING THAT GOD WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU HELP FREE YOU TO TAKE CARE OF OTHERS?

10:25-27 - Eat everything that is sold in the meat market, without raising questions for the sake of conscience, since the earth is the Lord's, and all that is in it. If any of the unbelievers invites you over and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, without raising questions for the sake of conscience.

Paul reiterates the Christian's freedom to **eat everything that is sold in the meat market, without raising questions for the sake of conscience**. As Jesus stated in Matthew 15:11:

It's not what goes into the mouth that defiles a person, but what comes out of the mouth—this defiles a person.

The Corinthian's conscience could remain clear while eating meat from the market. The unbeliever could eat with a clear conscience so **if any of the unbelievers invites you over**

and you want to go, eat everything that is set before you, without raising questions for the sake of conscience. This continues his discussion from last week's lesson where Paul became all things to all people. We should not refuse the hospitality of your host and potentially offend him. In doing so, you could compromise your chances to share the gospel with him. So if the host does not raise a concern over what he serves then neither should you.

10:28-30- But if someone says to you, "This is food from a sacrifice," do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who told you, and for the sake of conscience. I do not mean your own conscience, but the other person's. For why is my freedom judged by another person's conscience? If I partake with thanksgiving, why am I criticized because of something for which I give thanks?

While the Christian has the full freedom to eat what he pleases, Paul warns that **if someone says to you, "This is food from a sacrifice," do not eat it, out of consideration for the one who told you.** If the one you are dining with raises an objection, you should abstain from eating due to the objection. This is for two reasons: First, the objector could be a weaker Christian. Paul has already addressed this issue in Chapter 8, warning the mature Christian to abstain for the sake of the weaker Christian. Second, the objector could be an unbeliever and the eating of food from a sacrifice could be an impediment to their coming to faith. Their confusion over a Christian eating food from a sacrifice could harden their hearts against the gospel. In either case, Paul teaches that the Christian sacrifice his freedom in order to pave the way for evangelism.

10:31-33- So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do everything for the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or Greeks or the church of God, just as I also try to please everyone in everything, not seeking my own benefit, but the benefit of many, so that they may be saved.

Paul's argument comes to its conclusion when he implores the Corinthians to **do everything for the glory of God.** The principles he applies to meals should be applied to everything we do. Every aspect of our lives, down to the most menial tasks such as eating and drinking, should be done for the glory of God. In everything we do we must seek to glorify God. This takes a conscious effort on our part to think critically about every interaction, every decision, and even every thought we have during the day. One of the best ways to start focusing your whole life on glorifying God is to start by being mindful of your thoughts. Is what you are thinking of throughout the day glorifying to God? If you can conform your thoughts to Him, He can conform your behavior to His glory.

WHAT ARE WAYS YOU CAN GLORIFY GOD IN YOUR EVERYDAY LIFE?

Paul's ultimate goal in all that he did was to bring glory to God. You cannot glorify God if your main concern is bringing glory to yourself. This is why Paul tried **to please everyone in everything, not seeking his own benefit, but the benefit of many.** To that end, he knew bringing others to faith in Christ is the means by which he could glorify God.

11:1- Imitate me, as I also imitate Christ.

What Paul is calling the Corinthians to do is not something he's not willing to do himself. He calls the Corinthians to **imitate me, as I also imitate Christ**. What a bold statement by Paul! Paul doesn't just talk the talk, he walks the walk! In doing so, the Corinthians had an example that they could live by.

In parenting there is an old adage that says "More is caught than taught." Any parent can attest to the truth of that saying. While we may make concerted efforts to instill knowledge and wisdom in our children, they tend to repeat not what we teach but what we model for them. Our children imitate us, as we imitate our own parents. This is the basic principle behind discipleship. When Jesus called His disciples He didn't just call them to come listen to lectures; He called them to come live life with Him. The disciples were able to not only listen to His teachings but to see Him live them out in daily life.

Discipleship today is the same: teaching and living out those teachings together. The most effective way to disciple another person is to give them the same charge as Paul: Imitate me as I imitate Christ. This, of course, takes two things: First, you must be dedicated to imitating Christ. You cannot imitate Him if you don't know Him, and you can't know Him if you do not know and follow His commands (John 14:21). Second, you must be willing to open your life up for observation by those you disciple. This includes the good and the bad: not just your Facebook best.

Of course, discipleship takes at least two people: the disciple and the discipler. In our lives we should each seek someone to disciple and someone to disciple us. There will always be people with a more mature faith than us that can teach us how to be more like Christ. Seek someone out to lead you. In the same way, there will always be people with weaker faiths than us. Seek those out to be your disciples and teach them what you know. Everyone can have a part in discipleship today.

ASK IF ANYONE IN YOUR CLASS IS CURRENTLY DISCIPLING OR BEING DISCIPLLED. ASK IF THEY WILL SHARE THEIR EXPERIENCES. IF NO ONE IS CURRENTLY DOING EITHER, THIS IS A GOOD OPPORTUNITY FOR YOU AS A TEACHER TO START DISCIPLING SOMEONE IN YOUR CLASS SO YOU CAN MODEL IT FOR THEM.

Final Thoughts

Jesus' thoughts were always on others and Paul's thoughts were always on Jesus. If we are trying to be like Jesus then the way we serve others is a good way to see how close to Him we are. In your every interaction this week, look to see what your motivation is behind it. Are you acting in a way that benefits you first or others first? Just take this week to watch your behavior: it will give you a great indication of how well you are following Jesus.

1 Corinthians 11:20-34

THE BODY: REMEMBRANCE

April 29, 2018

Have you ever heard a song that brought back a memory of your past? Certain songs have the ability to transport our minds. Sometimes it's a song we heard when we first met our spouse, or a song sung at a loved one's funeral, or just a song that was playing during a significant time in your life. When you hear that song years later you can go right back to those moments in your mind.

WHAT ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF SONGS IN YOUR LIFE THAT BRING BACK GOOD OR BAD MEMORIES?

The Lord's Supper is meant to be done in remembrance of Jesus' death on the cross for us. Every time we gather to take the Lord's Supper, our minds should immediately be drawn to Jesus and the cross. Unfortunately, the Corinthians did not treat the Lord's Supper with the reverence they should have. In today's lesson we will see the wrong approach to the Lord's Supper and then learn the right approach.

Explore the Text

An Unworthy Manner

11:20-22- When you come together, then, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. For at the meal, each one eats his own supper. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk! Don't you have homes in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing. What should I say to you? Should I praise you? I do not praise you in this matter!

As Baptists we love a good fellowship meal; especially the potluck dinner. Potlucks are wonderful because a large group of people can eat very well without the burden of the meal being on any one person. Everyone brings what they can and everyone eats well. The problem with the Corinthian church was the meal in which they gathered together to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Because of the manner in which they were acting at these meals, Paul says when they gather **it is not to eat the Lord's Supper**. The Corinthians were eating in an unworthy manner because when they gathered **each one eats his own supper. So one person is hungry while another gets drunk!** Like most churches today, the Corinthian church was made up of people from all walks of life. From the wealthiest to the poorest, they gathered to worship the Lord. Unfortunately, when they gathered for meals, the wealthy would bring and eat their own meals instead of sharing with others. This would leave some in the church to go hungry while others would get drunk. Using our potluck analogy, it's like someone bringing the fried chicken and macaroni and cheese but then eating it all by

themselves. Paul, in saying don't you have homes in which to eat and drink, had no problem with the members enjoying their meals in their own homes. It is when they wouldn't share in the church that offended Paul.

HOW WOULD THIS SCENARIO BRING CONFLICT IN OUR CHURCHES TODAY?

By not sharing their meals, the wealthiest members not only kept others from eating but also **humiliated those who have nothing**. In the previous chapter Paul taught on putting the needs of others before the needs of the self. This was an example of what he had been teaching against. The poorer of the church who did not have the means by which to bring their own meals would be humiliated as they sat and watched others have their fill of food and wine. Whether the wealthier members meant to humiliate them or not, the church should be a place of building each other up and not tearing each other down.

WHAT ARE WAYS WE CAN ENCOURAGE ONE ANOTHER IN THE CHURCH?

A Worthy Manner

11:23-25- For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: On the night when he was betrayed, the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, 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, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

Paul recalls the teaching on the Lord's supper that he had already passed on to the Corinthians. The disciples had gathered **on the night when Jesus was betrayed** to celebrate the Passover meal. The purpose of the Jewish Passover meal was to remind them of when the Israelites were liberated from their slavery in Egypt. The meal was already meant to be a reminder of God's salvation. When **the Lord Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me,"** he instituted a new meal to be taken as a reminder of our liberation from the slavery of sin through Jesus' death on the cross. Jesus takes the bread and breaks it to share among the disciples. The breaking of bread is necessary to distribute it, but it is also symbolic of his body being broken for us. The imagery of seeing the bread broken into pieces reminds us of the way he suffered and was broken on our behalf.

HOW DOES BEING REMINDED OF JESUS' SUFFERING AFFECT THE WAY WE VIEW SIN?

Paul continues describing the night of the first Lord's Supper by saying **in the same way also he took the cup, after supper, and said, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."** The cup symbolizes the new covenant which is enacted by Jesus' shed blood. The word covenant here is defined as "a divine promise conditioned on obedience, a solemn disposition or appointment of man and God's covenant with men." Jesus' shed blood meant that God had entered into an agreement with man to save them from their sins. The obedience on our part is our faith in that salvation. If we have faith in Christ, we receive the gift of salvation from God. Each time we drink of that cup we are

reminded of God's grace on us that comes through His Son's sacrifice. This is a reminder of our salvation.

WHY IS IMPORTANT THAT WE ARE REMINDED OF OUR SALVATION?

11:26- For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Every time we take the Lord's Supper we **proclaim the Lord's death until He comes**. The Lord's Supper is an important ordinance of the church because it is a reminder of what Jesus went through in order to bring salvation to us. This reminder will be necessary until the day the Lord returns. Why is it necessary we continue? Because we as humans are so quick to forget the works of God. The Old Testament narrative is a roller coaster ride of God's people being saved, following God, forgetting God, and enduring punishment for turning away from Him. Simply read through Judges and see how quickly Israel would turn from God and do whatever seemed right in their own eyes. The Lord's Supper is a means by which we are reminded of our salvation through Christ.

HOW WILL PAUL'S TEACHING AFFECT THE WAY YOU TAKE THE LORD'S SUPPER?

Self Examination

11:27- So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord.

Paul warns that anyone who takes the Lord's Supper **in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord**. Paul's focus on unworthy eating earlier in the chapter is focused on the way in which the Corinthians interacted during the meal. The meal shared by the church was a meal marked by selfishness and greed. It was tainted by the disregard of the needs of others for the sake of self. Jesus' sacrifice was the exact opposite. Jesus gave all of Himself for our benefit. There was nothing selfish in the sacrifice of Christ. The Lord's Supper is meant to be a solemn moment of reflection on the work of Jesus Christ in our lives. Some of the Corinthians were treating it as a party and even an opportunity to drink to excess. They had lost sight of the significance of the meal.

In the church, the Lord's Supper can be taken in an unworthy manner. Most churches take the meal regularly, whether it be quarterly, monthly, or biannually. With such regularity there is the possibility that the Lord's Supper simply becomes part of the routine. This should never be. Every opportunity we have to take the meal, however often, should be viewed as a wonderful chance to be reminded of our greatest blessing: salvation. As we sit, holding the bread or the cup, we must reflect on what they truly mean. We must reflect on how costly each element truly was to our Savior. And we must approach the Lord's Supper with the reverence it deserves. To not do so is to be **guilty of sin against the body and blood of the Lord**.

HAVE YOU TAKEN THE LORD'S SUPPER IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER BEFORE? WHAT ARE WAYS YOU CAN PREVENT YOURSELF FROM TAKING IT IN AN UNWORTHY MANNER AGAIN?

11:28-29- Let a person examine himself; in this way let him eat the bread and drink from the cup. For whoever eats and drinks without recognizing the body, eats and drinks judgement on himself.

In light of his teaching, Paul calls on each person to **examine himself**. When we approach the Lord's table, we must do so with the proper reverence. To examine yourself is to examine how you are viewing the Lord's Supper. Is it just another thing that you do during the service or is it a personal reminder of Jesus' work on the cross? Are you taking the bread and the cup in a way that is proclaiming Jesus' death or are you simply going through the motions? Paul warns that if you approach the Lord's Supper as though it is insignificant, then you eat and drink judgment on yourself. By examining yourself you give yourself the opportunity to see what your motives are and to change them.

11:30-32- This is why many are sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep. If we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged, but when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world.

The Corinthians' flippant manner in which they approached the Lord's Supper had led many to be **sick and ill among you, and many have fallen asleep**. Physical illness had come upon many in the church as a result of their behavior during the Lord's Supper. Not all diseases are caused by our personal sin, but sometimes God does use disease as His judgment. Paul specifically states that because some had taken the bread and the cup without recognizing the body, judgment had come upon them. This judgment came in the form of sickness and even death.

Illness can be God's judgment in our lives. Again, not every illness is brought on by our sin. We live in a fallen world and sickness and death are a part of that. So just because you are sick doesn't mean it's because you sinned. However, that's not to say that every illness is just a result of the fallen world. It very well could be a result of sin. This again is an opportunity to examine yourself and to see what God may be teaching you in your suffering. Have your actions led to your suffering? If so, what can you do to turn from those actions? Paul says that **if we were properly judging ourselves, we would not be judged**. Our sin can result in our illness. If we can see that and turn from those sins, then perhaps we could avoid the consequences that result from that sin.

HAVE YOU EVER EXPERIENCED ILLNESS OR SUFFERING AS A DIRECT RESULT OF SIN? IN WHAT WAYS COULD YOU HAVE AVOIDED THAT SUFFERING?

Paul also teaches that **when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined, so that we may not be condemned with the world**. God's purpose behind His discipline is to keep us from being condemned with the world. When God disciplines us, He does so to keep us from the same fate as the condemned world. His discipline is not mean-spirited but rather intended to grow us closer to Him. Some of the greatest lessons we learn come through our suffering. We learn our true dependence on God and our complete inability to navigate this world without His strength. Like a father's discipline towards his child, God disciplines us out of His love and concern for our lives

WHAT ARE SOME LESSONS YOU HAVE LEARNED THROUGH A TIME OF TRIAL?

11:33-34- Therefore, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, welcome one another. If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you gather together you will not come under judgment. I will give instructions about the other matters whenever I come.

Paul rounds out his argument by returning to the fellowship meal. He calls on the Corinthians to **welcome one another** when they **come together to eat**. Instead of thinking primarily of themselves, they should think of others and look to welcome them no matter their social status. The Corinthian church, like every other church, was made up of many different groups that identify with one another and don't necessarily identify with those outside of their group. Through his letter, Paul has called for the unity of the church. Meal time at the church was an opportunity to exercise that unity. He calls on them to welcome one another, to be hospitable to each other. This can be practiced by us today. The church, no matter the size, can easily fall into individual social groups. We must make the effort to look beyond our groups and to be welcoming to all.

HAVE YOU EVER HAD AN EXPERIENCE IN A CHURCH WHERE YOU HAVE NOT FELT WELCOMED? WHAT COULD THE MEMBERS OF THAT CHURCH DONE IN ORDER TO BE MORE WELCOMING OF YOU?

He also tells the Corinthians that **if anyone is hungry, he should eat at home**. Not everyone arrived to the meals at the same time. Some worked and had to come late. Some didn't work and could come early. Just like meals in our church today, everyone comes at different times. From a practical standpoint, Paul advises the early arrivers to eat at home first if that will help them wait until all have gathered.

Final Thoughts

The Lord's Supper is a time of remembrance. The times we sit with the bread and cup before us are precious moments to reflect on our Savior's work on the cross. We should never take those moments for granted; they should always be special. How do we ensure each of those moments hold the reverence they deserve? Here are a few suggestions in light of today's lesson:

1. Actively prepare for the next time you take the Lord's Supper. Find out when the church is planning to observe the Lord's Supper and begin praying now for that time.
2. Examine yourself now. Don't wait until that moment in the pew to examine yourself. Do it now so that you have the opportunity to change what God calls you to change. This way you can come confidently to the table in a worthy manner.
3. Embrace the corporate nature of the Lord's Supper. We are called to take the Lord's Supper together as the Body of Christ. Thank God for not only your salvation but for that salvation of those around you.

Complete Schedule

DATE	LIFE GROUPS	SERMON
March 4	1 Corinthians 1:4-9 Called: To Be Thankful	1 Corinthians 1:10-17 Divided: The Power of One
March 11	1 Corinthians 2:1-16 Divided: The Power of the Spirit	1 Corinthians 3:1-17 Grow: In Maturity
March 18	1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7 Grow: In Humility	1 Corinthians 4:8-21 Grow: In Submission
March 25	1 Corinthians 5:1-8 Judgment: Church Discipline	1 Corinthians 5:9-6:11 Judgment: Immorality & Lawsuits
April 1	NO SUNDAY SCHOOL	1 Corinthians 6:12-20 Judgment: Yourself
April 8	1 Corinthians 7:1-40 Marriage, Singleness, Divorce	1 Corinthians 8:1-9:18 Freedom: Brings Responsibility
April 15	1 Corinthians 9:19-27 Freedom: Brings Sacrifice	1 Corinthians 10:1-14 Freedom: Brings Reflection
April 22	1 Corinthians 10:15-11:1 Freedom: Brings Concern	1 Corinthians 11:2-19 The Body: Equality
April 29	1 Corinthians 11:20-34 The Body: Remembrance	1 Corinthians 12:1-11 The Body: Diversity
May 6	1 Corinthians 12:12-30 The Body: Unity	1 Corinthians 13:1-13 The Body: Love
May 13	1 Corinthians 14:1-25 The Body: Clarity	1 Corinthians 14:26-40 The Body: Edification
May 20	1 Corinthians 15:1-11 Resurrection: The Facts	1 Corinthians 15:12-34 Resurrection: The Hope
May 27	1 Corinthians 15:35-58 Resurrection: The Future	1 Corinthians 16:1-24 One God, One Gospel, One Glory