

1 Corinthians – Section 4

A Study in 1 Corinthians 8 weeks

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Dr Robert E. Self 2017

This was originally an expository series of sermons given in the church where I was serving as Pastor. A few years later, they were edited to be used as a Bible Study. There are a few things I feel I should share with you before using this material:

First: I had no intent of sharing or publishing this material until encouraged to do so by some friends. While I did consult several commentaries as I was preparing the original sermon series, I did not make notes of the references used in the messages. There was not in the beginning, nor is there now, any intent to plagiarize. Should you see anything you feel is the original thought of another, I ask for your grace and mercy.

Second: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I tend to spell certain words phonetically for the purpose of emphasis. When transforming these notes from sermon notes to teaching notes, I felt inclined to leave a number of these phonetic spellings. They help me to make emphasis in the lesson at particular points.

Third: In my notes for teaching (or preaching), I make little effort to conform to rules of grammar. One example is that I often use a hyphen (-) to indicate a point where I may want to pause slightly and to keep certain thoughts connected as I speak. Another example is that I will use local colloquialisms to make points in the message.

Please accept that these notes are not an academic work. But I do hope they will help the preacher or teacher to be able to more quickly prepare their own sermon or teaching.

How far can a Christian go - in participating in the activities of the world? This question has nagged just about every generation since the Church was established by our Lord.

Another topic that has been tackled in every generation - is what about the unity of the Believers. Ephesians 4:4 declares plainly that there is "one body." And yet many people - even Christians - don't seem to understand what this really means.

Far too many of us see Christians divided into many groups - and then with perhaps the best of intentions - we declare "We must bring all the Christians together." Then we usually go about this task with the typical human way of doing things - we want to organize "something."

It is important for us to realize - that organization IS NOT the same thing as a "living organism." I thank God that He has made it clear - there is just "one body". This "one body" has existed - since Jesus established the church. And this "one body" still exist today. One of the most important things for us to grasp - is the necessity for Christians to live in accordance with this simple truth that there is "one body."

The Corinthian church was confronted daily with the problem of idolatry. Some of the members of the church in Corinth - actually attended social banquets that were being held in the temples of idols.

Were the members of the Corinthian church right to attend these social functions? Were they being too loose with their Christian liberty and freedom?

Christian Liberty has already been dealt with at length in the portion of the letter we know as chapter 8. The issue is so important that it is addressed again in a straight forward unmistakable way.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 and make notes:

The Greek words translated “flee idolatry” in verse 14 - are words of force and words of a command. Like those spoken by a superior officer - which no one dares to disobey.

Most of us have probably heard at some point in our life - that if you are not worshipping God, - then you are worshipping something of this world; - such as business, sports, knowledge, possessions, power, etc. Most Church people probably wouldn't argue with the idea - that if someone holds something to be more important to them than God, - then they are worshipping an Idol.

An idol can be just about anything or person. Anything we give our life to becomes our idol.

Sometimes when we speak in a commanding way - a person of less maturity can quickly jump to the conclusion that we are angry. They may hear the command as "mean."

It is important that we do not miss the phrase by which Paul referred to the Corinthians when he gave this forceful instruction - He called them "dear friends."

This is not the command of an angry person - but of a person who cares deeply for these Believers. And He knows the great danger they are in by continuing to have a lax attitude toward idolatry.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

If we saw that our dearly loved child - was about to step into something that could harm them - We would say in a commanding voice - "get back" - "step away quickly" - "stop immediately." And our forcefulness of voice and words - would be prompted by our love and concern. Such is the case in this text.

In 1 Samuel 15:23 - king Saul was told - "rebellion is like witchcraft" and "arrogance is like the evil of idolatry"- "because you have rejected the Word of God, He has rejected you." How terrible it becomes for those who reject God and reject His Word. How terrible it becomes for those who do not make sure that their life and actions line up with His will.

To be in a place - or a lifestyle - that is contrary to the will of God - is a dangerous place to be. And certainly to remain there. What it is saying in this passage - it is very important that we "flee" from the danger of staying in this place.

In the earlier part of this chapter - God gives 5 examples of how - His people failed and reaped the consequences- and He said those things were recorded to be examples for us today.

It seems highly unlikely that any sinner can understand this passage we are looking at today. For the sinner has no spiritual knowledge with which to grasp it. Spiritual knowledge only comes to the Believer as the Holy Spirit reveals it to us.

Since the Corinthians prided themselves in having great spiritual understanding - surely they were sensible people. Since you are such sensible people - you are capable of judging for yourselves - that what I am about to say to you is true and right. If you will just hear and consider it.

There are those who have trouble with the text of verse 16 - because the cup is mentioned before the bread. In all the Gospel accounts - and the rest of the New Testament - it is recorded as the bread being shared first - and then the cup. All of our recorded early church history shows that the first century churches - shared the Lord's Supper with the bread first and then the cup.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

The purpose of this text - is not to explain the right way to share the Lord's Supper. The purpose of this text was not to get people to change the order of events at the Lord's Supper. The purpose of this text was not to say that it doesn't matter which element is shared first.

The purpose of this text - is to clear up the "basis" for sharing the Lord's Supper.

Participation with other people - identifies us with their function or their activity. Participation in idolatry - is meaningless worship - and it wastes resources and time. Participation in idolatry condemns a person. Participation in the Lord's Supper identifies us as a Worshiper of the Lord Most High.

There is something inherent in the participation of the Lord's Supper - that makes it completely incompatible with idolatrous activities. There is a bonding relationship - that takes place between the worshipers who share such a meal.

It is a good thing - it is an important thing - for Christians to experience this bonding relationship. But it is a poisoning thing - a deadly thing - for Christians to have this bonding experience with non-Christians.

While our fellowship is with one another - the basis for our fellowship - and the focus of our fellowship - is in Christ, - His death and His resurrection for us - in the sharing of the Lord's Supper - it is to be understood - that He is Here with us. And while we bond with one another - we together bond with Christ.

It is this unique relationship between believers and our Lord - that makes it wholly inappropriate for any other associations to be allowed to enter in. The cup reminds us of his death. The blood speaks of His life that He gave for me.

Many times we mistakenly focus on the "many pieces" - or the "broken bread." Verse 17 makes it clear - the focus is to be on the "one loaf" - or the "one bread." The "one loaf" in it's unbroken condition - speaks of the one body that we all share. There are not "tables" at the Lord's Supper - but one table. There are not "many bodies" - but one body.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

We make a sad error - when we begin to focus on the many pieces - that result when we begin to break - the "one loaf" in order to share it. The focus must remain upon the fact - that while you and I each have a different piece of the bread - that both of our pieces came from - and are a part of - the very same "one loaf." When we each take a piece of the "one loaf" - and eat it - we are expressing to each other - that we are part of His "one body."

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ Jesus - Please don't allow anyone to deceive you. All believers will be together in Heaven. There is no exclusivism here - and there will be none in heaven. There are no elite Christian groups. You may see Christians - as being in different groups - and I guess it would only be natural to see your group - as the best of Christian groups. But God doesn't see us that way. We are either a part of the "one body" - or we are not part of the body at all.

The truth is that the real point of this text - is not the unity of the body of believers - that this meal represents. The real point is the solidarity of the redeemed Community - or the Church - as one body in Christ. That forbids all other similar unions.

It isn't this meal that gives us this unity or solidarity. That is given to us by the death and resurrection of Christ Jesus - it is given to us when we accept His death as being for us as an individual.

What this meal does - is to give us an opportunity to affirm to those around us - that we do in fact have this oneness and unity with the body of Christ. It is much like a man who is going to a place where there will be many women - and he makes it a point to wear his wedding ring for others to see. And IF he is offered the opportunity to join with another - he refuses because he is determined to keep his unity with his wife. A solidarity - as well as a unity.

This is one of the things we should be doing - when we share the Lord's Supper together.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

We cannot share the Lord's Supper with someone who is lost and living in sin. We can't say, "I'll share the communion meal with you - but you let it be to your god and I'll let it be to mine." We can't share the communion meal with a pagan - and say we didn't share any fellowship or bonding by it. Verses 18-22 make it rather clear - that we do bond in such fellowship at the communion meal.

The idols these people worship - are really nothing in themselves. The problem is that there are demons associated with every one of the idols. It was demons who prompted people to establish the idols. These rebellious fallen angels want to seduce us - and to get us to turn from our relationship with the Heavenly Father.

In verse 20 the word "participants" - is the Greek word "*koinonous*" - which means partners or sharers.

I do not want you to be "partners or sharers" with demons. How can we even consider being in fellowship with someone who is being led by a demon - which has a purpose to destroy our relationship with God?

In verse 21 the language becomes that of a commanding and authoritative voice again - "you CANNOT drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons too." These are words of prohibition. It is forbidden - this is not allowed.

Many may think this does not apply – “we don't worship idols.” This is in essence the negative side of the instruction. It is the "thou shall not" portion. But there is a positive side to the instruction. A “thou shall do” portion.

Look back to verse 14 for a moment. An interesting word is used in this verse - that is translated "idolatry." It is the Greek word "*eidololatrias*" - which means both the worship of something other than the true God, - AND a failure to have a right relationship with God.

1 Corinthians - 23 – Unity and Solidarity

In our nation, we probably have a large number of people who honestly ARE NOT worshipping a false god. But, sadly, the majority of these DO NOT have a right relationship with God. Every person who does not have a right relationship with God - is in a state of "*eidololatrias*" - and the passage commands us in an authoritative voice - "flee from that state of existence" - make haste in getting yourself out of the state of "*eidoloatrias*."

Do not simply turn and leisurely walk away from idolatry. Make every effort to get away from idolatry. Let nothing hinder you or slow you down in you efforts to get away from idolatry.

Since the word translated "idolatry" in this text - also means to fail to have a right relationship with God - then in fairness and honesty to the text - the command is for us to - get into a right relationship with God and do it quickly.

Paul also understood the danger these believers were in by failing to have a right relationship with God. Let nothing hinder us or slow us down from getting in a right relationship with God. The whole matter is one of "fleeing" from that which is unclean - and "fleeing" to a right relationship with the Heavenly Father.

Maybe for the majority of us - the message isn't for us to "put down" something – or to stop our worshipful practices of something other than God. But to us the command is for us to get into a right relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Should we allow the immaturity of another Believer - to keep us from doing things the Lord has given us the freedom to do? Should we allow pagans to keep us from doing things the Lord has given us the freedom to do? As long as God has given me the freedom to do something - should it make any difference what others think about me doing it?

This is the basic issue that we will look at this lesson. Whether directly or indirectly - this topic is being addressed on a regular basis in American churches today. And quite frankly, many of us are coming to the wrong conclusion.

Paul has basically finished with the argument over attendance at idol temple meals. Eating sacrificial food at the temples of idols is absolutely to be avoided at all times and under all circumstances. Eating food from the public market place - that mayor may not have been sacrificed to idols is another thing.

The real issue being discussed in this section - is much deeper than simply eating food. The issue being discussed here - is clarifying the difference between essentials and non-essentials.

Essential = something that will affect our salvation.

You know, - will get us into heaven or keep us out.

Non-Essential = something that will not affect our salvation.

You know, - won't get us into heaven or keep us out.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23 and make notes:

The Corinthians had managed to go astray in the Christian lifestyles - because they were placing all their emphasis on the "right" to do what they wanted to do. After all, they had become "free in Christ Jesus" - and "he whom the Lord sets free is free indeed. "

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Paul begins this section by affirming part of what they are saying - certainly you have the right to do just about anything "Everything is permissible" - "BUT Everything IS NOT Beneficial." And "Everything IS NOT Constructive."

As a Believer in Jesus Christ as my Savior – I have the freedom to go and do - what I want to do. And so do you, if you are a Christian.

Here are two questions we should consider before we continue with this message:

- do I really want to do things that are not beneficial and are not constructive?
- who is the object of the "beneficial" and "constructive"?

These things that are not beneficial - who is it that they are not beneficial for? These things that are not constructive - who is it that they do not build up?

As long as WE remain the object of our life - like the Believers in Corinth - then we will say "it is not beneficial for me" - or "it does not build me up." And sadly, some Believers can take the attitude that it's okay - that I don't benefit from this - and it is okay that I don't get built up from this. So they emphasize doing what they want to do - when they want to do it - because they see themselves as the focus - of who is to benefit and who is to be built up.

The next verse brings this misguided idea of Christian "rights" to its knees:

Read 1 Corinthians 10:24 and make notes:

This verse qualifies the object of the "beneficial" and the "constructive" mentioned in verse 23. It is the "other person" who does not benefit. It is the "other person" who is not built up.

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

While we do have the freedom to do just about anything - we need to remain keenly aware of the fact - that there are some things that are not beneficial to those around us - there are some things that do not build up those around us.

No True Christian should ever seek their own good. If we are going to follow the example set for us by our Lord Jesus Christ, - we will always seek the good of others.

The Holy Spirit, through Paul, wanted to convey to the Believers in Corinth - and to every Believer today - that the servant like lifestyle of Jesus - even to the point of death - wasn't simply the actions of a "good and merciful god" - but it was a true and clear example of how every Believer should live OUT life.

When we proclaim our freedom - to do whatever we want to do - whenever we want to do it we have just departed from the Christian lifestyle. At this point – we have embarked on a lifestyle of carnality - which will shortly take us into sinful indulgence and abuse. It will become Abuse Of ourselves and abuse of others.

As Christians, we never have the "freedom" to seek our own good. But as Christians, we have the freedom to do anything that benefits others and builds them up. Do you see the difference in these two concepts of Christians having the freedom to do anything?

Read 1 Corinthians 10:25 and make notes:

This verse states clearly - that it is okay to eat "anything" sold in the public market place. And it says to do so without "raising questions of conscience." Who's conscience is the questions going to be raised within? The Christian who is free to eat anything - or the others who are observing the Christian?

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

The Jews of that day were very concerned with the meat sold in the public market. Much of the meat sold in the market had been sacrificed in the pagan temples before being sold to the meat market.

The Jews held to the idea - that it was acceptable to eat meat if it had not been used in an idol temple. But once it had been used in any fashion within an idol temple - it was to be considered as unclean - as if it were pork.

The normal practice of the Jews in that day - was to carefully investigate where the meat had come from, - who had killed it, - and had it in anyway participated in any activity of any idol temple. If they did not receive clear answers - and could not be assured that this meat had never been in the hands of an idol priest, - then they would not purchase it. Paul is saying, "Don't ask this question."

Read 1 Corinthians 10:26 and make notes:

Everything in the earth is the Lord's. The Holy Spirit connected with Paul's Jewish roots. The Jewish Rabbis taught the reason it was necessary to bless the food at every meal - was "the earth is the Lord's and everything in it." Since everything in the world is the Lord's - when you sit down to eat some of the product of this world - you are eating that which belongs to the Lord. To take that which belongs to the Lord - and fail to bless it and to say thanks - would not only be ungrateful on our part - but would be stealing from God.

Paul departed from his Jewish heritage and what he says here is about as "un-Jewish" as you can be. What Paul is saying in this verse is quite simple. If the meat was okay to eat before it was used in an idol temple - then it was okay to eat after it had been in an idol temple.

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Because the original source of this meat was the Lord. Since it doesn't matter whether it had been in an idol temple or not, - then don't bother asking questions. Just buy the meat, - give thanks to God for the meat, - and eat the meat.

What if we decided sexual sins would become “these things?” You are acceptable as long as you never committed a sexual sin. But if you committed a sexual sin – you are not longer acceptable! The principle shared in an earlier lesson – not that you have done so – but is it a lifestyle.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:27 and make notes:

Here another kind of eating is addressed. Invitations to eat in the home of others - specifically the homes of unbelievers. Some try to say this is talking about invitations to special celebration meals given at the idol temple.

First, the eating at idol temples has already been addressed - and we are told emphatically that this is not acceptable - since the meals there are to honor or worship demons.

Second, if you were at an idol temple, - there would be no "questions" - At the idol temple you know that everything done there is to recognize and honor the demon behind the idol.

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Questions of conscience can only occur - if you are at the home of an unbeliever. Is this meal - just a meal - or is it to honor their demon idol god? Just as with the instruction about eating meat purchased at the public meat market - if you want it, buy it and eat it without asking questions. When you go to the home of an unbeliever, just eat what is set before you without asking questions.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:28-29 and make notes:

Remember, Paul understands and teaches - that as Believers - we have absolute freedom in all things that are non-essential. But our personal freedom in Christ Jesus is not absolute as many try to make it. Our personal freedom in Christ Jesus is ruled by "seeking the good of another."

If a pagan invites you over to eat with them - and you want to go- then go and eat whatever they serve, without asking questions. Unless they specifically state that this meal has been offered to the honor and worship of an idol, - then we are to accept it as just a meal.

The Gentiles of that day were very much aware of the Jewish restrictions regarding food - and especially the prohibition against eating otherwise acceptable meats - after they had been offered in worship of an idol. It was only natural to expect these Christian Believers to have the same or similar standard regarding foods offered to idol.

If a pagan is taking the time to tell you that the meat has been offered to an idol, - this indicates a sensitivity on the part of the pagan - to at least let you know about the meat so that you don't eat it unaware. If the pagan tells you that it has been offered to an idol - then for the sake of the pagan's conscience - don't eat the meat.

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Show the pagan that you still love them and care about them, - that you appreciate their consideration of you and your Faith, - but don't participate in their worship of an idol. Once you know this meal is to honor an idol - the same prohibition applies as to the meal being offered in the idol temple. We cannot participate in anything that honors or worships a demon. But please remember, - our doing so - or our not doing so - is for the purpose of helping the other person.

Read 1 Corinthians 10:30 and make notes:

There are those who interpret this verse along with the last half of verse 29 - as an argument on the part of Paul to justify his eating whatever he wants - wherever he wants - when ever he wants - and refuses to allow anyone to judge him. To interpret this in this manner is totally out of character with the rest of the text. These two questions are not defensive - and they are not declaring that you cant limit me in what I do.

Let me share with you a better way to read these two questions:

"Would you like to know why my freedom should be limited by another person's conscience?" "We know that as long as you thank God for the food, then it should be okay, but would you like to know why I allow someone else to keep me from eating that which I know I am free to eat and would eat with thankfulness?"

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-32 and make notes:

While we recognize our complete freedom in Christ Jesus - we can go and we can eat without being condemned by God for going or for eating. **FIRST** – everything we do – everything we say - and every place we go - should be for the foremost purpose of bringing glory to God. **SECOND** - we should never be the cause of another person stumbling or falling. But instead, we should purposefully be trying to build them up and strengthen them. This guideline isn't just about eating. It is "whatever" we do. It applies to every area of our life.

If everything belongs to the Lord - it isn't just the foods that we eat - but **EVERYTHING**. The gold is the Lord's - The precious gems are the Lord's - Our income is the Lord's - Our houses, cars, appliances, and furniture is the Lord's. Our whole life should be to honor God and to bring Him glory. And this makes it necessary for us to acknowledge His prior ownership of anything and everything we think we have.

How can I be honoring God if I do not give Him Thanks for everything I have? How can I be honoring God if I do not give consideration toward those other persons?

You know, - the other people Jesus suffered and died for! To give offense really isn't talking about hurting the feelings of an unbeliever - it's talking about being an obstacle or becoming a hindrance for them accepting Jesus as their Savior.

Personal Freedom in Christ Jesus **DOES NOT** mean that we can do whatever we wish. Everything we do **MUST** be for the honor and glory of God - For the sake of the gospel cause - For the good of all - And not **JUST ME!**

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Read 1 Corinthians 10:33 and make notes:

When I am with the Jews - I try to be sensitive to their limits - so that I do not cause them to stumble. When I am with the Gentiles - I try to be sensitive to their limits - so that I do not cause them to stumble.

Follow the example that Jesus set forth. He lived his life for the good of others. That's what I am trying to do - so that these others may be saved also.

The Corinthian Believers, - just like many Believers today, - had confused the distinctions between those things that are essential and those that are non-essential. The Corinthian Believers, - just like many Believers today, - had confused the distinctions between "knowledge" and "love"; - and they had confused the distinctions between "rights" and "freedom."

Focusing on "Knowledge" and "rights" leads to pride; - and they are both basically non-Christian because the bottom line of both of these is "selfishness." "Knowledge" and "rights" are all about "Me" getting to do what I want when I want to do it.

Focusing on "Love" and "Freedom" leads to edification; - and they are both basically Christian because the bottom line of both of these is the benefit of someone else - and for Paul this was so "that they may be saved. " "Love" and "Freedom" are all about "Others" getting what they really need and what God wants them to receive.

1 Corinthians - 24- Ruling The Freedom

Every Believer is completely free in matters that are non-essentials. As for as Paul was concerned, - for Christians, - non-essentials included such things as circumcision and observing special days. (Romans 14:5; Colossians 2: 16). Paul did not hold "personal freedom" to be high point, - or the main point, - of Christian Life. For all Christians the true main point of our Christian life is seeking the good of others.

After everything has been said, - what ultimately regulates True Christian conduct - is not the law, - or even "personal rights" as the Corinthians had been arguing for. What rules the Christian life is "freedom" - set in the context of "benefit" to others on one hand, - and bringing glory to God on the other hand.

God wants you and me to be Free - really free. But when the exercise of our Freedom begins to interfere with the ability of another person to get saved - we are outside our freedom. And we are equally outside our freedom when the exercise of our freedom interferes with the freedom and peace of another person.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

It is believed by some - that many of the Christian women in Corinth had taken hold of the teaching we have in Galatians 3 :28 that says, "there is neither male or female" in Christ's kingdom. And they were coming to the public places of worship and praying, prophesying, and ministering with their heads uncovered.

It has been suggested some of them had even gone so far as to cut their hair to look more like the men - so that when they stood to minister that they wouldn't look like a female. It has also been suggested perhaps some of them were even trying to dress more like men and less like women.

Whatever had actually taken place - one thing was sure - the church was becoming divided over their actions - and many people were being offended. The church was spending a great deal of time discussing, arguing, and debating this issue instead of feeding upon the Word of God - Instead of building one another up – encouraging one another - instead of reaching the lost with the message of the Gospel of life and salvation in Jesus Christ.

Here again, - in this text, - Paul takes one of the simple details of everyday life - and uses it as an example and analogy. To teach one of the important Christian guidelines and principles by which we are to live our Christ like life.

CLUE #1:

The real issue IS NOT really about hair - Or hats, or shawls, or veils!

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

“Follow” is translated from “*ginomai*” {ghin'-om-ahee} –
which means become, begin to be
“Example is translated from “*mimetes*” {mim-ay-tace'} –
which means an imitator

You are to become an imitator of Christ - just like I have become an imitator of Christ.
You are to begin to be an imitator of Christ - as I have become an imitator of Christ.

This sets the tone (or attitude) for the rest of this text. This gives us the purpose for what is about to be shared. If the way we interpret the following verses does not help us to "become or begin to be" - Imitators of Christ - then we have probably misinterpreted the text!

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-3 and make notes:

Many have interpreted - and have taught - this passage from the stand point of establishing hierarchy. This passage DOES NOT establish one person as being superior to another. And one person being subordinate to another.

The Holy Spirit, speaking through Paul, is making a shift from the teaching on individual freedom - to teaching on relational responsibility. There is a female/male relationship - There is a man/Christ relationship - There is a Christ/God relationship.

Clue #2:

When things or people are in a relationship - what one does or experiences, affects the other part of the relationship.

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

“Realize” is translated from “*eido*” {i'-do} –
which means to understand, to perceive with any of the senses,
to be knowledgeable of

"Now" then - there is something that I want you to understand - something I want you to know - something I want you to perceive.

“Head” is translated from “*kephale*” {kef-al-ay'} –
which means physical head of men or animals,
the supreme or prominent, the source of

Instead of interpreting "head" in this text as referring to "supreme, or prominent," - consider - "head" as being used in the sense of "source of." We will see evidence toward this view a few verses later.

The concern in this passage is not about who has authority "over" whom. Instead, this passage is about the unique relationships that are predicated on one being the source of another's existence. John 1: 3 tells us that through Christ all things were made - nothing that has been made was made without him. This means that Christ is "the source" of every and all persons.

In the creation account - specifically Genesis chapter 2 - we are told while God formed man out of the physical earth. The woman was formed out of the substance of the man. This means "man" is the source of the woman.

Later in verse 12 of this chapter it is stated clearly- "Everything comes from God." God is the source of Christ.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:4 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

“Covered” is translated from “*kata*” {kat-ah'} –
which means down from, along

This verse is clearly referring to public assemblies. While we may pray in private - this speaks of praying AND Prophesying. Ministering in the area of prophesy is done in the presence of others.

Consider this before continuing: The custom of the Jews was to remove their shoes when in the presence of God - Ministering, prophesying, etc. But it was also their custom to cover their head.

This verse just said a man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors Christ. And yet, it was the customary practice of the Jews to cover their head when praying or ministering. It was the Greek custom for the men not to have a cover on their head.

Here again, we see Paul going away from his Jewish roots. It appears he is taking the position of the Greeks in regards to a man not covering his head when he prays or ministers.

It is at least noteworthy at this point - the Jewish men also covered their head when they were mourning. So a covered head on a male Jew could indicate an attitude of heart which is in a state of mourning instead of rejoicing and celebration.

What does it mean regarding the "head" to be "down from or along?" Was it referring to covering the head in a time of mourning - to pray or prophesy with the appearance of mourning?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:5-6 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

Prays with her head “not down from” - or “not along.”

Is the disgrace - upon the husband - or upon man in general? What about the woman who is not married?

What does it mean to "be covered?" Is this a literal physical covering? Is this a veil or shawl? Is this the hair falling loosely down around the head and shoulders?

Verse 15 states "long hair" is given to a woman to be her glory - and is a good thing. Could the not displaying of a "good thing" bring shame and disgrace upon her head?

Further more, verse 15 says, "let her be covered" - referring to the long hair given to her. Then put the hair up, would be the opposite of being covered by the hair. And yet, most groups who interpret this as “long hair” - “put up” their hair instead of it falling loosely.

There are many pieces of ancient pottery that depict women in public without their head being covered. So it WAS NOT the Corinthian Greek customary practice for the women to go around at all times with their heads covered - like some of the middle eastern countries require even today.

It was the Greek custom when women would come into a public gathering, they would cover their head - thus their face. This was just considered to be the proper thing to do when a lot of men and women would be in close proximity to one another. For a woman to stand and speak in a public assembly without her head being covered was a violation of the customary practices of that national society.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:7 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

This does not say that a woman should cover her head. Many who teach from this text say that is what is implied by this verse. We need to be careful about reading into Scriptures what we think it should have said.

Let's not read more than it says. It says man is the "image and glory" of God. It says woman is the "glory" of man. Genesis 1, tells us that both the male and the female were made in the image of God. So don't read into this verse that woman IS NOT in the image of God.

This verse simply restates the fact that woman is the glory of man. Verses 4,5, & 6 are simply stating the customary practices of that Corinthian Greek culture. Verse 7 begins the basis of the relationship attitude that is going to be set forth.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:8 and make notes:

“From” is translated from “*ek*” -
which means out of, from, by, away from

Before we join with those who use this verse along with verse 9 to teach the subordination of women to men - let us acknowledge that V11-12 set limits on these two verses. Man, by himself, is not complete. Woman, by herself is not complete.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:9 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

“Created” is translated from “*ktizo*” {ktid'-zo} –
which means to make habitable, to populate, to form, or shape

“For” is translated from “*dia*” {dee-ah'} –
which means through, by means of, by reason of, on account of

This verse does not give authority for the man to have dominion over the woman. Or for man to exercise authority over the woman. Refer back to the Creation account. No animal was a suitable helper for the man. The only suitable helper for man was a helper formed from his substance and uniquely suited to be his "glory."

Read 1 Corinthians 11:10 and make notes:

For this “reason” is translated from “*dia*” - same as the “for” that was used above. "on account of this" - "this is the reason why"

“Ought” is translated from “*opheilo*” {of-i'-lo} –
which means to owe, be in debt, goodwill due

The woman should consider that she has a debt of goodwill due - but this is no more so than the debt of goodwill owed by the male.

“Have” is translated from “*echo*” {ekh'-o} –
which means to have, to hold, to hold one's self to something

“Authority” is translated from “*exousia*” {ex-oo-see-ah} –
which means power of choice, liberty of doing as one pleases

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

For those who might take the first part of this statement - to teach women were created just for the purpose and pleasure of the man - the Holy Spirit prompted Paul to write the second part of this statement - "sign of authority" - evidence of authority.

The woman is expected to hold onto something that gives evidence of her power of choice - gives evidence of her liberty to choose.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:11 and make notes:

"Independent" is translated from "*choris*" {kho-rece'} –
which means separate, apart

While the woman should "hold onto something that gives evidence of her power to choose" - Women - Don't see yourselves as independent of man! But, Men - Don't see yourselves as independent of woman!

Read 1 Corinthians 11:12 and make notes:

"From" is translated from "*ek*" {ek} – same as used above.

To make sure that we don't begin to demote women - the case is made to show that men and women are equal in the Lord and mutually dependent. God began a cycle that continues to this day: Woman Came From man - Man is Born Of woman.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:13 and make notes:

"You decide" - is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:14 and make notes:

“Long hair” is translated from “*komao*” {kom-ah'-o} –
which means to let the hair grow, have long hair

This verse requires great care. If we interpret this verse to be saying Paul taught men are to have short hair and women are to have long hair - we are going to run into problems. If this verse is saying that "nature" teaches it is a shame and disgrace for man to have long hair - then what do we do with those who have taken a Nazarite vow?

Consider the Divine strength with which Sampson was endowed when his hair was long. And how the Divine strength was taken from him when he allowed his hair to be cut. What part of "nature" teaches that men are to have short hair and women are to have long hair? Doesn't a male's hair grow just as long as a female's hair? Unless we cut it?

According to drawings from that era of time - apparently it was customary for men to cut their hair short. Not just Christian men, men in society in general. But in times before this and in other cultures of that day, - it was the custom for men to have longer hair. The "nature" that is being referred to in this text is most likely the "natural contemporary culture.”

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

Verse 14 is another acknowledgment of the customary practices of that society. In that society, - just being natural - out in public, there is a distinction between who is a man and who is a woman - by the men wearing short hair and the women having long hair.

It was being pointed out that it was their "natural" practice of distinguishing between male and female. Let's not lose that distinction when we come together to worship, pray, and prophesy. Not in hair length or style - Not in the style of clothes - Not in actions - Not in any way should we lose the distinctions between - males and females.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:15 and make notes:

Long hair (1) is translated from “*komaō*” {kom-ah'-o} -
to let the hair grow, have long hair long hair
(2) is translated from “*kome*” {kom'-ay} -
head of hair

“Covering” is translated from “*peribolaion*” {per-ib-ol'-ah-yon} -
a covering thrown around, a wrapper

What is dishonor for one - is glory to the other. So, for "glory" to be the opposite of "dishonor" we may need to make sure we are using the same definition.

“Glory” is translated from “*doxa*” {dox'-ah} -
opinion, judgment, splendor, most exalted state

Long hair does not give the woman an exalted position (glory). In that society - it did give a judgment by others that this person is a female. And it gave the "opinion" that this person is a female.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:16 and make notes:

“Contentious” is translated from “*philoneikos*” {fil-on'-i-kos} -
fond of strife, contentious

“Churches” is translated from “*ekklesia*” {ek-klay-see'-ah} -
a gathering of citizens called out from their homes
into some public place,

Something is missing from the conclusion of this discussion - that is present in most of Paul's teachings of specific areas. There is no definitive instruction - no commandment - no directive as to what The Lord issued on this subject. In fact, Paul concludes this section of the letter by saying "this issue is not important enough to fight over" - " If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice-- nor do the churches of God."

Not only do I, - Paul, - not have any practice concerning the requirements of the length of hair - but none of the other Apostles have any practice concerning hair. And none of the other churches have any practice concerning hair. If you Believers in Corinth want to make such rules, - then you will do so all by yourself.

Reflect on verse 13 for a moment. This is a non-essential issue. I am not going to make a specific directive concerning this issue - other than you should not allow it to become a dividing issue. You just decide among yourselves what is right for you in your society concerning this issue.

What does all this say to us today?

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

Christians should live as individuals - AND as part of the corporate body of Christ - and as part of the community.

Christian Men should conduct themselves as Men - but men who recognize that we owe our very existence to Christ. Whatever we do - in all things as we live our life - we reflect either honor or dishonor upon Christ.

Men - do the things we do in public honor Christ?

Men - do the words we use in public honor Christ?

Men - does the way we conduct our business honor Christ?

Christian Women should conduct themselves as Women- but women who conduct themselves with dignity and do nothing to bring dishonor upon themselves. The way women conduct themselves in living their life reflects either honor or dishonor upon mankind in general. The whole society is judged by the lifestyles of the women in that society.

Women - do the things you do in public say that mankind is honorable - or a bunch of reprobates?

Women - do the words you use in public speak highly of mankind - or do they indicate we are an immoral lot?

Women - does the clothing you wear in public indicate we are a people of honor and dignity -

or that we are a dishonorable people with no class, or dignity?

Women - what do you advertise when you are in public?

Christians are to treat each other with mutual respect - regardless of male or female gender. Christians should remember that God made a distinction in the sexes - but both are in the image of God. If it pleased God to distinguish between the sexes while maintaining His image - let us not blur that distinction.

Whatever we do - in whatever way we conduct ourselves in the male/female relationships - reflects either honor or dishonor upon God.

1 Corinthians - 25- Customary Practices

Christians - do we honor God in the attitudes we hold toward those of the opposite sex?
Christians - do we treat others as though they are less prominent in the Kingdom than we are? Christians - do we honor God by treating His other children with the respect and honor

that He gives them?

Christians - as a representative of God in this community:

Do we display an attitude that God is worthy of honor

Or do we display contempt and disregard for His Love, Mercy, and Grace?

Let us not fight over non-essential issues! It's okay to follow customary practices according to our society - On non-essential issues.

Let's remember that everything we do - the way we live our lives - does impact and affect the others who are in relationship with us. This includes our fellow man - Our Savior - And our God!

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Have you ever known a church that goes out of their way to attract "certain" people in the community to become members - while doing everything short of discouraging certain other people from becoming a member? Have you noticed in some churches there are several levels of membership – and privileges? Maybe not in writing but in practice?

The text today is just usually used to teach on the Lord's Supper. And it is a fine text to include on such a teaching. But there is a bigger picture, - a deeper message, - that is very important for the Church to hear. I believe God wants us to be familiar with it - so that we can be the Church He wants us to be in our community.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22 and make notes:

When you come together - it is not to edify one another. It is not to remember the Lord until he returns. It's not that some belong to a private club outside the church. It's not that some people invite just certain people over to their house for supper.

The problem wasn't even that the Corinthians were forsaking the assembling of themselves together. When you come together, - you are doing more harm than you are good.

The problem is they are coming together "as a church" - and are not acting at all like the church - or body of Christ - that Jesus came and gave His life to establish. They are failing in just about every way - to even look like the people of God.

The Corinthian Believers were not simply having a small piece of bread and small cup of wine or juice. They were having a full fledged meal - some were calling it a "love feast" - and saying they were having the Lord's Supper.

While most churches in this country don't try to have a full fledged meal - when observing the Lord's Supper - we still are prone to commit the same 4 abuses that the Corinthian Believers were committing.

#1 Divisions and Cliques corrupt and pollute the Lord's Supper

The very existence of a clique or faction - is a direct violation - of the unity and solidarity we are supposed to be testifying to having by sharing the Lord's Supper.

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10; 1 Peter 3:8 and make notes:

When we have divisions and/or cliques within a local church - you can be sure there is pain, anger, rumor, gossip, pride, selfishness, and misunderstandings in that same local church.

A note worth taking - divisions and cliques don't catch God off guard - or by surprise. In fact, it turns out that when these develop, - God uses them to help the genuine and true Believer to stand out from the crowd - even more than otherwise they would.

People who are part of a clique or who take part in a division within the church - cause the love and truth of the genuine mature Believer - to shine brightly in the otherwise dark atmosphere of division. The genuine believer will not take part in a division or become part of a clique. The genuine believer will stand firm on the importance of - and the absolute necessity for - us to come together in unity and oneness.

The only division that is proper in the Church - is the division between Believers and Non- Believers. And this isn't a division based upon snobbery or pride, - but a division of lifestyles and moral standards.

#2 Deception corrupts the Lord's Supper.

When these people came together - and called it the Lord's Supper, - the only one they were fooling was themselves. If they actually thought they were observing the Lord's Supper - then they had managed to deceive themselves.

It is completely impossible to participate in a division or clique within the church - and bring honor and glory to the Lord. So much for remembering Him until He returns.

#3 Selfishness and the neglect of others corrupts the Lord's Supper.

When the early church would come together to share what they called a "love feast" - everyone brought as much as they could - and it was shared with everyone. All that they brought – was considered to belong to the church – not an individual or a family!

When they did this, everyone, - including the poor and the slaves - would be able to have plenty to eat. Their idea was a good one - they would have fellowship around a meal where everyone shared equally:

Rich and Poor

Free and Slave

Jew and Gentile

Educated and Uneducated

But this wasn't what was happening with the Corinthian Believers. They were not sharing fellowship - they were getting together only with those in their "group." They were eating the food and drinking the drinks that they brought - and they were not sharing what they brought with anyone else.

While some were being neglected with little or nothing to eat - others were eating and drinking all they could hold. There simply wasn't any Christ like fellowship - or love - being shared at their "eating meetings.

And while they were at some point during this time eating the bread and drinking from the cup and calling it "The Lord's Supper" - they were in no way celebrating the Lord's Supper.

You can put the emphasis on the "each one" (NIV) - "everyone" (KJV) – and see the intense individualism that was being stressed among those believers. You can put the emphasis on the "goes ahead" (NIV) - "before" (KJV) - and see those who were well off in material things as eating before those who were poor.

I believe the proper emphasis should be placed on the "one's own" (KJV). This gives the picture of each family eating only what they brought themselves. Unlike the "love feasts" being shared by other local churches - the Corinthians were not sharing.

Those with very little - were eating their meager supper – while they watched those with plenty gorge themselves.

#4 Shaming the Poor corrupts the Lord's Supper.

There was the abuse of the Sanctity of the Church as the *Eklesia* - or as the "called out people of Christ." Just look at these questions - that answer themselves - and they surely bring a certain amount of conviction to the hearts of the Believers in Corinth:

Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Are you not abusing the Church?
Are you not shaming the poor through your divisions, cliques, selfishness, and hoarding?

Some like to use this text to teach that those who "have" - should eat the same as those who "have not." Others like to use this text to teach that those who "have not" - should eat the same as those who "have."

Either of these teaching falls terribly short of the standard given to us as The Church. It isn't a matter of the "haves" dressing down - or lowering the quality or quantity of the food - to that of the "have nots." And it isn't a matter of the "have nots" dressing up - and raising the quality or quantity of the food to that of the "haves."

1 Corinthians - 26- Church Equity

The real message here - is that we should have NO CLASS DISTINCTIONS in the Church. And especially when we come to the Lord's Table to share in the meal that is supposed to depict what he has done for us - and that we are truly One Body in The Lord Jesus Christ.

No issue is made regarding the quality or quantity of the food presented at this Lord's Table. It is wholly and completely about coming to this Table as One Body - no divisions, no cliques, and no distinctions.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-34 and make notes:

Paul reminds them - that he had passed on to them - exactly and everything - that Jesus had shared with him concerning the Lord's Supper. They were basically without any excuse for allowing the observance of the Lord's Supper to have become so polluted and corrupted.

These meals the Corinthian Believers were having - were not truly the Lord's Supper, - because they in no way reflected or proclaimed the meaning that meal has.

Jesus had said you are remembering me when you share this meal. This is asking us to do something more than simply recall the fact that he died on the cross for us. He means for us to actively stir up our mind to the magnitude of what Christ really did for ME - and to meditate upon the person of Jesus Christ - and the example of lifestyle he set out for ME to follow.

1 Corinthians - 26- Church Equity

The purpose of the Lord's Supper is to proclaim, - to declare, to announce, to depict - to all those who are around us - both what Jesus has done for us - and our future redemption - when we shall be conformed more fully into His image of perfection in Love.

Read Philippians 3:20-21 and make notes:

There are severe consequences for participating in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy attitude or with an unworthy heart. What does it mean to partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner? Just look at the 4 abuses the Corinthian Believers were being chastised for:

- #1 Divisions and Cliques
- #2 Deception
- #3 Selfishness
- #4 Shaming the Poor

This is not an all inclusive list of ways in which we could be unworthy. But this is a clear list of common abuses that are in the Church Today - just like they were in the church at Corinth.

To partake of the Lord's Supper with unconfessed sin in our life is a very dangerous thing. This makes us guilty of insulting Christ - Offending Christ - Trampling His wonderful gift underfoot as if they were trash.

1 Corinthians - 26- Church Equity

Read Hebrews 10:29; 2 Corinthians 13:5 and make notes:

When we refuse to examine our own heart - we condemn ourselves. To partake of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy attitude – removes the protection of the Lord from our lives. Just look at what had come upon the Corinthian Believers - because of their unworthy attitude and heart:

Many of them had become weak

Many of them had become sick

And some of them had even died a premature death

There are 4 major points we need to take home from this text - and put into action in our everyday lives:

First, we must approach The Lord's Supper having judged ourselves.

Second, we must approach the Lord's Supper having confessed and repented.

Third, we must approach the Lord's Supper in an attitude of serving our fellow man.

Fourth, we must approach the Lord's Supper in a commitment to live in such a way as not to bring condemnation upon myself.

It is a serious mistake to apply this to only to the day - or the service - where we observe or participate in the Lord's Supper. The proper attitude and heart with which to approach the Lord's Supper - can't be achieved in a few minutes before you actually approach the Table. It takes a lifestyle of continuous confession to God. It takes a lifestyle that is in continuous repentance to God. It takes a lifestyle that is in continuous praise of His Mercy, Grace, and Work.

1 Corinthians - 26- Church Equity

The real problem in the Corinthian Church - wasn't just that they were doing the Lord's Supper wrong. The real problem was - they were failing to love their neighbor as themselves.

If we are going to be the local Church God wants us to be - If you and I are going to be the Christian that God wants us to be - we will treat everyone as though they are equally important - Equally valuable - Because we all are - in the eyes of the Lord God Most High.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

Corinth was on a North-South highway between Southern Peolponesus and Greece. Ancient Corinth became the greatest commercial center of Greece.

In 146 B.C. - the Romans destroyed the city. Then in 46 B.C. - Julius Caesar rebuilt the city of Corinth. He even rebuilt the temple of Aphrodite - Goddess of love and fertility. The practices of this goddess dominated the social, commercial, and religious activities of Corinth.

Paul came to Corinth approx 52 A.D. - and spent about a year and half teaching and preaching to the people in and around Corinth. The practices of this goddess worship - fostered immorality among both the citizens and the travelers who passed through the area.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-3 and make notes:

The Corinthian church was facing several problems that were on the verge of tearing the church apart. One of the most serious issues - centered around the issue of spiritual gifts. No Gift, no ability, from God - should ever be used to cause division or controversy! But God's Gifts were being used and abused in the Corinthian church in such a ways as to tear the church apart.

Only when the Gifts are present in the atmosphere of ignorance - will they be used to cause division and controversy. So, "Don't be ignorant concerning Spiritual Gifts."

Through the prophet Joel (2:28-29), - God told us that He would send His Spirit to earth and Gift His people in a special way. Jesus Christ promised and even discussed the Holy Spirit with His followers. Jesus told them who the Holy Spirit is. Jesus told them what the work of the Holy Spirit would be. Jesus told them of the Special Signs and protection that would accompany the Holy Spirit. Read Acts 1:5; and Acts 1:8.

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

The coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost - was such a phenomenal experience - that it launched the greatest movement the Christian church has ever experienced. And when you and I receive the Holy Spirit as an individual - that will launch the greatest movement that we will experience as a Christian.

There are 4 dangers concerning Spiritual Gifts. All four are mentioned here in the first 3 verses of chapter 12 of 1 Corinthians:

DANGER #1 - The danger of being ignorant about Spiritual Gifts!

There are 3 ways we can be ignorant about Spiritual Gifts:

- ignorant that there is such a thing as Spiritual Gifts
- ignorant as to what Spiritual Gift God has given
- ignorant as to how to use our Spiritual Gift

Read 1 Corinthians 12:4 and make notes:

There are quite a few other Scriptures that make it very clear - there certainly are "Spiritual Gifts." Most every Christian believes and or knows this. We are more likely to fall into one of the second 2 areas of ignorance concerning Spiritual Gifts.

What is my Spiritual Gift? This is a very common situation among Believers - saved people. They know they are God's Child - they know or at least believe they are baptized and have received the Holy Spirit - but they are uncertain as to what Gift God has given to them. Or if He has given them a Gift yet.

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

If you do not know - you don't need to be ashamed or embarrassed. But you do need to find out. Ignorance IS NOT a shameful thing! Stupidity IS! Ignorance is temporary - it can be fixed. Stupidity is forever. Ignorance is simply “not knowing.” Stupidity is “unwilling to learn.”

As long as we remain ignorant as to what our Spiritual Gift is: First - we will NOT be functioning in that area - the body of Christ will suffer. Secondly - the devil will continue to be victorious in areas of our life. Satan flourishes in ignorance Satan will take advantage of people who are ignorant.

If your ignorance is in the area of not knowing how to use your Spiritual Gift - again, you don't need to feel ashamed or embarrassed. Just don't stay in that state of ignorance. Get with someone who is using that Gift - and walk with them, minister with them - practice - practice – practice.

One of the best solutions to ignorance is to study.

Read 2 Timothy 2:15 and make notes:

Someone who has the talent and desire to become an auto mechanic - won't get any better in the area of being a mechanic - by hanging around with carpenters or farmers. Someone who has the talent and desire to become a seamstress - won't get any better at sewing by hanging around with bakers and cosmetologist.

If you want to learn how to use your Gift properly and effectively:

FIRST - study God's Word concerning that gift and ministry area.

SECOND - minister along side someone who is ministering in that area - properly and in a mature manner.

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

DANGER #2 - The danger of being carried away to false worship!

The believers in Corinth had been Gentiles - they were now Christians. They had worshiped idols - they now worship God. They had been led by some force - they now are being led by God's Power.

Many religions of that day - and today - claim to have a "special force" leading them. They have trances - ecstatic utterances, prophecy of future events. They claim to know secret things. Many of the believers came from pagan backgrounds - and brought all of these practices with them; "if you want the others to accept you" - "you must convulse - stammer - scream - run - jump - or prophesy."

Many would counterfeit these practices with the idea that they are activating worship. Unfortunately that is still happening today. Many Believers are being told today - that if you want to see God move - or if you want to feel His presence - then you must "do these things."

Listen dear friends - we have NEVER been instructed by God's Word to follow the Signs and Wonders. The Signs and Wonders are to follow us - The Believers!

When they go about ministering – and they don't see the signs and wonders – they begin to try and make them seem to appear. They counterfeit the works and moving of God.

Read John 4:24 and make notes:

Brothers and Sisters - we are not worshiping in truth - when we are counterfeiting the actions of God. Let's worship God in Truth - Let's worship God in Our Spirit - and let God bring about the actions - Let God direct the worship.

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

DANGER #3 - The danger of speaking false messages!

Every Believer needs to be very careful - that everything we proclaim - be of God and not of ourselves. The World is full of false prophets; read John 8:32.

As we, - or the people around us - hear the truth, - people will become free. But the reverse is also true. When we hear the Un-Truth - that which is false - it takes away our freedom - and enslaves us.

Do not be a Believer who speaks false messages. Do not sit under the teaching of one who speaks false messages. The World needs to hear the truth - concerning Small Things as well as the big things. Read 1 John 4:1 & 2 Peter 2:1.

DANGER #4 - The danger of false profession!

There is great danger of speaking the truth, but apart from the Holy Spirit. There are so many people today – who Counterfeit God's Spirit and profess to know and proclaim the truth - and yet are not led by the Holy Spirit! How many teach and preach - And yet they are only mouthing the truth? No Spiritual truth can ever be used effectively - apart from the leadership of the Holy Spirit! Read 1 Corinthians 2:12-14.

When we share the truths of God's Word - it must be done by the Leading of the Holy Spirit.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:14 and make notes:

To call Jesus "Lord" - is to acknowledge His deity - to acknowledge that He is God. To please God, we must acknowledge Jesus as Lord – in our hear - and not Just With Our Mouth!

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

No one is going to acknowledge Jesus is Lord from their heart - unless they are prompted and led by the Holy Spirit.

Read Matthew 7:21 and make notes:

Too often - envy and jealousy are the reason - people begin to counterfeit the Gifts. From the earliest days of the Church - this has been a problem to deal with. God does not want us ignorant about Spiritual Gifts:

Spiritual Gifts do exist

They are From God

They are Of God

They are For Today

They are For Every Believer

We are not talking about your natural talents - or you trained and learned expertise. We are talking about Your Divine Gift.

Read Ephesians 4:11-13 & 1 Corinthians 12:7-11 and make notes:

We have been given Spiritual Gifts. Every Believer can receive them - so that we can prepare each other for service to Christ – so that we can reach unity in the Faith – so that we can become mature and receive the full measure of Christ

1 Corinthians - 27- Dangers Concerning Gifts

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

We are going to look at a passage in this lesson - that is most likely a familiar passage for most of us. I am sure the majority of us have heard several sermons and teachings on this text from First Corinthians. I am also fairly sure that the majority of teaching and preaching you have heard - has placed the emphasis on something different than the original teaching had in mind. It is most likely that the teaching you have heard from this text has used this particular portion of Scripture to emphasize the importance of Believers being One Body. This has already been taught in this letter.

Being "One Body" IS NOT the emphasis of this particular text. The original teacher of this text - The Holy Spirit - and Paul, who first shared it with other Believers - had a different emphasis and this is what God wants us to know - as we prepare to be what He desires for us to be in our community.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12

This verse is intended to explain the reason or point that has just been made. The explanation uses the imagery of the Church being the Body of Christ. This imagery was a common one in the ancient Church - and probably was well known among the Believers in Corinth.

Back in 10:17, the point was made that the many are one body - this point becoming the basis for the "many of them" to eat the "one loaf." Now in the present text - this concept is referred to not as the main point of the "teaching" - but as a presupposition - this is simply the concept that we all believe and accept to be true.

The fact that the many are one body is not what is being argued "for" in this text. This fact is what is being argued "from" in this text. So, verse 12 is basically restating the accepted analogy that the many parts make up one body.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:13-14 and make notes:

This verse is a basic explanation or elaboration of the presupposition in Verse 12. Notice that it begins with "for." What makes the Corinthian Believers "one" - is their common experience of the Holy Spirit. It isn't that each and every one of them becomes a duplicate of one another - it isn't "uniformity" that makes the Believers "one" - it is the common experience in the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is what essentially distinguishes the True Believer from all the many Counterfeit Believers. And from Non-Believers for that matter.

There have been many fine teachings and preaching that have used this text as a reference when trying to teach "how" we become Believers. This IS NOT what was being taught here in the original application! Instead of teaching "how" we become Believers - what is being taught is "how" we become "One."

We become "one" by being baptized in the "One Spirit." We become "one" by drinking the "One Spirit."

While there are many opinions among the different groups as to what exactly is meant by "being baptized in the Spirit" - it doesn't change the basic message - that being "baptized in the One Spirit" - is the thing that makes us all "One."

It is also important for me to say at this point - it isn't "baptism" that makes us one - it is the "one Spirit" that makes us one.

Being baptized in water - or any other medium - does not make us one - so it isn't the baptism that make us one. It is being baptized in the One Spirit that makes us one - it is the One Spirit.

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Verse 14 is like V13 - being an explanation or elaboration. It begins with "now." This is to remind the Corinthian Believers - just because they are now "one body" - this doesn't mean they all become exactly the same thing. They are reminded to be "one body" doesn't mean "uniformity" for each part.

The body is not "one part" - but the body is many parts working in harmony together. In generation after generation - the church has struggled against the misconception - that if we are to be "one body" - then each and every one of us must become this body. So, this means that each and every one of us must become the same thing.

This teaching is a perversion of what was originally taught. Satan has made sure that every generation of the Church has heard this perverted teaching. And when God's people begin to accept this perverted teaching;
the church loses power, the church loses ability.
and the church becomes increasingly non-effective.

This is not "just" a problem the Church of old had to deal with. This is a problem the modern day Church is having to contend with. Think about this:
How often does a minister or ministry - try to convince everyone they come into contact with - that if you really want to please God - if you really want to be in a right relationship with God - then you will do exactly what they do - they way the do it. In effect - you will become just like them.

Some missionary will come along and when they leave - everyone who doesn't feel called to be a missionary will have a guilty conscience. Some evangelist will come along and when they leave - everyone who doesn't feel called to become an evangelist will have a guilty conscience. Some prophet will come along and when they leave - everyone who is not serving God as a prophet will have a guilty conscience. And so it is with basically every gift and office God has given to the Church.

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

There are those who have received a certain gift or office - and they make everyone else feel guilty - because they aren't serving God in exactly the same way. Here is a sad note before we continue today's message:

The very thing that is the basis for our Unity - the common life in the Spirit - has been made the point of much tension among Believers.

There are two things I want to go on record as saying:

First - If the work of the Spirit appears to be the cause of disunity among some - it is not the fault of the Holy Spirit. It is our common fallenness - and our common walk without yielding to the leading of the Spirit that leads us to disunity.

Secondly - Unity is the result of our common life in the Holy Spirit. It is never the result of our human means, organizations, programs, or anything else of mankind. The truth is that it has been the lack of the presence of the Holy Spirit - that has forced many people to attempt unity by human (or carnal) means.

No local church will ever attain true unity by any programmed means of mankind. Just like it was in the first generation of the Church - so it is today. If we are going to be in "unity" - it will be by the presence and the leading of the Holy Spirit in our DAILY LIVES as Believers.

Now we are going to read the verses that will reveal the original emphasis of this text.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:15-16 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Just because one part of our physical body might begin to declare itself - as not being part of the body - because it thinks another body part is superior to it - doesn't make that body part cease to be a part of the body. It might well have a self-esteem problem - it might well fail to see it's purpose - or its usefulness - it might fail to be appreciated by the other body parts - But it is still a part of the body. The exact same is true in the Body Of Christ - or the Church!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:21 and make notes:

Just because one part of our physical body might begin to declare itself as self sufficient - and thinking itself to be superior to other body parts - doesn't make it true. It might well have a pride problem - It might well think itself to be self-sufficient - when none of us are. It might fail to recognize the purpose or usefulness of the other body parts. It might demand all the attention and fail to show appreciation to other body parts. But no one part of our physical body is truly superior to any other body parts - and no one part of our body can continue to exist or function - all by itself. The exact same is true in the Body Of Christ - or the Church!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:17-26 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Here is the original emphasis of this text. This text is making an effort to drive home a point made in the previous text - the need for Diversity within the unity of the One Body.

The "Diversity" of the many parts of the body - is God's divine plan and design for the body. "Diversity" is necessary if the Body is going to experience - and have True Unity. Each and every member is in the Body of Christ - the Church:
by divine plan -
by divine purpose -
and by divine placement.

It is important that we understand the monumental importance of diversity - in order for there to be a "Body of Christ. " If everyone was a hand - we would not have a body - we would simply have a large number of hands. There would be a lot of "slapping and clapping" - but nothing would ever really be accomplished.

If everyone was a foot - we would not have a body - we would have a large number of feet. There would be a lot of "stomping and stepping" - but we would never really get anywhere. If everyone was a mouth - we would not have a body - we would have a large number of mouths. There would be a lot of "telling and a lot of noise" - but we would never learn anything.

In order for there to be One Body - it is absolutely necessary that there be a diversity of parts. Without the Diversity of Parts – there would be No Body!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:27-28 and make notes:

We are about to read from God's Word a few "rhetorical questions."

Read 1 Corinthians 12:29-30 and make notes:

Are all apostles?

Are all prophets?

Are all teachers?

Do all work miracles?

Do all have gifts of healing?

Do all speak in tongues?

Do all interpret?

"Now" - in case some of you are not paying attention - in case it has not already dawned on some of you - "You are the Body of Christ." Not "You - Individually" - but "You – Collectively." Just like with the Corinthians to whom this letter was addressed - it is true with us as Believers today. There isn't one of us - who is the Body of Christ - by ourselves. Regardless of how superior we may see ourselves as compared to others around us - Regardless of how irreplaceable we may think ourselves to be - Regardless of how essential we may think we are Alone - we are nothing more than a “Body PART.” Alone - we ARE NOT The Body of Christ

I am a Body Part - I might even be a magnificent specimen of a Body Part - I might be the best of my kind of Body Part you have ever seen - but alone, I cannot accomplish the work that the Body of Christ has been commissioned to do. If the Body of Christ in our Community is going to accomplish the Work that has been given to us to do - Then I NEED all the other Body Parts to connect with - to work together with - to work in harmony with - to be faithful to do My Part and to insure that I don't make it difficult for another Body Part to do their part.

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Sometimes, a very active part of the body finds it difficult to "wait" around and appear to do nothing - while another body part does what it needs to do - for the good of the whole body. Do you want an example?

Take the stomach as an example. The stomach knows it's job is to digest food and to provide nourishment to the rest of the body. The stomach is good at it's job. And the stomach "really likes" to do it's job.

Now, the body NEEDS to be in church on the morning of the weekly church service - to hear something taught from God's Word - so that the body will be better prepared to do the work of the ministry. But the stomach sits "in idle" for a few minutes during the church service. After only a few minutes, the stomach begins to tell the rest of the body, "we need to get out of here and down to the chicken place so that I can begin to digest food" - and sometimes the stomach can get pretty persistent about it's desire.

If it continues to badger the rest of the body - to the point that the rest of the body gives in and leaves the church service early - just so the stomach can do it's thing - then the whole body may be less prepared - and fail to do the work of the ministry - as well as God intends.

The hands and feet are two more good examples. Some of us have feet that really like to be "going places." And some of us have hands that really like to be "doing something." The body needs to be in church right now, so the "ears" can hear the teaching on God's Word - and the "mind" can consider the teaching on God's Word - and the "heart" can adopt what God is saying through the teaching on God's Word - so the whole body can perform the work of the ministry God has given your body to do.

After only a few minutes of "just sitting" here - the "feet" start to shuffle - and begin to say to the rest of the body, "shouldn't we be going somewhere?" The "hands" start to fumble with anything they can touch - and begin to say to the rest of the body, "I have things I need to be doing." If the rest of the body allows the feet or hands to rule the body, - then the body will never reach a place of excellence in the work of the ministry.

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Sometimes the "movers and shakers" - need to sit quietly by while the rest of the body receives some new - or further instructions. Sometimes the "digester of physical food" - needs to sit quietly by while the rest of the body receives some spiritual nourishment - so that we can become a Body that performs the work of the ministry with excellence.

Whatever your function in the Body of Christ - don't demand that be the only thing or the primary thing that the Body of Christ should do.

If we are going to be the Local Church God has ordained for us to be - if we are going to accomplish the work God has commissioned us to do - then we must not "shut out" certain "body parts" - or certain gifts of the Holy Spirit! We must not seek to fill our local assembly or membership with just certain "body parts" - or just certain gifts of the Holy Spirit!

It is of monumental importance that we welcome all the gifts of the Spirit - It is of monumental importance that we accommodate all the gifts of the Spirit - It is of monumental importance that we work in harmony with each other - It is of monumental importance that the stronger protect the weaker - It is of monumental importance that the most presentable provide an appropriate covering for the less presentable - It is of monumental importance that each part do it's own task well - and not try to do the jobs of other parts. And it is of monumental importance that each and every part work together - in harmony and unity of purpose and unity of Goal.

Every local church must be prepared and readily welcome all those who will work in unison and harmony with the local body - to accomplish the work God has given to us. AND we must be prepared and readily encourage those to leave who WILL NOT work in unison or harmony with this local body to accomplish the work God has given us to do.

But the emphasis of the message from this text is: We MUST HAVE Diversity in Spiritual Gifts - We MUST HAVE Diversity in functions and works - If we are going to be the local Body of Christ we have been ordained to be.

1 Corinthians - 28- Necessity of Diversity

Have you been holding back from serving the Lord because you have looked at the ministry or serving of another person - and said "I can't do that, so I will just sit back out of the way." If so, then you need to hear this - You are not sitting back - you are holding the entire body back from accomplishing the Work we have been given to do.

Will you please repent from this attitude - and commit to do your part - so the other parts can do what they have been created and gifted to do?

If you have been seeing yourself as more capable - or more gifted than someone else who is serving the local body - and thinking you should have "that job" instead of the person who has it or at least along with that person – Will you please repent for your prideful attitude - and commit to be faithful with whatever it is that you have been asked to do for now - so that we as a body can move along in harmony and unison?

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

In the previous lesson, we saw that it is necessary for us to have all the Spiritual Gifts in our local Church. We saw that all of the gifts are of equal importance.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 and make notes:

After stating the necessity for diversity in the spiritual gifts - if a local church is going to be the real body of Jesus Christ - and how equally important each gift is - there is this little troubling verse that many teachers eagerly skip over. "Eagerly desire the greater gifts" - if all the gifts are equally important to the existence and survival of the Body of Christ - what could be the "greater gifts" that we are supposed to eagerly desire?

There are two ways a Spiritual Gift – from the Holy Spirit – can be greater than the other gifts. One thing that can make one gift greater than the other gifts - the gift that is needed right now is greater than the others! Before you begin to throw things at me, please hear me out. If your physical body is being attacked by some disease or infirmity - which gift from the Holy Spirit is going to be greater to you right now; - the gift of administration, the gift of evangelism, the gift of prophecy, the gift of tongues, - or the gift of Healing?

There are many examples of this - but the gift that best fills the current need - is the greater gift right now!

Let's read the next few verses, and then I will share with you the second way one of the gifts can be greater than the others.

Read 1 Corinthians 13:1-3 and make notes:

There is no question that this part of the letter speaks - yes even declares - the superiority of Love - and the necessity of Love. The gifts, - as wonderful as they are, - are sometimes nothing without love - and sometimes they are annoying, distracting, and disturbing - without love.

Love is the Most Excellent way!

Love is the most excellent way for a Christian to use their Spiritual Gift. Not just any love - is the most excellent way for a Christian to use their Spiritual Gift. "*Agape*" love - is the most excellent way.

In our English language, we just have one word - "love" - that we use for affection. And we apply it to all types of affection and liking. We use the word to say that "I love chocolate" - and to say that "I love my wife, the mother of my children" - and to say that "I love my dog or cat." We would readily admit that what we mean by the word "love" is different in each of these cases. The Greek language had at least 4 different words to speak of the affection one might have for something or someone.

"*eros*" - passion -

This is the "love" most of us are familiar with. This is the physical attraction - this is what we would call "lust." This is usually what the man says to the woman in the early stages of the relationship when he says "I Love You."

"*storge*" - affection -

This is the affection a parent has for their child. this is the affection between a loyal citizen and a trustworthy leader.

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"*phileo*" or "*philos*" - cherishing or caring for -

This is the feelings a husband will have for his wife in a good marriage - or the wife will have for her husband in a good marriage. This is the feelings between close brothers, sisters, or friends. This is the feeling that holds another person to be very important

“*agape*” - selfless or sacrificial -

This is the love that will sacrifice what "I want" to make sure this other person has what they need. This is the love that will continue to serve the other person even when they don't deserve to be served.

“*Agape*” love is used in the N.T. to speak of the deep abiding affection God and Christ Jesus show toward each other; read John 15:10, & John 17:26. "*Agape*" love is said to be the deep abiding affection that God and Christ Jesus show toward us as Believers; read 1 John 4:9. "*Agape*" love is the deep abiding affection Believers are supposed to show toward each other; read John 13:34-35. Husbands - this is the love that God says He expects us to have toward our wives; read Ephesians 5:25.

Let me say something to every woman who is considering finding a husband someday: Make a note of these types of "love." Don't agree to marry a man if all he is demonstrating toward you is "*eros*" love – lusts. Don't agree to marry a man if he has managed to make it to "*storge*" love – respect.

Only agree to marry a man, when he has demonstrated - and proven himself - to have "*phileo*" love for you - caring and cherishing. If you both walk with the Lord, - it will grow to be "*Agape*" love - selfless and sacrificial.

There are 3 things we should remember about “*Agape*” Love:

Sacrificial -

It is the love we see demonstrated by Christ on the Cross for my sake. If we have “*Agape*” Love for a person or a people, then we will sacrifice our personal desires for their good.

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Selfless -

It is a gift from God to us as a people. If we have “*Agape*” Love for another person, then we will give to them without asking, what's in it for me

Greatest gift of all -

God is Love - God actually gave Himself. Jesus said there is nothing greater than to love God with all your being and to love your neighbor as yourself. If we have “*Agape*” Love for another person, then we will give them the best we have - holding back nothing.

Remember, earlier in this series, we shared that the Corinthian believers had placed excessive emphasis on the gifts of tongues and prophecy. They had come to the place where they held in highest esteem - those who could speak in tongues, or sing in tongues - or pray in tongues - as well as those who could prophesy. They looked down on those who had any other gift as being not quite as spiritual - or somehow in less favor with God.

Many fine sermons and fine teachings have been given using this text to say that it is better to have "love" than it is to have one of the Spiritual Gifts. On a "technicality" and on principle, I will agree with that basic statement. But, when it comes to saying that this text teaches that, - then I will disagree.

This text Does Not say that it is better to have "love" than it is to have one of the Spiritual Gifts! What this text does say - is that the Spiritual Gift being used in "Love" - is a greater gift than the gift being used without love. "*Agape*" love to be specific!

Take another look at verse 1 of chapter 13:

If I speak in the tongues of men - or even if I speak in the tongues of angels - If I am speaking without the “*Agape*” Love of God - then I am as annoying and distracting as a gong that just keeps on being beat - over, and over, and over. Someone who just keeps talking - simply for the sake of talking - can get pretty annoying - and you find yourself wanting to say, "would you just be quiet for a while."

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This is true whether the person is speaking in English, French, German, Japanese, or any other language of this earth. And it is just as true if the person is speaking in one of the Heavenly languages. It is not a blessing to hear someone speaking - when they are not speaking with the “*Agape*” Love of God. It is as edifying as “clang, clang, clang, clang, clang.....”

What kind of local church do we want to be?

Do we want to make sure that someone speaks in tongues every time we have a service - whether they speak with the “*Agape*” Love of God or not?

Do we want to make sure that someone speaks in English every time we have a service - whether they speak with the “*Agape*” Love of God or not?

Even though I have the gift of "teaching" - and I love to use this gift - I submit to you that if we are going to be the local church God wants us to be - we will make sure we share the “*Agape*” Love of God with those who come into our assembly - as a higher priority than whether or not we have a speaker.

Not only was it a problem in Corinth, but it is a problem today. There are those who have decided the gift of prophecy is at an exalted position above all the other gifts. There is a air and attitude that we are better than all the others because we have the gift of prophecy.

This verse states quite clearly - even if we can tell what is coming - even if we can explain all the Spiritual Mysteries concerning the Kingdom - even if we can have the gift of Knowledge and just seem to know everything that we need to know - even if we have the faith to accomplish great miracles and signs and wonders – if we use these gifts - without the “*Agape*” Love of God, - Then we ARE NOTHING!

Even if we should give impressive gifts - even if we should give great help to the poor and needy - even if we should volunteer to be burned at the stake for the claim to being a Christian - If we don't give - or don't do with the “*Agape*” Love of God - Then we gain No thing!

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Please hear: God has given every Spiritual Gift for the good of the Body of Christ - Right here on this earth for today. If we are going to be the Body of Christ God intends for us to be - then we will have to welcome, encourage, and make a place for every Spiritual Gift. But if we are going to be the Body of Christ God intends for us to be - then we must make sure that every Spiritual Gift is used, - in an attitude and atmosphere of “*Agape*” Love - or we are failing miserably - and we are perverting the Body of Christ!

The choice really isn't - Love or Spiritual Gifts .

The instruction is to use all the Spiritual Gifts - But do so with “*Agape*” Love. If we don't have “*Agape*” Love, - Then we are annoying and distracting - We are Nothing. And we accomplish nothing.

That's not the kind of local Church God wants us to be! And it's not the kind of local Church I want to be a part of - How about You?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 and make notes:

This portion of the letter describes the essential character of the kind of Love a Christian is expected to have and to share. It not only identifies what real Christian Love is, - but it also identifies what real Christian Love Is Not. And it tells us of the enduring nature and character of real Christian Love.

It is by this portion of the letter to the Corinthians, that we can judge ourselves to see if we are simply a group of people meeting together - or if we are the Body of Christ in this Community. I can judge myself to see in am a minister of the Living God - or am I just a person doing some things that look like ministry.

On the positive side - WHAT LOVE IS:

Love is Patient

Love is Kind

Love delights in Truth

Love is Protective

Love is Trusting

Love is Hopeful

Love has a Persevering Attitude

When we are together:

if you are patient toward my faults and shortcomings -

if you are kind to me when I mess up -

if you are delighted with the truth, even when it is disappointing truth -

if you try to protect me when I am vulnerable or in danger -

if you trust me, when I haven't proven myself yet -

if you hold out hope for me -

if you don't give up on me -

Then I know that you Love me with the "*Agape*" Love of God.

But if your attitude and actions toward me don't have these characteristics -

Simply stated, - I don't know whether you have "*Agape*" Love for me or not.

On the negative side - WHAT LOVE IS NOT:

Love does not Envy

Love does not brag and Boast

Love is not Proud

Love is not Rude

Love is not self-centered or Self-Seeking

Love does not get angry easily

Love does not take delight in evil

Love does not behave disgracefully

Love does not keep a record of wrongs

1 Corinthians - 29– Greatest Gift

When we are together:

If I see you envious toward me or others -

If all I hear is your bragging and boasting about you and yours -

If you are proud -

If you are rude -

If everything seems to revolve around you and your family -

If you get angry easily -

If you rejoice when evil comes upon someone who has failed – I

f you act disgracefully-

If you seem to have a complete record of all the times others have failed -

I Know that you DO NOT have the “*Agape*” Love of God.

We can apply this test to the Pastor, the Elders, the Music Minister, the Deacons, The Teachers, the Leaders, and all areas of the Church's ministry – and to the church's members.

This test isn't for us to take out and go around to examine all the local churches in our community. It is given to us to examine ourselves - on a daily basis. Are we being the Body of Christ ministering with the “*Agape*” Love of God - or simply a group of people meeting together doing what seems good unto mankind?

God wants us to be a local church exhibiting ALL the positive characteristics of “*Agape*” Love. And I want to be a part of a local Church that has all the positive characteristics of “*Agape*” Love. What about You?

Read 1 Corinthians 13:8-13 and make notes:

1 Corinthians - 29- Greatest Gift

This portion of the letter declares real Christian Love to be greater than even Faith or Hope. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit will cease to exist on this earth some day. The “*Agape*” Love of God, will continue forever and ever and ever. And for those of us who are tempted to exalt ourselves because we have received a particular Gift - as human beings - we are not capable of handling, receiving, or containing - All the knowledge or all the essence of the kingdom of God.

So when we prophesy, it is only "in part" because that's all we can handle. When we use our gift of knowledge, it is only "in part" - for that is all we can handle. When we get to Heaven in our glorified bodies - the difference will be as great or even greater - between us using Spiritual Gifts now on earth - and ministering in Heaven - than the difference between us as children and as adults.

We shouldn't get puffed up because God is allowing us to minister in some particular Spiritual Gift - because it is like "child's play" compared to the maturity of what we will be like in Heaven. Regardless of the insights into God's Kingdom - we may receive by way of our Spiritual Gifts here on earth - they are nothing but a very poor reflection of the reality.

Our Spiritual insights now - can be compared to looking at someone's reflection on a shiny aluminum pan - But in Heaven, - our Spiritual understanding will be like looking directly at that person face to face.

Consider a little boy of about 6 years old. He could feel pretty proud that he could hit better or further than most boys his age. He could feel pretty proud that he could catch better than most boys his age. But how proud would he be - if he had been made to compare my baseball skills against the professional baseball players? He wouldn't have stood a chance. There would have been no contest at all. That's how it is when our Spiritual Gifts here on earth - are compared to what it shall be like in our glorified bodies in Heaven.

Let us not be puffed up or proud. It looks silly and foolish in the eyes of God and the angels in Heaven. Let us walk in - Let us live in - Let us minister in - The “*Agape*” Love of God. For it is one of the few things that will last past this earth.

1 Corinthians - 29– Greatest Gift

And of the Big Three that will remain; Faith, Hope, and Love - Love is superior to all.

If we watch and learn - We will see that Faith and Hope do reach people. Faith and Hope do help people make it through some tough places and tough circumstances. But people of Faith and Hope can still be prideful people - Arrogant people - Cold and distant people. “*Agape*” Love can reach more people than Faith or Hope. “*Agape*” Love can be of much greater help to people going through tough places or circumstances.

God wants us to be a local Church that can be of the greatest help to the people of our community. God wants us to be a local Church that can reach the greatest number of people in our community. And that will be - when we are a local Church quenching non of the Spiritual Gifts – and making sure that each one is administered in the - “*Agape*” Love of God.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group:

The Scripture texts for this lesson are very important to every local congregation who desires to be the local church God wants us to be. There are those who eloquently and intellectually speak against tongues for today. And there are those who speak eloquently and intellectually in favor of tongues for today. And it can't be both ways.

It can't be that we simply ignore it as something that has no relevance for today. We have to be either for or against the contemporary use of tongues. There are those who loudly proclaim the present day ministry of the prophet. And those who just as loudly proclaim the day of the prophet has passed.

Of those who believe the office and the gift of prophet are for today - There are those who believe the prophet to be able to foretell what is going to come to pass; And others who believe the prophet is only one who proclaims the gospel message.

Either the office, calling, and/or gift of the prophet are for today - Or it isn't. If it is for today, we need to know where it fits into God's plan for us.

Even if we should decide - that we WILL NOT decide - on either tongues or prophecy and just ignore them - There will be those who will come to this church and they will have questions - perhaps doubts and fears as well.

Perhaps you are one of those who has seen someone cause harm or even a great disturbance while exercising what they call their gift of tongues. Perhaps you have seen someone cause harm by exercising what they call their gift of prophecy. Maybe you have witnessed someone in person or on television who has used their gift or calling with unusual excitement or enthusiasm.

Most of us are aware – that being loud in an argument does not make you right! A person's level of excitement does not give credibility to the gift they profess to have and to use. A person's lack of excitement does not deny the credibility of their gift or calling.

A person's misuse or abuse of a certain gift or calling doesn't give a sound reason to deny that gift as being relevant for today. We NEED to know what God says about such issues and let that determine what we will believe .

1 Corinthians - 30 – Tongues But Edify

There is a much bigger message – than just tongues and prophecy!

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1 and make notes:

The instruction is very clear -

Step 1 - whatever else we do, we are to follow the way of love

Step 2 - we are to "eagerly desire" spiritual gifts -
especially those that edify, or build up the local Body of Christ.

To whatever level or degree we pursue spiritual gifts, abilities, or service - let us make sure that we pursue "love" even more than that. And not just any love - but let us pursue having "agape" love. When we have "agape" love for someone, then we will do all that we can possibly do to meet their needs. The "agape" love from God is the supreme answer to all the needs we have.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:2-4 and make notes:

Verse 2 is particularly important for those who have been taught to "put down" speaking in tongues as being from the devil. It states clearly at this point that a person who is speaking in "a tongue" IS speaking to God. And the person is speaking to God "with" their spirit.

1 Corinthians - 30 – Tongues But Edify

This text validates speaking in tongues - as communication with God by a person's spirit. And it acknowledges that no one in that person's presence understands them.

"Everyone who prophesies" - strengthens others, encourages others, and comforts others. This text is important both for those who have been taught to down play prophecy for today - And for those who have been taught to exalt prophecy. Verse 3 first of all validates "prophecy" as a valid ministry. And Secondly gives us the characteristics of "true prophecy."-

Prophecy strengthens, encourages, and comforts! If someone is using something that appears to be the gift of prophecy to control others, - To intimidate others, to impress others, - And especially to obtain some personal gain - Then they are either a fake and fraud - or they are perverting the precious gift of God.

Again, tongues is validated as a legitimate ministry gift - But clarified as edifying the individual person. It is pointed out that prophecy edifies the Body of Christ - or the Church – But Tongues edifies the individual in their spiritual fellowship with God. While Prophecy edifies the collection of the Saints. Tongues is a commendable gift. But prophecy is more commendable.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:5 and make notes:

Verse 5 is a real interesting one to remember when you hear someone saying that the gift of tongues was "just for the apostles." If Paul was writing this at the leading and guiding of the Holy Spirit - And he was! - Why would the Holy Spirit say "I would like every one of you to speak in tongues" - when surely the Holy Spirit would know that it was only a gift for the apostles?

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Let's face the music. It was the desire of the Holy Spirit - It was the desire of the apostle Paul - that every member of the local church should be able to speak in tongues. And as much as it is desired that everyone be able to speak in tongues - it is even more greatly desired that everyone be able to prophesy!

Do you remember from the previous lesson - that all the gifts of the Holy Spirit are equal? Do you remember from the previous lesson - that there are two ways a gift of the Holy Spirit can be greater than the other gifts?

Please remember, that all the gifts are equal as given by the Holy Spirit. The gift that is needed right now - is greater than the others (at least to the person who has the need). The gift that is ministered in love is greater than the gifts that are ministered without love (at least to those to whom the ministry is being given).

Today, we see a third way a gift of the Holy Spirit can be greater than another gift of the Holy Spirit. The gift that edifies the whole body is greater than the gift that edifies just one person.

The person who prophesies is greater than the person who speaks in tongues - UNLESS the person speaking in tongues also interprets. In which case the whole body is edified - And tongues is then just as great as prophecy.

Even at this point in the text, surely we can see there isn't an issue of one gift competing against the others for a place of supremacy. The issue is one of what edifies the Body of Christ - or the local church.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:6-9 and make notes:

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There has been - throughout the generations of the church's history - a debate as to whether "prophecy" in the N.T. refers to the foretelling of things to come - or to the proclaiming of the gospel. To be fair, the technical definition of the Greek words translated "prophecy" and "prophesy" - Can mean either - and are accurately used in both context.

This is one of the many text where I marvel at the foresight of God - and of His purposeful choice of specific words. He says, even "if I come to you and speak in tongues" - what good is it unless I bring "some revelation" or some knowledge? What good is it unless I bring some "prophecy" or some teaching? What good is a message in tongues unless it brings a "foretelling" - or at least a "proclaiming"?

Let's not argue about which way God intends for us to interpret the words "prophecy" and "prophesy." Let's accept the simple truth that God intends for us to interpret them both - as sometimes "foretelling" - and sometimes "proclaiming." And one person's gift of "prophecy" is predominantly one of "foretelling" those things that are to come. While another person's gift of "prophecy" is predominantly one of "proclaiming" the gospel message.

Verses 7-9 make the comparison of the sounds made by musical instruments to that of a person speaking. Each of us may have a different idea of which instrument makes the most beautiful music. But we most likely would agree that even on the most beautiful of instruments - a bunch of sounds made at random has little or no beauty. Is not pleasant to listen to - and we do not appreciate our ears being bombarded with a hodge-podge of indiscriminate sounds.

So it is with a bunch of speaking sounds. Even though they may be made by the person we most like to hear speak. Unless the words have distinct sounds - Unless they are spoken in a speed we can take in - We do not appreciate them - They do not convey a meaningful message - And they do not build us up, encourage us, nor do they comfort us.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:10-14 and make notes:

There are all sorts of languages in the earth - and not one of them is without meaning. But I must confess that of the natural languages of mankind - all but one of them is without meaning to me as an individual. And sometimes, even this one gives me some difficulty in understanding. Just because I, as an individual, do not understand what is being said in another language - this does not mean that the language has "no meaning." It just doesn't have any meaning "to me!"

There is no word against the desire to have spiritual gifts! Only a correction in the purpose for having a spiritual gift. Instead of trying to excel in a gift that will get you the most attention - instead of trying to excel in a gift that will some how raise your standing among the people - while you are eagerly desiring spiritual gifts - make a sincere effort to excel in the gifts that build up the entire church.

Verse 13 makes No instruction against speaking in tongues. Just the summary statement of what has just been stated - When a person speaks in a tongue - they should "pray" that they would also receive the interpretation - So that some meaning can be obtained from the words spoken in a tongue.

Maybe the Lord will give the interpretation to the person who spoke in the tongue. Maybe the Lord will give the interpretation to someone else. But at least pray that an interpretation be given.

When a person is used of God to give a word in tongues in a public assembly - That person frequently doesn't know the natural meaning - But they receive a tremendous spiritual blessing from yielding to the Spirit and allowing the Spirit to "Speak through them."

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It is desirable that even the one doing the speaking should receive some intellectual blessing along with the spiritual blessing from the word in tongues. It's not just the other people in the assembly that should understand - The one doing the speaking should understand and benefit from the message as well.

Verse 2 declared that it is our spirit that speaks when we are speaking in a tongue. Verse 14 states that it is our spirit that is praying when we pray in a tongue. There is no injunction against praying in tongues on the part of the Holy Spirit or the apostle Paul. Simply a point being made that it is our spirit that is doing the praying - and not our natural mind or understanding. And my natural mind doesn't understand what my spirit is praying.

Read 1 Corinthians 14:15-17 and make notes:

Paul declared that he in fact does "pray with my spirit" - But he also prays with his understanding. What's more, the apostle Paul even "sings" with his spirit. But he also sings with his understanding.

When we are in private - all alone - If we speak in tongues, Or pray in tongues, Or sing in tongues, There is little if any problem at all. It is when we are in the presence of others that we can experience or cause a problem with understanding, - by speaking in tongues, Praying in tongues, Or singing in tongues.

Even if we do speak, pray, or sing in tongues while in the presence of others - the problem is not one of committing sin - or doctrinal error. The problem is more simply - that the other person or persons around us - will not know whether to agree with what we are saying, praying. Or singing, - Because they don't know what is being said.

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And since the other person does not understand what we are saying, - then the other person is not built up, encouraged, or comforted. It is also important that we recognize that this Scripture DOES NOT say Don't speak in tongues in Church! The instruction is that if we do speak in tongues in Church - Then we should pray for interpretation. And we should be aware that others aren't going to understand - What is being said without an interpretation.

Let us commit that whatever we do - We will make our highest priority to edify - To build up - to encourage - And to comfort others - More than just to build myself up.

Write your thoughts and questions regarding this study to share with the group: