



Title	Passage	Sermon
1. Headship	1 Cor 11:1-16	Jul 14
2. Remembering well	1 Cor 11:17-34	Jul 21
3. Many parts but one body	1 Cor 12:1-31	Jul 28
4. Love the most excellent way	1 Cor 13:1-13	No sermon
5. Tongues and prophecy	1 Cor 14:1-25	Aug 4
6. Order in the gathering	1 Cor 14:26-40	Aug 11



Some helpful background to 1 Corinthians

1 Corinthians 1:1-2 helps us to know who this letter is from and who it is to.

Paul, called to be an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, and our brother Sosthenes, ² To the church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be his holy people, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ--their Lord and ours:

Paul and Sosthenes (most likely Paul's scribe) are writing to the church of God in Corinth (most likely a group of house churches). He is writing to remind them of who they are in Christ. They are sanctified, they are called to be holy, they are like the rest of God's people who call on the name of Jesus. They have been set apart for a special purpose, to glorify God.

Paul is writing to remind these believers of who they are in Christ because the way they are living doesn't always line up with who they are. Paul first visited Corinth around 50 AD and he spent a year and a half there, establishing the church, which consisted mostly of Gentiles. Paul most likely wrote 1 Corinthians some time between 52-55 AD.

Below is a helpful outline of 1 Corinthians.

I. Letter opening (1:1-9)

II. True and False Wisdom and Corinthian Factionalism (1:10-4:17)

III. "Flee Sexual Immorality" and "Glorify God with your Bodies" (4:18-7:40)

A. Negative Treatment: "Flee Sexual Immorality" (and Greed) (4:18-6:20)

B. Positive Treatment: "Glorify God with Your Bodies (7:1-40)

IV. "Flee Idolatry" and "Glorify God" in Your Worship (8:1-14:40)

A. Negative Treatment: Flee Idolatry (Food offered to Idols) (8:1-11:1)

B. Positive Treatment: "Glorify God" in Your Worship (11:2-14:40)

V. The Resurrection and Consummation (15:1-58)

VI. Letter Closing (16:1-24)

(Outline from Ciampa R.E and Rosner B.S., The Pillar New Testament Commentary).

According to this outline, the section that we will be looking at this term is really all about 'Glorifying God' in our worship, as we gather as God's people. This term we will think about headship in the gathering, how to appropriately participate in the Lord's Supper, how we are one body with many parts, the importance of love, tongues, prophecy and when we need to stay silent in the gathering. From chapter 7 onwards (see 7:1) it appears that Paul is responding to a letter that the Corinthians wrote to him. He probably also has some personal reports.

As we dig into this section I hope it helps us to see that church is not really about you or me, it's not about the individual. It's about building up the body. It's about following God's created order and having gatherings that are ordered and make sense. I have called this series 'Love: the most excellent way'. As we meet together we're called to love each other, build each other up. Often the way that we will do that is by laying down our rights. 1 Corinthians 11:1 calls us to follow Paul, as he followed Christ. Christ's love was ultimately shown when he laid down his life for us.

There will be some confusing verses in these studies and some of them might make you angry or confused. However, we need to stick at it and work hard to understand these verses because this is God's word to us. And as hard as it might be, once we push through the hard stuff I think we will see a beautiful picture of men and women laying down their lives to love and serve each other.

If you have questions along the way, please reach out. Talk to me at church or call the church office during the week. Or my email is simon@willows.org.au

On the front cover you will notice that there are 6 studies but there are only 5 talks. I have chosen to speak on the more controversial passages. Your leader can determine the best way to order the studies.

I am praying that this is a really fruitful time in God's word for you personally, your group and our church.

In Christ Simon

Kickoff: What are some key differences you've observed in the way men dress compared to women in Townsville in 2024?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Applying the gospel to a Cultural Context

We know from Numbers 6 that men having long hair is not something seen as uniformly sinful in the Bible. Yet, from 1 Corinthians 11 we can tell there is clearly something going on in the cultural context of first century Corinth that meant the way men and women presented their heads said a lot about who they were and what they stood for. The way we present our heads in our cultural moment in Townsville may not say the same things about who we are and what we stand for. Our culture is different.

Precisely what the issue was with hair and head coverings in the first century is unclear. It could be:

- that particular headwear or lack of headwear implied something about sexual availability
- or that it implied participation in some form of idol worship

Or... other things... no one knows for certain! But we do know that in this section, Paul is concerned that the church of God appears holy and ordered to the watching world—not as a disgrace!

1. From verses 4-5 and 13-16, what issue is Paul concerned about in the Corinthian gatherings? (Please note no one really knows what New Testament prophecy is but from what we will see in study 5 it must be some way of talking about Jesus).
2. In correcting the Corinthians on this cultural issue, what principle does Paul base his argument on in verse 3?
3. What does Paul mean when he says 'the head of Christ is God' (Check Philippians 2:5-8 to help with your response)?
4. How does this help us understand what it means when it says, 'the head of every man is Christ and the head of the woman is man'?

5. What attitude is Paul asking the women and men of church to have in verses 4 to 10 (remember the Philippians passage above)?

Nobody knows what the phrase, 'because of the angels' means. It could be that the angels were the ones the Jews understood to be messengers of God and that the phrase means 'because this is what God has spoken to us'. It could be that Paul wants us to appear holy because he has already stated in 1 Corinthians 6:3 that 'we will judge angels'. Lots has been written about it, but nobody knows for certain.

6. In verses 11 and 12, who is Paul asking the Corinthians to consider as they act?

7. We learn from the Numbers 6 passage above that 'the very nature of things' in verse 14 can't be referring to God's word through history. It's most likely Paul's just saying, 'look around at our culture—what does it tell you about long hair?'. Why do you think Paul would be so serious about this issue in verse 16?

Think and Apply

8. In what ways is Paul applying here in 11:2-16 the principles stated in 10:31-11:1?

9. Should women wear head coverings in church today? Explain your answer.

10. Are there ways we can dress and act as Christians today that imply we care little for God's order and authority?

11. What is one thing you are taking away from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kick off: Can you think of a time when you've acted selfishly during meal time? Share it with the group.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. Compare 11:2 with 11:17. From verse 18 why is Paul so concerned?
2. From verses 20-22 why is their meal not fit to be called the Lord's Supper?
3. From verses 23-26 what should we be remembering/proclaiming when we share the Lord's Supper?
4. From verses 27-34 what difference should this remembering make?
5. Verse 29 is a wordplay on 'recognising the body'. It is only when we recognise (remember properly) Jesus' body broken for us that we will recognise (serve properly) 'the body', the church. Often Christians have felt that they shouldn't take the Lord's supper in church because they've sinned during the week or not been as godly as they should have been during the week—they have felt this is taking the Lord's supper in an 'unworthy manner'. Is that on Paul's radar here? What was the unworthy manner he was rebuking the Corinthians for (remember the title of these studies!)?

Think and Apply

6. Paul wants to get the Corinthians beyond the ritual to true remembering (that is discerning the body of Christ—in the sense that it means Christ's body given for us). What difference does it make to how we treat each other if we're always 'remembering Jesus' death?

7. In what ways can we build more remembrance of the cross into our lives?

8. How can we better at discerning the body of Christ (in the sense that it means each other) when we share in the Lord's supper and more generally in our Sunday gatherings?

9. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

3

Many parts but one body

Kick off: Try to list off as many different skills/occupations of people at church as you can.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

1. How many of the Corinthian Christians have the Spirit according to verses 1 to 3?
2. What is different and what is the same about what the Corinthians have (see verses 4-6)?
3. Why according to verse 7 are we given the Spirit? How does this fit with the rest of 1 Corinthians?

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31a

4. What picture does Paul use to describe the church? Why is this a helpful image?
5. How does Paul describe the relationship between the parts in verse 25 and 26?
6. What do you make of the order of gifts from verse 28? Why do you think God wants us to eagerly desire the greater gifts?

Think and Apply

7. Discuss how effective your group is in using what God has given you for the common good.

8. What gifts do you have? How could you be using them for the common good?

9. How can you help our church be as Paul describes in verses 25 and 26?

10. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

4

Love: the most excellent way

Kick off: Share some examples of love you've seen in the world this year so far.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:31b-13:13

1. What is the most excellent way for Christians to act? Why is this the most excellent way?
2. How is the description of love in verses 4 to 7 a contrast to the way the Corinthians have been behaving (see 3:3; 4:18; 5:1; 6:6; 11:17, 21)?
3. How is this description of love an imitation of Christ (as in 11:1)?
4. What is Paul comparing love to in verses 1 to 3 and 9 to 10? What is the point of his comparison?
5. In verse 8 what is Paul saying about even our most impressive knowledge/tongues/prophecy?
6. From verses 9-12 can we know everything now?
7. What can we know now? How is love greater than faith and hope?

Think and Apply

8. What are some things that we might do in our gatherings and in our lives that are without love?

9. When you consider verses 4-7, what areas of your love do you need to work on?

10. Where do we need to keep looking to, to ensure we keep this love at the centre of our actions?
How can we keep looking there?

11. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

Kick off: What's the weirdest thing you've ever seen happen in a church service?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-20

1. We will think more about prophecy later in this study. But for now what do you think 'tongues' is referring to in 1 Corinthians?

2. Why is prophecy more desirable/greater than tongues according to verses 1 to 5?

3. What is Paul labouring to convince his readers of in verses 6 to 20?

4. How is this consistent with the attitude Paul has been calling the Corinthians to since chapter 8?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:21-25

5. In what sense does it seem that tongues are a sign for 'unbelievers'?

6. How does Paul help us to understand what prophecy might be and what prophecy will lead to in verses 24 and 25?

7. How would you sum up the boarder attitude Paul is calling his readers to have in their gathering?

Think and Apply

8. How could it be possible for us to have edifying prophecy or tongue speaking in the church today?

9. How important do you think it is for our gatherings to be done in a fitting and orderly way? Explain your answer.

10. What message might an unbeliever hear/understand if they come into one of our gatherings? What might they say if they see what is happening in our gatherings?

11. What could you do to help our gatherings become more fitting and orderly?

12. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?

6

Order in the gathering

Kick off: What do you think are some of the more offensive parts of the Bible to the world today?

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

1. From verse 26 how does Paul want everything done in the gathering?
2. How should speaking in tongues be conducted in the gathering according to verses 27 to 28?
3. How should prophecy be conducted in the gathering according to verses 29-33?
4. We thought about what prophecy might be in the previous study. Refresh each other if you have forgotten. What do you think weighing the prophecy involves?
5. From verse 34 it seems that there was an issue with women speaking during the weighing of prophecy in the gathering. This was creating a sense of disorder. What is Paul's / the law's solution?
6. In verse 35 it says that it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. It also said back in 11:6 that it was disgraceful for a woman to have a shaved head. Back in study 1 we said that a woman having shaved head was a cultural thing. To what extent might it be a cultural thing for it to be disgraceful for a woman to speak in church?
7. In verses 36-40 Paul shifts from specifically addressing women to again addressing the whole church. How important is order in the gatherings according to this section (see also verse 33)? Explain your answer.

Think and Apply

8. Do you think our Sunday gatherings are orderly or disorderly? Are there ways we could be more peaceful?

9. Do you think there is anything similar to 'weighing the prophecy' in churches today? If so how do you think women should participate?

10. What can you do in the church to help build the church up?

11. Remember Paul started this section in 10:31-11:1 reminding us to be like Jesus. What did Jesus do to build up the church? How can we remind ourselves of this?

12. What's one thing you are taking from this study?

Pray

What can you pray about from the study?

What can you pray about in general?