

ORCHARD ROAD PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

BIBLE FOR ALL (BFA) MATERIAL FOR SMALL GROUPS DISCUSSION

1 Corinthians – Building Community

Sermon Series

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03 May 2020

1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Living In These Last Days

INTRODUCTION

In the previous chapter, Paul encourages the Corinthians to “run in such a way as to get the prize” (1 Cor 9:24) – “a crown that will last forever” (v25).

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. Paul wants the Corinthians to keep running in faith and obedience so that they will make it to the finish line. To underline his point, he points to an example in history.
 - a. What period is he focusing on in 1 Cor 10:1-4?

 - b. What advantages did these people have? Refer also to Exodus 14:21-31; 16:4-5, 13-18; 17:5-6.

 - c. Why is the food, drink and Rock described as spiritual in 1 Cor 10:3? Why might this be significant?

 - d. Read 1 Cor 10:5-13. How did these people respond to God? What happened to them as a result? And why did this happen to them? Refer also to Exodus 17:1-3; 31:18-32:6; Numbers 25:1-2.

2. What does 1 Cor 10:1-10 tell us (a) about God and (b) about following Him?

3. Based on what Paul has already highlighted in this letter (chapters 1-9) of the areas in which the Corinthian church were facing, or giving in to, temptation, why did this church need to hear verse 12?

APPLICATION

4. What are some modern parallels to the negative examples we see in 1 Cor 10:6-12? What are some excuses we make for giving in to these temptation today? How does verse 13 both encourage and challenge us?

5. Why is complacency – assuming that “you are standing firm” (v12) – such a danger to a church?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

We can be confident that God will enable us to resist any and every temptation. We face the same temptations as everyone else, and we can outlast all of them, with God’s help.

Churches cannot coast along in spiritual things. Regardless of what amazing things we might have seen God do in our congregation, we must continue to rely on Him daily.

GROUP/PERSONAL REFLECTION

How are you being tempted to disobey God? When you give in, what excuses do you use? What truth do you need to remember to combat that excuse?

Do you pray for your church to grow in godliness? Do you encourage other Christians not to be complacent and to keep challenging themselves? Who (in your group) are the ones you will be completely honest with about your spiritual life and who will keep you accountable so that you will not be complacent in this area? (Set aside part of your small group time for honest sharing and accountability in smaller groups.)

Are there ways in which you need to be careful that you keep on running and don’t fall by the wayside?

Write down a key lesson that you have learnt from this study.

What is a key verse that you would like to take to heart?

PRAY

Thank God that:

- He lovingly warns His people.
- He can see through complacency and hypocrisy.
- He enables you to resist temptation so that you are able to obey Him.

Ask God to:

- Help you enjoy your blessings, but not to become complacent about your Christian life.
- Help you stand up to temptation (you might want to name a couple of areas in which you are struggling to do this at the moment)

10 May 2020

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

Living For God's Glory

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. Read 1 Cor 10:14-21.
 - a. What does Paul say we are doing when we share in the Lord's Supper?

 - b. A lot of Corinthian social and political life had to do with great public feasts held at pagan temples, where the food has been offered to false gods. What does Paul say is really happening at these feasts? (v19-20)

 - c. What is the choice Christians have to make? (v21)

2. Read 1 Cor 10:23-11:1. The Corinthian Christians said they were free to eat any meat, even though it had been offered to idols before being sold in the markets of the city.
 - a. Are they right? What does Paul say about that, and why? (v25-26, 30)

 - b. When would it NOT be ok to eat meat that has been sacrificed? (v28-29a) Why not?

3. Paul is refusing to be legalistic, refusing to forbid what the Bible allows (v30). He won't make a rule that eating meat sacrificed to idols is always wrong. But equally, Paul is refusing to say that doing what is "permissible" is always best (v23). Liberty is not his highest priority, so he won't say that eating such meat is always fine.
 - a. If it is neither following a rule nor enjoying freedom, what should direct a Christian's actions?

 - b. Whose good is Paul seeking? What is his primary aim for them? (v33)

 - c. Paul says he is following "the example of Christ" (1 Cor 11:1). What does he mean? Read also Luke 19:1-10.

APPLICATION

4. What are the most worshipped idols in our culture? How might a Christian end up trying to worship both God and one of these idols? What is the warning here for them?

5. How is acting legalistically different from acting out of love?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

An idol is anything someone treats as their god, serving it because they trust it will give them what they need.

Jesus is our great example of loving God and loving others – not prizing his own liberty, nor being legalistic. And Paul tells us to follow those who follow Christ's example.

GROUP/PERSONAL REFLECTIONS

What do you talk about most? What interests you most? What excites you most? What you answer is a good indication of what you worship. Can you work out why these things are particularly attractive to you?

What do you need to do to “flee from idolatry” when it comes to these false gods?

What kinds of examples do you see around you? Do you follow those who lead you toward Christ, rather than away from Him? Whose Christlike example could you seek to follow more of?

Write down a key lesson that you have learnt from this study.

What is a key verse that you would like to take to heart?

PRAY

Thank God that Christ Jesus came to seek and to save what was lost. Thank Him for freeing you from pursuing empty idols or religious rule-keeping. Thank you for making you part of His people.

Ask God to enable you to worship Him, bring Him glory, and point others to the truth about Him.

17 May 2020

1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Living Under God's Created Order

INTRODUCTION

This is a famously difficult passage. The key theme throughout is that Paul wants to show the inadequacy of autonomy as the way to follow Christ. He wants instead to encourage us to welcome and live within the authority God has designed people to live within, in the church and in marriage.

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. It helps to remember that the words "men" and "women" in this passage also meant "husband" and "wife".
 - a. What is the relationship between wife and husband? (v3) Which other relationship does this reflect?

 - b. Archaeological records show that high-ranking, wealthy and well-respected men would pull a portion of their togas over their heads when leading prayer in the pagan temples, as a form of piety. Why would men doing this in church be dishonouring his "head"? (v3-4) What difference would it make if a man prayed with or without covering his head?

 - c. What were men using their roles in the church service to do?

2. In those days, headgear and hairstyle reflected a woman's marital status. Covered hair showed that she was married. Uncovered hair indicated that she was single, or sexually available (shaming her husband, if she was married).
 - a. How does this help us understand why Paul says what he does in v5-6?

 - b. What were women (especially married ones) using their roles in church services to do?

3. Read Genesis 2:18-25. In 1 Cor 11:8-10, Paul is looking back to the story of creation. Why is it helpful to be reminded of how things were in the Garden of Eden, before sin entered the world?

4. What does Paul tell us about men and women, particularly husbands and wives, in verses 11-12?

5. Paul says that nature teaches us that long hair on men is a disgrace (v14). What does Paul mean by this?

6. What point is Paul making in 1 Cor 11:2-16?

APPLICATION

7. Today, men do not seek to show how important they are by covering their heads, nor do women seek to show they are attractive and potentially available by uncovering theirs.

a. What would a church where these things were happening today look like?

b. What would be the impact of both these attitudes and behaviours on a church fellowship?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Paul is teaching this church that men and women are equally valuable. There is hierarchy in marriage, just as in the relationship between God the Father and God the Son (v3, 8-9). There is inter-reliance in marriage, just as in the relationship between God the Father and God the Son (v11-12). The church, as the body of Christ, reflects the love that exists within the Trinity, displaying God's character. Therefore, it is important that believers' conduct in worship is orderly and communicates who God is to our surrounding culture.

GROUP/PERSONAL REFLECTION

Husbands, how have you led your wife this week? How have you loved her and cared for her?
Wives, how have you helped your husband this week? How have you loved and encouraged him to lead?

What are our own motivations when we come to church or to fellowships? Are there ways in which our behaviour and thoughts fail to reflect God's character?

PRAY

Thank God for:

- Who He is: Father, Son, and Spirit. Praise Him for His loving relational nature: for the loving authority of the Father, the loving submission of the Son, and the loving humility of the Spirit.
- What His church is. Praise Him that His church is a place where pride and selfishness have no place. Thank Him that the truths His church are based on are unchanging.

Ask God to:

- Help you with any parts of the passage you have found difficult to understand, accept, or apply.
- Show you where you might be using your church as a way to gain prestige or to gain admirers.

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

Everything we do as church members needs to help other Christians and avoid harming them.

GROUP/PERSONAL REFLECTION

How are you putting others' needs before your own within your church fellowship?

Do you need to make an effort to build relationships with others in your congregation who come from different backgrounds? How will you do this?

In light of this passage, do you need to change anything in:

- How you prepare to take the Lord's Supper?
- What you think about during the Lord's Supper?
- A broken or damaged relationship with a fellow Christian?

Write down a key lesson that you have learnt from this study.

What is a key verse that you would like to take to heart?

PRAY

Thank God that:

- He does not care more for the rich, or the clever, or the confident.
- At the Lord's Supper we are all equally undeserving, and equally forgiven, and equally blessed.

Ask God to:

- Help you make real changes if you have realized you are not thoughtfully loving other church members.
- Shape your thoughts and emotions next time you come to the Lord's Table.

31 May 2020

1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Living Under The Spirit's Sovereignty

INTRODUCTION

It seems that the Corinthians had written to Paul and asked him about “spiritual gifts” (v1) - *charismata*, gifts God has given to his people through His Spirit.

OBSERVATION AND INTERPRETATION

1. How is it that anyone can stop worshipping “mute idols” (v2) and accept Jesus as Lord (v3)?

2. What else does the Spirit do for believers? (v4, 7, 11)

3. Why had these “manifestations” been given to believers? (v7)

4. What kinds of gifts does the Spirit give to God's people? (v7-10)

APPLICATION

5. How is the Bible's view of our gifts different from what the world says about our abilities:
 - a. In where they come from?

 - b. In their purpose?

6. How will remembering the truth of these verses prevent us from using our gifts divisively or selfishly?

7. How are you using your spiritual gifts “for the common good”? Are there ways in which you are using them only for your own good?

DISCIPLESHIP POINTERS

We cannot see the Holy Spirit, but two of the ways the internal work of the Spirit is manifested in us is: (1) knowing Jesus as Lord, and (2) having spiritual gifts. Our gifts and abilities are given by the Holy Spirit, to be used to build up Christ's body, the church.

1 Corinthians 12:8-11 is not meant to be a complete list of spiritual gifts. There are many things the New Testament calls *charismata*, including God's gift of eternal life (Romans 6:23) and marriage and singleness (1 Cor 7:7). We are not meant to be bogged down in exactly what each gift listed here means. The point is that "all these are the work of [the] Spirit" and that He gives them "to each one" (v11) and so every Christian has a gift to be used for the "common good" of the church.

GROUP/PERSONAL REFLECTION

Do you recognize and enjoy the fellowship of people who are, like you, Spirit-filled Christians?

How could you work at living out the closeness and unity God has given you with your Christian brothers and sisters? How will you treat them as family?

Write down a key lesson that you have learnt from this study.

What is a key verse that you would like to take to heart?

PRAY

Thank God for your gifts.

Ask Him to help you identify them.

Ask Him for the humility to lay them at the service of others in your church.

Thank Him for the opportunities he gives you to do that.