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## Church Members Challenged To Exalt Christ

**Quarterly Aim: By the conclusion of this quarter the students will discuss ways that church members can exalt Christ.**

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## Challenge To Evangelize

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will emphasize the importance of reaching the lost for Christ.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

Background Scripture: Psalms 51:10-13; 126:5, 6; Isaiah 6:9-12; Luke 14:23; Acts 1:8.

Devotional Reading: Come Unto Me, Matthew 11:28-30.

### Introduction

This quarter continues the study of 1 Corinthians. Corinth was a wicked, licentious city. This was partly because of the predominant religion of the city. Just outside the city was a huge hill upon which the temple to the Roman goddess of love, Aphrodite, was built. This temple housed a large number of temple prostitutes for use during the worship of this false god. The lack of morals in the city had greatly influenced this church. The people were not overly concerned about sin in the church at Corinth. They simply thought it was a fact of life that could not be avoided.

What Paul wanted to do in writing this letter to the members of the church at Corinth was to turn them from immorality so that they would serve Jesus Christ. He issued many challenges to the church members at Corinth to live in a manner that would exalt Christ. This is the goal of our quarterly study.

The first lesson gives the work of every church. As Jesus prepared to ascend to the Father, He gave a commission to every church. "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). This is a command to every church to

reach the world for Christ. It can only be accomplished when church members fulfill their responsibility. The present population of the world is over six billion people. Think of one person reaching only one other person with the gospel of Jesus Christ in one year. The second year, two would each reach one. The third year, four would each reach one. How long would that method of evangelization take to reach the population of the world? In just over twenty-five years, over six billion people would have been reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is less than one generation, and that is only one person starting the process. If a church of one hundred members would go through the above process, the time span would decrease by ten years. If ten churches of one hundred members each would do it, over six billion people would be reached with the gospel of Jesus Christ in only seven years. Church members need to make it a priority to reach the world with the gospel.

The lesson Text related Paul's instructions to the church at Corinth concerning its responsibility to God. The members were to reach others for Jesus Christ.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Principle of Service  
Through Evangelism

From the time of his salvation, Paul's ministry was reaching lost people with the gospel. "For thou shalt be his witness unto all men of what thou hast seen and heard" (Acts 22:15). Paul told others about the saving power of Jesus Christ and endeavored to pass this challenge on to other people. Notice how he expressed his position in relation to others. "I made myself servant unto all" (1 Cor. 9:19). Though he had no outer bond to the lost, he placed a burden upon himself. "I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise" (Rom. 1:14).

His self-proclaimed burden had as its goal the salvation of those who are lost. He wanted to "gain the more." Paul used the word gain five times in 1 Corinthians 9:19-22. It had the idea of winning something. Paul used all the methods he could to win people to salvation. He wanted all people to be saved. He did everything within his power to encourage them to turn to Jesus Christ. What was his plan for soul-winning? "I am made all things to all men, that I might by all means save some" (1 Cor. 9:22).

Some say that Paul was hypocritical in his outreach to others because he would change his standards of right and wrong to fit with those around him. This simply is not true. Paul discussed matters that were neutral in morality. Many things in the world are not inherently right or wrong. In these areas, Paul said he would not make a difference. If he had been hypocritical, his message would have changed from audience to audience. His method of presentation might have changed, but the message was always the same—salvation by grace through faith. He was not hypocritical in his presentation of the gospel.

Others claim that Paul behaved like his audience to reach them. These people taught this because they wanted to indulge in personal sin and justify it by claiming they were trying to reach sinners. When Paul said he went “to them that are without law, as without law,” he also added that he was not without law, but he remained under the law to Christ. He might have been free, but he was not permitted by God to indulge in sin.

Instead, Paul sought to understand the feelings and thoughts of others. He was flexible enough to make the gospel applicable to each situation. When surrounded by Jews, he spoke in Jewish terms. When surrounded by devout Gentiles, he spoke in terms they could understand. When surrounded by seeking pagans, he preached messages that helped them to know God. Paul followed this method in the book of Acts. He became all things to all men that he might present the gospel in a manner they could accept.

This should challenge people today. We live in a multicultural society. Different cultures have different customs, expressions and viewpoints. We must make the one gospel story relevant to all people. Paul tried to find common ground with those to whom he ministered. In finding common ground, he was able to reach them with the story of salvation.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Purpose of Service

Why was Paul involved in the ministry of reaching the lost? Why did he place this challenge before the church at Corinth and also before every church since? He had specific reasons for his service.

He reached out to the lost so they might be saved. He used every righteous means to reach people with the gospel. He would have made the ultimate sacrifice of remaining lost if oth-

ers would be saved (Rom. 9:1-3). He understood the excellence of God's grace that reached down to him. He understood he could never have deserved such a gift as salvation.

Seeing the people saved brought joy to his heart. He wanted to share this blessing with the church at Corinth. He had the joy of reaching out to those in Corinth. Now he wanted this church to participate in the work as well.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ The Practice of Service

Paul described how the church at Corinth could prepare for the work ahead. He spoke of athletic activities. In particular, Paul spoke of the Isthmian games held near the city of Corinth. They were on the same order as the Olympic games and were held in alternating years. Everyone in Corinth knew what took place at these games. Paul used athletic training as an illustration of training for God's service in evangelism.

The games had certain races to be run. Race was the root word for stadium. It referred to a distance measured out on a course. The athletes would begin the race at a certain point. They would follow the course and finish at the proper place. If they stepped out of bounds, they were disqualified. God has a course for every Christian to follow. According to this passage of Scripture, that course includes telling others about Jesus. We do not have the right to determine our own course. We must follow His directions.

To prepare for the race, an athlete spent much time exercising. Each athlete worked toward the mastery of his event. This included many hours of daily exercise. Everything was done that they might be victorious. What a challenge that is to the child of God. Too many Christians spend no time in Bible study or prayer. Then they face difficult times in life and fall by the wayside because they have no spiritual strength. Developing spiritual strength requires spiritual exercise (Heb. 5:14). Christians must study and use the Word of God to become spiritually mature. They must also refrain from certain things. As an athlete cannot have certain foods, the Christian cannot engage in certain kinds of behavior that will stunt spiritual growth and cause the person to remain a baby in Christ (1 Cor. 3:1-3). What are you willing to give up for the work of God and your testimony for Christ? Be in control of your life (temperate). Do what is right for His work.

The reward for winning the race was a laurel wreath placed about the head. This crown was temporary. In a few days, it faded away. Its green glory soon became brown; yet, the athlete worked diligently to gain that crown. How much more should God's children labor in His service? The servant of God does not expect a fading crown (corruptible). His crown will never fade away. God wants to honor those who are faithful to Him. Will you be His servant?

### Conclusion

Paul warned the members of the church at Corinth about becoming a castaway. This word described refining metals. One would take gold and place it in the crucible. It would be heated until melted. As the metal melted, impurities would begin to surface. The refiner would ladle the impurities from the top. When he saw his reflection in the metal, then the gold was pure. All the impurities had been castaway. Paul did not want his life and ministry to be castaway as worthless. He wanted to have a life of gold.

Are you living a life of precious metals, or is your life the worthless, castaway dregs?

## Challenged To Set an Example

### LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will determine to set an example that pleases Christ.

### SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:1-22.

Background Scripture: John 13:12-17; Hebrews 4:9-13; 8:1-5; 1 Peter 2:21-25.

Devotional Reading: Be an Example, 1 Timothy 4:12.

### Introduction

If you were to take a poll of one hundred people asking their opinion of what constitutes right living, what kind of answers would you receive? Some people would be Christian and would give an answer that might closely resemble your own. The vast majority of those polled would not be conservative, Bible-believing Christians and would have no answer to what constitutes right living. They would assume that as long as you did nothing to hurt your fellowman, you would be living right. Others might tie it to political correctness such as being tolerant of other people's differences or treating the earth with respect. Most people would have no concept of right living tied to directions from God. This is one reason why the people of God must take the challenge to set a proper example for the world to see.

What is the standard for right living? God's only begotten Son lived a sinless life. He revealed God's desire for mankind by His perfect example (1 Peter 2:21). Jesus willingly endured every temptation faced by man to be that flawless example. He can help every man who faces temptation (Heb. 2:18).

This lesson challenges us to be good examples for those around us. The world is in need of good people willing to stand for Jesus Christ.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Failure of Israel  
as an Example

When God removed the people of Israel from Egyptian bondage, they were in a position to start over as a nation. They had gone down into Egypt as a small tribe of only seventy people (Gen. 46:27). When they departed from Egypt, the number was over six hundred thousand men plus their families. God had truly blessed them during their years of bondage. Now they were released from slavery. Surely, they would be completely devoted to God who delivered them.

The people of Israel had many benefits to draw them closer to the Lord (1 Cor. 10:1-4). One blessing was that God destroyed their enemy. The path of the Israelites brought them directly to the Red Sea. When they arrived at this spot, the armies of Pharaoh came against them. The Israelites greatly feared this enemy. God halted the progress of the Egyptians and opened the Red Sea for His people to march to safety. When they reached the other side, the soldiers of Pharaoh were released to pursue their prey. When they reached the middle of the sea, God brought the waters together again, and the army was destroyed. The Israelites knew the destruction was complete. They saw the dead upon the shore (Ex. 14:30). This act also served another purpose. When they marched through the Red Sea, the waters encompassed them on each side and the Lord's cloud overshadowed them. Paul said this baptized them unto Moses. This indicates they should have been fully identified with the leadership of Moses. They should have no longer doubted his position with God.

Another blessing was the food and water God provided for their journey (1 Cor. 10:3, 4). Most often manna was God's provision of food. Occasionally, He also gave them quail for meat. When He provided quail, He did so abundantly (Num. 11:31). God gave sufficient food to meet their dietary requirements for forty years. He also provided drinking water. In a wilderness area like the Sinai peninsula, water is precious. God gave them water in abundance. The streams of water which flowed out from the rocks met their present and future needs.

Many times the Israelites disobeyed God. Sometimes they committed idolatry and immorality (1 Cor. 10:7, 8). On one occasion they complained that God could not really bring them to the Promised Land. They even complained about the free food. They longed to return to their slavery in Egypt. God was so angry that He sent poisonous snakes to kill them (1 Cor. 10:9). On many occasions they murmured against God and His leader, Moses. They hated being in the wilderness even though their disobedience was the reason for their forty year journey. The people of Israel had the opportunity to be witnesses for God throughout the world, but they utterly failed.

People tend to read the story of the Israelites and disdain them by saying, Those poor Israelites. They were such bad people. They could not be satisfied with the wonderful blessings of God. However, we are not satisfied with the blessings of God in our lives. Our churches have bigger buildings, more programs, greater advantages than ever before; yet, we seem to be unhappy. We should stop complaining lest we suffer the same judgment that Israel did.

The failure of the Israelites should serve as a warning to us. Their example can keep us from setting our hearts on evil things (verse 6).

2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Faithfulness of God  
for an Example

Man's nature will always lead toward failure. The example already examined reveals how lacking man is. If it happened to people who daily saw the generosity of God, how much more likely is it to happen for those of us "upon whom the ends of the world are come?" But even in their failure, God continued to bless them. God loves His people and wants to help them live in victory. How does He help us win the victory in this life?

God warns us of potential trouble. Have you ever driven toward road construction? Beginning many miles ahead, signs warn of trouble ahead. His warning here is, when you think nothing can hurt you or affect your Christian walk, beware because you are headed for a fall (1 Cor. 10:12). "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall" (Prov. 16:18). Troubles are ahead, and God wants you prepared.

God also will never put more on you than you can bear (1 Cor. 10:13). The word temptation, or a variation of the term, appears

three times in this verse. The idea is of an examination or a test. Every child of God will face times of testing and trial. But there will always be “a way to escape.” This statement means “a way out, to go out or to exit.” God never promises to remove all trials from life. He has only promised to face those difficult times with you.

Recently a missionary faced an extremely trying time. He and his family were on a plane over hostile territory. The resident government accused them of being drug smugglers and shot them out of the sky. The man and one son lived. His wife and one son died. His testimony over the following weeks touched thousands of people. Here was a man whose family had been killed; yet, he still had a burden for the people of that nation. He stood boldly and proclaimed his love for Jesus. He had a reason to be bitter. Instead, he was able to bear the trial because God was on his side.

God is still in control of every situation. God will never let us down.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Fleeing from Things Which Hurt Our Example

The remaining verses of the lesson Text reveal a situation that greatly hindered the testimony of the members of the Corinthian church. Paul returned to his discussion of meat sacrificed to idols. Earlier in his letter, Paul told these people that meat was meat and there was nothing inherently wrong with it. In these verses Paul takes the discussion to a new level. While nothing might be wrong with the meat, the testimony of the church members might be irreparably damaged by their actions in partaking of meat sacrificed to idols.

Paul’s argument on this occasion dealt with the perception of those around them. While nothing might be inherently wrong with the meat, the action of the partaking of meat sacrificed to idols might cause unbelievers to think that Christians were also worshiping idols and the demons they represented. “Ye cannot drink the cup of the Lord, and the cup of devils; ye cannot be partakers of the Lord’s table, and of the table of devils” (1 Cor. 10:21). They needed to give a steady signal to the people of the city.

How can this principle be applied to churches and members today? We live in a time when many promote a joining of reli-

gious forces. Certain organizations attempt to break down the barriers between denominations and churches. Their idea is to ignore the differences and embrace the similarities. Many are tempted to forget doctrinal differences. We cannot join with those who teach false doctrine. Truth is of God and heresy is of Satan. We cannot partake of the things of God and the things of Satan.

### Conclusion

Church members have a special challenge in the world today. The world in general wants everyone to be the same. The cry is for tolerance for all except those who disagree with the worldly philosophy. In spite of the anger of the world, we must stand for Jesus. We must serve “not with eyeservice, as menpleasers; but as the servants of Christ, doing the will of God from the heart” (Eph. 6:6).

## Challenge To Glorify God

### LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain why it is necessary to give God glory daily.

### SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 10:23—11:1.

Background Scripture: Psalm 86:9-12; Matthew 5:13-16; John 12:23-33; Revelation 15:1-8.

Devotional Reading: No Glory, Save in the Cross, Galatians 6:11-15.

### Introduction

Possibly the greatest act anyone can perform on the earth is the act of glorifying God. Worship is prominent throughout the Bible, from the most ancient times to the latest times in the Bible to the future events described in great detail. People and angels have given and will give God glory. Just think of some of the expressions of praise given in the Bible.

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem according to prophecies, the angels gathered in a marvelous anthem of praise (Luke 2:13, 14). Following that event, when Mary presented Jesus for His circumcision, the aged prophet Simeon blessed God honoring the advent of the Lord's Messiah (Luke 2:26, 28-32). At the triumphant entry, the crowds cried out in honor to the Messiah. "Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:38). The Pharisees were disturbed because of that declaration. They knew those words were reserved for God alone. They asked Jesus to stop the praise of the crowd. He replied, "I tell you that, if these should hold their peace, the stones would immediately cry out" (verse 40). Revelation declares that the angelic hosts

will lead in a future praise service (Rev. 4: 5). God receives praise throughout the Bible.

If worship was of such importance to have this prominent place in the Bible, why do people today think little of the need to give God glory? Paul surely praised God. Even when beaten and bound in the deepest prison, Paul led in prayer and praise (Acts 16:25). In the lesson Text, Paul exhorted the church members at Corinth to give God glory in everything they did. “Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31).

The members of the church at Corinth had many problems. One of these problems dealt with understanding ways to give God glory. The people in the church were too concerned with their own desires to really glorify Him. This was wrong and Paul set out to correct this problem. He issued a great challenge to glorify God in everything they did. How can we glorify God in our lives?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Through Choices

We make choices each day. We make choices about what we wear, where we go, what we do and what we eat. Though we sometimes think our choices only impact ourselves, we are wrong. Our choices can glorify God or they can bring a reproach on Him. Paul wrote to Timothy about having vessels to honor or to dishonor (2 Tim. 2:20). Our vessels (figuratively bodies) can be used for honoring or dishonoring God.

Paul understood that morally he had the right to do many things. This long discussion began in chapter 8 with questions on meat sacrificed to idols. Paul told them that meat was meat. While there was nothing inherently wrong with the meat, the right to eat that kind of meat might offend someone and drive them away from Christ. Paul worried that such actions might bring a disadvantage to God’s work. Not expedient means “the action might not bring an advantage to the spread of the gospel.” Edify not means “the action would not build up the work.” In both of these phrases, Paul expressed his desire for the work of God to progress, not to be hindered.

What kind of activities today might reflect this hindrance to God’s work? Some think that going to certain kinds of movies is acceptable. Surely nothing would be wrong with going to G-rated movies. Think of the testimony your life gives simply by placing your approval on going to movies. Worldly people or

immature Christians will rarely separate among kinds of movies. To them movies are movies. If you place your approval on movies, will you be influencing weaker Christians or lost people to see inappropriate movies? It is not just a matter of right and wrong. It is a matter of influence and testimony. One might have the right to go to a movie, but is it expedient and edifying?

Paul's conclusion of this idea is that we should not simply seek to do what we want. Instead, we should seek the other person's welfare. We should always make choices that will bring honor to God and His work.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Through Conscience

The most significant word in these verses is conscience. Modern thinking ascribes to the idea of some inner voice that tells us right from wrong. The problem with this thought is that man's natural inner voice will always lead him to wrong over right. That is because of the sin nature. That is not the biblical idea for conscience. This word was used five times in this short passage of Scripture. It came from a root meaning "to see completely; to become aware; to understand." In these verses Paul used it to refer to the moral concept of right over wrong. The people needed to make decisions based on right and wrong.

Paul made statements here that almost seemed contradictory. First, he told them to buy whatever meat they wanted without raising questions of conscience. In essence he told them not to worry about where the meat came from. Just buy it, cook it, eat it and enjoy the blessings of the Lord. How could they do this? "For the earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof" (1 Cor. 10:26). Because God gave it to man for him to enjoy, they could eat the meat without worries. He followed that by telling them that, if a friend invited them to a meal and they wanted to go, they should go, eat whatever was set before them and not worry about where the meat came from. Because it came from God, they could enjoy it.

As soon as he finished those statements, Paul made a disclaimer. If someone at the feast saw the need to inform them of the origin of the meat, they should refrain from eating that meat. Was Paul telling them to be hypocritical about eating or not eating? No, he wanted to remove all hindrances from the advancement of the gospel. If the person thought it necessary to tell the Christian that the meat came from an idol meat mar-

ket, he was of the perception that the Christian should not be eating that meat. Pagans associated partaking of sacrificed meat as becoming allied to an idol god. Paul did not want to be associated with false gods, but he wanted to protect the church members. Why would Paul do this? “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (1 Cor. 10:28).

In essence Paul said it should not be that way (verses 29, 30). One person’s liberty in Christ should not be judged by the standards of the world. Reality is that every child of God is judged by a double standard. He is viewed as being aloof and as thinking of himself as being above the world. The world has many derogatory names to call him. Then they delight when he slips the least bit. A Christian must live by the higher standard of the Lord. He has a conscience. He knows the difference between right and wrong. He must be willing to glorify God through his life of righteousness.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Through Concern

What did Paul have in mind when he wrote these words? Examining the focus of these words, he could easily have had in mind the statement of Jesus to the lawyer who asked Him which was the greatest commandment. Jesus’ answer was that two commandments form the greatest. “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind” (Matt. 22:37) and “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself” (verse 39). Jesus said those words summed up all the Law and prophets. In these verses Paul showed the same emphasis.

Paul’s words encouraged the people in the church at Corinth to glorify God in everything they did (1 Cor. 10:31). Were they eating? They should honor God through their food. This referred back to Paul’s previous quote from the Old Testament. “For the earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof” (verse 26). Because everything that exists on the earth is God’s possession, then everything should exist to give Him glory. A good challenge for all Christians is to write down the activities of one full day. If we did this and honestly reported our day, we might find some items that would make us ashamed. Everything we do should be for His honor and glory. We are His possession and exist for this purpose (1 Cor. 6:20).

Every action should honor God by concern for others. Paul carefully taught this church the importance of having a good

relationship with all people. His statement was clear and precise. Do not give offense to others. This pictured something that would cause a person to stumble. Have you ever gotten up at night and tried to walk through a room? Usually something gets in the way and you stumble over it. That is this word. Do not cause others to stumble. What people deserve this kind of concern? Paul listed three groups: Jews, Gentiles and the members of a church. We must be careful how we act in life because others are watching.

Why was Paul concerned about how other people perceived him? Paul did not really care whether they liked him personally. His concern was for their salvation (1 Cor. 10:33). He was not being political; he was being responsible. He knew God had called him to reach out to the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ. He would do nothing that might cause people to stumble. He wanted everyone to be saved.

### Conclusion

Paul understood that many people looked to him as their example to follow. This was a heavy burden to bear; yet, Paul understood his position as a leader and was willing to accept the burden. The fact is that every church member stands as an example to others, but too many people decide to shirk their responsibilities. They fail to lead others to Jesus Christ. Paul was an example and so are you.

While Paul understood his leadership position as an example, he also knew his source of strength and the pattern for godly living. He did not simply tell the Corinthian church members to follow him wherever he went. He qualified the responsibility to follow. He said, "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). If he failed in his life for Christ, he did not want them following his wrong example. While he knew others were watching him and while he understood others would try to follow him, he really wanted to direct their attention toward the One who would never let them down. In essence Paul was telling them that they could follow him if they wanted to; however, the One they should have followed was Jesus Christ. We exist on the earth to bring Him honor and glory. Is your life God-honoring?

## Challenge To Behave Properly in Worship

### LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will compare suitable behavior in the early churches with proper conduct in churches today.

### SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:2-16.

Background Scripture: 1 Chronicles 16:27-29; John 4:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 1 Timothy 3:14-16.

Devotional Reading: Orderly Behavior, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 7.

### Introduction

The church members at Corinth faced some trying times as they served God in this sinful city. They were in an evil culture and its rebellious principles had begun to influence them. Paul challenged them to be especially careful as they went about their daily activities. He wanted them to be positive witnesses of Jesus Christ, not to conform to the image of the world.

The behavior of a church and its members in modern society continues to be an important part of the function of a church. Too many church members think they can continue worldly actions and still remain positive witnesses for Christ. This is simply not true. Paul wrote to Timothy as pastor of the church at Ephesus. The members of the church there had some problems that needed attention. Paul wanted to travel there and instruct them further in proper behavior in the house of God. "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Those people needed a refresher course in proper behavior in their church. People in churches today need to remember what it takes to positively influence others.

What kind of behavior is appropriate for members of churches today? How can a church conduct its business to become more effective in its outreach to a lost and dying world? In the verses of this lesson Paul taught some principles that will serve churches of all ages in making worship meaningful.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Worship Should Be Relevant

Paul began this section by commending the church at Corinth for not deserting the teaching it had received. He called those teachings “the ordinances.” This statement means “the traditions that had been passed down from the days of Jesus Christ.” These matters were true and could not be compromised. The members of this church kept these things in their minds, but now they were living the traditions passed down by the apostles.

Paul introduced an idea to lessen the bitterness against what he would soon teach. He showed the principle of rank or authority. The one in authority over man is Jesus Christ. Few would question this fact. Paul continued by declaring that man had the authoritative position over woman. This is true in family matters as well as in a church. The Bible decrees that the pastor of a church must be a male (1 Tim. 3:2). While this is not popular in today’s society, it is the biblical standard. Therefore, the male is in a leadership position over the female. This should not cause distress for godly women. Not only is the man in an authoritative position over the woman but also God is in an authoritative position over Jesus Christ. How can people complain over their God-appointed role when Jesus Christ, the Son of God, never complained about His role of a submissive Son. All scriptural positions are honorable in service to God.

Does this submissive role mean that ladies have no real position of service in a New Testament church? Paul never diminished the role of women in worship. In fact, Paul indicated that ladies have the opportunity to teach and pray in the worship of a church (1 Cor. 11:5—“prayeth or prophesieth”). Within her role as a member of a church, each lady has an opportunity to fill important positions within the church of her membership. On another occasion Paul placed one restriction on women who

teach. He said that women should not “teach, nor . . . usurp authority over the man” (1 Tim. 2:12). This means that women do not have the right to dominate the leadership role of men. What roles should a woman not hold in a church? She should not hold the offices of pastor or deacon (1 Tim. 3:2, 12). Though many times women can actually be better teachers than men, the above verse indicates they should not be placed in a position of teaching adult men. Any other role may be filled by women in a church. They may teach teenagers and children, sing specials, give testimonies, pray publicly and participate in many other roles within the church. These do not sound like second-class roles for women. Women are highly exalted for their willingness to serve God.

One of the problems faced by this church was that of women doing their daily activities and worshiping without their heads being covered. While not covering the head presents no problems for the culture of the United States, it did present problems then. Good moral women of that day wore veils to cover their heads and lower faces. Only a few types of women would go out uncovered. The vestal virgins (temple prostitutes of Aphrodite) shaved their heads and proudly went uncovered. The immoral women of the city did not shave their heads, but did uncover their heads. The lesbians of the city uncovered their heads and cut their hair to appear like men. These women were immoral and openly exhibited their disregard for common decency. Paul did not want the ladies in the church at Corinth to be identified with these immoral women. He wanted them to have a character of honesty and decency. His request was relevant for their society. They needed to show their morality by their dress.

The present generation faces a similar problem. Many fashions of the day paint a picture of immorality. For ladies, baring the midriff, wearing short skirts or dresses and uncovering a large portion of the chest give the suggestion of immorality. For men, baring the thighs and unbuttoning shirts low give the same suggestion. We are showing the young people of today that it really does not matter what a person wears (or fails to wear). Fashionable clothing is acceptable to some no matter how it looks. However, immodest clothing is never acceptable to God. He is extremely displeased when men and women uncover their bodies in public. We should not associate too closely

with the world. If we love the world, the love of God is not in us (1 John 2:15).

Worship must be relevant for our generation. Whatever we do must reflect the positive character of God. This will be evidenced by our dress, actions and attitudes.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Worship Should Honor God

The creation of man proves the importance of worshiping God. Man is not the result of accidental mutations that began in the primordial ooze and culminated in what we are today. Mankind is the crowning achievement of God's creation. We were created for a specific purpose—to honor the Lord.

Man was created in the image of God. "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen. 1:27). In what way was man created in the image of God? He is much more than a physical creation. All of the universe shares this characteristic. Even the planets are physical. Man is also more than body and mind. Animal life has both of these characteristics. Man was created with body, mind and spirit. No other part of creation has this threefold nature. This reflects the character, the image of God—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

First Corinthians 11:7 declares that man is not only the image but also the glory of God. This indicates that man was the goal of creation. God did not create man as a missing link to something higher. Man is the glory of God. In what way is man the glory of God? Man was created in innocence. Adam willfully partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. This one act of rebellion cast all his descendants into sin. God did not destroy that rebellious part of creation. Instead, He provided a way of redemption. The true glory of God in man is shown by the marvelous love and great grace of God which offers every man the opportunity to receive eternal life. The cost of redemption was not cheap. Redemption required the precious blood of the only begotten Son of God (1 Peter 1:18-20). What a beautiful portrait of love. God did not have to save man, but He chose to do so.

Because God has been so gracious to man, we should give Him the glory due His name. Men and women have the opportunity to serve and glorify Him. Each person must be willing to fulfill his own role in the overall purpose of God.

3. \_\_\_\_\_

Worship Should  
Emphasize Family

Often churches tend to fracture families in their worship. There are times when men separate from ladies and parents separate from children. While it is not wrong for families to divide on occasion in a church, too often they are separated. The ideal is that the entire family should worship together.

When the family becomes fractured, God does not receive the greatest glory. Remember that He is the One who created man and woman. He is also the One who brought man and woman together to form the first family. "All things [are] of God" (1 Cor. 11:12). In the Garden of Eden, man was alone and it was not good. God created Eve out of Adam and made her the completing part of Adam. Without the wife, the husband is incomplete. Without the husband, the wife is incomplete. There is nothing wrong with this arrangement. God intended it to be this way. The reason for this completion is so that both partners can better serve God. They complement each other in honoring the Lord.

Conclusion

The matters Paul discussed in these verses caused controversy in his day. Some people did not want to follow the pattern he had set for them. He called them contentious. This means "loving a quarrel." These people were not trying to worship God. They were rebelling against the teachings of Paul. He declared that this be not the custom among the churches of God. They needed to follow the patterns that would best promote the work of God.

Often, people become consumed with having their own way. Paul had called these people "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). They were really acting like children by demanding their own way. Now was the time for them to grow up and start acting mature. When people must have their own way, they are not concerned about the work of God. They only think of themselves. Our hearts should not be motivated by selfish pursuits. We should simply want what is best for the work of God.

## Challenge To Observe the Lord's Supper Worthily

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain different attitudes toward the Lord's Supper.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.  
Background Scripture: Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:19, 20;  
John 15:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:7-11.  
Devotional Reading: Jesus Took Bread, Matthew 26:26-30.

### Introduction

A controversial doctrine among religions is the Lord's Supper. Almost every denomination has different ideas concerning what the Lord's Supper is or does. Before going into the discussion of the lesson Text, we will briefly present some of these primary doctrinal differences.

Some people have different opinions about what elements may be used when partaking of the Lord's Supper. The biblical method was to use unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine. These elements were part of the Passover celebration. Some have concluded that the actual elements are not important because the ordinance is symbolic. Some stoop so low that they use grape Kool-aid and crackers. The Lord carefully chose the elements of this ordinance, and we must follow His example.

Some religions give different purposes for partaking the Lord's Supper. Certain groups look upon the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine as being miraculously turned into the actual (though invisible) body and blood of Christ thereby imparting saving grace. Other groups teach that Christ works through the unleavened bread and fruit of the vine by imparting saving

grace. Both of these groups believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacrament with the ability to work salvation in the life of the one participating. Baptists believe that the Lord's Supper is a pictorial and memorial ordinance which reminds one of the great sacrifice of Jesus Christ in providing salvation.

Religions differ about who may participate in the ordinance. Most religious beliefs accept the false teaching that the Lord's Supper is necessary for salvation. This false belief results in all people's being offered the Lord's Supper. Conservative Baptists believe that the Lord's Supper is restricted to the membership of the church celebrating the ordinance. The reasoning is that a church only has authority over its own members; therefore, it can only offer the Lord's Supper to those under its authority.

These doctrinal differences might seem insignificant to many people. However, the differences are vital to our belief concerning Christ and His churches. Some compromise and choose to drift from the biblical standard by substituting the teachings of man for the doctrines of God (Matt. 15:9).

This lesson examines the teachings of Paul concerning this beautiful ordinance and shows the proper attitude concerning it. Are we thinking only of ourselves, or are we thinking of our relationship with Christ and our work for Him through the church of our membership?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Hindrances

The church members at Corinth faced a different problem in dealing with the Lord's Supper than that faced by church members today. Their celebration was more than just a small part of their occasional worship. It was a celebration that rivaled the Jewish Passover. This was a common practice among the early churches, but the church at Corinth had allowed this beautiful celebration to deteriorate into something that stirred up trouble in the congregation.

That church had in its number people from different social standings. Some members were extremely rich while others were extremely poor. Some members in the church were free while some were slaves. Each of these distinctions had the potential for trouble. How did the problem escalate into division in the church at Corinth (1 Cor. 11:18)? Those who were wealthy had much more free time than did those who had to work long hours simply to continue their existence. On the day of the Lord's Supper celebration, the Corinthian church would gather

for a love feast (called “feasts of charity” in Jude 12). Those who were wealthy would be able to gather quite early and would quickly fill the dining area of the house in which they met. The latecomers would then be segregated to the outside courtyard. Those who arrived early would already have been eating and those who came late would have little left. Paul taught the need of waiting for the entire congregation to gather before they continued with the meal.

This social division might have seemed natural for many of the people there. The wealthy undoubtedly had possessed numerous slaves. They were accustomed to having their meals served and the servants waiting until later to eat. Because this was normal to them, they felt no shame when they patterned their church love feast in the same way. It felt natural, but it was producing a spirit of division in this church. Those who received Christ as their Savior were supposed to have all barriers removed (Gal. 3:28). Though Christ had broken down the walls between them (Eph. 2:14), too many members were making a difference between social classes.

Not only were the people divided socially but they were also divided doctrinally. Paul said the social divisions had proceeded to “heresies” (1 Cor. 11:19). They had differing beliefs that caused division on certain issues. Each person was more concerned with his own wants than in the care of the church of his membership. Paul refused to praise them for their behavior in the church at Corinth.

This kind of behavior showed their lack of respect for the Corinthian church itself. They despised the church of God (1 Cor. 11:22). When they should have been seeking the promotion of this church and all the members of it, they were humiliating the poorer members and bringing a lack of respect for the work of God.

These people should have been focused on the Lord. Instead of concentrating on Him, they were concerned only with their own meal. Paul could not praise them. Instead, he condemned their selfishness.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Honoring God

Paul reminded this church of the institution of the ordinance. This should have produced great excitement to the Corinthian church.

The instructions came directly from God (1 Cor. 11:23). These words were not new to the church members at Corinth. As Paul ministered to them during his stay in the city, he taught them these words. Now he reinforced these words in his inspired letter.

The Lord's Supper was to be observed with special elements. It was instituted from the Passover Feast. That means the bread was unleavened and the cup was the fruit of the vine. When preparing for Passover, the Jewish family would carefully search the house for any leaven. No leaven was allowed anywhere in the dwelling place. The fruitful vine always pictured the bountiful provision of God. The deepest meaning of these two elements pointed toward Jesus, the ultimate sacrifice for sin.

The Lord's Supper was pictorial. The unleavened bread pictured the body of Christ which was sacrificed as the offering for sin. Leaven was always a picture of sin. For the bread to be a picture of the sinless body of Christ, it had to be unleavened. The contents of the cup pictured the pure blood of Jesus Christ which was shed to pay the price for sin. The Old Testament had many animal sacrifices; yet, the blood of these sacrifices had no power to produce redemption. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4).

The Lord's Supper was to be observed with anticipation (1 Cor. 11:26). Every time a church celebrates the Lord's Supper, it testifies of its belief that Jesus is coming again. What would be the benefit of a spiritual leader who died and remained in the grave? Jesus was crucified and buried, but He arose from the dead. He is alive today and will someday return.

Observing the Lord's Supper is one way church members can celebrate the wonderful work of Jesus Christ. When we partake of the unleavened bread and the fruit of the vine, we are shouting to the world that we believe the Word of God. We proclaim that the sacrifice of Jesus is the only way of salvation. We declare that Jesus is coming again.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Horrible Consequences

Paul concluded his explanation of the Lord's Supper with words of warning.

His first admonition was for the people to go through self-examination (1 Cor. 11:28). James wrote about the tendency of natural man. "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer,

he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was" (James 1:23, 24). No one should partake of the Lord's Supper lightly. It is not a matter of frivolous behavior. It is a time of solemn contemplation. Only after deep, honest self-examination should a person partake of the Lord's Supper.

A person who lightly participates in this celebration is in danger of judgment from God—"eateth and drinketh damnation to himself" (1 Cor. 11:29). Damnation means "judgment." God will judge the motives behind every action. God will judge his heart. Will God's chastisement be severe? These verses indicate that some Corinthian church members faced sickness and even death because of their failure to reverence the sacrificial work of Jesus Christ. A person needs to go through a time of personal evaluation. When he fully deals with his own motives and failures, he need not fear judgment from God.

### Conclusion

Paul's final words returned to his earlier condemnation of their behavior. The members had been selfish when arriving to celebrate the Lord's Supper. Paul wanted their celebration to be a joyous time of mutual sharing. They needed to consider the other person more than self. If one group arrived before another, they should have all waited so they could celebrate together.

What is our focus when celebrating the Lord's Supper? We should focus on the Lord. Anything less is an insult to the Lord.

Have you placed  your literature order?

## Challenge To Equip Church Members

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand that spiritual gifts were given to equip the members of the early churches for service.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 12:1-31.

Background Scripture: Acts 13:1, 2; Romans 12:3-8; Ephesians 4:7-12; 5:18, 19.

Devotional Reading: The Purpose of Spiritual Gifts, Ephesians 4:12-15.

### Introduction

The subject Paul discussed in 1 Corinthians 12—14 was his understanding of spiritual gifts. The church at Corinth had been greatly influenced by the pagan society of its city. Most of the members of that church had been involved in pagan rituals. Those rituals were ecstatic in religious fervor. The excitement was contagious. Possibly the young Christians missed some of the emotional highs that they had experienced in their false worship. They were inclined to bring the physical excitement into the worship of their church. They forgot that the emotional highs and physical excitement led the pagan worship into sexual orgies.

Church members today must walk the fine line between worship that encourages them from an emotional and spiritual standpoint and worship that simply stimulates the flesh. There is nothing wrong with a spiritual song that makes the listener tap the foot. But if the song only touches the toe and never affects the heart, it is wrong. The Scriptures advise church

members to teach and admonish each other through psalms, hymns and spiritual songs (Col. 3:16). Songs and worship are not entertainment. Songs and worship must instruct from a spiritual standpoint.

This lesson will focus on the reason God gave the spiritual gifts to the Corinthian church. Realize that no gift was given to this church to prove one's salvation. No gift was given to confirm one's spiritual maturity. The gifts came for the purpose of edifying this particular church.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Declaration

Paul launched his discussion of spiritual gifts by reminding the people of this church of their spiritual history. They were Gentiles who had recently come to a saving knowledge of Christ. They had spent their entire lives in the worship of "dumb idols." This phrase sprang from the psalmist's description of idols (Psalm 115:5-7). Because those false gods had no life and no real spiritual influence, why would the people in this church want to return to false worship?

Instead, Paul tried to draw them even closer to the source of their spiritual power. Paul knew the problems faced by many in that congregation. They faced persecution on a daily basis. Living under Roman rule, they were required to have no king but caesar. If a person stood accused of treason against Rome, he was required to curse his former leader. Jesus was their king. A true Christian could never call Jesus accursed. Their declarations should be that Jesus is the Lord. To be acquitted from the charge of treason, one had to declare that caesar is lord. These church members had One who stood above caesar in their hearts. Jesus was their Lord.

Notice how those statements stood in relation to the leading of the Spirit of God. No one who was indwelt by the Holy Spirit could ever place a curse on Jesus. That was declaring that Jesus was of the devil. No saved person would dare make such a heinous accusation. Because these people were facing condemnation for treason, it was unlikely that anyone not indwelt by the Holy Spirit would declare that Jesus is Lord.

A great challenge presents itself for every child of God. Please do more than just say the words that Jesus is the Lord. Live as though He is Lord. Our lives will declare what we believe concerning Jesus Christ.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Diversity

Now Paul teaches on the subject of spiritual gifts. He wanted the church members to know why these gifts were bestowed upon them.

It was God who bestowed spiritual gifts on His church at Corinth (1 Cor. 12:3-6). The Holy Spirit bestowed the “diversities of gifts.” Gifts means “spiritual endowments.” These are abilities that a person should use for God’s honor and glory. This speaks of the calling to service and the provision of the spiritual abilities to accomplish the work of God. God conferred the “differences of administrations.” Administration means “aid, service or ministry.” This speaks of the heart and motivation of service. God the Father granted “diversities of operations.” Operations refers to the effect produced by a work. This is our word for energy. This speaks of the ability to accomplish the service.

Every Christian receives the “manifestation of the Spirit” (1 Cor. 12:7). Too many church members think they have nothing to offer the work of God. That is not true. The problem many face is that they limit what they consider to be spiritual gifts. They think only flashy abilities are spiritual talents. There were many different kinds of gifts. In the subsequent verses Paul discussed many different kind of works he termed spiritual gifts. Such things as wisdom, knowledge, faith, preaching, teaching, helping others, leading the church and others are listed in this chapter. Churches today need the talents of the members. One needs to use his talent in service to the King.

It is God who determines what talent a person will receive (1 Cor. 12:9). You might want the talent to sing, but God might want you to use your natural talent to help others. You might want the talent to teach a class, but God might want you to use physical skills—carpentry or some other skill. We mistakenly think that certain spiritual endowments are better than others. If God has granted you a talent, it is the best thing for your life. God makes no mistakes. Peter was on the roof praying to God. He was seeking God’s will for his life. God gave him a dream. He saw a sheet coming down containing all manner of animals—clean and unclean. The voice from Heaven told him to kill the animals and eat. His response was that he had never eaten an unclean animal. God’s answer to Peter was, “What God hath cleansed, that call not thou common” (Acts 10:15). Peter had been busy judging whether others were acceptable to

God. He needed to do what God wanted. The same is true for us. We must do what God wants. He wants us to use the talents and abilities He has given. He knows far better than we what is best for us.

God has diversity in His spiritual endowments. He will not give everyone the same talent. If He did that, so much would remain undone. We must be open to the leadership of God. He will show us our abilities if we open our hearts to Him.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Dependence

Paul gave a beautiful illustration of a church. He said it was like the physical body. This illustration shows the interdependence of the various members of a local church.

The body is composed of many members (1 Cor. 12:14). When examining the human body, one notices the various parts. The body has eyes, ears, a nose, hands, arms, legs, feet and various internal organs too numerous to mention. This illustrates the membership of a church. There are many different families, many different occupations, many different ages and many different interests; yet, as the various parts go together to form the human body, the individual members go together to form the body of Christ, a church.

Each member has a different but necessary function (1 Cor. 12:15-17). Think of how silly it sounds to have the foot leave from the body because it is not the hand. The foot has a necessary function in the body. It does not need to be the hand. Think also of how silly it sounds to think of the whole body as a single, gigantic eye, ear or nose. How could the gigantic eye motivate? There would be no legs or feet; yet, some people fall into such traps as these. They think, I cannot sing a special so I do not feel like a part of the church and if I cannot teach a class, I am nothing. Every part of a church serves a different but necessary function. If we all did the same thing, much of a church's work would go unfinished. There must be diversity of responsibility. Your work is necessary.

Each member is equally important. Please do not think that certain jobs in a church are more important than others. We think that visible jobs such as pastor, teacher, music director, singing a special and others are higher callings than other less noticeable works. Every job in a church is important. If the sanctuary were filled with trash, who would listen to the singing or preaching? If the grounds were not kept, who would

even turn in our driveways. Every work for the Lord is of great importance to the overall functioning of a church.

One of the reasons for equal importance for every member of a church is so that everyone will have a love and concern for the other members (1 Cor. 12:25, 26). A body needs to function properly so it will have no division. A few years ago I suffered a back injury. Only one vertebrae in my back was injured, but from that point down, my body felt the effects. A church is the same. When one member of a church is hurting, the entire church should feel the pain. When one member of a church has been blessed, the entire church should rejoice with him. We should not have jealousy over the blessings that others receive. Their good fortune is a blessing to a church.

A church is not composed of independent parts. A church has many members who are fully dependent on each other. They can hurt together and rejoice together. They are a body of Christ.

### Conclusion

Why did God choose to bestow spiritual gifts on the Corinthian church? It was so that church could function more productively. The early churches had special gifts that have since been taken away. Churches today still have spiritual gifts (faith, hope, love—1 Cor. 13:13) so that they can function more productively. We do not have miraculous spiritual gifts, but the gifts we have remaining are as beneficial and as important to us as those miraculous spiritual gifts were to the early churches.

No one will have all the spiritual talents. This is an argument against some who teach that every person who is saved must have the evidence of speaking in tongues. In his list of rhetorical questions, Paul asked, “Do all speak with tongues?” (1 Cor. 12:30). The answer was no. But this does not mean we have no spiritual talents. Paul even admonished the church at Corinth to desire the best spiritual gifts (verse 31). What is the more excellent way he proposed? That would be the way of godly love discussed in the following lesson. Let us serve God by using the best gift He has conferred. Let us serve Him with love.

## Challenge To Accept the Greatest Gift

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will conclude that love is the greatest gift.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

Background Scripture: John 3:14-18; 14:21-28; Romans 5:5-8; 8:35-39; Ephesians 2:1-5; Revelation 1:1-5.

Devotional Reading: God Is Love, 1 John 4:8.

### Introduction

What is your idea of love? The concept of love is so mysterious that most people might feel the emotion, but never be able to put into words the feeling of love. The language of the New Testament has different words for love. Each word expresses a different thought. One word is eros. It points toward the physical feelings. The English idea would be lust or passion. It is not used anywhere in the New Testament. Another word is phileo with the idea of affection or deep friendship. The final word for love is agape. This is the highest ideal of love. It is used throughout the New Testament to describe God's love for man. This is the word used in the lesson Text and translated charity.

The thirteenth chapter of 1 Corinthians has been called the great hymn of love. Though the words of this chapter say much about the impact of love in the life of the child of God, it never tries to define love. Instead, it gives principles of how this spiritual gift governs every positive thought or action in a Christian's life. The goal of this lesson is a challenge to every member of every New Testament church to accept the greatest

of all spiritual gifts and to live according to its unselfish principles. How can love help you make decisions in everyday life?

1. \_\_\_\_\_ The Centrality of Love

The previous chapter showed the institution of the spiritual gifts in the Corinthian church. This chapter begins by showing that those gifts should have been governed and directed by the principles of love.

What you say should be governed by love (1 Cor. 13:1). Whatever language skills or oratorical abilities a person has, if he has no love behind his speech, what would be the benefit? He would be like a sounding trumpet and clanging cymbals. Certain heathen worship included the incessant beating of cymbals and blaring trumpets. Trying to speak to others without love was no better than what went on in the world.

Your religious activity should be governed by love (verse 2). Many saved people long for greater knowledge. There is nothing wrong with wanting to understand more about Jesus. People need to make sure that their preaching and/or teaching is built on the principle of love. Many preachers and teachers have presented biblical lessons but have spoken in a vengeful manner. One can teach with a hug or with a club. The choice should be easy to make. Everyone responds to a message of love. The members of the church at Corinth loved putting people on pedestals. Paul told them if they had spiritual abilities but failed to work out of love, they were nothing. Love should govern all Christian works.

Even your sacrifices should be governed by love (verse 3). Paul used two illustrations. First, he spoke of a person giving his wealth to feed those who were hungry. How could giving to feed and clothe the poor be abused? Ananias and Sapphira were a married couple in the church at Jerusalem (Acts 5:1-11). Others in that church had begun giving sacrificially to the work of God. These two wanted to get in on the glory. They determined to give the proceeds of a land sale. They got more than they thought they would, so they decided to lie about the sale price. The sin was not in giving a portion rather than all. The sin was lying to God (Acts 5:4). They were not motivated by love. They were motivated by personal acclaim.

The second illustration was giving one's life for the cause of Christ. The possibility was real that these people might be called upon to make the ultimate sacrifice for the cause of

Christ. Paul wanted them to face reality and be prepared to give themselves for Christ because they loved Him. Though people gave financial gifts to feed the poor and though they gave the ultimate sacrifice and died for Christ, if they had no love, there was no profit, no lasting benefit.

Paul issued a great challenge to these people to live by love. Everything they did needed to have love as the motivation behind the action.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ The Character of Love

After showing how important love was to everyday living, Paul launched into a lesson on what attitudes and actions godly love would produce. Having love will do more than put a smile on the face. It will produce real changes in one's life-style. Paul gave fifteen different traits which show the character of love.

Love endures much. "Charity suffereth long, . . . endureth all things" (1 Cor. 13:4, 7). Man tends to strike back when bad things happen. We think that if a person does something to hurt us, he deserves our contempt and whatever we choose to do in revenge. The story is told of Lincoln and Stanton. Stanton had a great deal of contempt for Lincoln calling him "a low cunning clown" and "the original gorilla." Yet, when Abraham Lincoln became President of the United States, he chose Stanton to serve as his war minister because he was best qualified for the position. Lincoln treated Stanton with the greatest respect. The night came when President Lincoln lay dead by the assassin's bullet. Stanton stood over the body with tears streaming down his face. He spoke these words, "There lies the greatest ruler of men the world has ever seen." Lincoln's patient spirit had won his bitterest enemy. Love will help us endure the harshness that enters our lives. Love will help us face the most trying times and to emerge victorious. Love endures all things.

Love is not concerned with self. "Charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, . . . seeketh not her own" (verses 4, 5). Too many people are involved in activities of a church to receive honor. That is not the proper motivation for service. Others think that everything should be done the way they want. A church does not exist to serve the individual members. The members exist to serve God through the church of their membership. A famous former president made a statement for which this writer will substitute some words. Ask not what your church can do for you; ask what you can do for God

through your church. If a person only serves to receive recognition or to gain something from it, his motivation is wrong. Love only seeks to serve God.

Love has a concern about right and wrong. “Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth” (verse 6). Some people think that if we are motivated by love, we cannot take a strong stand against things. Jesus is the Son of God. The Bible declares that “God is love.” Because Jesus is God, then He is also love; yet, Jesus did not let the thieves at the Temple go unchallenged. He made a scourge and drove them out of the grounds of the Temple. True love goes beyond loving other people. It loves God first and foremost. The world will rejoice in evil and despise the truth (Rom. 1:32). Godly love will rejoice in the truth and will never rejoice in evil things. If you rejoice in your petty sins, know that you are not motivated by love for God (1 John 2:15). Love rejoices in truth and sorrows over evil.

Love has hope for today and the future. Love “believeth all things, hopeth all things” (1 Cor. 13:7). Many people in the world today have no confidence in what happens around them. Their dearest friend can tell them something and they might not believe him. True love will sometimes look beyond the faults of friends or family and will see something better than expected. If we can trust the love of God to save us, we can trust the love of God to sustain and keep us. We need hope for today. True love also gives hope for the future. The word indicates a triumphant hope. The biblical word for hope always has a future meaning. It indicates one’s understanding that his future is built upon the promises of God and that only God’s good can come. God’s love will produce that good for us. We need love to show our hope in God, both for today and the future.

Godly love has a specific character about it. Everything we observe about this love is positive, uplifting, helpful and hopeful. Are these character traits evident in your life? If not, then turn to the love of God.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ The Continuation of Love

The final section of this chapter has the theme of the permanence of love as the greatest spiritual gift. First Corinthians 13:8 begins with a beautiful statement of this fact—“Charity never faileth.” Godly love will never fail. It will always be at the forefront of motivation for service to God.

Some people want to stress things other than love. Some beliefs stress the importance of speaking in tongues. They feel that everyone who is saved will have their faith manifested by speaking in tongues. This is their focus; yet, Paul gave assurance that the miraculous spiritual gifts would soon cease (fade out, vanish away, stop entirely). Those miraculous gifts were necessary when Jesus instituted His church because the Bible was not completed. Paul made a statement that has been greatly abused in recent years. "But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away" (1 Cor. 13:10). The general context of these verses is on the divine knowledge given by God. Knowledge was described as being partial, incomplete and cloudy ("darkly" in a mirror). But when the completed knowledge of God comes, the incomplete will be done away. When the completed revelation of the Bible arrived, the partial methods of information ceased. The miraculous spiritual gifts ended at that time. They were no longer needed because they were childish things. We mature as we grow in understanding the Bible.

Though the partial things ended, the "better way" of love never ends. Even in this generation love is the motivation for service. "For the love of Christ constraineth us" (2 Cor. 5:14). We are compelled to serve God because of His love for us and our love for Him. Love goes on forever.

### Conclusion

This final verse gives one more challenge to children of God who are members of New Testament churches. We have available to us three special gifts that enable us for service to Christ. Faith helps us know that God will be with us through any situation. Hope helps us look beyond the day and its troubles to the return of Jesus Christ. Love motivates us to serve God to the best of our abilities. We see what He did for us and we want to return to Him our best. Love encourages children of God to draw closer to the One who sacrificed His all for us. May we all exhibit the traits of love in our lives.

**It's later than you think.**



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## Challenge To Understand Spiritual Gifts

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will discuss abuses of spiritual gifts then and now.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 14:1-22.

Background Scripture: Matthew 7:21-23; Acts 8:14-21;  
James 1:16, 17.

Devotional Reading: Establishing the Saints, Romans 1:11-13.

### Introduction

This chapter reveals the abuses of certain spiritual gifts in the church at Corinth. This is timely because of today's misunderstanding of the miraculous spiritual gifts and tongues in particular. As we begin this study of the abuse of the miraculous spiritual gifts, it would be wise for us to understand the subject.

One of the prominent words in this chapter is tongues. It is used eight times in this chapter and an additional six times in a general discussion of spiritual gifts (chapters 12—14). It comes from a word referring to the tongue as a member of the body but usually implies a specific language. This word was used in other places to denote people of different lands and dialects. In the Bible it never refers to a stream of gibberish with no understandable meaning. It always refers to definite languages.

Why is this definition so important? The charismatic movement began in earnest early in the twentieth century. These people believed that God had granted them the ability to speak in actual human languages. They tried to revive the New

Testament pattern of mission work by going into new areas without studying the language of that area. They began speaking to the people there in what they considered the gift of tongues. The natives stood in disbelief because the people were spewing out syllables with no real meaning. The charismatic missionaries did not have the biblical gift of tongues. To justify their continued practice, they borrowed an idea from the liberal theologians of their day. They considered their experience of tongues as a heavenly prayer language. For them, experience was more important than Scripture. Most charismatics hold one of two opinions. Some believe that speaking in tongues is a necessary evidence of one's salvation. Others teach that speaking in tongues is a necessary proof of one's spiritual maturity. Both of these contradict scriptural declarations that not all children of God will speak in tongues (1 Cor. 12:30).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Preaching and Tongues Compared

In this chapter Paul presented a great comparison between tongues and prophecy. Prophecy means "presenting the will of God to an audience." We often think of the Old Testament office of prophet as telling future events. While a part of his function was to give warning of what would take place, a larger part of the responsibility of the prophet was to tell the people what God said. It was a forthtelling of the purpose and plan of God. Isaiah did more than tell the people of the coming Messiah. He told them why they were facing a time of punishment. Daniel did more than give the vision of the seventy weeks. He also showed the people how they could live for God. The prophetic office dispensed the message of God to His people.

The New Testament office of prophet was similar. Sometimes the prophet would tell of future events. John and Paul did this in their writings; yet, each of these men gave special instructions for the people of God who were their contemporaries. The seven letters in the book of Revelation gave instructions to actual churches. The ministry of prophecy was important to the churches of the first century. They did not have the completed revelation of God, the Bible. They only had partial knowledge and needed special help from God. The Lord used the prophets to fill this need.

Early in this chapter Paul showed the difference in the gifts of tongues and prophecy. Tongues had limited benefit to the Corinthian church. If a person spoke in some language that no

one in that church understood, who was helped? No one learned if the words were not understood. This would be similar to you sending words into the air and letting the wind carry them away (1 Cor. 14:9). In contrast to this, preaching serves to help a church. “But he that prophesieth speaketh unto men to edification, and exhortation, and comfort” (verse 3). These three areas are important to the spiritual growth of a church.

Edification comes from a word referring to the construction of a building. It means “to dome up or finish the roof.” The preaching of the Bible helps to build up an individual spiritually. He learns more about God and understands how to live for Him. He becomes more mature spiritually. Notice the contrast between speaking in tongues and preaching (verse 4). Tongues did nothing to build up others. Speaking in tongues was often used to bring prestige to the individual. It was of little benefit to a church. Preaching serves to build up a church numerically, spiritually and emotionally.

Exhortation comes from a word meaning “to call alongside.” This is the root word for the Paraclete, the Holy Spirit. Preaching the Bible calls for the individual to draw closer to the Lord and to take an active part in His work. Preaching is beneficial because it reveals the true nature of God, increases the church’s understanding, declares the purpose of God and teaches truth (verse 6). Paul gave an illustration. Musical instruments can make beautiful music when the chords blend together. If you permit several people without skills to take those musical instruments and try to make music, a cacophony (harshness or discordant sounds) will emerge. It will not be beautiful. On the battlefield a trumpet sounds to signal an advance or retreat. If the trumpet does not sound clearly, the soldiers will not know what to do. Preaching is the clear sound which can encourage a church to do what is right.

Comfort has the meaning of consolation. Preaching the Word of God brings solace to a grieving individual. Paul wrote about the hope of the child of God. The Lord will return for His children. In conclusion of this thought, Paul wrote, “Wherefore comfort one another with these words” (1 Thess. 4:18).

There was great difference between the gifts of tongues and prophecy. One had few benefits while the other greatly benefited the Corinthian church. Paul encouraged the church at Corinth to stop emphasizing the lesser benefit. He wanted those people to focus on understanding God’s Word.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Praying and Tongues

Modern charismatics have embraced the idea of the heavenly prayer language. Their proof for this concept comes from this passage of Scripture. What is amusing is that these verses do exactly the opposite of what they want. Paul was not encouraging a new use of the spiritual gift of languages (tongues). Instead, he was reporting the abuses of that gift. He wanted their minds far away from the heretical beliefs of the idolatrous religions of Corinth.

The cry today for the heavenly prayer language is to stop thinking and open your mind to what God will give you. One problem with this is that it directly contradicts careful admonitions of the Bible. John wrote words to encourage saved people to understand that false doctrine comes from the devil, not from God. "Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1 John 4:1). John wanted people to examine experience by the truth of God's Word. Too many people want to judge truth by personal experience. This call to open one's mind to whatever comes contradicts what Paul said. His prayers would not be just opening the mind to whatever comes (1 Cor. 14:15). His prayers would be with understanding.

The practice of praying in an unknown language (the heavenly prayer language) does little more than bring confusion to a church (verse 16). Picture what might have taken place. A service is in progress. An individual gets up in the middle of the service and begins praying in some heavenly prayer language. What should be the response of the people? Should they cry out, Amen? Amen means "a full agreement with what was said." How could an individual fully agree with something he does not understand? For all he knows, the speaker could have cursed God in the unknown language. This could only bring confusion to a church.

The concept of a heavenly prayer language was not the biblical practice of tongues. This gift came first on the day of Pentecost, and its expression did not change. It was a gift to open doors of utterance so that unbelievers could have the opportunity to hear the gospel message. Other claims for tongues are unscriptural and unbiblical.

4. \_\_\_\_\_ Preference of Paul

Lest anyone think that Paul minimized the gift of tongues, he hastened to remind those people that he had experienced the

gift of tongues more than anyone. Being a missionary to many places, cultures and dialects, Paul could better serve people without an translator. He could enter a town with a strange dialect and be able to speak to them in everyday language. Paul knew this gift had benefited the work of God. But even in this he gave a disclaimer.

He understood that in general it was better to speak five words in the language that could be understood than to speak myriads of words in a language no one understood. For most congregations in the United States, what benefit would there be for a man to come and preach an entire message in Russian without the benefit of a translator? It is much better to speak a shorter message in understandable words than a long message in words no one can understand. Paul's preference was for understandable messages to be preached in every church.

The members of the church at Corinth needed to grow up in Christ. Remember that Paul had called them "babes in Christ" (1 Cor. 3:1). Their maturity was what he longed for; yet, these people continued to stress the childish gift of speaking in tongues. He reminded them of the warning God had given the people of Israel for their rebellion. They would hear the message preached in the language of other people. This served as a warning to them.

Tongues served as a tool to reach the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Preaching served to edify churches, but tongues served as a witnessing tool among those who were lost. Paul's preference was for people to hear, understand and heed the message preached.

### Conclusion

Because many in the religious world are abusing these spiritual gifts, what should be the response of scriptural churches? Should Baptists forget the differences and seek to join hands and go forward? "Can two walk together, except they be agreed?" (Amos 3:3). Members of scriptural churches must learn the truth about tongues and stand for what is right. We cannot compromise the truth.

## Challenge To Emphasize Priorities

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand the priority of decency and order in the Lord's churches.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 14:23-40.  
Background Scripture: Matthew 6:33; Mark 13:10; Romans 1:16; 15:17-20; 2 Corinthians 8:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:19, 20; 1 John 4:6; Revelation 1:11, 17.  
Devotional Reading: The Preeminent One, Colossians 1:18.

### Introduction

What kind of worship does your church have? In recent years, many churches have gone through some changes in conduct of praise and worship. Some churches remain with a traditional order of service while others adopt a more contemporary arrangement. Still others have a blended service with both traditional hymns and praise choruses. Is any one kind of worship better than the others? This lesson focuses on priorities in worship at the house of God. Is the focus of attention on spectacular events or on the worship of Jesus Christ?

In these verses Paul taught the members of the church at Corinth that they needed to remember why they gathered for worship. They were gathered to worship the Lord. If the worship focuses on styles rather than substance, the priority is on standardization. Remember that Paul's focus was on Jesus Christ above all else (1 Cor. 2:2).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Seeking the Lost

The early part of this chapter had drawn the distinction between the results of speaking in tongues and preaching the Word of God. The church members at Corinth had been so conscious of the flashy gift of speaking in tongues that they had stopped directing the attention of the lost toward Christ.

What was the focus of attention when the Corinthian church was only concerned about speaking in tongues? The attraction was the spectacular gift. Those seeking the Lord and desiring to know more about Him were distracted from their search. Instead, the spectacle of disorder and confusion drove them away. The normally sober and clear-thinking people had taken on a new personality. They were “beside themselves” and raving like lunatics. This did not draw the lost to Jesus Christ.

The contrast to this is preaching. A person comes to a service and hears people giving testimonies and the pastor preaching from God’s Word. He understands those words. He realizes his failure before God and decides to come to Jesus and be saved. The difference is in understanding. He cannot understand the foreign language, but he can understand the message of salvation in his own language.

The goal of every service should be the salvation of those who are unsaved. The songs should draw the heart to an understanding of the wonderful grace of Jesus. The prayers and testimonies should also focus on Christ. The message should draw people to see their place without Jesus. It should give them the only hope of eternal life.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Speaking

When gathering for a time of worship, what do we expect to gain? Some people come to church because they are expected. Others come because they are forced; yet, some people come to worship Jesus. Everyone has a part in the worship of a church. Notice what Paul said. “When ye come together, every one of you hath a psalm, hath a doctrine, hath a tongue, hath a revelation, hath an interpretation” (1 Cor. 14:26). Every service has different parts. Each part of the worship is important. Every member present is important. But the focus of every bit of worship should not be on edifying members of a church. When church members are edified instead of Jesus, problems begin.

What then is the priority within worship? Again the same two spiritual gifts will serve to illustrate where the attention

must be. Paul gave a certain limitation on individual involvement in a service. Those who were to speak in tongues could only number two or three at most. They needed to wait their turn so that the entire church could get the benefit of the message. If no one in the congregation could interpret the message, no one had the right to speak in tongues. This is far different from the present-day practice of tongues. Now people everywhere are encouraged to speak in tongues. There is no limitation about how many can do it. There is no need for an interpreter. This is in disagreement with the Bible. The focus should be on Jesus.

Even the testimony and preaching had limitations. Two or three was considered the ideal number of speakers (verse 29). But they did not have the right to say whatever popped into their heads. Everything they spoke was judged (weigh carefully, discriminate). This would keep false doctrine from creeping in under the heading of “a revelation from the Lord.” An important attitude of those speaking was that of deference. If a person spoke a message and another person desired to give his testimony, the first should not monopolize the floor but should defer to the other speaker (verse 30). Again the focus was on Christ, not on the speaker.

The goal of every speaker in worship should be for the edification, the growth of a church. Each message comes “that all may learn, and all may be comforted” (verse 31). If a service is directed toward the Lord, He will produce growth, not confusion. He wants peace to prevail in all churches everywhere. If actions in a church are producing confusion, it is not pleasing to God. Before you speak in any service—testimony time or business meeting—you should ask yourself whether your words will produce confusion or peace. God wants to produce peace and growth in His people.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Silence  
This section of the narrative is one that has caused controversy. This controversy comes from two opposing ideas of what it says. Some radically want to promote women to positions of pastoral leadership. They despise these words because they take them to limit the rights of women in worship. The others want to restrict the opportunities of women in times of worship. Hence, they take these words out of context and declare that women cannot speak even one word in an organized service.

Both of these ideas are wrong and disagree with Paul's teaching.

One of the key phrases in this passage is "keep silence in the churches" (1 Cor. 14:34). Does this actually mean what it says? Compare this phrase with a similar one in verse 28: "keep silence in the church." The discussion was on those seeking to speak in tongues without an interpreter. What was the conclusion? They were to keep silent and not speak in tongues without an interpreter. This phrase and the one in verse 34 have a similar prohibition. Since the general subject was speaking in tongues, this verse must maintain the same subject. It is not a prohibition of a godly woman speaking in prayer or testimony in worship. This was simply a ban of women speaking in tongues. The modern tongues movement is guilty of breaking this ban. If women were forbidden to speak in tongues, the charismatic movement would soon fade away.

Why was this prohibition made? Paul indicated that a woman speaking in tongues would tend to promote herself above the place of her husband in the eyes of the people. Instead, she should be under submission to her husband. Paul hurried to declare this was not just his preference. This was direction from God. He even challenged those who claimed to be spiritual to acknowledge that this message came from God. The church in Corinth had greatly abused this truth and needed to return to the standard set by God.

The church members had a problem with ignorance. The problem was not that they had not been taught. Their problem was an inclination to ignore the teaching they had received. Paul wanted them to return to the truth.

### Conclusion

These people were encouraged to remember what would really benefit the Corinthian church. They should have desired to have the gift that would teach, challenge, exhort and encourage this church. Because this was the best way to edify the church members at Corinth, they should long after that gift. Whatever happened in their services, decency and order were the watchwords. Everything needed to be performed in an orderly manner. If something produced confusion in the Corinthian church, it should have been abandoned.

## Challenge To Live by Resurrection Power

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will evaluate the impact of the resurrection of Christ on their lives.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:1-34.

Background Scripture: Matthew 28:1-6; John 11:23-28;  
Acts 1:21-23; 24:14-16.

Devotional Reading: The Power of His Resurrection, Philippians 3:10, 11.

### Introduction

We live in an age of skepticism. All things must be proven before accepted. This applies to matters of religious faith even more than scientific fact. A scientist can make a declaration of some new theory, and it is quickly accepted as fact even though the principles of the theory cannot be proven by empirical examination; yet, when a Christian declares a biblical truth, it is automatically discounted as unprovable because it is a matter of faith.

At the core of Christianity is the matter of the resurrection. Without this marvelous and joyous truth, the entire Bible fails to be reliable. Many references and much evidence point to this central theme. Therefore, if the resurrection is rejected, the entire Bible must be rejected. Does evidence prove this event took place? The theme of this lesson is evaluating the reality of the resurrection and determining its impact on the individual believer. Take the evidence, evaluate it and learn it so that you can share the reality of the resurrection with others.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Declaration of the Resurrection

Paul declared his intent to preach to them and others nothing but “Jesus Christ, and him crucified” (1 Cor. 2:2). Now Paul came to the point of presenting to the Corinthian church information about the completion of the gospel. The gospel of Jesus Christ is important for “it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth” (Rom. 1:16). This was the gospel Paul presented to this church.

Paul used three words to describe how he presented this message to the people at Corinth—declare, preached (used twice) and delivered. The first of these words indicates that Paul gave information that would cause them to have understanding. The second of these words (preached) comes from the word often translated gospel. He declared the good news of Jesus Christ. The last of the words (delivered) indicates he recommended this truth to the people there. It had been in his possession and now was passed on to these Christians. Paul forcefully and repeatedly shared the gospel with those around him.

The preaching of the gospel was instrumental in bringing the Corinthians to Christ. Paul preached to them and they received the message. They understood the message was intended for them, and they trusted in Christ and were saved. “Unless ye have believed in vain” (1 Cor. 15:2) does not mean losing one’s salvation. It describes an empty faith. The person really did not trust in Jesus. He went through the motions, said the words and followed the rituals, but never trusted Jesus as Savior. When a person receives the message of the gospel and believes Jesus as Savior, he has salvation. Nothing can take salvation away (John 10:28-30; Rom. 8:35, 38, 39).

The gospel consists of three parts. The gospel begins with the substitutionary death of Jesus Christ—“how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:3). The death was clearly predicted by Old Testament Scriptures. Jesus died on the tree (Deut. 21:23). His death was for the sins of others (Isa. 53:5, 11). The crucifixion of Christ was between two thieves (verse 12). Prophecies foretold many other aspects of the crucifixion process. Jesus followed the normal course of action for any person who had died. He was buried. The gospel also includes that “he rose again the third day according to the scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:4). Jesus had to rise from death or He would be nothing more than an ordinary man. Every person faces the

prospect of death (Heb. 9:27). Jesus did not remain in the tomb. He arose from death. This proved His deity (Rom. 1:4). The Old Testament also foretold the resurrection of the Messiah. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalm 16:10). The Son of God would never decay in the grave but would return to life. Another Old Testament promise was fulfilled in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Is the account of the resurrection of Jesus reliable? Legal systems demand eyewitnesses to prove a fact. Paul carefully listed by name several eyewitnesses to the resurrected Lord. Such men as Peter, James and Paul saw Jesus alive after His passion. The twelve also were eyewitnesses of this fact. Besides these men were above five hundred eyewitnesses to the resurrected Lord. The majority of those people remained alive at the time of writing. Paul drew attention to people who were personally aware of the facts and could testify in any court of law concerning the validity of the claim that Christ arose from death. Had the claims of the resurrection been false, surely, at least one of the number would have recanted his story; yet, they all maintained a faith in the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The story is reliable.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Denials of the Resurrection

The resurrection of Jesus Christ should have an impact on those who have trusted Him as Savior; yet, some in the church at Corinth denied the reality of the resurrection. Nine times Paul referred to the doubts some had concerning the resurrection. Each time he emphasized the fact that Christ was raised from death.

If Christ is not raised from death, then we have no salvation (1 Cor. 15:14, 17). The crucifixion of Christ on the cross paid the price for our sins. His shed blood paid the price of redemption. But the resurrection provided the power to save. If Christ be not risen, we are still lost and on our way to hell. Faith is invalid because there is no one to trust. If Christ is not raised from death, there is no salvation.

If Christ is not raised from death, there is no life after death (verse 18). If there is no resurrection from death, then, when we fall asleep (die), we perish. This word perish means "to destroy

fully.” Our hope for the future is based on the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Paul concluded that his ministry was full of lies if Christ is not risen from death. All ministers and soul-winners are liars if Christ remained in the grave. The goal behind Paul’s teaching the resurrection of Jesus Christ was to give assurance to believers. Since Christ is raised from death, we have hope for the future. If this life is all the hope we can have, we can only have misery (verse 19). We have sickness and injury. We face the loss of loved ones. This life cannot grant much hope. Paul proceeded to a higher thought that would produce great hope and joy. That hope and joy could only come because of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Demands of the Resurrection

As Paul concluded the negative side of this teaching (that being the denial of the resurrection by some), he proceeded to tell the church members at Corinth what hope and joy awaited them because of the resurrection. “But now is Christ risen from the dead” (1 Cor. 15:20). Any hope must find its basis in the present life of Jesus Christ.

He illustrated this hope with the Old Testament celebration of the firstfruits (verses 20, 26). They were to take the first sheaf harvested from the field and bring it to the house of God as an offering. This feast showed the individual’s faith in the provision of God. The firstfruits was a promise of better things to come. When we lay a loved one to rest, we can have hope because of the firstfruits of Jesus Christ. We know the day will come when we will have a reunion with those who have gone before. There is rejoicing in the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

All things had to be done in their proper order. “But every man in his own order: Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (verse 23). But it is also true concerning the relative rank of the Trinity (verses 27, 28). God will place all things under the feet of the Son. He will be the authority over all things; yet, this passage declares that Jesus will remain positionally under the Father. Jesus willingly takes His position under the Father because of the working of God. God must be exalted above all. No one part can be declared more godly than the other. God will be in a position to receive the praise of all creation. Then God will be declared supreme.

How should we respond to the majesty and greatness of God? Paul said this was the reason that he willingly faced persecution (verses 30-32). He knew God was alive and was watching over him. He did not worry when he faced the “beasts at Ephesus” (verse 32). He knew what the future held. We also must look beyond the day. If we look to the return of Jesus, we can face the trials of life with joy. This is what Jesus did. “Who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross” (Heb. 12:2). May we live in the hope of Jesus Christ.

### Conclusion

Paul issued a great challenge to the church members. He warned of some who were teaching that a person could live an immoral life-style and still remain Christian. If they followed that perverted teaching, they would be in danger of corrupting what had been a positive and godly life-style. They should not indulge in immorality. Paul warned them to wake up. It was as though the false teaching had lulled the people into a stupor. They were not alert and were in danger of unknowingly falling into evil lives. Those who were contradicting the inspired teaching of Paul had no real knowledge of Jesus Christ. They should be ignored.

Does this challenge still ring true today? In an age when even Baptists have begun to lean toward compromise with the religious world, we must wake up and beware. In an age when the immorality of the world has become acceptable to many churches, we must wake up and beware. Why is this important? Because Jesus is alive today. His promise of presence with each scriptural church is still true today. Be challenged to understand and live by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

## Challenge to Victory

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will understand that ultimate victory comes in the resurrected body.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.  
Background Scripture: Job 19:23-27; Philippians 3:20, 21;  
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.  
Devotional Reading: Mortal Bodies Quickened, Romans 8:11.

### Introduction

Victory is a theme of interest to all people. For sports enthusiasts, victory is the goal of every game. For hobbyists, victory means they have completed the work and arrived at the goal. For those in business, victory means they have accomplished a great profit and have transacted a positive business deal. Though we might gain victory on earth, that victory is temporary. It will not last forever.

Yet God gave a promise of victory that is not transitory. His promise is based on the fact that Jesus is alive today. The life of Jesus Christ after His crucifixion is the assurance that we also have life after death. The spirit of man never dies but is transported immediately to its place after death (Luke 16:22, 23). If that were the only hope we had, it would be sufficient. But God has promised that the dead body of the believer will be brought back to life and will be reunited with the spirit for a permanent state of glory. God promised this victory to all who have trusted Jesus as Savior. This victory will be the theme for this lesson.

Because of His resurrection, we have hope for the future. The ultimate victory will come when our bodies are changed and fashioned like the glorious body of Christ (Phil. 3:21).

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Illustrations of the Resurrection

How can the reality of the resurrection be described in terms that most people can understand? This was the goal of Paul's use of certain illustrations. These were common ideas that were applied to extraordinary beliefs.

The first illustration concerned seed sown in a field (1 Cor. 15:36-38). Grain or any other seed has no purpose and no productivity until it is planted. If you place seed on a shelf, it will remain useless. When it is planted, the seed begins to decay, but out of the death comes the promise of life. What appeared to be dead and lifeless takes on the form of productivity. Out of death comes new life and much fruit.

The second illustration spoke of the difference between different kinds of physical bodies (verse 39). Paul showed how mankind has a different kind of flesh than does animals. Even different animals have flesh differing from other kinds of animals. Mammals have different forms than fish. Fish have different forms than birds. Each kind of being has its own physical shape and makeup. This also builds to the description of the resurrected body's being different from the present flesh.

The third illustration is that of astronomical bodies (verses 40, 41). Paul mentioned the fact that the various heavenly bodies in the universe appear different from each other. No one would mistake the sun for the moon. No one would mistake the moon for the stars. Even the stars appear in different positions so that they can be distinguished from each other. Modern technology has proven that the differences are even more basic than surface observation. Different stars can be specified by the color of their light. Stars burn at different temperatures and travel in different directions. Each of these factors can help to determine the identity of a star. The heavenly bodies differ in their characteristics.

"So also is the resurrection of the dead" (verse 42). These three illustrations teach that different bodies have different characteristics. Because Paul was teaching about the resurrection of the body, he was laying the groundwork for remarkable lessons to come. The people at Corinth understood the importance of trusting Christ as Savior. Now they needed to learn the

ultimate victory that truth brought. What Christ did in producing salvation was to prepare the individual for the future.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Inheritance in the Resurrection

The resurrection from the dead gives promise of great things to come. When we trusted Jesus as Savior, we became the children of God. One aspect of this relationship is adoption. The biblical concept of adoption is placing a person in the position of a son with an inheritance. It was a legal term that assured the son of his place within the family. With God we are put in the position of a son with an inheritance. That inheritance will find its pinnacle beyond this physical life (1 Cor. 15:50). What is special about that great inheritance?

It is not based on the physical body. This section of Scripture describes the physical body in many terms. The illustration of planting a seed continues here as well. The physical body is sown in corruption, dishonor, weakness and as a natural, earthy body. These words show the true nature of man. Corruption indicates a body that will decay and ruin. Dishonor speaks of the shame and disgrace of natural man. Weakness shows the feebleness and disease inherent with natural man. Earthy shows the origin of man. God formed man of the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7). Nothing of a spiritual nature is innate with man. He is a physical creature with spiritual possibilities because of the love of God. This physical creature does not have a natural inheritance. An inheritance is available if he will only follow the instructions of the Lord.

Because the physical character of man does not insure his inheritance, it must come from some other place. Remember that "flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption" (1 Cor. 15:50). The earthy body with its sin cannot enter the eternal places. The body must go through a transformation. Christ will accomplish this when He returns. What changes will be made? The old physical body will be changed so that it will be like Jesus' glorious body (Phil. 3:21). Paul compared the change that will take place to harvesting a crop. What was sown in corruption, dishonor, weakness and as a weak, earthy body will be harvested in a different form. Think of the illustration of a planted seed. When the seed begins to decay and the new plant begins to grow, does the plant look like the seed? No, its appearance is far different than before; yet, that new plant is the rebirth of the old seed. The

new body promised to the children of God will be harvested in incorruption, glory, power and as a spiritual, heavenly body. It will be different and better than before because it will be built upon the spiritual principles of the Son of God. The image has changed to be conformed to Christ.

The inheritance promised to the children of God is a marvelous blessing. It can also be a great motivating force in the life of every church member. The blessings of that wondrous body should encourage our commitment to Him today. It is a great inheritance.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Immortality Gained  
by the Resurrection

What will take place on that glorious day when the Lord will return for His own people? That Jesus will return cannot be debated. Even the angels at the ascension proclaimed the personal return of Christ. "This same Jesus" (Acts 1:11) will return to be with you forever. What can be learned about the promise of immortality gained by the resurrection of Jesus Christ?

We learn of a great mystery (1 Cor. 15:51). A mystery was a truth hidden to Old Testament saints, yet, it is revealed to us under grace. The physical, literal return of the Messiah could not be this mystery. That was understood and proclaimed in ancient times. Even Job understood the fact of the life of the Messiah and of his own life in later times. He declared, "yet in my flesh shall I see God: whom I shall see for myself, and mine eyes shall behold, and not another; though my reins be consumed within me" (Job 19:26, 27). The mystery Paul declared was that some saints will not have to see death. Even this mysterious concept was foreshadowed in the Old Testament. Enoch walked with God and did not die. Instead, "God took him" (Gen. 5:24). Elijah was a great prophet of God who did not die. Instead, God sent a chariot of fire to take him bodily to Heaven (2 Kings 2:11). But the general translation (or rapture) of all living saints was a concept unknown in Old Testament times. Paul declared this to the church at Corinth.

This wondrous translation will take place in a moment (1 Cor. 15:52). How long is the "twinkling of an eye"? Though we will not try to measure that brief time, we can know it is almost instantaneous. God will not have to work long and hard to resurrect the dead saints and translate the living saints. At the call of God, this event will be accomplished. The change will be

marvelous and complete. In one instant the dead in Christ will be in the grave and the living saints will be in their earthy bodies. The next instant of time will find the dead brought out of the graves and the living saints changed into their glorified bodies.

What will that great change mean to us (verses 53-57)? In our present bodies, there is a sense of dread about what is yet to come. Paul did not dread his approaching death. He longed for the day that he would be with Christ (Phil. 1:23). When that day comes, all the fears of death, pain and sickness will be washed away. Death today holds a sting to most people. The grave seems to be the victory of evil over good. But in Christ, death has no sting and the grave has no victory. Instead, ultimate victory will come through the resurrection of our bodies by the power of God.

The day of the Lord's return should bring a sense of anticipation to the faithful servant of God. It will not be a time of dread but of greatest joy as we stand in the presence of the King of kings. May we always have a longing for His return.

### Conclusion

This last verse begins with the word therefore. Here Paul drew a conclusion from all he declared about the resurrection. He had reminded them of the resurrection of Jesus. That fact challenges every child of God to greater faith in Him. Then Paul instructed those people concerning the hope they had in Christ. That should motivate us to greater service than ever before. Our assignment is to be "stedfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58). We cannot deviate but must remain true to the Lord. How can this be encouraging to us? When we follow this pattern, our work will never be in vain, empty and of no purpose. Do you have a reason to serve the Lord? Be steadfast and sure in your commitment to Him.

## Challenge to Biblical Stewardship

LESSON AIM

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will explain the importance of giving through the church of their membership.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: 1 Corinthians 16:1-12.

Background Scripture: Luke 6:38; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; 9:6, 7; Ephesians 3:20, 21.

Devotional Reading: An Account of Stewardship, Luke 16:2.

### Introduction

One of the most controversial subjects a pastor can teach in almost any church is on the financial support of the Lord's work. A pastor can preach almost any subject and not cause trouble in the church. As soon as he begins talking about money, many consider that he has quit preaching and gone to meddling. Because of this fact, teaching on the worship aspect of financially giving to the Lord is often neglected. Even Paul seemed to fall victim to the malady. He waited until the end of the letter to even mention the importance of giving.

This lesson will discuss certain principles important for supporting work of the Lord. These principles will primarily come from these few verses. Other passages of New Testament Scripture enlarge on this pattern. After that we will examine some important uses of the financial support of the Lord's churches. May we learn God's standard of giving and base our giving on His standard.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Supporting the Lord's Work

The importance of this collection was evidenced by the fact that Paul did not have to specify which offering he meant. He wanted this offering to follow the pattern of all things in God's work. He wanted it done decently and in order. How should the church members at Corinth receive this gift to God's work?

The Corinthian church should receive the offering systematically. As the people gathered on the first day of every week, they were to receive gifts for God. Why is it important to bring your offerings on a regular basis? Too many people want to separate various parts of the worship. They equate singing, praying and preaching with worship. They fail to imagine their financial gifts are worship as well; yet, according to Paul's second letter to the church at Corinth, our contributions are a proof of the inner love we have for the Lord (2 Cor. 8:8, 24). If we are not consistent in giving, we say His work is not important.

Giving should also be proportional. Paul said each individual was to give "as God hath prospered him." What does that mean? The Old Testament taught a pattern for giving that is often called the tithe. The people determined to give a percentage of their income as an offering of praise to God. This even took place before the Lord instituted the Law. Abraham rescued Lot from kings who had taken him captive. When Abraham defeated them, he tithed of the spoils of war. He took a tenth of his income and gave it to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). He gave out of respect for God and His priest.

Why is proportional giving the best way to support the Lord's churches? Later Paul wrote to this same church showing why this was the better way. "For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened" (2 Cor. 8:12, 13). Proportional giving will help bring an equality of responsibility in a church. In Corinth it was common for a rich patron to give great financial gifts to support his religion. Some in the church at Corinth were wealthy. Had they been the only ones supporting the church's outreach and ministry, they would have thought they owned the Corinthian church. How could they solve the problem? Everyone in the church had the responsibility to bring offerings. Not everyone could bring the same amount, but they could bring the same general proportion. This would promote equality.

Gifts to God should also be given in a timely manner. Paul said he wanted the offerings to be received before he arrived “that there be no gatherings when I come” (1 Cor. 16:2). Often people fail to recognize the ongoing requirements of a church. Some will only give when extraordinary needs occur. While that kind of giving is important, it cannot take the place of systematic, proportional and timely giving. Each church has certain budgetary needs. Without the regular offerings those payments are not met.

The finances of a church are a potential trouble spot for many churches. Part of the reason for this is that the treasurer alone is responsible for counting and reporting the offerings. While most of the time this causes no troubles, there is always the potential for trouble. It is much better for a church to have at least two people responsible to work together in counting and reporting the offerings. This could be part of what Paul mentioned in verses 3 and 4. It was not one person who was responsible for delivering the offering to the churches at Judea. It was a group of men. This removed any question of impropriety.

A church must be careful how it deals with finances. Everything must be dealt with honestly and properly. Then a church can have a clean reputation in these matters.

## 2. \_\_\_\_\_ Satisfying the Needy

Paul always had a deep concern for those who were less fortunate than he was. The churches in the region of Judea were facing trying times when Paul wrote this letter. The primary reason for their lack was a tremendous drought that plagued the land. This caused all people to face hardship. The difference between the churches and others of the region was that those in churches had been excluded from normal Jewish activity. The Law required the Jews to care for those who were hungry or destitute. When these people trusted Jesus as their Savior, they were no longer considered a part of Jewish society. Even their own Jewish families did not feel obligated to help them. They were doing without, and Paul wanted to help them.

We should have compassion on the downtrodden of society. For too many years we have delegated the responsibility of caring for the needy to the government. Then we complain because there is so much waste in the system. A church has the responsibility to care for the needy. Jesus taught about this duty. He said that we should be careful to feed the hungry, house the

homeless, clothe the cold and visit the sick and the imprisoned. When we serve those around us, we are really serving Jesus directly (Matt. 25:35-40). The blessing is at least twofold. Those we help are blessed because they are helped, and they have the opportunity to hear about Jesus. We also are blessed because we are fulfilling the commands of Christ.

When we look around us in the world and see non-Christians helping those in need, we should feel shame because we are doing so little. This was Paul's desire for the members of the church at Corinth. To the church at Philippi, Paul stated, "Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Phil. 4:17). He did not recommend their help for his own benefit, but that God would bless them because of the fruit borne in the ministry. The churches of Judea would be helped and blessed by this work. The church at Corinth would be blessed because its members thought of others and endeavored to help them.

### 3. \_\_\_\_\_ Supplying Mission Work

Paul quickly made the transition from the support of the Corinthian church to the continuing work of this church in missions. The general purpose of church existence is missions. To accomplish the work of spreading the gospel to the world takes great amounts of funding.

Paul had definite plans for the future of his ministry outreach. He had a great desire to spend more time with the church at Corinth. He did not want to come to it just in passing. "I will not see you now by the way" (1 Cor. 16:7). His heart had been with this people, and he wanted to help them by taking the time to minister to their needs. The problem was that God had placed him in a work that was not completed. This work was in Ephesus. God had opened a great door for an effectual work (verse 9). When God opens a door, no human has the right to close it. The work in Ephesus was fragile at this time. It faced many adversaries. Paul needed to stay there and deal with these problems. Too often we want God to adapt His will to our wants. If we want to do something, then it must be right. This was not the way Paul looked at things. God's way was always right even when it conflicted with what Paul wanted. Paul needed the support of churches so that he could continue God's work on God's timetable.

Paul reminded them of other ministers who were involved in spreading the gospel. Their works also needed the prayerful and financial support of other churches. Paul called upon the church at Corinth to aid in these endeavors. He wanted both men, Timothy and Apollos, to visit with the church at Ephesus. Timothy would apparently go. He asked the church to treat the young preacher as it would an older preacher. The phrase conduct him forth in peace indicated Paul wanted this church to send him along with a love offering. This would be much like churches today having visiting missionaries to come and present their mission works to a congregation. Most times a church will receive a love offering to help defray the expenses of travel. This church needed to help visiting ministers and missionaries with support.

The Lord gave specific directions to His churches as He went to the Father. The responsibility of a church is to take the gospel to a lost and dying world. It is not possible for every individual in every church to do all the work. Some will help evangelize the world by sharing finances with those called by God to go into the world. This is in fulfillment of God's command.

### Conclusion

What comes to mind when tithing or giving is mentioned in church? Do we automatically assume the pastor is asking for a raise? If so, we have failed to see his love for a church and the spread of the gospel. Your church has a responsibility to reach out to the entire world. That takes great funds. Your church also has a responsibility in its community. It must be prompt in paying its bills. It must do all it can to support the pastor so that he can also have a good reputation among the people. All of these things take finances. Where will it come from if we fail to do our part?

## Challenge To Love God Supremely

**LESSON AIM**

By the conclusion of this lesson the students will list ways to show their love for God.

**SCRIPTURES TO READ**

Text: 1 Corinthians 16:13-24.  
Background Scripture: John 13:35; 14:15; 21:15-17; 1 John 4:8, 20, 21.  
Devotional Reading: The First Commandment, Mark 12:29-31.

### Introduction

Many times Paul had to confront actions he considered inappropriate for the body of Christ. When mentioning those matters, he used difficult language. He spoke to them as though they were his children and in need of discipline. He did not want to end the letter with such harsh language. Instead, he spoke to them one final time about their need to love Christ and each other.

Love is often misunderstood in the world today. Most people consider love to be little more than physical attraction for someone. To care for someone without hope of gaining benefits from the relationship is unheard of; yet, Paul instructed this church to be loving in its outreach. Earlier he told the church members to undertake all works out of love. If they worked only out of a sense of duty and if they helped someone only because it was expected of them, they were nothing more than blaring trum-

pets and clanging cymbals (1 Cor. 13:1-3). This kind of behavior benefited no one.

This lesson encourages the student to have real love for God. Too many people just talk about it (1 John 3:18). Anyone can claim to love God. Here Paul challenged the members of the church at Corinth to show their love for God by loving each other. This love should also spill over to other servants of God.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ Command to Love

First Corinthians 16:13, 14 give five separate commands to follow. The first four are military ideas. They give the marching orders as the Christian goes out into the world. The final command gives the motivation for service and the method of operation for God's work.

The military commands indicate churches and their members face difficulty in this world. The truth is that the world in general cares little for the committed Christian. The world does not mind those who claim to be Christian but act like everyone else. That kind of Christian is acceptable to the world. Those who are really dedicated to serving the Lord are really different. They are the ones who understand the difference between right and wrong. They understand that sin is wrong and is unacceptable to God. The world considers that attitude bigoted, intolerant and outdated. The world will stand against that kind of Christian. Is it any wonder that Paul warned the Corinthian church to prepare for battle?

These four commands all relate to armies or cities facing battles. The first was "watch." The idea of this word watch is to be alert and watchful. It referred to the watchman on the city walls whose responsibility it was to guard the approaches. If he spied an army marching against the city, he sounded the alarm. This prepared the city or army for an attack. The second command was "stand fast." The first reaction to an approaching enemy would be to turn and run away. The command was for the people to stand firm without flinching. How could this be accomplished? They could only stand securely through faith. They must trust the commander in chief. The third command was "quit you like men." This phrase indicated they were to stand as mature soldiers. They were not to act like novice Christian soldiers. To be successful in the battles of life, we must grow up and be mature. The fourth military command

was “be strong.” War is not quick. Life is not the one hundred meter dash. It is more like a marathon. We must stand for the Lord today, tomorrow and for the rest of our lives. To do this takes great strength. We must be strong in the Lord.

The final command was much different than the others. Those indicated harshness and strength. This command related to why they served the Lord and what they were to accomplish. This was a command to do everything in their Christian ministry from the motivation of love (1 Cor. 16:14). Though they faced harsh battles that demanded a certain hardness from the good soldier, the only way to true victory was through the love of God.

2. \_\_\_\_\_ Counsel for Loving Service

Paul continued his discussion by reminding the members at Corinth of others engaged in mission work for the Lord.

He gave several examples of people involved in God's work (1 Cor. 16:17, 19). Paul mentioned five people by name who were faithful in service. Aquila and Priscilla were former members of the church at Corinth. Paul had met them while ministering there. They were faithful while living in Corinth. They had been faithful while living in Rome. They were presently faithful in the church at Ephesus. This husband and wife loved God's work so much that they provided a place for this church to meet. The other three men, Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus, also worked in the church at Ephesus. The church at Corinth knew them because they had been saved there. God used them to supply Paul's financial needs while he ministered in Ephesus.

Paul also encouraged this church to get personally involved in service (verses 15, 16). The examples mentioned served God to the point of exhaustion. Why were they willing to do this? They were fully committed and attached to the work of God. Love motivated them to serve (2 Cor. 5:14). This kind of service brought great encouragement to Paul. Church members should have great respect for those willing to be servants. God honors those who love Him enough to serve.

This church should not have only encouraged Paul, it should have encouraged each other. The greeting of a “holy kiss” was common in that culture. Our culture greets others with a firm handshake and a smile. We should never give reason for lost

people to doubt our love for God because we behave inappropriately.

3. \_\_\_\_\_ Call To Love Christ

Paul wrote the conclusion to this letter with his own hand. Most of his writings were accomplished through the means of someone's helping him. Here his call to the Corinthian church was to focus on a love for Christ. His focus was on "Jesus Christ, and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2). What could he say about those who claimed to love Jesus Christ but really did not show it in their lives? "Let him be Anathema Maran-atha" (1 Cor. 16:22). Anathema means "to be accursed." These people who faced such difficult times both within and outside this church deserved this call to remembrance. The entire salutation of Paul in this letter focused the attention of the people on Jesus Christ. His grace was extended (verse 23). Paul's love for the people was because of Jesus Christ (verse 24). So how should they respond to this message? They should love the Lord. If they did not love the Lord, judgment was coming.

### Conclusion

We come to the end of Paul's letter. Throughout its pages we have learned much about the church at Corinth. We could see that it faced some trying times; yet, its members had the ability through the power of God to make it through those times. We even saw some of the abuses which took place in that church. They had fellowship problems, discipline problems, doctrinal problems, marital problems and other difficulties that Paul tried to deal with. In each case Paul gave wonderful advice that could help the church be what God really intended it to be, a fellowship of saints rather than a house of bickering friends.

However, if all we have learned in this study has been the problems faced by that church, we have failed in the purpose of these lessons. We have the opportunity to look at an example of wrong behavior, but we must do far more than just condemn their wrong practices. We must learn to apply biblical principles to our lives. Our churches face many of the same difficulties as did the church at Corinth. We must learn to judge all things by the benefit to the Lord's churches.