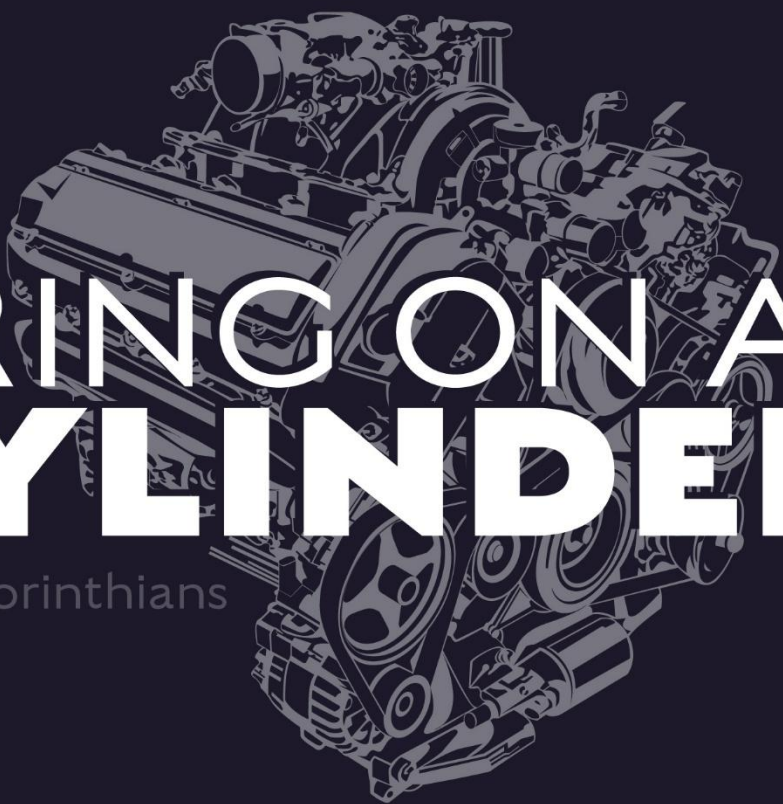




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# FIRING ON ALL CYLINDERS

I Corinthians

**SMALL GROUP LESSONS**

PACKET 7

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

LESSON 25 | Jealousy .....2

LESSON 26 | Order in the Church!.....10

LESSON 27 | How Important Is the Resurrection? ..... 18

LESSON 28 | Raised in Power.....24

LESSON 29 | Before I Go... ..... 30



# Jealousy

## INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Green eyed monster

"She has my doll!"

"I want it!"

Jealousy starts young. From kids who want the same toy, to teens after the same boy (or girl), to adults who want the same job or car or home. Jealousy is such a common emotion that we regularly see it in others but somehow overlook it in ourselves. It shows up in the strangest of places and times, often over the silliest of things, things we normally don't want or even value.

Jealousy may be small and petty, or it may be large. Sometimes we can easily shake it off and even laugh at ourselves for feeling jealous. But sometimes it is an indicator of a deeper hurt, a desire to have a longing fulfilled, to matter on a level we don't seem to be able to capture. And so we pit ourselves against those around us, often not even recognizing what we are doing until much later, if ever. But on those occasions we do stop and reflect, we can come to the realization that our sense of self-worth is not or should not be developed in opposition to those around us but in concert with them. In no place is this more true than in the church.

## BREAK THE ICE

Can you remember a silly childhood jealousy that you are embarrassed about now?

## READ IT

Read 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

## EXPLORE IT

1. What are the people to pursue? (v. 1)
2. What are the two gifts at issue in this passage?
3. What is the point of these gifts? (v. 5)
4. What is the setting for this discussion?
5. Which gift is a sign for believers and which for unbelievers? (v. 22)

## APPLY IT

Tongues and prophecy. Not exactly commonplace in our church or in many churches outside the charismatic movement today. Yet the principles that Paul gives in this passage, both for gifts generally, and specifically for their use in worship, are still important and profitable for the church today. While we will focus on the underlying principles, some understanding of tongues and prophecy, especially as practiced by the Corinthian church, is important.

NT Wright offers a helpful introduction to what Paul is talking about when he discusses both tongues and prophecy:

‘Tongues’ refers to the gift of speech which, through making sounds, and using apparent or even actual languages, somehow bypasses the speaker’s conscious mind. Such speech is experienced as a stream of praise in which, though the speaker may not be able to articulate what precisely is being said . . . a sense of love for God, of adoration and gratitude, wells up and overflows. It is like a private language of love.

That is its delight, as Paul himself knew (see verse 18), but also its problem. It is essentially private. And when wealth is displayed but not shared, it becomes a matter of showing off – which may have been exactly what some in Corinth had been doing, insisting on praying long and loud in public . . . which made them feel ecstatic, but which neither they nor anyone else could understand.

...

When Paul says ‘prophecy’, he doesn’t just mean foretelling the future’, though that may sometimes happen. (Even the great Old Testament prophets were just as concerned with commenting on the present as with warnings and promises about the future.) Nor is he simply referring to sudden flashes of inspiration in which someone comes to know something, or understand something, they couldn’t otherwise have imagined, and is moved at once to speak it out so that others . . . may learn and profit from it. That, too, happens, and Paul would be the last to disparage it. But his central emphasis is on God-given wisdom, understanding, insight, and teaching that the church badly needs if it is to go forward instead of round and round in circles, if it is to be built up as a community instead of as an accidental collection of private individuals. As the chapter develops, we shall see Paul insisting over and over again that prophecy, like all ‘spiritual’ phenomena, does not need to be ‘spontaneous’ to be genuine.<sup>1</sup>

Both gifts, Paul says, are important. Both have benefits, but those benefits are different and may be more appropriately exercised in different settings and ways.

6. How has the issue of tongues and prophecy been handled in your church experience? Avoided? Embraced? If you’ve had any experience with these two gifts, how would you describe that experience?

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<sup>1</sup> NT Wright, *1 Corinthians for Everyone*, (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2023), 124-125.

**7. How does the discussion of tongues and prophecy relate to chapters 12 and 13?**

**8. How does Paul's framing of these two gifts in the first 5 verses speak to the way we should approach corporate worship?**

Verses 6-12 illustrate Paul's point about tongues versus prophecy in a corporate worship setting. The purpose of a worship gathering is corporate, not individual in nature. Paul makes it clear that he is not opposed to tongues (v. 5, 18), but that finding the appropriate place is key. Each of the three illustrations he employs speaks to the proper use of a thing—whether musical instruments, a signal (military use of a bugle) or language itself. When a gift is not used appropriately it is, in effect, useless in that setting.

While we do not practice tongues today, and prophecy is generally understood in the “forthtelling” not “foretelling” mode, Paul's principles still apply. Broadly, he is speaking about the use of spiritual gifts to facilitate understanding and edification in the church among its members. It is quite possible to misuse other gifts in our worship services.

**9. What are some ways that gifts other than tongues or prophecy could be misused based on Paul's illustrations?**

- 10. Have you had an experience of being the only person who didn't speak a language? How did that feel? How does Paul's illustration help us to avoid creating these kinds of situations in worship?**

Verses 13-19 give important instruction for how tongues can be used in a worship service for the benefit of all—an interpretation needs to be present. Scholars are divided on whether this interpretation is from the speaker him or herself or from someone else, but the broader point remains. Paul is not putting restrictions in place to cramp anyone's style (much less to stifle the Holy Spirit), rather he is working to ensure that the gifts of the Spirit are used to build everyone up. Building one's self up spiritually is not a problem—Paul says he speaks in tongues more than all of them!—it is the occasion that causes an issue. When Paul pits 5 words against 10,000, he is using a hyperbole that is even larger than most of us realize. 10,000 was the highest named number in Greek, so Paul is essentially saying the smallest intelligible teaching is worth more in a corporate setting than as many words as could ever be said unintelligibly.

Paul also speaks to a problem that many of us often face—pitting the spiritual against the mind. We are all wired differently, some more emotionally, some more intellectually. Often we map one or the other onto our (and other's) spiritual lives. Paul makes it clear that we should not separate our minds and our spirits both for our own sake and for the sake of others, not least because they need to be able to understand and agree with us appropriately.

- 11. You likely find yourself more in the “spirit” or the “mind” camp. How do you typically relate with and react to those who are wired differently than you?**

12. What are some ways that you can seek to incorporate both parts (“spirit” and “mind”) into your worship?
13. How can having guard rails on the use of gifts help us to ensure that we are using them appropriately both for ourselves and for others?

Verses 20-25 present us with several challenges. An opening charge about maturity, a quote from Isaiah, and then an explanation of that quote in verse 22 which seems directly at odds with verses 23-25.

Too often, in our day, being “adult” or “mature” about things means exactly the opposite—allowing baser urges to drive behavior and what is acceptable with little or no thought about the consequences of actions. Paul is making a rather pointed charge at the Corinthians—they should be as little children when it comes to evil (innocent), but otherwise they should be mature. And they aren’t behaving maturely. They are using their gifts in a worship setting in ways that puffs them up but does not build up the body, ways that could have dire consequences. William Baker explains that Paul quotes Isaiah 28:11-12 to:

warn any tongue-speaking Corinthians of the tragic consequence for them and others if they continue to speak in tongues that are not interpreted. Paul considered their situation comparable to that of Israel in the days of Isaiah: Israel had mocked Isaiah’s prophecies of doom as baby chatter (Is. 28:10). For their retribution, Isaiah pronounced that they would have to hear the message from the lips of foreign invaders—whose speech ironically would sound like babble too—when they were in their streets destroying their cities and hauling them into slavery. Though they would not understand the words, God’s message of doom will have been delivered.

In 14:22-25, Paul draws out the intent of highlighting this tragic scene in the history of Israel. In effect, he believed that speaking in tongues could be a negative sign (like the foreigners uttering prophetic doom by their invasion). These Corinthians, though, would find that their condemnation would be uttered by outsiders visiting their assemblies, as they pronounced Christians to be out of their minds and then left, never to return. While tongue-speakers may think their gift is a demonstration of God’s power to unbelievers and as an encouraging sign to believers, neither is true. Incessant tongues speaking looks like nothing more than immature grandstanding to believers and like uninhibited craziness to unbelievers. It is a sign to drive them away from God to their own condemnation apart from Christ.

By contrast, gifts related to prophecy are a positive sign, helpful all around. They encourage and develop fellow believers while also conveying the message of the gospel to nonbelievers. Paul reveals in 14:24 that hearing the gospel first leads to an overwhelming awareness in people of their sinful rebellion against God and their need to repent and find acceptance in him. In 14:25, Paul draws upon eschatological images from Isaiah 45:14 and Zechariah 8:23 to picture this conversion experience as the people falling to their knees and then joining the believers in worship and praise to God.<sup>2</sup>

Paul's play on words shows just how serious appropriate worship can be and how we can get things completely turned upside down because of our immaturity. If however, we use our gifting to worship appropriately, God can use us mightily. Baker concludes that the positive outcome for unbelievers happens "precisely because the believers conducted their public worship and instruction in language that everyone present could understand."<sup>3</sup>

**14. When have you experienced a situation where what seemed to be mature is exactly the opposite?**

**15. What are some ways you can apply your own maturity in the use of your gifts to help those who are perhaps not as mature or who are unbelievers?**

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<sup>2</sup> William Baker, *Cornerstone Biblical Commentary vol. 15, 1 and 2 Corinthians* (Carol Stream, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2009), 200, 201.

<sup>3</sup> IBID.

16. This passage serves as a reminder to us that the way we come together in worship matters both for our own edification and also the edification of those around us. How does this change your mindset and approach to gathering with your church this week?
17. Given the questions of jealousy that opened the lesson, how can you work to avoid being jealous of the gifts of others on the one hand and work to avoid provoking envy on the other (knowing that you cannot control the hearts of others)?



## Order in the Church!

### INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

When you walk into a church—any church—what should you expect to take place? Should all church gatherings look the same, regardless of whether you step into a Baptist, Presbyterian, Methodist, Mennonite, Episcopal, AME, CME, Catholic, or Bible Church? When you enter a McDonald's, Starbucks, or Chick-fil-A, you generally know what to expect. Should church gatherings have that same level of uniformity? These are important questions. I could take you to different churches where the services look so different that, on the surface, you might wonder if they have anything in common. Let me explain.

If I took you to a liturgical church, you would likely see a priest in robes processing down the center aisle at the start of the service, hear the deep sounds of a pipe organ, smell incense burning, and listen as the congregation recites prayers and creeds together. The sermon—often called a *homily*—would follow a lectionary that aligns with the church calendar, and the service would include the sacraments.

Now, if we left that service and walked into a contemporary church—you would experience something quite different. There would be no formal liturgy, no priestly robes, no incense or pipe organ. Instead, the service might begin with a worship band leading songs, the sermon would likely be expository, and whether or not the Lord's Supper is observed would depend on the church's practice. The music, structure, and overall feel would be noticeably different from the liturgical setting.

On the surface, these two types of churches would *feel* very different—very different. Yet, if you look beyond the surface, you would find that both seek to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. There are many ways to structure a church gathering.

What we see in Acts 2, at the birth of the church, looks different from what we read about in 1 Corinthians. And what we read about in Corinth looks different from how we gather here on Sunday mornings. Paul has been instructing the Corinthian believers—and us—about what should take place when we come together. He has also warned about what *must not* take place. Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand that while there is freedom in how we worship, their gatherings were not to become a free-for-all. Ray Stedman wrote:

“When the church comes together it can be built up in marvelous ways. It can be such a strengthening thing to meet together, to encourage one another in our faith, to share in the exercise of spiritual gifts, to be taught by the mind of God, by the Spirit of God, through the Word of God, and to be comforted in times of trial and testing and pressure. This is the purpose for the church getting together. But whatever you do, do not let it become an endlessly confusing ministry, misrepresentative of the character of God, who is a God of order and decency.” (Stedman, Ray. *When You Come Together*.)

There are many ways for the followers of Jesus to gather and worship, but whatever a church does must reflect the character of God. As Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:33: “For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.” (1 Corinthians 14:33, ESV) And in verse 40: “But all things should be done decently and in order.” (1 Corinthians 14:40, ESV)

In the final verses of 1 Corinthians 14, Paul addresses the necessary limitations that should be in place so that church gatherings reflect God's order and peace. *Trigger warning, ladies.* As we read this passage, don't rush to conclusions—let's take time to carefully examine what Paul is saying within the context of God's Word.<sup>4</sup>

## BREAK THE ICE

**“What is one church experience—whether from childhood, travel, or visiting a new church—that surprised you or felt very different from what you were used to?”**

## READ IT

Read 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

## EXPLORE IT

1. According to verse 26, what is the purpose of each person bringing a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation?
2. What instructions does Paul give regarding speaking in tongues in verses 27-28?
3. What guidelines does Paul provide for prophecy in verses 29-33?
4. In verses 34-35, what does Paul say about women speaking in the church, and how does he ground this instruction?

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<sup>4</sup> Sermon by Mike Hays found @ <https://www.brittonchurch.com/sermons/in-a-fitting-and-orderly-way-1-corinthians-1426-40>



Tongues and prophecy were two key spiritual gifts in the early church, each serving a distinct purpose. Tongues, often referring to Spirit-enabled speech in human or heavenly languages, functioned as a sign of God's power but required interpretation to edify the church (1 Cor. 14:27-28). Prophecy, on the other hand, was a Spirit-directed speech meant to encourage, exhort, and build up believers (1 Cor. 14:3). While tongues demonstrated God's presence, prophecy provided clear instruction and conviction. In Corinth, the misuse of these gifts led to disorder in worship, prompting Paul to emphasize intelligibility, edification, and order (1 Cor. 14:33). His correction reinforced that spiritual gifts should unite and strengthen the body, rather than create confusion or self-centered experiences.

**8. Why were the gifts of tongues and prophecy essential in the 1st century but not as central in the 21st century?**

**How did their use in the early church contribute to building up the body of Christ?**

**In what ways might God still be using these gifts today?**

**9. What does Paul's correction of the Corinthians teach us about the importance of balancing personal spiritual experiences with corporate edification?**

Apparently, though these gifts were exercised, there were some problems. There was disproportionate use of the gifts (chapter 12; 14:1-5, 27-31); there was distasteful use of the gifts (12:31-13:13; 14:23); there was disorderly use of the gifts (14:33, 40).<sup>6</sup>

10. While Paul does not question the validity of the gift, he does challenge its uncontrolled use. How can our God-given gifts, when misused, hinder the church rather than help it?

### A Word for Women

Then comes this kicker. *Paul says, [T]he women should be silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak, but are to submit themselves, as the law also says. If they want to learn something, let them ask their own husbands at home, since it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church. (14:34-35)* Frankly, I grew up in a church tradition that took these verses out of context and taught that a woman could not pray or say anything at all in church. That is an impossibility, since Paul gives clear instructions in chapter 11 that a woman can not only pray but also prophesy. Though these verses are hotly debated, a viable position has been proposed. Verse 29 calls for prophecy to be evaluated.

I agree with Blomberg when he says, “Perhaps the best perspective, therefore, is to take Paul’s commands as prohibiting women from participating in the final church decisions about the legitimacy of any given prophecy” (1 Corinthians, 281). He is surely right when he says that the evaluation of any prophecy would most likely have been the responsibility of the church leadership, which at least in the first century was exclusively male (ibid.). Carson concurs that, in light of the call to submission and obedience to the law, this seems to be the most plausible interpretation (Showing, 129–31). Anticipating objections, Paul closes with firm words (vv. 37–40). Spiritual gifts are to be subject to two authorities: the Word of God and the man of God.<sup>7</sup>

11. How do you see the women using their gifts within the church? In what ways can a church showcase women in a way that promotes women in areas of leadership?

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<sup>6</sup> Sermon notes found @ <https://brackenhurstbaptist.co.za/silent-in-the-churches/>

<sup>7</sup> Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) Dr. Daniel L. Akin and James Merritt

12. How can women actively engage in learning and contributing to the church while still honoring the principle of submission and order that Paul outlines?
13. How does the interpretation that Paul is restricting women from having the final say in evaluating prophecy align with the leadership structure and decision-making process at Village Bible Church today?
14. What principles should guide us in applying this passage today, guarding against both an overly restrictive interpretation that silences women entirely and a dismissive interpretation that ignores Paul's instruction?

## **A Word of Warning**

In the early days, the church followed the practices of the synagogue in her worship. In synagogue meetings, it was customary for men to sit on one side of the sanctuary, and for women to sit on the other side. Picture this setting in a church service.

Now, picture a husband standing up in the church to “judge” (14:29) and “interpret” (14:27) a prophecy. “Here is what the prophecy means,” he begins, and proceeds to give the interpretation. Suddenly, his wife stands at the other end of the room, “I disagree, actually. Here is what I believe it means...” Or, perhaps she has a question, “Excuse me, honey, but could you please clarify what you just said?” You can see how this would cause disruption in the service. Thus, Paul commands the wife to listen quietly to the interpretation and to reserve her questions until her and her husband get home. It was a “shame” for a woman to “speak in the church” and disrupt the service. Such disruptions brought “shame” or “disgrace” upon herself, her husband and, ultimately, Christ. This does not excuse a man from disrupting the service; the fact that Paul wrote these words indicates that there was a problem in the church with women disrupting the services.<sup>8</sup>

**15. Why would a wife publicly questioning or disagreeing with her husband’s interpretation of a prophecy be considered disruptive in the early church? How might this have affected the order of worship?**

**16. How does this passage reinforce the biblical pattern of a husband’s spiritual leadership in the home? What responsibilities does this place on husbands in leading their wives well?**

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<sup>8</sup> Sermon notes found @ <https://brackenhurstbaptist.co.za/silent-in-the-churches/>

The entire discussion has led to the conclusion that they should especially desire to prophesy, since prophecy edifies the church. Indeed, much of chapter 14 has been devoted to the superiority of prophecy over tongues, which again suggests that the matter of spiritual gifts was precipitated by an overemphasis on tongues. Still, one could lurch in the other direction and repress tongues altogether; thus the believers are told not to forbid tongue-speaking. Acknowledging that speaking in tongues is legitimate leads to a final comment: tongues, prophecy and any other gift must be exercised in a fitting and orderly way. The rules set forth earlier must be heeded: no languages without an interpretation, and people must prophesy and speak in tongues one at a time. The motivation for exercising the gifts should be the strengthening and building up of the church.<sup>9</sup>

**17. What principles from this passage can guide modern churches in practicing spiritual gifts in a way that strengthens and unifies the body of Christ?**

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<sup>9</sup> 1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Book 7)  
Thomas R. Schreiner  
Studies were compiled and questions were written by Pastor Tim Badal (Sugar Grove Campus Pastor)



# How Important Is the Resurrection?

## INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 15:1-34

Timothy Keller has written: “If Jesus rose from the dead, then you have to accept all that he said; if he didn't rise from the dead, then why worry about any of what he said?” If Jesus really defeated death, that gives credence to every claim he made. If Jesus did not defeat death, every claim he ever made is proven false. In the words of Jaroslav Pelikan: “If Christ is risen—then nothing else matters. And if Christ is not risen—then nothing else matters.”

Christians and non-Christians have taken various positions on the topic of Christ's resurrection. Those who hold to an ahistorical position assert that Christians over spiritualize the resurrection and so remove it from its cultural setting. Many non-Christians flat out deny it. Those on the periphery state that Christians overemphasize various aspects of Christ's life and ministry at the expense of a proper treatment of the resurrection. Christian humanists tend to overemphasize the incarnation. Christian legalists overemphasize the life and teaching of Jesus, while Christian fundamentalists overemphasize the death of Christ to the exclusion of all other aspects. Some non-Christians, on the other hand, treat the resurrection as the novel belief of a minority rather than a claim with which we must reckon. The impersonal perspective argues that Christians over-doctrinalize and over-theologize so that the reality of Christ's resurrection has little to no impact on life. Non-Christian skeptics keep Christ and his claims at arm's length to avoid any need for a real encounter.

I like what Tim Keller has said about the doctrine of the resurrection: “I like the doctrine of the resurrection because it is just as hard or harsh as life itself.” In other words, the resurrection has a sharp, intolerable, hard edge. When it evaluates life, there is something very hard and sharp about what it is trying to say. If Jesus Christ was bodily raised from the dead—a real historical event—that should change everything. We have both hope and joy. It changes the way we view ourselves, the world, our neighbors, creation, God, and history. It changes everything. But if Jesus Christ were not bodily raised from the grave, then Christianity has nothing to say. No hope. No joy. No exhortation. No inspiration. But Christianity is not just an optimistic pile of stories; real power emerges. If it is true, then we have real hope. And if it is not true, then we as Christians are most to be pitied of all people. The current text tells us that the gospel, rather than being ahistorical, is unmistakably historical; rather than being peripheral, it is necessarily central; and rather than being impersonal, it is radically personal.<sup>10</sup>

## BREAK THE ICE

**What is one Easter tradition your family still enjoys?**

<sup>10</sup> Hughes, Kent R., Um, Stephen T., 1 Corinthians: The Word of the Cross (Preaching the Word) Article: The Power of the Gospel (1 Corinthians 15:1–11). Crossway. 2015.

## READ IT

Read Corinthians 15:1-34

## EXPLORE IT

1. By what does Paul say that Christians are being saved? (vv. 1-2)
2. To whom did Jesus appear after his resurrection? (vv. 5-7)
3. How did Paul become what he became? (v. 10)
4. What are some contrasts between Adam and Christ? (vv. 21-22)
5. What will happen to the various enemies of God in the last days? (vv. 24-28)



### **Be Guaranteed Resurrection through Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 15:12-19)**

The resurrection of Jesus is the great climax of the gospel. This is what gives meaning to Christ's death. There is no gospel unless there is also resurrection. However, the death also gives meaning to the resurrection, for in this is seen the sovereign work of God in the vindication of Christ and of his people. Furthermore, the resurrection of Christ is what guarantees the fact of resurrection life that is available to all through Jesus Christ. Where he has gone before, there his people also will go. In this way, the resurrection can be seen to bring about the great eschatological hope and to fulfill all the great covenant promises.<sup>13</sup>

**9. If Jesus didn't rise from the grave, what are Christians left with? Would it make sense to continue in Christianity without a resurrected Savior?**

**10. Verse 17 brings up the topic of our sins. What would you say if a friend asked you, "Why does Jesus' resurrection make a difference for sins?"**

**11. Finish the sentence with something that is true of you: Because Jesus is alive, I...**

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

### **Celebrate Jesus' Victory over Death (1 Corinthians 15:20-28)**

If Christ defeats all enemies, he must defeat death, the greatest enemy standing against having life with God. Defeating death in battle requires the ability to have and give life in a manner that death cannot overcome. The means by which Christ destroys the last enemy is resurrection from the dead. That victory will be actualized to its full extent in the establishment of the final rule. "All things"—says the one who became "all things" for all persons in 9:22–27—includes death as one of these things. However, Paul notes one exception to all things coming under the rule of Christ: Christ will present the kingdom to God the Father. This means the Father is in the superior position within the Godhead. Paul's conclusion draws from Psalm 110:1 because it is the sovereign LORD who makes the enemies subject to David's Lord. The Sovereign LORD rules and gives to David's Lord the victory over his enemies. He is in authority over Christ, not subjugated under him.<sup>14</sup>

**12. What's one time death has caused you pain? What other emotions did you feel at that time?**

**13. Verse 23 says that those who belong to Christ will be made alive at His second coming. In what ways are you ready for that day? In what ways are you not ready?**

**14. How does the promise of life after death change the way you want to live this week?**

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<sup>14</sup> Redmond, Eric C.. Interlude on the Resurrection of the Dead and Its Implications for Steadfastness. The Gospel Coalition. <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/commentary/1-corinthians/>

### **Don't Sleepwalk into Ruin (1 Corinthians 15:29-34)**

While Scripture knows multiple motivations for godly living in this age, the final victory over sin and death evidenced in Christ's resurrection is surely one. Living with the certainty that sinners will face the resurrected Christ himself as he comes in judgment provides a motivation of fear (2 Pet 3:9-10). Yet it also provides a great motivation of excited anticipation (2 Pet 3:14-15). Christ comes as the King who has defeated death, so his people look forward to overcoming death. He has defeated sin, so they anticipate lives without sin in bodies made ready for eternal existence. Life today is to be lived in obedience to Christ, all the while anticipating the day when full obedience is realized and the Christian's own perfection is established. The race is worth running, but only if the end is Christ and sharing in his resurrection and his glory. Otherwise, Christians are left to the world that "is passing away" (7:29-31).

Sadly, some at Corinth, as so often in the church today, seem to be sleepwalking into ruin as they evidence "no knowledge of God" (15:34). With no anticipation of the resurrection, they mix too readily with those who, likewise, have no great hope for the future. Most seriously they have dramatically underestimated the power of God to raise the dead.<sup>15</sup>

**15. Have you experienced a season of sleepwalking in your Christian faith? If so, what helped you wake up?**

**16. What actions last week did you only take because you believe Jesus is alive? Are there any actions in the week ahead you plan to take for the same reason?**

**17. On a scale of 1 to 10, how important is the resurrection of Christ to you? Why did you choose that number?**

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<sup>15</sup> Gardner, Paul. 1 Corinthians (Zondervan Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament). Zondervan. 2018.  
Studies were compiled and questions were written by Pastor David Wood (Aurora Campus Pastor)



# Raised in Power

## INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 15:35-58

We are afraid of death because it is an unknown, over which we have no control. We cannot evade it -- it is beyond us. We are in the grip of other forces, and, what bothers us is, we have a sense that we are being plunged into accountability. Beyond death lies a settling, and an answering, for where we have been, and how we have lived, and what we have done. That is why death is such a fearsome thing. It is made all the more so by the law that says you cannot escape the evil of your past. God cannot set it aside nor can any man. It must be faced. There can be no deliverance from it. That is what makes us afraid of death.

But the good news coming to us from the resurrection of Jesus, following his crucifixion, is that this power of sin is broken. We are no longer helpless; we are no longer unable to change. Many people today are troubled by an unending struggle they feel within to try to be different, but they cannot find the way. ...

Well, the good news is that there is a way. Sin's power has been broken. We have been given a way to say, "No!" and to be able to do it despite the pressure. Even when we fail there is a way of relief so that we can have the failure cleansed and put away and it no longer needs to haunt us. What is that way? Paul tells us in Verse 57. This is really the heart of the mystery:

**"But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ."**

I want you to notice that it is put in the present tense. It is not past, "who gave us the victory." It is "thanks be to God who keeps on giving us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." I do not know anything that means more to me as a Christian than the fact that every day I can lay hold of the grace of Jesus Christ. He is not a distant Savior who lived twenty centuries ago. He is alive, and I meet him every day. When I find myself having failed, faltered, and sinned, I come again and receive from him the cleansing that he has won for me on Calvary.<sup>16</sup>

## BREAK THE ICE

**What do you appreciate most about your favorite antique thing you own?**

<sup>16</sup> <https://www.raystedman.org/new-testament/1-corinthians/the-victory-of-the-mystery>

## READ IT

Read 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

## EXPLORE IT

1. What questions does Paul address in this passage?
2. What examples does Paul point to in the natural world to support his argument?
3. What must happen in order to “inherit the kingdom of God”?
4. What are we to give thanks for?
5. What is the “application” of Paul’s teaching on the believer’s future resurrection?

## APPLY IT

Paul uses the verbs sown versus raised four times, drawing a contrast between what is and what will be. We see four contrasts in these verses.

First, **the body that is sown is perishable** (phthora; cf. Col. 2:22; 2 Pet. 2:12); it will die and dissolve. The body that is raised, though, is imperishable (aphtharsia; cf. 15:50, 53, 54). The word imperishable is closely associated with eternal life (Rom. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:10; see also Dan. 12:3; Matt. 13:43). We see the same conception in 4 Maccabees 17:12 where the reward for the righteous is ‘immortality [aphtharsia] in endless life’ (nrsv).

Second, **the body is sown in dishonour but it is raised in glory**. The body is not intrinsically evil, but it is dishonourable due to its corruptibility and weakness; however, the resurrection body will be glorious and will not suffer from frailty. We see a similar notion in Philippians 3:21: ‘[Christ], by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.’

Third, **the body is sown in weakness but it is raised in power**. Human bodies are plagued with illness, injuries, tiredness and finally death, but in the resurrection they will go from strength to strength.

Fourth, **Paul contrasts the natural body (psychikos) with a spiritual body.** Elsewhere Paul contrasts the natural person (cf. ESV) who is not a believer with those who are spiritual (1 Cor. 2:13–14). ... The natural body, then, is what all people possess upon entering the world as sons and daughters of Adam (Rom. 5:12–19). When new life in Christ comes for believers, they receive the Spirit, but they do not immediately receive a spiritual body. They will not be given a spiritual body until the end (cf. 15:20–28).<sup>17</sup>

**6. How can we value and care for our natural bodies today, even knowing that they are perishable and will one day be replaced with spiritual bodies as described in 1 Corinthians 15?**

**7. Using the Bible, how would you defend what you think Paul means when he says Christians will receive a “spiritual body”?**

Inherit[ing] the kingdom of God refers to entering the eschatological kingdom, and Paul is clear that the wicked will not participate (1 Cor. 6:9–10; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5–6). When Paul says that flesh and blood will not enter the kingdom, he does not mean that physical bodies will not be in the kingdom. Such a notion would contradict the affirmation of the physical resurrection which permeates this chapter. Instead, as the next line in the verse demonstrates, and as the whole chapter certifies, corruptible flesh and blood will not enter the kingdom. Flesh which is fallen and mortal because of sin cannot inherit the imperishable...<sup>18</sup>

**8. Read Ephesians 4:17–32. How does Paul’s teaching that “corruptible flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom” influence the way we honor God with the bodies we have now?**

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<sup>17</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R.. 1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Book 7) (pp. 415–416). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

<sup>18</sup> Schreiner, Thomas R.. 1 Corinthians: An Introduction and Commentary (Tyndale New Testament Commentaries Book 7) (p. 418). InterVarsity Press. Kindle Edition.

The pinnacle of Paul's teaching is the contrast between the first Adam and the last Adam. In Romans 5, Paul explains that sin entered the world through the first Adam, bringing death to all. But the last Adam, Jesus Christ, offered Himself as a ransom for many, so that where death once reigned through the first Adam, justification and life now reign through Christ. Paul reminds us:

***“The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”***

Through Christ, we have tasted the glories of the imperishable and immortal. We no longer live from a place of defeat and decay but from a place of decisive victory as we await the final fulfillment of our hope in salvation.

**9. What does it mean for you personally to live from a place of victory in Christ rather than defeat and decay?**

If we know that God is able to put together a body, even one that has decayed into nothing but ashes or particles of dust, then we should know that God never forgets even the smallest deed done in his service.

- We ought to be **constant** in God's work: “be steadfast.”
- We ought to be **committed** to God's work: “immoveable.”
- We ought to be **consistent** in God's work: “always excelling.”
- We ought to be **confident** in God's work: “because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain.”<sup>19</sup>

**10. Paul's assumption is that believers are actively involved in “the work of the Lord.” What does your current involvement in the “work of the Lord” look like?**

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<sup>19</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L.; Merritt, James. Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (p. 296). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

**11. What would it look like for you personally to remain constant in God's work?**

**12. What would it look like for you personally to remain committed to God's work?**

**13. What would it look like for you personally to remain consistent in God's work?**

**14. What would it look like for you personally to remain confident in God's work?**

**15. What things might hinder you from being "constant, committed, consistent, and confident" in the work of the Lord that you are engaged in?**



# Before I Go...

## INTRODUCTION

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

The pastor's been preaching for a while, and then the final point flashes on the screen. Almost instinctively, the sound of rustling papers and Bibles closing fills the room as people start to mentally check out. We may be tempted to do the same as we open our Bibles to the closing chapter of 1 Corinthians. After 29 small group gatherings, we've walked through this rich letter together—encountering some of our favorite passages, wrestling with challenging truths, and striving to apply its lessons to our lives. It's been a journey, and it might feel like we're at the "logistical wrap-up" stage. But don't check out just yet!

While it's true that Paul is drawing this letter to a close, the things he shares here are far from insignificant. In fact, they're essential. Throughout this letter, Paul has addressed the church's weaknesses and shortcomings head-on, teaching us valuable lessons about what it means for a church to be firing on all cylinders. Now, as he wraps up, Paul offers practical pictures of what it looks like to love and care for one another in the church. He doesn't leave these brothers and sisters beat up and defeated. Instead, he offers encouragement to lift them up and help them move forward.

Let's take one more look together and see how Paul's final words can inspire us to press on in faith, love, and community.

## BREAK THE ICE

What's your go-to feel-good song or movie when you need a pick-me-up?

## READ IT

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

## EXPLORE IT

1. What instructions does Paul give the Corinthians regarding “the collection for the saints”?
2. Who does Paul mention will be visiting the Corinthians at some point?
3. What is Paul’s charge to the Corinthians in verses 13-14?
4. What does Paul commend people for in verses 15-18?
5. Who sends greetings to the Corinthians?

## APPLY IT

### Generosity

Paul encourages the Corinthian believers to give “as he may prosper.” While Paul doesn’t specify a particular amount or percentage, this phrase clearly implies a planned and proportional approach to giving that reflects one’s income. Rather than using Paul’s lack of mention of percentages as an excuse to give less than the tithe (a tenth) required under the Old Testament Law, grace should compel us to ask, “How much can I give?”—not, “How little must I give?”

6. How can we cultivate a heart of generosity that sees giving as an opportunity instead of an obligation?

7. What do you think a church community would look like if everyone embraced the mindset of asking, 'How much can I give?' instead of 'How little must I give?'?

"There are three important words not to be missed in verse 2: **"each of you."** ... Paul makes it plain that everybody should give something to this offering. There is no room for exemptions, exceptions, or excuses. Nobody gets a pass. Nobody gets a get-out-of-giving card. When it comes to giving, we are to participate whether we are rich or poor, whether the offering looks like a gold coin from a rich man or a little mite from a widow (Mare and Harris, 1 & 2 Corinthians, 121).

I have discovered that Christian givers typically fall into three categories.

- **Spontaneously:** When presented with a cause or an emergency or something that burdens them, they will give. That is one way to give, and some giving should be spontaneous, but I think there is room for improvement here.
- **Sporadically:** They just give when the mood hits them. So depending on their frame of mind, the performance of the stock market, how high or low interest rates are, or how much confidence they have in the economy, they give. Here, too, I see room for improvement, and I think Paul would agree.
- **Sparingly:** For many of them, giving is not generous or sacrificial; they just want that good feeling that comes from knowing they have at least given something.

The best way to give, though it may certainly be supplemented with spontaneous offerings, is **systematically**. We should give with a steadfast determination to give as often as our income is refreshed or we have an unexpected inflow of money. We should have a steadfast determination to give some portion of that back to God's work and to people who are more needy than we are. Though there may be times to give beyond this pattern, we should have a system of calculating what we are going to give ahead of time, where we are going to give it, and when we are going to give it." <sup>20</sup>

8. Why do you think all Christians are called to show generosity to the ministry of the church and support of others?

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<sup>20</sup> Akin, Dr. Daniel L.; Merritt, James. Exalting Jesus in 1 Corinthians (Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary) (pp. 301-302). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

9. Which of the models of generosity listed above most resembles your current approach to generosity? Why do you think that is?

10. What steps can you take to move toward a “systematic” approach to your generosity?

11. What challenges or barriers might you face when working to implement a more systematic approach to generosity?

## **Comradery**

This letter was undoubtedly a challenging one for Paul to write and a difficult one for the Corinthians to receive. The issues in Corinth must have felt overwhelming, with fires to put out in every direction. From divisions in the church to tolerance of sin, godly sexuality, the proper use of liberties and love, issues surrounding the Lord's Supper, spiritual gifts and worship, and even doctrinal clarity on the resurrection, the scope of correction could easily leave someone feeling discouraged. Yet Paul doesn't let the letter end on a low note. Instead, he reminds the Corinthians of his deep love for them and their vital place in the broader Church.

Paul encourages them by sharing his plans to visit soon and his decision to send Timothy in the meantime. Despite all their struggles and missteps, Paul hadn't given up on them. What a powerful reminder that, even with significant work ahead, he was committed to walking alongside them as they grew in faith. This reassurance offers hope: no matter how messy things might get, God's work continues, and there's always room for growth and renewal.

**12. What is your typical response when someone addresses something in your life that needs correction?**

**13. Thinking of a time when despite your own shortcomings, someone didn't give up on you and instead continued to invest into your life. What kind of impact did that kind of partnership and relationship have in shaping who you are today?**

- 14. When you have to lovingly correct something in another person's life, how can you balance criticism and correction with grace and encouragement?**

In verses 13-14, Paul offers a heartfelt encouragement to these struggling Christians, as though putting his arm around them and saying, "Don't give up. Keep going." He urges them to "stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. Let all that you do be done in love." What a powerful reminder of the strength and love we are called to in Christ!

In our own moments of struggle and discouragement, it's a profound blessing when a brother or sister in Christ comes alongside us, offering support and reminding us to keep going.

- 15. How have you experienced the love and support of other believers through discouragements and frustrations either in life or in your own faith journey?**

- 16. What area of your faith and life do you need to apply Paul's words to "be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong"?**

It's often said that you can't "John Wayne" Christianity—our faith was never meant to be lived out alone. God designed it to flourish in the community of other believers. Even amidst the struggles in the Corinthian church, there were bright spots that Paul didn't overlook. The household of Stephanas stood out as faithful, devoted, and seasoned believers, setting an example the church could confidently follow. Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus were a great blessing to Paul and others, and their ministry and service to the Lord were worthy of commendation.

This serves as a great reminder that, even when challenges arise—whether in the church or in our personal faith—there are always reasons to rejoice and praise God.

**17. How has someone else's example and ministry encouraged you?**

**How can you "give recognition to such people"?**