

1 CORINTHIANS

U P S I D E D O W N

CHAPTERS 7-16

ev / church

INTRODUCTION: 1 CORINTHIANS 7-16

The city of Corinth

At the bottom of an impressive rugged limestone summit, Greek Corinth had existed for several hundred years before it was destroyed by Rome in 146 B.C. The city was rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 44 B.C., becoming one of the most important cities of the Roman Empire. Corinth was the capital of the province of Achaia and the seat of the governor.

Roman Corinth was rich, trendy, and religiously diverse, accustomed to visits by impressive traveling public speakers, and obsessed with status, self-promotion, and personal rights. From a Jewish or Christian perspective, as with any pagan city, its inhabitants were marked by the worship of idols, sexual immorality, and greed.

Paul's relationship with the Corinthians

The church in Corinth began in approximately AD 50-51 as part of Paul's second missionary journey; his relationship with them was roughly over a seven-year period. Paul visited Corinth three times and wrote four letters in total, two of which have been lost to time. The letters we know as 1 and 2 Corinthians are actually his second and fourth letters to them.

Paul's purpose in writing

The historical context leading up to Paul writing 1 Corinthians is important to understand. Between AD 52-54, when Paul came to Ephesus (Acts 19:1), things at Corinth became complicated for two reasons. First, for some of that time the church was under the influence of other leaders. There was the gifted Alexandrian Jewish leader, Apollos, who was an impressive "man of words" (Acts 18:24). After him, the "high-ranking" Apostle Peter and his wife visited Corinth also. By contrast, Paul seemed quite unimpressive. Second, the previous (lost) letter was directed to the church's failure to deal with internal moral issues of sexual immorality, drunkenness, idolatry and fraud (1 Corinthians 5:1-9). The church was growing in size, but with that came increasingly pagan thinking and behaviour. This pull of ungodly values, along with less effective leadership, meant the culture of the church in Corinth was declining in a hurry!

UPSIDE DOWN

Paul was prompted to write this second letter, 1 Corinthians, in response to distressing news from the church. This news included verbal reports, from Chloe's people (1:11) and Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus (16:17), and a letter from the church that Paul mentions in 7:1, which contained a series of questions posed by the congregation. The congregation was now divided over their favourite Christian leaders (1:12). Further, Paul learned that they were confused over a range of issues, with some members taking legal action against other members (6:1–11), cases of sexual immorality (5:1–13; 6:12–20), marriage problems (7:1–40), and questions concerning food offered to idols (chapters 8–10) and spiritual gifts (chapters 12–14).

What was causing the problems? At the core, it seems that they grew out of the Corinthians' inability to let the gospel message fully reshape their lives, whether because they misunderstood that message or because they rejected it outright. Rather than being the "church of God in Corinth" (1:2), they were behaving more like they were the "church of the city of Corinth". It was their failure to grasp the gospel and its implications across all areas of their lives that led to the problems. Therefore, it's no mistake that Paul's letter begins with the power and wisdom of the cross and climaxes with detailed teaching on matters of "first importance": the gospel of Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. In the middle of this teaching, he applies the gospel and its implications to the Corinthian's current situation.

Today, we are subject to similar pressures and temptations. We also need to be reminded that the gospel message in its fullness will help us to think and see clearly and therefore know how to live. This letter will urge us, with God's help, to turn our upside-down lives right-side up to the glory of God.

WEEK 1: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-24

DAY 1

Read 1 Corinthians 1:10-11; 5:1; 5:9; 7:1

1. Looking at these verses, what do you learn about the reason/s Paul wrote this letter?
 - a. What are the two issues that had been reported back to Paul? (1:10-11; 5:1)
 - b. Is this the first letter Paul had written to them? (5:9)
 - i. Why might it be helpful to notice this?
 - c. Chapter 7 begins a section that runs all the way through to the end of chapter 14. How does 7:1 help us understand why Paul wrote this section?

It's helpful to notice these verses because we start to get a feel for how things were going in Corinth since the gospel landed there. There had been significant issues that caused Paul to write a previous letter (now lost to time). Despite this first letter, the report he receives back is that things are no better; in fact they seem to be getting worse! More than that, the church has a whole range of questions about the Christian life showing they have a long way to go – they are still very worldly in thought and lifestyle. It's helpful for us to notice that people don't grow into maturity overnight. In fact, it's often through difficulty, hardship, struggle, even personal failures that God brings us to our senses and teaches us to trust and honour Him. This letter to the Corinthians will speak powerfully to us today because ancient Corinth and the Central Coast are not all that different in many ways.

Prayer: Ask God to help you be open to hearing from Him this term as the gospel challenges our values and our lifestyles. Ask Him to give you a soft heart that is ready and wanting to change so that you might grow in your love for God and into deeper Christian maturity.

Marriage, Divorce and Changing Circumstances

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 7:1-7

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Numbers 14-23; Proverbs 7-9; Acts 1-2

1. What are the Corinthians asking questions about?
2. What do you learn about Paul's view of sex from these verses?
3. What are the risks of not paying enough attention to your sex life within marriage?
4. If you take your queues from Hollywood, there is nothing overly sacred about sex. It's presented as something worthy of great pursuit – however you get there, and whoever you have it with. But did you notice that Paul does not share that view about sex at all? In fact, he says, "I wish that you were as I am". Paul was single yet he did not think of his singleness as inferior or missing out in any way. He held it as a highly valuable gift from God. Regardless of whether you are married or single, is your view of sex in line with God's view?
 - a. How might you need to change your thinking about that?
 - b. Do you have to change the way you are acting when it comes to sex?

Prayer: Thank God for the chance to remember that sex is a good gift to be enjoyed as an act of loving service between two people in marriage. Ask God to help you repent of any thinking or actions where a wrong view of sex has replaced the higher value of living your life for God's honour and glory.

WEEK 1: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-24

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 7:8-11; Matthew 5:27-32

1. Looking at 1 Corinthians 7:8-11, what do you learn about sex and marriage?

2. What else do you notice in the text that adds weight to Paul's words about marriage?
 - a. Looking at Matthew 5:27-32, what else does Jesus say?

 - b. Why do you think Paul doesn't mention everything Jesus said in Matthew 5? (Hint: remember the question the Corinthians were asking in 7:1)

3. How does Paul's teaching here go against our culture today? What do you find personally hard to hear in these words?

Prayer: Ask God to help you desire eternal things above earthly things, to see single life as a good thing, not a thing to grieve over; to see marriage as a gift from God, but not an ultimate thing; to see it as a permanent life-long union and not just a temporary thing. And if you find yourself in a place where by your own choosing, or by another's, that you now have a broken past, ask God to meet you in that place by His grace in Jesus. Ask Him to give you the humility, strength and courage to repent and to live your life now in light of His good Word to you.

Marriage, Divorce and Changing Circumstances

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 7:12-16

1. What does this passage teach us about marriage between Christians and non-Christians?
2. Why might newly converted Christians in Corinth have been tempted to divorce their non-Christian partners?
3. What reasons does Paul give for telling the Corinthian Christians they are not to divorce their non-Christian partners?
4. Do you find this confronting? Why, or why not?

Prayer: If you have an unbelieving partner, pray that God might use you to share the gospel with them. Pray for those in this situation that they might have the strength to continue standing for Jesus in their marriages. Pray for the children in those marriages that those kids might come to know the saving knowledge of Jesus through their Christian parent's teaching and example.

WEEK 1: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:1-24

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 7:17-24

1. Yesterday, we read that people who were married and then became a Christian should remain in that situation in the hope that the unbelieving partner and children might be saved. How does today's passage continue that idea?
2. How does this passage cause us to understand God's sovereign purpose for our lives?
3. What new identity do we need to grasp to be able to do this? (See verse 22-23)
4. Ambition to succeed and get out of certain circumstances is a strong worldly value. Now, if your circumstances are unsafe, of course it's a good thing to distance yourself. But many of us desire change for essentially worldly reasons. How might a growing awareness of God's purposes in our lives help us find contentment regardless of our circumstances?

Prayer: Ask God to give you contentment where you are today, that you might be God's person right now and know this is His will for you. Ask Him to help you see how God might use you today to make Jesus known.

Marriage, Divorce and Changing Circumstances

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 2: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40

DAY 1

Read 1 Corinthians 7:25-40

1. In verse 25, Paul begins to deal with the matter of “virgins”. What clues in the passage help us understand how this group of people differ to the “unmarried” in 7:8?

2. If this passage was the only information we had about marriage, what feeling would you be left with about the importance of marriage?

3. It’s a good thing we know that Paul teaches about the wonderful purpose of marriage in Ephesians 5, for example. How does this help us understand what Paul is wanting the Corinthians to know here?
 - a. Are you content in your present state?

 - b. Is your desire to be married causing you to make compromises?

 - c. Is your marriage or family way too important to what it should be compared to the eternal realities of heaven and hell?

 - d. How does this passage challenge you personally?

 - e. What might you need to change here?

Prayer: Pray that you might have a view of life, marriage and singleness as God does so that your priorities in life might reflect those rightly for the glory of God.

Marriage or Mission?

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 7:26-28

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Numbers 24-33; Psalms 42-44; Acts 3-4

Paul has urged the Corinthians to consider remaining in their current relationship status. This was a big call! So, he offers three reasons to help them understand why. We will consider each reason over the next few days.

1. What is the first reason?
 - a. How does verse 28b help us to understand what Paul means in verse 26a?
2. Christians who want to be proactive gospel servants face all kinds of challenges. This has been the case throughout the ages. What are some of the challenges facing married people in particular?
3. Why does Paul want to spare them these challenges?
4. How does this significantly challenge us about having too high a view about marriage?

Prayer: If you are married, pray for those who are single among us. Pray that they might not feel less valued – on the contrary, pray that God might embolden them and use them in fruitful ways as they serve God's people. If you are single, pray for those who are married among us. Pray that the struggles they face in their marriages, and because of their marriages, might not hinder them being generous and hard working as they serve and support God's people.

WEEK 2: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 7:29-31

1. What is Paul's second reason for remaining unmarried?
 - a. Who else does he speak to in this passage?

2. How does verse 31b help to confirm what Paul means in verse 29a?

3. Paul wants us to have a right view of the world. He wants us to be clear that this world is passing away and it's not our home. This is such an important reality for us living in such an affluent and beautiful part of the world.
 - a. How is this challenging you today?

 - b. Where are you overly engrossed in this world?

 - c. How is this getting in the way of you being a devoted follower of Jesus?

 - d. What do you have to let go of?

Prayer: Pray that God might help break your desire for things that don't matter so you can be given to things that will count for eternity.

Marriage or Mission?

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 7:32-35

1. Paul's third reason for remaining single brings his argument to a high point. What does Paul want the Corinthians to understand?
 - a. How does verse 35 complete the idea he starts in verse 32?
2. As Christians, what ought to be our highest value? What is the thing we ought to strive for the most?
3. How are you going in this kind of devotion to Jesus?

Prayer: Ask God to forgive you for your compromised devotion, and pray that He stirs within you an urgent need to make the most of your life before it's over. Pray that God might use you for the days He has given you to serve Him faithfully and fruitfully.

WEEK 2: 1 CORINTHIANS 7:25-40

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 7:36-40

1. What else does Paul want Christians to know who are engaged? What should they do? Why, and why not?

2. What makes this passage so honest and realistic to read?

3. How should the Christian approach marriage? (See verses 39-40)

4. What's something that has stood out to you this week?
 - a. How has it changed your thinking?

 - b. How has it challenged the way you are living?

Prayer: Ask God to give you wisdom wherever you are in life, that you might make the most of your life in devotion to God.

Marriage or Mission?

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

DAY 1

The city of Corinth was full of temples. The sacrifice of animals was a part of daily pagan religious worship. As you can imagine, trade in the city included a thriving meat market where the selling of animals to the temples and then the meat that came back from those sacrifices flooded the city. The new Christians in Corinth became aware that God's holy people were to have nothing to do with idol worship. But how do you avoid it in a city such as Corinth? On top of that, some among them considered themselves as having arrived at a superior level of knowledge. This knowledge enabled them to do whatever they wanted, apparently! It's no surprise that it was a question they asked Paul about. This week we will look at the problem of idolatry and how Paul responds to their question about it. Paul will focus on this topic and the issues related to it all the way through until 11:1.

Read Exodus 20:1-6; Romans 1:18-25

1. From today's two readings, what is idolatry, and why is it a problem?
2. What are the consequences for those who worship idols?
3. As you consider God's position towards those who have turned their backs on Him, how should we respond?

Prayer: Ask God to help you understand the problem of idolatry as He does. Ask Him to help you desire Him over all things, to delight in Him and to worship Him alone. Pray for the people you know who do not yet know Jesus, who remain under God's righteous judgment. Pray that God might graciously save them and call them back to Himself.

Food Sacrificed to Idols

DAY 2

**Read Colossians 3:5-6;
1 Thessalonians 1:9-10**

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Numbers 34-36; Psalms 45-48; Acts 5-6

1. Idolatry is at least the worship of some kind of figure that has been made. How does today's passage expand that idea?
2. The passage in 1 Thessalonians is helpful because it shows the need to turn back to God from idols, to trust in Jesus and be saved. This means that in the first place, idolatry is the turning away from God to pursue things instead of Him; to disregard and disobey Him. How does this help you see idolatry in your own life?
3. Idolatry starts in the heart – craving, wanting, enjoying and being satisfied by anything that you love and treasure more than God. Before we see what Paul has to say to the Corinthians how about we take time to reflect on the things that we have made too much of. What things capture the affections of your heart? What do you desire more than God?

Prayer: Pray that God might help you see the things that you have made into idols, things you have made more important than God. How might you repent of those things today?

WEEK 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-8

The past two days we spent some time getting our heads into a right place to understand God's attitude towards idolatry.

1. Today's passage is dealing with the food that has been sacrificed to idols, and whether or not it's ok for Christians to eat it. Why are some people able to eat this food while others are not?
2. How does knowledge about the truth bring freedom in this issue?
3. What is the problem of knowledge without love?
4. What difference should love make in this issue?

Prayer: Pray that God would grow you in knowledge, Christian freedom and love so that you might live your life careful not to cause others to stumble in their faith.

Food Sacrificed to Idols

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 8:1-8; Matthew 15:10-11

1. What role does food play in a person being closer to, or further away from God?
2. What makes food that's been sacrificed to idols a problem for some people?
3. Why should these people still avoid eating that food?
4. There are commands that God has given us that must be followed, and there are other matters where Christian maturity enables Christian freedom to guide us in these decisions. Can you think of any other things that a Christian might be "free" to do, but may choose not to out of concern for others?
5. When have you chosen to go without something out of concern for someone else?

Prayer: Pray that your growth in knowledge and maturity might not cause you to become selfish, but that your maturity might help you both enjoy and deny yourself things out of a greater interest in the care of others.

WEEK 3: 1 CORINTHIANS 8:1-13

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 8:9-13

1. How is it possible to have personal freedom in a matter, yet still sin as you engage in it?
2. How does this help us understand what love should look like?
3. The Christian life is not something that is simply an individual choice with no impact on others. The Christian life is a communal life where our maturity is reflected in our actions, for better or worse. As you think about your own life, what are some ways you are in danger of causing others to fall by your example?
4. How might you deal with that today?

Prayer: Ask God to help you see where you are not making decisions from a place of love and concern for others, especially when that kind of love might be costly for you.

Food Sacrificed to Idols

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 4: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23

DAY 1

Having told the Corinthians they have freedom in the gospel, Paul has then told them that freedom must be exercised in love, otherwise people might stumble and fall away from the faith. Paul will demonstrate this by his own example of how the gospel shapes his Christian freedom. Each reading this week builds on each other to form a larger picture of how the gospel and Christian freedom go together.

Read 1 Corinthians 9:1-2; Galatians 2:7-9

1. What to these verses confirm about Paul's freedom and his status?
2. It's likely that some people in Corinth thought more highly of themselves than they ought because of their "knowledge". Why might it be important for Paul to remind the Corinthians of his freedom and status as an Apostle when talking to these people?
3. How does his status help us see that we should take notice of his example also?

Prayer: Ask God to humble you and help you look to Paul's example as one He chose to be an Apostle to the Gentiles.

The Gospel and Christian Freedom

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 9:3-14

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Deuteronomy 1-7; Psalms 49-51;
Acts 7-8

1. Yesterday we read how Paul established his freedom and his status as an Apostle. What was he entitled to as an Apostle?
2. As people who have benefitted directly from Paul's ministry (8:2), what is Paul entitled to from them in particular?
3. Why does he want them to understand their obligation to support him?
4. How might this obligation apply to us today?

Prayer: Pray that God would help us understand the importance of financially supporting our pastoral staff as a reflection of our gratitude to God for saving us.

WEEK 4: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 9:15-18

1. Having established his right to support from the church in Corinth, what does he do with his rights?
 - a. Why is this such an amazing expression of love?
 - b. Why might this be helpful for people who are just starting to understand the gospel?
2. What reason does Paul give for not making use of his rights?
 - a. Why is this such an amazing expression of love?
 - b. Why might this be helpful for people who are just starting to understand the gospel?

Prayer: Ask God to help you think carefully about how you might act among non-Christians and young Christians so that nothing you do might hinder their growth in the gospel.

The Gospel and Christian Freedom

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

1. Yesterday we read how Paul did not make use of his gospel right to practical support. How does today's passage add to that idea?
2. What makes Paul's argument about his rights and freedoms so counter cultural?
3. What is Paul's highest value and how does it impact his life and ministry?
4. Jesus told His disciples to pick up their cross and follow Him. Paul seems to be modelling that in very real terms. What have you given up for the cause of Jesus?

Prayer: Ask God to show you where you are holding on too tightly to things of this life at the expense of the gospel.

WEEK 4: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:1-23

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 9:19-23

1. These verses are often used to prepare people for missionary work in other cultures. Can you see why they might be helpful?
2. Where are the boundaries of Paul's Christian freedom?
3. What do you find most challenging in these verses?

Prayer: Pray that God might help you grow in your knowledge of Christian freedom so that you might give yourself at whatever cost to the cause of the gospel.

The Gospel and Christian Freedom

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 5: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-11:1

This week, Paul continues with the question of eating food sacrificed to idols (8:1-11:1). So far, Paul has addressed those who claimed a superior knowledge, calling them to temper knowledge with love out of concern for those with a weaker conscience. He then argued that his rights and freedom as an Apostle were not things he demanded. Rather, he gave them up for the cause of the gospel. Throughout this teaching, he uses his own example to model how they should be living – not built on personal rights and freedoms but built on sacrificial love for others. Paul takes them back to Israel’s history showing how their example is a stern warning for those who think they can live as they please with their new “knowledge”.

DAY 1

Read 1 Corinthians 9:24-27

1. Last week, we read about Paul’s Christian freedom and how he uses that to see people saved. How does Paul show us that his freedom is not something he takes lightly?
 - a. How do the illustrations help to make that point?
2. How do words challenge us not to just drift along in our Christian life?

Prayer: Pray that God might help you see that He saved you to live a life worthy of the gospel. Take time to repent of attitudes or actions that show you are not living this way and set yourself to work hard at your Christian life.

A Stern Warning from History

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Deuteronomy 8-17; Psalms 52-54;
Acts 9-10

1. What does Paul remind the Corinthians about from Israel's history?
2. What does he specifically warn them about?
3. What does this warning suggest about how they are living?
4. How might this warning apply to us today?
5. What gives you great confidence in these verses in your fight against sin?

Prayer: Ask God to help you see and face your sin with confidence as you listen to God's Word and act on it. Remember that there is nothing uniquely different with your struggle to overcome sin; it's been the common struggle for all humanity. Ask God help you find confidence knowing that He promises to help you overcome your sin.

WEEK 5: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-11:1

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 10:14-22

1. How is this section teaching something different to 8:1-6 where Paul talks about eating food sacrificed to idols?
2. Why is participating in idolatry such a problem?
3. Yesterday's reading was a stern warning about participating in idolatry, sexual immorality, drunken activities and generally testing Christ. What does today's reading add to heighten the need to heed that warning?

Prayer: Pray that your picture of God might grow so that He is the one you seek to honour in all of your life.

A Stern Warning from History

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 10:23-30

1. What insight does verse 23 offer in to the attitude of some in Corinth?
2. Where does their focus seem to be?
3. Where does he want their focus to be, and why?
4. How does this section help us understand what Christian freedom should look like?

Prayer: Pray that God would help you more deeply appreciate the freedom you have because of what Jesus has done for you. Pray that you might live your life with the same expression of love that seeks the good of others ahead of your own interests.

WEEK 5: 1 CORINTHIANS 9:24-11:1

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:1

1. What is Paul's conclusion to this whole section on Christian freedom?
2. What is Paul's motivation as he applies his Christian freedom?
3. What should our motivation be as we listen to Paul's words here?

Prayer: Pray that your whole life might be driven by the desire to see God's glory made known as you seek to follow Christ.

A Stern Warning from History

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

Head Coverings and Corporate Worship

DAY 2

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-3

BIBLE IN 2 YEARS

Deuteronomy 18-27; Psalms 55-57;
Acts 11-12

1. What reason does Paul give about how men and women (probably meaning wives in this context) should approach public worship?
2. How does seeing this help us understand whether this principle still applies today?
3. How does this help us see that gender distinction matters?
4. Why is this principle of headship difficult to understand or agree with today?
5. What does Paul tell us in these verses that ought to help us see it as a good thing?

Prayer: Depending on how long you've been a Christian, this topic might give rise to joyful thanksgiving for God's good design, or, it might give you great concern. Come before God honestly asking Him to help you trust His Word and live in line with it faithfully.

WEEK 6: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

DAY 3

Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-6

1. Looking at 11:4-6, what exactly is the problem here?
2. In light of 11:3, what might the head coverings represent?
3. What does a person's head/hair seem to represent?
4. In the first century, the principle of showing appropriate headship and gender were seen in head coverings and hair length. These things functioned as a symbol (like a wedding ring symbolizes a person is married). Those symbols today don't carry the same meaning they did in the first century which means we need to think about ways to reflect the same principle today. How might we appropriately reflect our gender, marital status and headship today in our gatherings?

Prayer: Pray that at church we might delight in representing gender and headship as God has ordered.

Head Coverings and Corporate Worship

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 11:7-12

1. What reasons do these verses offer for why reflecting gender and headship properly in church really matters?
 - a. What's going on with the angels do you think? (See also 1 Corinthians 6:3; Psalm 138:1 [God here probably means angels]).
2. How do these verses promote God's order in creation as something we should be eager to reflect well as we gather together to worship?
3. How has this passage challenged you most?

Prayer: Ask God to help you see where you have taken on the values of the world instead of delighting to live according to God's design.

WEEK 6: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:2-16

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 11:13-16

1. How do these verses add to Paul's teaching about the importance of presenting yourself appropriately according to your gender?

2. What is the basis of Paul's argument here?

3. We might be tempted to think that how we present ourselves is such a trivial matter that we don't think twice about it. But if your personal appearance is an expression of independence, revealing a heart attitude of indifference or rebellion towards God's order in creation, or authority in general, might it actually be bringing shame on you before God?
 - a. Do you present yourself appropriately according to the gender (masculinity or femininity) God has made you?

 - b. Do you present yourself in a way that respects authority as God has purposed?

 - c. Are there things you could change?

Prayer: Pray that God might keep stirring you to want to reflect His purpose and design in the way you live above cultural norms or the desire to be individual in style.

Head Coverings and Corporate Worship

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS

WEEK 7: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

DAY 1

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

Last week we read about problems when the church was gathered together. Some women (most likely upper-class Roman women) were denying the need to acknowledge headship and authority in their dress and appearance. Paul addressed this concern by helping them see that authority is a good God-given thing, and that appropriate gender expression is important to reflect God's order in creation. Today we will see another expression of upper-class abuse of power and privilege when the church gathered together for the Lord's Supper.

1. Last week's readings began with commendation in general followed by instruction about the importance of proper gender and headship expression in church. How does this passage begin by comparison?
2. What is the issue Paul has heard about?
3. Why does Paul come at them so hard?
4. Why might a person's social status or wealth cause division in a church community?

Prayer: Pray that together we might all remember we are one and the same in our sin and need for salvation, that we are one in Christ together because of His grace, and so we need to work hard at seeing and celebrating what unites us more than what distinguishes us as different from each other.

Class Division at the Lord's Table

DAY 4

Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34

1. What is the tone of these verses?
2. How do Paul's words here help correct the problem of people not approaching communion appropriately?
3. Think back over time for a moment... how do you approach communion? Is your approach something you need to change?

Prayer: Ask God to forgive you for the times you've not honoured Jesus by the way you've approached communion. Pray that He might prepare your heart next communion so that you might really come with a right attitude towards God and others.

WEEK 7: 1 CORINTHIANS 11:17-34

DAY 5

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. How do these verses show us that communion is about more than just remembering Jesus' death?
2. What deep spiritual reality about Jesus and His people is revealed here?
3. Our union with Christ is a deeply profound spiritual truth and reality. Jesus gave us communion to actively remember and declare His return, where that union will fully and finally take place. Communion is a time where you can sit honestly with the weight of your sin while smiling with joy because of Jesus' work on your behalf to deal with your sin, forgive you and save you. There's nothing more freeing than being able to be totally honest with yourself without fearing being crushed by your failures. But for those in Christ, that's what Jesus enables us to do. That's what communion celebrates. And that's why it's such an offence to treat communion flippantly. How should this stir your affections today? How does this influence what you want to say to God in prayer?

Prayer: Pray in response to your answers.

Class Division at the Lord's Table

NOTES AND PRAYER POINTS