

Read through the Bible



1 Corinthians Week Four



Monday, July Third

Love. In our culture today, this word can mean a variety of things. Love can be used to describe our satisfaction of something – “I love those Red Lobster cheddar biscuits.” It can also be used to pronounce our romantic feelings toward someone – “Gertrude, I love you with all my heart.” Love can even be a responsive affirmation to a proposal – “I’d love to go the Lego exhibit in Tampa with you!” With so many ways to describe and use the word “love,” it is often difficult to determine just what people mean when they say it. In today’s passage, Paul lays out what love is and isn’t within the context of spiritual gifts and Christian unity.

Read: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- When it comes to using spiritual gifts and good works for the benefit of others, what is the necessary component? What happens without this component? (see verses 1-3)

Imagine building a car from scratch. Upon completion, you can take it for a test drive, but if you have no fuel, you’re going nowhere! Similarly, Paul reminds the Corinthians their spiritual gifts and good works are meaningless unless they are fueled by love.

- What is love? What is love not? (see verses 4-7)

Notice that Paul isn’t describing how love makes a person feel. Instead, love is demonstrated in our actions toward others. We don’t *feel* patient. We *show* patience. And we don’t *feel* kindness. We *show* kindness. That’s why at Our Savior, we don’t talk about *feeling* love. We *live* love in our actions toward others.

- Who or what does Paul seem to refer to with his phrases – “when perfection comes,” “we shall see face to face,” and “I shall know fully, even as I am fully known”? (see verses 8-12)

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Take a moment to go to God in prayer and thank Him for demonstrating His love for us through action by sending His Son.

Tuesday, July Fourth

On July 4, 1776, thirteen American colonies signed the Declaration of Independence, proclaiming freedom from the grasps of the British Empire. This newfound “gift” they had acquired called on each colonist to consider how they would use it. Would they use their freedom to profit for themselves? Or would they use it for the benefit of those around them? In today’s passage, Paul discusses how a Corinthian Christian might properly use a spiritual gift they’ve been given.

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Christian circles have varying degrees of teaching and interest in spiritual gifts. Some rarely discuss them. Others appear obsessed with them. But whenever we discuss spiritual gifts, we must always remember their source – they are “given through the Spirit” (12:8).

- According to Paul, who does the gift of prophecy speak to? Who does speaking in tongues speak to? (see verses 1-5)
- What result(s) should occur from speaking in tongues? (see verse 6) What is the key with this gift? (see verse 13)

Based on Paul’s exhortation, the Corinthian church seemed enamored with spiritual gifts, particularly speaking in tongues. While he speaks to the gift’s benefits, he also cautions them to consider how useless it can be without purpose and interpretation. That is why he “would rather speak five intelligible words to instruct others than ten thousand words in a tongue” (v. 19).

- What benefit does prophesying have for a non-Christian? (see verses 24-25)

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

What is your background and understanding of spiritual gifts? How do Paul’s words to the Corinthian church affirm, clarify, or refute your understandings?

Wednesday, July Fifth

Over the centuries, we have developed ways to bring order to a chaotic situation. A judge uses her gavel to quiet down the courtroom. A coach blows his whistle to get his players to pay attention. A camp counselor claps her hands together in a repeated pattern to get her campers to mimic the pattern and settle down. In today’s section, Paul attempts to provide order for the Corinthian church’s worship practices.

Read: 1 Corinthians 14:26-40

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- To avoid chaos in a worship setting, what instruction does Paul provide? (see verses 27-33 and 40)

Notice Paul is reminding the Corinthians that their worship should reflect the nature of God. As “God is not a God of disorder but of peace,” so should their worship reflect a peaceful order.

- What is Paul’s instruction for women? (see verses 34-35)

These verses have been rather tough for Christians throughout the centuries, but we must work to place them in proper context. Paul had already affirmed a woman’s right to pray and prophesy publicly (remember 1 Corinthians 11:4-5 and 14:3-5?), so what could these verses speak to? Many theologians point to Paul’s concern for wives disrupting worship with questions for their husbands (v. 35). Remember, Paul is talking about orderly worship here. In that time, it would have been the custom for men and women to sit in separate groups during the worship service. Thus, if a wife had a question or concern for her husband, she might ask it from across the church and thus disrupt the order of worship. This was not good practice, and Paul aimed to speak against it.

Respond: Apply what you’ve learned in prayer and action

Consider the flow and content of our worship services. How do they reflect a peaceful order?

Thursday, July Sixth

When you were born into this world, many of your identities were determined for you. Your father's chromosomes determined your biological sex. Your mother's diet helped to determine how you grew and developed during her pregnancy. When you were born, your parents or guardians determined what name you would be called. With these and other aspects regarding your birth, you can see that many of your identities were not your own choice; they were given to you. In today's passage, Paul discusses the source of the Corinthians' new identity as Christians.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:1-11

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why are the Corinthians to hold firmly to the word Paul preached to them? (see verses 1-2)

Throughout his letter, Paul made clear that the Corinthians were living in ways contrary to the Gospel they had received (divisions, lawsuits, sexual immorality, even improper use of the Lord's Supper). In turning back to that Good News here, Paul once again calls on the Corinthians to "hold firmly" to it and turn from their sinful ways.

- What message was of utmost importance to Paul? (see verses 3-8)
- Why does Paul feel undeserving to be called an apostle? (see verses 9-10)

Paul's moment of introspection is truly beautiful – "by the grace of God *I am what I am*" (v. 10). This simple notion boldly proclaims the formative power of faith in Jesus on our lives. There is nothing we can *do* to make ourselves righteous before God. It is only by God's grace through faith in Jesus alone that *we are what we are!*

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

How does the Gospel make you what you are? Spend some time in prayer thanking God for revealing your new identity in Jesus.

Friday, July Seventh

Imagine you're walking along the boardwalk at Clearwater Beach one afternoon when you stop to talk to a local artist. She tells you she quit her big corporate job, and now makes a living off her passion for art. "That's awesome that it's worked for you," you say, "but it could never work for me." "Why not?", she asks. You're not quite sure why you think that, so you say, "I don't know. I guess I just believe that not everyone can experience that. I'd love to make a living off my passion, but something tells me it just wouldn't work." In today's passage, Paul asks the Corinthians why they can't believe something about themselves that they believe about Jesus.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Why does Paul say the Corinthians should believe in the resurrection of the dead? (see verses 12-14)

The Corinthians weren't struggling to believe in Jesus' resurrection; they were struggling to believe their own. Paul points out that if they can't believe in the notion of resurrection, they deny Christ's resurrection by default. And if Christ didn't rise, why believe at all?

- What is the order of who rises from the dead? (see verse 23)
- What was the connection between resurrection and baptism for the dead? (see verse 29)

Notice that Paul distinguishes between "those" who are baptized for the dead (v. 29) and "us" who put themselves on the line for the sake of the Gospel (v. 30). In this sense, Paul doesn't approve of this practice, but uses it to bolster his argument for the resurrection of the dead. After all, even the pagans believe in the concept of resurrection, for they baptize each other for the dead!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Paul notes that "in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive" (v. 22). How could you authentically share this truth with someone so they understand their sin (Law) has been forgiven (Gospel)?

Saturday, July Eighth

As careful as we are when we eat, food and drink inevitably find their way onto our clothes. When that happens, we try hard to scrub out the stain with our napkin and some water, but it doesn't seem to do the trick. However, a few hours later after running it through the laundry machine, we find our clothing in significantly better shape than when we first spilled something on it. In today's passage, Paul describes the significant changes between our natural bodies and our resurrected ones.

Read: 1 Corinthians 15:35-58

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Is our earthly (or natural) body different from our resurrected (or spiritual) body? (see verses 35-41)
- How does Paul describe our bodies that are "sown," and how does he describe them when they are "raised"? (see verses 42-44)

Many of us like to think our natural bodies are pretty great as they are. We can think deep thoughts, run long distances, and even accomplish death-defying feats. But when we compare our natural bodies to our resurrected ones, there is no comparison. We can give thanks for this reality as we eagerly await Christ's return.

- What new "likeness" do Christians bear? (see verse 49)
- Why can the Corinthians stand firm in such a tumultuous world? (see verses 56-58)

When we look around the world today, there are many logical reasons to fear. But Paul assures us that because we have been saved by Christ, we *truly* have nothing to fear. God has already given us victory through Jesus (v. 57). Do we believe that? Better yet, do we live our lives like we really believe that?

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Consider chatting with someone tomorrow at church about something God has been revealing to you in 1 Corinthians.

Sunday, July Ninth

Saying goodbye is almost always tough. It must have been tough for Paul when he originally left the Corinthian church, and now after writing a lengthy letter from afar, it must have felt like saying goodbye again. How does one sum up a letter filled with encouragement ("I always thank God for you"; 1:4), commands ("Expel the wicked man from among you"; 5:13), clarifications ("There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit"; 12:4), and assurance ("By this gospel you are saved"; 15:2)?

Read: 1 Corinthians 16:1-24

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What instructions does Paul give for the collection for God's people in Jerusalem? (see verses 1-4)

There were many poor Christians in Jerusalem, and Paul asks the Corinthians (like the Galatians) to consider setting aside some money to provide for the needs of these poor.

- What phrases in verses 5-9 speak to Paul's trust in God?

Paul ends his letter with some personal greetings and requests. It's a testament to the relationship Paul had established with the Corinthian church while he was with them. As a dear friend now living far away, Paul reminds them of what still binds them together – their love for Jesus and their love for one another.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

If you wrote a letter to fellow Christians, how would you end it?

Well, that's the end of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians! I pray your time in God's Word has given you fresh perspective as you reflect on how we can live in Christian community with one another. I'll be back in September with our next book of the Bible...The Psalms: Book One. – Vicar Chris

Questions? Comments? Contact Vicar Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.