

1 CORINTHIANS

gospel formed worship



OVERVIEW FOR PART 5: GOSPEL FORMED WORSHIP

Paul has been addressing the liberties and freedoms God has afforded the Corinthian Christians in regard to their everyday lives in the world. Now, he is going to address how they enjoy and practice their liberty and freedom in the gathering of the Church together.

The dominant theme throughout these four chapters is honor. Paul wants them to consider how they honor God and one another in their gatherings. The gathering of the Church is not meant to be a place where we exalt self and primarily seek opportunities for self-expression or fulfillment. The goal of our gathering together is to glorify God, make much of Jesus and consider how we might encourage or equip others. Of course, as we do this, we will also benefit ourselves since we were made to serve and it is in serving that we also thrive.

In each section Paul wants the Corinthians and us to remember how the Gospel forms our worship. We need to consider how the truths of who God is, what he has done in Christ and who he has created us to be as his Church should shape how we gather together for worship. The gospel of Jesus Christ deeply impacts how we gather together as his people.

PART 5: WEEK TWO - The Family Meal

Text: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Now we are at a place where Paul cannot commend the Corinthian church at all when they come together for their weekly gathering. Once again Paul refers to divisions, but this time he is not thinking about party rivals but the large gap between the rich and the poor in their house-church gatherings.

The Corinthian Christians gathered together as the church in large homes owned by a wealthier member. They gathered around a meal they called the agape feast which preceded the remembrance meal – The Lord’s Supper.

These homes had dining rooms that could accommodate 9-20 people. The rest would end up in an adjacent atrium or courtyard. The agape meal was a shared meal in which all the guests contributed, like a potluck. However, as you can imagine the wealthier people brought better food and wine, whereas, the poorer had very little to contribute. The poor, due to their work schedules, generally showed up later to the meal than the wealthy. The wealthy had already taken the best seats in the dining room, eaten most of the food and drunk on the wine by the time the poorer members of the community arrived.

Imagine what celebrating the Lord’s Supper must have been like as the poor heard the words of the gospel in the context of this very broken situation. The gospel brought about inclusion and equality. God, in Christ, welcomed us all to the table and provided us with equal grace regardless of our status in society. However, the agape feast was displaying a completely different message.

Paul confronts them and calls them to examine themselves and discern the body - the brothers and sisters around you - which is another way of saying look at yourselves and look at one another and ask: How can we come to the common table of our Lord Jesus Christ (communion) to remember him properly when we ourselves are not loving one another well?

Read: 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

1. How did Jesus engage meals as ministry while he was on the earth?
2. In light of the overall story of the Bible and the gospel specifically, how does God want us to understand and engage in meals?
3. How should that affect how we take and remember Jesus through the bread and the cup?
4. How does the gospel inform how we should engage meals with others now (who we include; how we share what we have; what we do)?
5. Where does our present practice around meals need to change to better represent the truths of Jesus and the Lord's Supper?
6. What steps will we take to intentionally engage everyday meals and the Lord's Supper?