



1st Corinthians

:: Chaos in Corinth

∴ introduction.

Paradoxians,

It is such a joy and a pleasure to study a book of the bible with you. I am thankful for your thirst for the Scriptures and your passion for Jesus.

The first letter to the Corinthians is written in response to a letter this new, young church had sent the Apostle Paul. The Christians in Corinth had a number of practical questions for their founding pastor on how they should live now that the grace of the Gospel had transformed them. Their questions included how they should relate with one another, with those outside the church, as well as questions about sex, marriage, singleness, and much more.

Many of you have similar questions. As a church – a new, young one at that – we must be asking these questions as well. We believe that the Church is a family sent by God to carry out His mission – of proclaiming His glory and grace – to the city we have been sent to. Thus, how we relate to one another and those outside the church, and how we live as a city within the city displaying God's glory and grace, is determinant upon how the Scriptures answer these questions.

Fort Worth is similar to Corinth in terms of size (relatively), influence, stature, and economy. In fact the various religions of Corinth, while pagan in nature, had a similar effect that our “religious” culture has on Fort Worth – that being syncretistic and ritualistic as opposed to transformative and relational – like the Gospel is.

So through our time in First Corinthians we will gain much insight into our context. Though written only 20 years after Jesus rose from the dead, this letter is as contemporary and relevant to our culture as it gets. Ultimately, we will know more about King Jesus and, Lord willing, glory in His Name and His Cross more and more.

For His Fame,
Pastor Jim

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Picking Up where Sodom and Gomorrah
left off since A.D. 51

Imagine the *ultimate* church location:

- Immediately behind the church, within walking distance, the Superbowl is being played in 'Jerryworld' with 400 paid attendees locked out and commiserating in the parking lot
- A short distance to the left is a NASCAR track where the tooth to tattoo ratio amongst spectators is greatly imbalanced
- To the abrupt right is the Bonnaroo Music Festival in its melodious glory beneath a cloud of 'organic glaucoma medication' and patchouli oil!

What an amazing ministry opportunity!!!! Right?

Unfortunately, as you look closer, you are suddenly ashamedly aware that in the nucleus of all this sensory-overload expendium is a congregation of 'Christians' behaving as if they were all the unbridled offspring of Carlos Mencia and Lindsay Lohan.

Welcome to Corinth!

The most important city in Greece during the Apostle Paul's day, Corinth was a busy center of worldwide business, besmirched civilization, and idolatrous religion.

"Paul's Corinth was at once the New York, Los Angeles, and Las Vegas of the ancient world." ¹
"Crucial for any success and status in this culture was attaining the patronage of powerful

¹ Gordon Fee – The First Epistle to the Corinthians, [William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1987]

persons and bestowing benefaction on others to establish an array of influential friends and clients, exerting political enmity to ostracize opponents, and employing skillful oratory to persuade others in an assembly. To use terms from American culture: schmoozing, massaging a superior's ego, rubbing shoulders with the powerful, pulling strings, scratching each other's back, and dragging rivals' names through the mud -- all describe what was required to attain success in this society.”²

Founded by Paul, according to Acts 18:1-18, upon first arriving at Corinth, the Apostle Paul made tents with Aquila and Priscilla and preached in the synagogue on Sabbath days. However, after Silas and Timothy rejoined him:

- He wrote First and Second Thessalonians
- Moved his preaching activity next door to the house of Titius Justus
- Converted Crispus, ruler of the synagogue
- Received from the Roman proconsul Gallio a dismissal of Jewish accusations against him
- Paul taught the Word of God at Corinth for eighteen months in A.D. 51-52

First Corinthians is the second of at least four letters written by Paul to the Church at Corinth:

1. A 'previous letter' [I Corinthians 5:9]
2. First Corinthians [written about A.D. 56]
3. The severe letter [II Corinthians 2:1-4]
4. Second Corinthians

“The basic theme of this epistle is the application of Christian principles on an individual and social level. The Cross of Christ is a message that is designed to transform the lives of believers and make them different, as people and as a corporate body, from the surrounding world. But the Corinthians were destroying their Christian testimony because of immorality and disunity.”³

² David E. Garland -- First Corinthians: Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament, [Baker Academic, Grand Rapids, MI, 2003]

³ Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa – Talk Thru the Bible [Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1983], 382

Paul was dealing with rumors of:

- Misconduct brought to Paul's attention from 'Chloe's household' [1:11]
- Factionalism and glorification of human leaders [chaps. 1-4]
- Gross immorality that escaped church discipline [chap. 5]
- Shameful litigation among believers [chap. 6]

However, by Paul's usage of the phrase 'Now concerning...' [7:1, 7:25, 8:1, 12:1, 16:1], First Corinthians was also written as an answer to questions raised in a prior letter from the church at Corinth concerning:

- Celibacy [chap. 7]
- Food offered to idols [chaps. 8-10]
- Behavior in congregational worship [chap. 11]
- Spiritual gifts [chaps. 12-14]
- The resurrection of the dead [chap. 15]

The Isthmian Games

Ranking second in popularity only to the Olympics, The Isthmian Games were held biennially in Corinth at the temple of Poseidon and included wrestling [since this entailed 'real' athletes engaged in a 'genuine' competitive event, WWF fans who enjoy watching 'rasslin' have no idea what these encounters resembled], boxing, and chariot races. The outdoor theater accommodated twenty thousand people; it was remodeled in Roman times to accommodate gladiatorial bouts.

Thus, Paul knew his audience at Corinth very well and addressed them with topical relevance that involved the inclusion of what would have been readily known to all of them; athleticism and the necessity of self-control, discipline, and obedience to rules in order to compete.

"Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one receives the prize? So run that you may obtain it. Every athlete exercises self-control in all things. They do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. So I do not run aimlessly; I do not box as one beating the air. But I

discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified." I Corinthians 9:24-27

Paul's emphasis to Corinth was to show their exaggerated interest and concern in the temporal and seen; bodies competing in events contained within a linear timeline that ultimately awarded a wreath of decaying leaves upon the brow of a victor. In modern vernacular, Paul would say, "Yes, these athletes are well-known here...on the Lord's footstool! Corinthian verminoids, please commit your life to aiming a little higher than momentary recognition on a footstool!" After all, the Apostle didn't want the Corinthians to settle for merely what could be provided at present, but rather, to raise a standard that held the 'imperishable' and unseen as the objective.

1,000 Temple Prostitutes

Temples and sacred statuary were to be found on every corner in Corinth, but the most prominent was the Temple of Aphrodite on top of an 1,800-foot promontory called the Acrocorinthus. Worshipers of the 'goddess of love' made free use of the 1,000 Hieroduli [consecrated prostitutes]. Thus, in discussions of mythology it is now academically accepted by Greek historians to refer to Aphrodite as 'Dat Corinthian Pimpess'! Additionally, modern linguists have all unanimously agreed that the English translation of Hieroduli would be Kardashian.

"[Aphrodite's] cult-statue was attired in the armor of the war-god Ares, with his helmet for a footrest and his shield for a mirror. At the foot of the citadel stood the temple of Melicertes, patron of seafarers; his name is a Hellenized form of Melkart, the principal deity of Tyre. The Isthmian Games, over which Corinth presided, and in which all the Greek city-states participated, were held every two years; at them the sea-god Poseidon was especially honored. Corinth paid respect, in Paul's words, to 'many gods and many lords'" [I Corinthians 8:5]."⁴

"This cosmopolitan center thrived on commerce, entertainment, vice, and corruption; pleasure-seekers came there to spend money on a holiday from morality."⁵

"The south side of the marketplace was lined with taverns equipped with underground cisterns for cooling the drinks. Archaeologists have discovered numerous drinking vessels in these liquor

⁴ F.F. Bruce – Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free [William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1995], 249
⁵ Bruce Wilkinson & Kenneth Boa – Talk Thru the Bible [Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1983], 381

lockers: some bear inscriptions, such as 'Health,' 'Security,' 'Love,' and the names of gods." ⁶

The biblical mindset is not 'How far is too far?' but rather, the Christian is to altogether avoid areas of known debauchery and sin; stay above reproach and don't go near them! The son receiving instruction regarding an adulterous woman void of morals is commanded, "Keep your way far from her, and do not go near the door of her house!" [Proverbs 5:8]. The instruction is NOT 'just avert your eyes as you walk by her doorway' or 'just greet her with a 'Christianly' side hug'... NO! It is 'STAY OFF OF HER STREET!'

The problem at Corinth was that all 'streets' in the Greco-Roman world led to them, and in desiring favor with men above all else, their avenues became the very streets for Believers to avoid!

Hence, the **Corinthian reputation** produced the term *Korinthiazomai* [*Corinthianize*] which became well known in the Roman Empire and literally meant "to live like a Corinthian" to fornicate or be with a prostitute."

Dejectedly, rather than Paul writing to a church influencing a city, he was addressing the squalid influence a city held on the church. Corinth was "Intellectually alert, materially prosperous, but morally corrupt." ⁷

Although for most Believers it is incomprehensible to imagine a church's reputation being synonymous with the very behavior it 'preaches' against with words but denies with its choice of behaviors, two modern equivalents would be:

1. **'Televangelists'** – This term has so consistently been the subject of abuse by men undeserving of the title who unfortunately lacked appropriate accountability and moral restraint. It is simply a sad and sobering fact that ministries fall because the pastor surrenders to one of the four 'S's: Self, Sloth, Silver, or Sex ⁸...and the world watching has grown so accustomed to seeing high profile preachers toppled by his or her own immorality and lack of self-control, that they no longer presume 'if', but only rather 'when'.

⁶ H. Gundry – A Survey of the New Testament: 4th Edition [Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 2003], 376

⁷ Leon Morris - The First epistle of Paul to the Corinthians: Tyndale New Testament Commentaries [Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1985]

⁸ Chuck Swindoll - Sermon "The Four 'Ss' to Avoid in Ministry"

2. **'God Hates Fags'** - The fact that this phrase is aligned with any 'congregation' [in the loosest possible definition], demonstrates just how distant the Body of Christ has drifted from the mark of recognition Christ Himself taught , *"By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another [John 13:35]."* This application of Christ-like love does not simply apply with those within the Body of Christ, as difficult as that task alone is sometimes, but outside as well! For our Savior commanded, *"Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven. For he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?" Matthew 5:44-47*

Fred Phelps and his likeminded ilk, preach a hate-centered 'gospel' engraved on brass knuckles that the mainstream media cannot get to the scene quick enough to capture every minute of avarice! The old journalistic adage I was told was 'If it bleeds, it leads!' I can only pray and hope that the Holy Spirit awakens Phelps and leads him to realize that while the Lord destroyed two cities for the sin of homosexuality, by contrast, because of the sins harbored in Phelps' heart and mind the Lord's justice destroyed the ENTIRE Earth with a flood. If he wants to compare with those he is screaming and spitting on...he loses.

⌘ the christ centered church

Waging a War on Culture with an Army of Newborns & Toddlers

You can find no better resource of instruction than Paul's letters to the Corinthians in regard to how to attend to troubles within the local congregation. Building upon the groundwork that has already been laid, the Apostle Paul writes to them as ones who have been "*sanctified in Jesus Christ*" (1 Corinthians 1:2); he writes to them as beloved brothers and sisters in Christ. Further, prior to pointing focus to any suspect behavior or problem, he immediately establishes what they have in common and stresses their common foundation.

It is VERY significant that in the first ten verses Paul uses the words

- "Christ" ten times
- "Jesus" nine times
- "Lord" six times

Frequently, they are connected together as "Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, "Lord" expresses His authority, "Jesus" - His coming in the flesh, and "Christ" - His being the Messiah of promise.

With this emphasis to Divine Authority, the Apostle is rightly establishing the basis by which every problem in Corinth will be addressed. Void of these foundational truths of authority and power that Paul is drawing their attention toward, it would have been, and is today, impossible to resolve any issues of sin or grant clarity and resolve to matters requiring righteous wisdom.

FACTIONALISM/PERSONALITY CULTS

Carnality, or an autonomous mindset, always breeds selfishness and an emphasis that desires all

things to point at and bring attention to the individual so they are recognized. At Corinth, it wasn't sufficient that they were all part of the Body of Christ, that was too easy and there was no distinction to be made. Therefore, to bring attention to the self, relational alignment that others didn't have were used to bring attention on immature, selfish 'children' disguised as adults in the form of **factionalism** or **'personality cults'**.

I appeal to you, brothers, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same judgment. For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there is quarreling among you, my brothers. What I mean is that each one of you says, "I follow Paul," or "I follow Apollos," or "I follow Cephas," or "I follow Christ." Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

I Corinthians 1:10-13

The Greek word Paul uses here is schismata, which means to 'tear' or 'crack'; literally, in this context, to 'tear the Body of Christ' into pieces.

"The pupils or 'disciples' of a secular teacher had to give exclusive loyalty to him. Traditionally they engaged in quarrels with rival pupils over the merits of their mentors who were also by tradition jealous of each other. Corinthians who were converted and baptized through the ministry of Paul, Apollos and Peter also perceived themselves in this secular way as their exclusive followers and likewise engaged in quarrels over the merits of Christian teachers. Paul declares such loyalty as idolatrous. He wants them to follow the Messiah and not his servants. Idolizing teachers or 'charismatic' speakers who seek the loyalty of 'their' members has always been divisive and disastrous for the Christian community."⁹

However, as L.O. Richards points out, "Some have taken this passage as an argument against the existence of different denominations. It is not—unless we argue that our group is "best" or "right" and so separate ourselves from others who are equally members of Christ's body."¹⁰

For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters

9 D.A. Carson - New Bible Commentary : 21st century edition (4th ed.) [Inter-Varsity Press ,Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.,1994]

10 L.O. Richards - The Bible Readers Companion [Victor Books ,Wheaton, 1991]

is anything, but only God who gives the growth. I Corinthians 3:4-7

In the Apostle Paul's mind, the Corinthians were arguing over who was the greatest amongst three nothings!!! The Corinthians' boasting about their "leaders" was really self-exalting boasting about themselves. In sincerity, it wasn't so much that they thought Apollos, Cephas, or even Paul himself was great, but the emphasis they desired in these peculiarities would be that others acknowledged them as great for following someone they were unfamiliar with and therefore unable to confess a similar alignment. Some members at Corinth were behaving as little more than 'religious' Sneetches:

Now, the Star-Bell Sneetches had bellies with stars.
The Plain-Belly Sneetches had none upon thars.
Those stars weren't so big. They were really so small.
You might think such a thing wouldn't matter at all.

But, because they had stars, all the Star-Belly Sneetches
Would brag, "We're the best kind of Sneetch on the beaches."
With their snoots in the air, they would sniff and they'd snort
"We'll have nothing to do with the Plain-Belly sort!"
And, whenever they met some, when they were out walking,
They'd hike right on past them without even talking.¹¹

Spiritual elitism is divisive, abhorrent, and models the very behavior of everything we have been redeemed from...no matter whose name it is practiced in. **However, as sinful as factionalism can be, today, it can be as tacit as, "Do you know how long I've been a member here?"** We display the divisiveness of our pride every time we attempt to 'one up' those around us in order to maintain our own self-defined worth. At Corinth, "Every other problem in the church was influenced by the lack of unity and could not be effectively solved as long as the church was divided."¹²

The Apostle Paul's, "appeal was for harmony, not the elimination of diversity. He desired a unity of all the parts, like a quilt of various colors and patterns blended together in a harmonious whole."¹³

11 The Sneetches by Dr. Seuss

12 Richard Ganz – 20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church: Paul's Counsel to the Corinthians and the Church Today [P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg & New Jersey, 2003]

13 J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck - The Bible Knowledge Commentary [Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1983]

To eliminate any uncertainty on where the allegiance of the Corinthians should be, Paul asked three imperative questions:

Is Christ divided? (vv. 10–13a) |

Were you baptized in the name of Paul? (vv. 13b-17)

Was Paul crucified for you? (vv. 18–25)

No, **NO**, and **NO!**

Even in the name of a superficial ‘spiritual’ veneer, church factions or cliques openly deny the truth of unity over all diversity in the church and speaks to the explicit, pride-driven foolishness of aligning your value and identity on anyone or anything other than Jesus.

“Our purpose in life should be to preach the Gospel, die, and be forgotten.”¹⁴

The emphasis in the Gospels being, *“Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.”* Matthew 5:16

IMMATURITY & IGNORANCE

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? I Corinthians 3:1-3

In the normal progression from newborn to toddler, by normal internal curiosity, a child will reach for solid food that is being consumed by a parent...very normal. If you have a seventeen year old whose cognitive functions are fully capable of aligning with normative age expectations, however, their diet still subsists solely on Gerber’s green beans, creamed carrots, and sweet potatoes while wearing adult-sized Depends and crawling throughout your home...you’ve got an issue. Paul had an issue at Corinth.

¹⁴ Count Zinzendorf

Rather than having their minds transformed [Romans 12:2], the Corinthians were very content to being 'conformed to this world' and subsisting on flannelgraph lessons indoctrinated by the surrounding culture rather than submitting to the teaching of doctrine and confronting sin.

The Corinthians failed to recognize the functions God had blessed them with and were not mature enough to care to examine how they were using them.

The Lord has blessed me with the gift of sight; therefore, what am I committing time to look at?
The Lord has blessed me with the gift of hearing, and what am I feeding my ears with?
The Lord has blessed me with the gift of speech, and what are my words communicating to others about my Savior?
The Lord has chosen for me to live **'in such a time as this' (Esther 4:14)**, so what am I doing with this time?

Some have forgotten that Daniel was despised for what he was not willing to participate in, and likewise, the lives of every Believer should be markedly different than the culture around them. "We are in the world, but not of the world," (John 17:14-15) and the current trend toward complete cultural assimilation in all things will have those that succumb walking arm in arm down a broad path to destruction (Matthew 7:13-14).

The popular motto 'it's all good' is a complete eyesore to God's truth, because there are certainly images, subject matter, and discussions that are explicitly inappropriate for an adopted son or daughter of the Most High God to be willing participants, and no pragmatic explanation of the 'end justifies the means' can prove otherwise.

"The apostle tells them he could not speak to them as unto spiritual men, but as unto carnal men, as to babes in Christ, v. 1. They were so far from forming their maxims and measures upon the ground of divine revelation, and entering into the spirit of the gospel, that it was but too evident they were much under the command of carnal and corrupt affections. They were still mere babes in Christ. They had received some of the first principles of Christianity, but had not grown up to maturity of understanding in them, or of faith and holiness; and yet it is plain, from several passages in this epistle, that the Corinthians were very proud of their wisdom and knowledge. Note. It is but too common for persons of very moderate knowledge and understanding to have a great measure of self-conceit. The apostle assigns their little proficiency in the knowledge of

Christianity as a reason why he had communicated no more of the deep things of it to them. They could not bear such food, they needed to be fed with milk, not with meat, v. 2. Note, It is the duty of a faithful minister of Christ to consult the capacities of his hearers and teach them as they can bear. And yet it is natural for babes to grow up to men; and babes in Christ should endeavour to grow in Stature, and become men in Christ. It is expected that their advances in knowledge should be in proportion to their means and opportunities, and their time of professing religion, that they may be able to bear discourses on the mysteries of our religion, and not always rest in plain things. It was a reproach to the Corinthians that they had so long sat under the ministry of Paul and had made no more improvement in Christian knowledge. Note, Christians are utterly to blame who do not endeavour to grow in grace and knowledge.”¹⁵

We are called to be set apart; to be Holy!

We are called to be the aroma of life to one and the aroma of death to another in the culture around us! We are called to remind a populace who parade around in 'Jesus is my Homeboy' t-shirts that the King of Glory is returning and He offers redemption, definition to their lives, and forgiveness for their blasphemous fashion choices.

AN INAPPROPRIATE SEXUAL RELATIONSHIP WITHIN THE CHURCH

It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord. I Corinthians 5:1-5

Three points immediately stand out:

1. The Corinthians were guilty of sexual perversity that shocked even the pagans; even amongst unbelievers there are degrees of acceptable and unacceptable perversity.

“The marriage of full brothers and sisters was considered immoral throughout the Roman

15 Matthew Henry - Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible, [Peabody: Hendrickson, 1996]

Empire except in Egypt; parent-child incest was universally abhorred throughout the Roman world. From the revulsion against the idea exhibited in the Greek Oedipus stories to slanders leveled against emperors, it was one of those few crimes that all cultures agreed were terrible. Its Roman legal punishment was banishment to an island. Relations with stepmothers were treated like relations with mothers—as incestuous.”¹⁶

2. The stepmother involved in this scenario is not a Christian as no form of discipline is assigned to her

3. The focus of Paul’s anger is rightfully directed far more at the church leaders knowledgeable tolerance of such an act without any discipline whatsoever

“Discipline in the church is not like a policeman arresting a culprit; rather, it is like a father chastening his son. The first motive is to help the sinner, to show Christian love in seeking to bring him to repentance. For us to allow church members to live in open sin hurts them as well as Christ and the church.”¹⁷

However, just as ‘a little leaven leavens the whole lump’ [1 Corinthians 5:6], the Corinthians were to treat this individual as a sickness that could bring death to the body. Consequently, the very purpose of church discipline, in Paul’s command to ‘deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.’ [1 Corinthians 5:5] was an act to prevent any additional influence or endorsement of such behavior and, hopefully, see this individual’s ultimate repentance.

“Deliverance over to Satan is equivalent to being removed from the assembly, that is, excommunicated. Delivered into Satan’s domain, the offender would no longer enjoy the protective fellowship of the church. The “destroyed” sinful nature (5:5) may refer (1) to the ruin of one’s physical body through sickness, even death, or (2) the destruction of the fleshly hold over the person.

The context (cf. 3:1–3) gives credence to the latter view. This view is more consistent with the ultimate purpose of church discipline, which is to restore the offender to fellowship with God and

¹⁶ C.S. Keener - The IVP Bible Background Commentary : New Testament [InterVarsity Press , Downers Grove, Ill., 1993]

¹⁷ W.W. Wiersbe - Wiersbe’s Expository Outlines on the New Testament, [Victor Books, Wheaton, Ill., 1997]

his people.”¹⁸

The Corinthians, as well as all believers, were to exercise a different standard of judgment on themselves than that which would be used to assess the behavior of unbelievers outside the church. Therefore, the restriction to not eat with those ‘guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler [1 Corinthians 5:11]’ ONLY APPLIES CHRISTIAN TO CHRISTIAN! If your unbelieving uncle shows up for Thanksgiving drunk DO NOT demand that he is refused his meal! Because when you do, you resemble the very same mindless Pharisaical turds who vehemently reprimanded Jesus Christ for ‘eating with sinners’! That is what we do! That is who we are! Paul’s words to Corinth,” For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? God judges those outside. [1 Corinthians 5:12–13] should rightly burn the eyes of EVERY Christian who has EVER called for a Disney boycott or demanded that Christians cancel their HBO subscriptions over Bill Maher’s Tebow tweet!!!!

Please note:

- Disney is a company, not a ministry. Those who boycott Disney’s productions simply make the theater line shorter for me and my family.
- Bill Maher is a porn-addicted atheist who can’t appear on camera without wearing the entire Mary Kay cosmetic line on his face simultaneously.

There is a reason that unbelievers say,” that was such a ‘Christian’ thing to do” *every time you stumble*; we have a standard to attain toward! However, the unbiblical expectation of unbelievers to ‘behave’ as believers literally insults the propitiation of Christ and the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. By contrast, unbelievers have no standard to reach toward; therefore, to say to your relative that possesses no moral compass ‘that was so Bill Maher of you’ can actually, depending on their degree of ethical degradation, serve as an unintended compliment.

LAWSUITS

When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? 1 Corinthians 6:1

18 R.B. Hughes & J.C. Laney - Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary, [Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill., 2001]

The Apostle Paul is NOT saying members of the Body of Christ should never sue their fellow-members in a civil court of law. Such a narrow view fails to understand our text in the light of its Biblical and historical context.

- First, such a view disregards the fact that God Himself instituted civil courts for the benefit of all citizens, including those who are members of churches, Deuteronomy 16:18-17:1. And, it should not be forgotten, that, since these courts were instituted in ancient Israel, all of those participating in lawsuits would be members of the covenant community, i.e., they would be fellow members of the Old Testament church.
- Second, Paul, who is issuing these apostolic injunctions to the Corinthian church, initiated a lawsuit-appeal, not only against fellow church members, but also against the leaders in the Jewish church of his day in his appeal to Caesar recorded in Acts 25.

“Under the circumstances in which the Corinthians were placed, it was wrong to go to law, even to protect themselves from injury. That this is not to be regarded as a general rule of Christian conduct is plain, because...God appointed judges for the administration of justice; and because Paul himself did not hesitate to appeal to Caesar to protect himself from the injustice of his countrymen.”¹⁹

Furthermore, what Paul is condemning in I Corinthians 6:1-7 is, “an excessive fondness for litigation, which took its rise from avarice...Paul does not here condemn those who from necessity have a cause before unbelieving judges, as when a person is summoned to a court; but those who of their own accord, bring their brethren into this situation, and harass them, as it were, through means of unbelievers, while it is in their power to employ another method. — Let

us therefore bear in mind, that Paul does not condemn lawsuits on the ground of its being a wrong thing in itself to maintain a good cause by having recourse to a magistrate, but because it is almost invariably accompanied with corrupt dispositions, as, for example, violence, desire of revenge, enmities, obstinacy, and the like.”²⁰

¹⁹ Charles Hodge – 1 Corinthians: Crossway Classic Commentaries, [Crossway Books, Wheaton, IL, 1995]

²⁰ John Calvin – Commentaries, Vol. XX, [Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 2009]

The points Paul is making are:

1. Christians dare not do anything that tends to bring reproach on the name of Christ, the church of Christ, or their Christian profession of faith [James 2:7]
2. Christians should never engage in lawsuits until all other remedies have been tried and have failed.
3. Christians must put aside completely a spirit of revenge and retaliation. We may go to court to maintain law, order and justice, but never to get even.
4. Christians must learn to suffer injuries quietly.
5. In Corinth, an improper lust for possessions had them in such a grip that they could not refrain from hurting one another.
6. The Christian, and especially the elder, has the responsibility to know Biblical law to the point that he can apply it correctly to situations as they arise without being too loose or too strict.²¹

A very practical safeguard for all Christians to exercise prior to discussions of litigation would be the reading of Christ's '**Parable of the Debtors**' [Matthew 18:23-35] and weigh our grievance or 'wrong' against a frequently active sinful perspective of entitlement that would demand 'pennies' be paid to us in full when we ourselves have been forgiven the equivalent of trillions upon trillions.

Harlan Ellison said, "The two most common elements in the Universe are Hydrogen and Stupidity."

In chemistry, hydrogen is represented by the symbol 'H'; in the Body of Christ, stupidity is represented by lawyers unnecessarily pitting Christians against Christians. Because, if we legitimately trust and believe the Lord is our Defender, Provider, and the Author of Promotion, frequently, as Paul advised, by faith we should defer to simply be 'wronged' or 'defrauded'. For the reason that in many litigious instances between Christians, before a judge is seated, by merely placing our judicial trust in the verdict of those outside the Body of Christ...we've already lost.

THE WISDOM OF THE CROSS

Paul talks about the 'wisdom of this world' in I Corinthians 1 – 2

²¹ Dr. Joe Morecraft - 'The Relation of Church Courts to Civil Courts'

For the word of the cross is folly to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. I Corinthians 1:18

Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away. But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory. None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. I Corinthians 2:6-8

The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. I Corinthians 2:14

...which is pitted against the wisdom of God, and scorns the wisdom of God believing that its foolishness. In this view of the wisdom of God as foolishness it cannot see spiritual truth, it is blinded, blinded by sin, blinded by the god of this age, by Satan – In their case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelievers, to keep them from seeing the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. II Corinthians 4:4.

Now this kind of wisdom, according to James 3:15 is **'earthly, sensual/unspiritual, and devilish/demonic'**. So the wisdom of the world, the way that people in the world use their God-given minds are towards **'earthly, unspiritual, and demonic' things**.

Sadly, this is conclusive proof from the Scripture that the unsaved person cannot, because of their enmity towards God, because of their use of a foreign wisdom to the wisdom of God, cannot see the things of God; they cannot interpret spiritual truths and see the depths of them and see the importance and necessity of embracing them, they cannot love them.

So, is there such a thing as free will? Absolutely there is, but this freedom is in line with the character of the person who wills or who uses it. Therefore a person may freely choose and yet always choose that which is in line with their nature and if their nature is opposed to God their choices will always be opposed to God unless God by His grace does something to effect a change in that self-determination of the sinner.

∴ the resurrection.

All that Matters

Being a Christian is not just a doctrine to understand; it is a Person to follow. It is our whole being aligned by faith in Scriptures maxims whereby, confession of Christ **MUST** produce evidence within our lives...as James shared, “**Even the demons believe--and shudder! [2:19b]**. But our belief, our confession, unlike the demons, must show forth in transformed lives that have our hope anchored in God’s unchanging Word. Lip service without belief is the equivalent of letting our mouths write checks our lives can’t cash...you will eventually find yourself alongside the sons of Sceva... **‘overpowered, naked, and wounded.’ [Acts 19:16]**. Thus, a very imperative aspect for all believers is our union with Christ: because He has been glorified, we shall also be glorified one day. Thus, dismissing the Resurrection of Christ as allegory, myth, or explainable by a slew of embarrassing arguments against, is not an option.

In **1 Corinthians 15**, the Apostle Paul explicitly lays out the proofs for and necessity of the resurrection of Christ to a populace at Corinth who were hearing some say, “**there is no resurrection of the dead**” (15:12).

The populace surrounding Corinth was influenced by Greek philosophy whereupon the idea of resurrection was virtually as foreign to Greek thought as you could get; technical words in Greek to describe this concept did not even exist. Thus, Scripture employs two common words; one meaning “to raise, to arouse” and the other “to awaken.”

“To the Greeks, immortality was a spiritual concept, and they had no place for the resurrection of the physical body. Since matter was considered essentially evil, release from a physical body was regarded as liberation, and a physical resurrection would amount to a return to bondage.” ²²

“In general the Greeks believed in the immortality of the soul, but they did not accept the resurrec-
22 RB Hughes & JC Laney - Tyndale Concise Bible Commentary, [Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, 2001].

tion of the body. To them the resurrection of the body was unthinkable in view of the fact that they

held the body to be the source of man's weakness and sin. Death, therefore, was very welcome, since by it the soul would be liberated from the body; but resurrection was not welcome, because this would constitute another descent of the soul into the grave of the body. This was the skepticism that Paul faced at Athens (cf. Acts 17:31, 32) and that the Christian faces in the modern world. James S. Stewart, Professor of New Testament at the University of Edinburgh, has put the timeless conflict succinctly, 'Twenty centuries have echoed the laughter of Areopagus.'²³

It was to a church in the midst of this influential environment that Paul began by presenting evidence for assurance to Corinth that Jesus Christ indeed had been raised from the dead.

- **The Corinthian's own Salvation (vv. 1–2).** Paul had come to Corinth and preached the message of the Gospel, and their faith had transformed their lives. But an integral part of the Gospel message was the fact of Christ's resurrection. After all, a dead Saviour cannot save anybody. Paul's readers had received the Word, trusted Christ, been saved, and were now standing on that Word as the assurance of their salvation. The fact that they were standing firm was proof that their faith was genuine and not empty.

- **The Old Testament Scriptures (vv. 3–4).** First of all means "of first importance." The Gospel is the most important message that the church ever proclaims. While it is good to be involved in social action and the betterment of mankind, there is no reason why these ministries should preempt the Gospel. "Christ died ... He was buried ... He rose again ... He was seen" are the basic historical facts on which the Gospel stands (**1 Cor. 15:3–5**). "Christ died for our sins" (author's italics) is the theological explanation of the historical facts. Many people were crucified by the Romans, but only one "victim" ever died for the sins of the world.

When Paul wrote "according to the Scriptures" (**1 Cor. 15:3**) he was referring to the Old Testament Scriptures. Much of the sacrificial system in the Old Testament pointed to the sacrifice of Christ as our substitute and Saviour. The annual Day of Atonement (**Lev. 16**) and prophecies like Isaiah 53 would also come to mind.

²³ CF Pfeiffer & EF Harrison - The Wycliffe Bible Commentary : New Testament (1 Co 15:1), [Moody Press, Chicago, 1962]

But where does the Old Testament declare His resurrection on the third day? Jesus pointed to the experience of Jonah (**Matt. 12:38–41**).

Paul also compared Christ's resurrection to the "firstfruits," and the firstfruits were presented to God on the day following the Sabbath after Passover (**Lev. 23:9–14; 1 Cor. 15:23**). Since the Sabbath must always be the seventh day, the day after Sabbath must be the first day of the week, or Sunday, the day of our Lord's resurrection. This covers three days on the Jewish calendar.

Apart from the Feast of Firstfruits, there were other prophecies of Messiah's resurrection in the Old Testament:

Psalm 16:8–11 (see Acts 2:25–28)

Psalm 22:22ff (see Heb. 2:12)

Isaiah 53:10–12; and Psalm 2:7 (see Acts 13:32–33).

• **Christ was Seen by Witnesses (vv. 5–11).** On the cross, Jesus was exposed to the eyes of unbelievers; but after the Resurrection, He was seen by believers who could be witnesses of His resurrection (**Acts 1:22; 2:32; 3:15; 5:32**).

-Peter saw Him

-The disciples saw Him collectively

-James was a half brother of the Lord who became a believer after the Lord appeared to him (**John 7:5; Acts 1:14**)

-The 500 plus brethren all saw Him at the same time (**1 Cor. 15:6**); could not have been a mass hallucination; this may have occurred just prior to His ascension (**Matt. 28:16ff**).

• **The radical change in Paul's life**, which subsequently entailed persecution and suffering, is actually one of the greatest witnesses of the Resurrection and is undoubtedly strong evidence that the Lord had indeed been raised from the dead. For previously, as unbelieving Saul, he was thoroughly certain that Jesus was dead.

So, all of that supporting our faith, just what is at stake...just *are* the **consequences if there were no resurrection?**

- 1) "...then our preaching is in vain." (v. 14)
- 2) "...your faith is in vain" (v. 14)
- 3) "We are even found to be misrepresenting God..." (v. 15)
- 4) "...your faith is futile and you are still in your sins." (v. 17)
- 5) "...those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished." (v.18)
- 6) "If in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied." (v. 19).

Thank the Lord that the discussion doesn't end there...but instead, for assurance God gave us.

But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive. I Corinthians 15:20-22

Thus, the Bible GUARANTEES the resurrection for all adopted sons and daughters of God at the coming of Jesus Christ for His Body (the Church) at the Rapture. With this unchangeable Paul can ask triumphantly, "**O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?**"
1 Corinthians 15:55

THE REALLY, REALLY, REALLY BAD ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE RESURRECTION OF CHRIST²⁴

Knowing the necessity of the Resurrection, the enemy of our faith takes very desperate measures in attempting to dispel our trust or to keep Believers in a state of doubt as with Eve who was asked, "**Hath God said...?**" **Genesis 3:1**

The arguments against the Resurrection have all the desperation of a small boy outnumbered in a snowball fight who has resorted to closing his eyes and just throwing handfuls of snow in the hopes that *something sticks to something*. As is evident in any debate, the more important the topic to topple, the more desperate the attempts are to have something stick.

²⁴ NOTE: In multiple instances I will be providing answers that are quite sarcastic; believer to believer, this is appropriate and lighthearted. However, as fun as it is, I would never answer a non-believer or skeptic with sarcasm; avoid joining a 'fool in his folly'. Thus, when asked, "Can God make a rock so big He can't lift it?" It is inappropriate to reply, "I'm not sure. But I do suspect that an atheist can ask a question so stupid He won't answer." Bad form. Don't do it. Just take my word for it.

Stack these arguments like dominoes on a large concrete floor, then drop a feather on the outskirts of the room, and they all instantaneously collapse...yes, they are that bad.

- **The resurrection of Jesus was a mass hallucination**

Answer: Aside from the 64,385,746 people who believed that a community organizer was fully qualified and equipped to serve in the role as the President of the United States, mass hallucinations are not neurologically possible.

- **The Women Went to the Wrong Tomb** – Due to the darkness, the women visited the wrong tomb, saw it empty and presumed he had risen. This report was then retold to the disciples and prompted their belief in the resurrections of Christ.

Answer: Right...right...because there was such a horde of tombs protected by Roman guards with a large stone in front of them sealed by Roman authorities. Again, inanity breeds questions:

Why did Mary Magdalene assume the gardener was working (**John 20:15**), if it was so dark? Although arriving later in daylight, with enough light to see the grave clothes and the rolled-up headcloth, how could Peter and John make the same mistake (**John 20:4–6**)? If the wrong tomb had been visited, opponents of Christ only needed to go to the right one and show them the body. POOF! No claims to a resurrection. Additionally, this theory offers no plausible rationalization for the reports that Jesus appeared.

- **The Disciples Stole the Body** - The guards spread the story that the disciples had stolen the body in the night and took it to an unknown location. Particularly in Jewish circles, this is still a popular claim because it explains the story of an empty tomb and the inability of anyone to disprove the claim that Jesus rose from the dead.

Answer: Aside from Judas Iscariot, what is recorded of the moral character of the disciples was exemplary; they were honest men, teaching and exhibiting the highest moral principles. That fact coupled with the continued confirmation that the disciples around Christ at the time of the crucifixion were not known for their perfunctory cerebral functions [they were not chosen because of their wits]. Thus, it makes no sense to lay this accusation on eleven men, who:

- If they were trying to make Christ's predictions come true by manipulation, at the moment Christ died they had no idea just how exactly the Old Testament prophecies pointed toward the resurrection of Jesus.
- Nor had they understood that Christ was going to die, and then be raised (**John 13:36**); clearly evidenced by their behavior at the tomb – they were confused and bewildered...not sure what to think at first discovering the empty tomb (**John 20:9**)...scattering and hiding in fear of being caught (**Mark 14:50**).

Even more serious would be the greater evidence of the apostles persisting in this conspiracy to the point of martyrdom; die for a cause they knew to be false. Even deceived human beings with bombs strapped to their bodies while boarding public busses in Israel, Spain, or London will die for what they believe to be true, but these same individuals have no motivation toward self-sacrifice for what is undeniably known to be a lie.

"It seems unbelievable that no disciple ever recanted belief in the resurrection of Christ, in spite of suffering and persecution (cf. 2 Cor. 11:22–33; Heb. 11:32–40). Not only did they die for this "lie," but the apostles placed belief in the resurrection at the center of their faith (Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 15:1–5, 12–19). Indeed, it was the theme of the earliest preaching by the apostles (Acts 2:30–31; 3:15; and 4:10, 33)." ²⁵

Again, how in the world could such a severe critic as Saul of Tarsus (cf. Acts 8–9) be so duped?

Lastly, if the body was merely stolen, how do skeptics explain ongoing living and breathing appearances to both to disciples and non-disciples? Jesus appeared bodily to:

- Mary
- James (Jesus' unbelieving brother)
- And the Apostle Paul, a zealous Jewish opponent of early Christianity.

- **Jesus had a Twin Brother who Appears After the Crucifixion** - this is taught by Orthodox Muslims; a similar argument is in the Koran

Answer: So actually, the entire crucifixion / resurrection scenario was little more than an ancient

25 Norman Geisler - Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, [Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999]

stigmata version of 'The Pledge'?!?!?!?!?!?!?

- **Joseph of Arimathea Took the Body** – Very similar to the claim of the disciples' theft of Jesus' body is the argument that Joseph of Arimathea, a secret believer in Jesus, stole the body and Jesus was buried in Joseph's tomb.

Answer: Joseph really had no reason to take the body of Jesus; why would he?

Even more difficult to answer is the timeline of 'when'; there was never an opportunity:

- A devout Jew, Joseph would not have broken the Sabbath (**Luke 23:50–56**)
- A Roman guard was posted in front of the tomb (**Matt. 27:62–66**)
- Very early the next morning, the women came by dawn (**Luke 24:1**)

Further, Christ's dead body was never found... given a timeline of almost two months passing prior to the disciples beginning to preaching, if Joseph took it, where did he put it?

And again, other than the resurrection, how can we account for eleven appearances, many taking place in the same city in which Jesus was crucified, over forty days to more than 500 people who saw him, handled him, ate with him, and talked with him,?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?!?

Based upon the resurrected interaction with Jesus, a frightened, disorganized, and skeptical populace was transformed into steadfast ambassadors willing to lay down their very lives for the sake of Christ, the Church, and the Gospel.

- **Appearances Were Mistaken Identity**. This is allegedly reinforced by the fact that many accounts recorded speak of eyewitnesses unsure or unaware that the person appearing was Jesus.
 - Mary thought she saw a gardener (**John 20**)
 - The two disciples thought it was a stranger traveling in Jerusalem (**Luke 24**), and later they supposed they saw a spirit (**Luke 24:38–39**)
 - Mark even admits the appearance was in “a different form” (**Mark 16:12**)

Answer: A large part of this confusion is directly linked to the Union of Nazarene Carpenters

Convention that took place directly after the crucifixion, whereby, membership in the union was contingent upon participants having visible holes in their hands, feet, and ribs...**NOT!**
This theory is beset with many difficulties.

“First, on none of these occasions mentioned did the disciples go away with any doubt in their minds that it was really the same Jesus they had known intimately for years who was appearing to them in physical form their doubts were only initial and momentary. By the time the appearance was over, Jesus had convinced them by his scars, his ability to eat food, by their touching him, by his teaching, by his voice, and/or by miracles that he was the same person with whom they had spent over three years.

Second, the mistaken identity hypothesis does not account for the permanently empty tomb. If the disciples were seeing different persons, the Jews or Romans could have gone to Jesus’ tomb and produced the body to refute their claim. But there is no evidence that they did, even though they had every reason to want to do so. The fact is that no one ever found the body. Instead, the disciples were absolutely convinced they were encountering the same Jesus in his same resurrected physical body whom they had known so closely all those years.

Third, this speculation does not account for the transformation of the disciples. Mistaken identity and a dead body rotting in some grave does not explain why the scared, scattered, and skeptical disciples were transformed into the world’s greatest missionary society overnight by their mistaken encounter with several mortal beings.

Fourth, it is highly unlikely that many people could be fooled on that many occasions. After all, Jesus appeared to over five hundred people on eleven different occasions over a forty-day period. It is less miraculous to hold in the supernatural resurrection of Christ than to believe that all of these people on all of these occasions who totally deceived and yet so totally transformed. It is easier to believe in the resurrection.”²⁶

- **The Swoon Theory** - the allegation that Christ was not dead when taken from the cross and placed in the tomb; therefore, he was not raised from the dead.

Answer: Okay, line up EVERY UFC fighter on earth, beat them with a scourge [a multi-thonged

26 Norman Geisler - Baker Encyclopedia of Christian Apologetics, [Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI, 1999]

whip with bits of bone and metal attached to the ends, that ripped off skin when applied] until they are unrecognizable, crucify them on a large cross by piercing through their hands and feet, then ask them to 'play possum' while you shove a spear through their ribcage and into their hearts.

The first one to laugh afterwards...WINS!

No winners.

"It is impossible that a being who had stolen half-dead out of the sepulchre, who crept about weak and ill, wanting medical treatment, who required bandaging, strengthening and indulgence, and who still at last yielded to his sufferings, could have given to his disciples the impression that he was a Conqueror over death and the grave, the Prince of Life, an impression which lay at the bottom of their future ministry. . . . Such a resuscitation could only have weakened the impression which he had made upon them in life and in death, at the most could only have given it an elegiac voice, but could by no possibility have changed their sorrow into enthusiasm, have elevated their reverence into worship."²⁷

WHY IS THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS CHRIST IMPORTANT?

In resurrecting Jesus from the grave, God reminds us of His absolute sovereignty over life and death and demonstrates the immense power and authority over creation of our Creator. To believe in the resurrection is to believe in a God, who created the universe, has unrestrained control over it, and solely possesses the absolute authoritative rule to raise the dead.

The resurrection is the triumphant and glorious victory for every believer. Jesus Christ died, was buried, and rose the third day according to the Scripture. And, He is coming again! The dead in Christ will be raised up, and those who remain and are alive at His coming will be changed and receive new, glorified bodies (**1 Thessalonians 4:13-18**). Christianity alone possesses a founder

who transcends death and who promises that His followers will do the same. All other religions were founded by men and prophets whose end was the grave. As Christians, we take comfort in the fact that our God became man, died for our sins, and was resurrected the third day. The grave

²⁷ David Strauss - A New Life of Jesus, [Nabu Press, 1879)

could not hold Him. He lives, and He sits today at the right hand of God the Father in heaven. The resurrection of Jesus Christ demonstrated that God accepted Jesus' sacrifice on our behalf, proves that God has the power to raise us from the dead, and it guarantees that those who believe in Christ will not remain dead, but will be resurrected unto eternal life. That is our blessed hope!

"Christ was not a martyr dying for his faith, but a Savior dying for our sins. He did not say, 'I am finished,' but 'It is finished.'" ²⁸

On this basis, the Apostle Paul can assure all Christians, "...that your labor in the Lord is not in vain" (v. 58). He reminds us that because we know we will be resurrected to new life, we can suffer persecution and danger for Christ's sake (vv. 29-31), just as He did. We can follow the example of the thousands of martyrs through history who gladly traded their earthly lives for everlasting life via the resurrection.

Thus, true Christian preaching is *centered* on the biblical fact that God raised Jesus Christ from the dead in order that believers may have victory over sin and death and receive the blessings of eternal life.

To that end, one of my favorite quotes from Clive Staples Lewis summarizes what is at stake very well:

"One must keep on pointing out that Christianity is a statement which, if false, is of no importance, and, if true, of infinite importance. The one thing it cannot be is moderately important." ²⁹

We cannot agree with Elliot Smith's lyric that, "anything is better than nothing..."³⁰ because sadly, in the case of Mr. Smith himself, this mindset is deadly. ³¹

Our lives are purposed, our existence and desires have meaning, and the Resurrection defines

28 H.L. Willmington - Willmington's Bible Handbook, [Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, Ill., 1997]

29 C. S. Lewis - "Christian Apologetics" from God in the Dock: Essays on Theology and Ethics [William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Michigan, 1994]

30 Lyrics from 'New Monkey' by Elliot Smith

31 At age 34, Elliot Smith was found dead, a suspected suicide, in Los Angeles, California from two stab wounds to the chest.

our very hope in sharing the Gospel itself. As Tullian Tchividjian understands very well: When Jesus plus nothing equals everything -- the Gospel -- became for me more than a theological passion, more than a cognitive catchphrase. It became my functional lifeline. Rediscovering the Gospel enabled me to see that:

because Jesus was strong for me, I was free to be weak;
because Jesus one for me, I was free to lose;
because Jesus was someone, I was free to be no one;
because Jesus was extraordinary, I was free to be ordinary;
because Jesus succeeded for me, I was free to fail. ³²

Time's 'People of the Year' for 2011 are 'Protesters'...how about a protest against the standards so easy to adhere to that the world provides and raising our standards to speak to the world around us Who Christ is as our '**righteousness and sanctification and redemption.**'

1 Corinthians 1:30

A protest to a world so desperate for God that in Russia they stand in the winter weather for up to 24 hours to glance at a purported belt that belonged to Mary?!?!?!?!?

We need a protest that cries to those with ears to hear," **Follow me as I follow Christ!"**

1 Corinthians 11:1

...that protest will change the world we know now *and* glorify the One who has secured our places in the world to come.

32 Tullian Tchividjian - Jesus + Nothing = Everything, [Crossway, Wheaton, 2011]

sex singleness and marriage

The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly

(Open on exterior, Westlake Brewing Company...dissolve to interior, three buddies sitting at the bar)

Jimmy: Thanks for coming out with me, man. I can't believe this! Five days from now, I'm gonna be married! I'm freaking out; I don't think I can go through with it!

Vince: Ah, it's perfectly normal to feel a little nervous, Jimmy. I did when I got married.

Will: Same here.

Jimmy: Listen... can I ask you guys some marriage questions?

Vince: Shoot.

Will: Yeah, we'll give it to you straight.

Jimmy: Okay... because Katie and I are fighting about stupid things all the time, and... I don't know... did you guys fight a lot, before you guys were married?

Will: I'm gonna let you in on a little secret, Jimmy - once you get married, the fighting... stops!

Jimmy: Really?

Will: Yep.

Jimmy: It stops completely?

Will: Mmm-hmm. You never fight about petty things again. No more screaming about filling up the ice cube trays.

Vince: No more reamings for forgetting to replace the toilet paper roll. You know.

Jimmy: I don't get it - why the sudden change? Is it possible?

Vince: I don't know, it's just magic.

Will: Yeah, it's like a fairy tale, Jimmy. Marriage is just this incredibly, wonderful state of mind.

Maybe it's the idea that you're gonna be with the same woman until the day you die.. that just frees you up!

Jimmy: This is just impossible! What, what else happens?

Vince: You lose weight.

Jimmy: You guys are fatter than me.

Vince: Hey, that's muscle, jerk!

Will: I mean, when you're married, you always want to look your best!

Jimmy: What about sex?

Vince: Oh, my God, it's constant.

Will: And totally spontaneous - totally. No more date nights.. just pure, adventurous experimentation until you.. fall asleep in a.. in a spoon position.

Vince: The sex is so great, that you actually quit watching television - you throw the tube right out of the room.

Jimmy: Really??

Vince: Uh-huh.

Will: Yeah. It's all truth.

Vince: The other thing is, too, until I got married, I had absolutely no idea how much fun it was to talk about money.

Jimmy: Really??

Vince: Mmm-hmm.

Jimmy: Money? I mean, Katie and I almost got into a fistfight over joint checking.

Will: You know what they say, Jimmy: "Marriage eradicates defensiveness."

Vince: And criticism. I mean, once you're married, you don't feel that urge to criticize your wife's lack of education in front of a group of male friends.

Will: It's true! The beauty of marriage is that you're free from thoughts like, "God, I just want to run away." Or, "I want to empty my bank account and just run off, to a small college town, under an assumed name, and live with a young girl in a cotton sundress."

Vince: Marriage is a wonderful dream, Jimmy. It's a wonderful, wonderful dream.

Jimmy: You guys make it sound really cool, man. I'm psyched! I gotta go to the bathroom, though.
[Jimmy exits scene, leaving Will and Vince alone to think about what they've done]

Vince: Should we tell him the truth?

Will: Nobody told me - screw him

Marriage is wonderful. Marriage is a blessing...but frequently, marriage is hard.

“Marriage is a major vehicle for the Gospel’s remaking of your heart from the inside out and your life from the ground up.

The reason that marriage is so painful and yet wonderful is because it is a reflection of the gospel, which is painful and wonderful at once. The gospel is this: we are more sinful and flawed in ourselves than we ever dared believe, yet at the very same time we are more loved and accepted in Jesus Christ than we ever dared hope. This is the only kind of relationship that will really transform us. Love without truth is sentimentality; it supports and affirms us but keeps us in denial about our flaws. Truth without love is harshness; it gives us information but in such a way that we cannot really hear it. God’s saving love in Christ, however, is marked by both radical truthfulness about who we are and yet also radical, unconditional commitment to us. The merciful commitment strengthens us to see the truth about ourselves and repent. The conviction and repentance moves us to cling to and rest in God’s mercy and grace.

The hard times of marriage drive us to experience more of this transforming love of God. But a good marriage will also be a place we experience more of this kind of transforming love at a human level. The gospel can fill our hearts with God’s love so that you can handle it when your spouse fails to love you as he or she should. That frees us to see our spouse’s sins and flaws to the bottom -- and speak of them -- and yet still love and accept our spouse fully. And when, by the power of the Gospel, our spouse experiences that same kind of truthful yet committed love, it enables our spouses to show us that same kind of transforming love when the time comes for it.”³³

Thus, “There is nothing nobler and more admirable than when two people who see eye to eye keep house as man and wife, confounding their enemies and delighting their friends.”³⁴

Because of the rampant pervasiveness and acceptance of sexual sin in a myriad of forms, the epidemic proportions of single mothers raising children without male role models present, and the

³³ Tim Keller -- The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God,(Dutton, New York, 2011)

³⁴ Homer, c. 700 BC

abandonment by man to give the same degree of attention, sacrifice, and commitment to the family as they do the profit expectations of shareholders, any notion of marriage as a monogamous, heterosexual, lifelong pledge, is openly considered an antiquated gesture. Now, as never before, marriage and family must be biblically-defined and unashamedly defended or face extinction as an irrelevant, intolerable, inapplicable social custom of yesteryear.

A marriage of love, unity, and understanding will flow out of a daily worship of God as Creator.

It is only when you look at your spouse and see the glory of God's creative artistry that you will treat her with the dignity and respect that a healthy marriage requires. God created every aspect of your personhood. He administered every choice of your hardwiring. He determined how tall you would be, whether you would tend to gain weight, the color of your eyes, the texture of your hair, the shape of your nose, the size of your hands, the tone of your voice, your innate personality, your natural gifts, the tone of your skin, your natural degree of physicality or athleticism, and whether you are mechanical, analytical, or relational. You didn't choose any of these things. You didn't wake up at six months and say, "I think I'll grow up and be a mechanical guy," or "I'm going to work on developing a long, thin nose because that will benefit the symmetry of my face."

All these choices were made by the Divine Artist who has infinite creativity. But there are moments in our selfishness, when that other person is in the way of what we want, that we all wish we could rise to the throne of the Creator and re-create our husband or wife into our own image, or at least into someone who would be easier for us to live with. The relational wife wants to turn her mechanical husband into her clone. The analytical husband wants to re-create his more emotionally wired wife into a dispassionate thinker like himself. The husband allows himself to be irritated by the screechiness of his wife's voice, or the wife is impatient with how slowly her husband does everything.

In subtle and not-so-subtle ways we all question the Creator, and in so doing we dishonor and disrespect our husband or wife. We end up criticizing the other for choices he or she didn't make. We all end up asking the other to change in areas where change simply is not possible. I cannot think myself taller. I cannot alter my natural Creator-initiated range of gifts.

When we celebrate the Creator, we look at one another with wonder and joy. When you look at your spouse and see the Creator's glory, then you feel blessed by the ways he is different. You are amazed and respectful of the experiences and perspectives that he has brought into your life, which you never would have had without him. And you look for ways to communicate your honor for him and what the fingers of the Creator formed him to be." ³⁵

Ultimately, marriage is the most effective tool the Lord uses in helping us understand that we are not here for the purpose of individual happiness but rather a much, much higher objective...that of holiness. Marriage provides two sinners, living their lives together in a fallen world, the opportunity to walk alongside one another rejoicing in victories and extending grace against disappointments and failures. Therefore, the Lord's commands regarding submission and servant leadership are never contingent on the way our spouse is or is not meeting 'our' standards...but rather, we serve one another joyfully 'as unto the Lord' thereby always being subject to the highest possible standards of grace, mercy, and unconditional love. It is a relationship that is designed to incorporate the strengths and weaknesses of two individuals in such a way that their dependence on God is made more and more evident everyday...which is why marriage reflects Christ's commitment to His Bride...that His ultimate desire is always for Her beauty and holiness.

The Apostle Paul, in First Corinthians, unpacks the intricacies and delicacies of sex, singleness, marriage, divorce, and remarriage – all the while in antithesis of the culture of his time, as well as ours. What must be kept in view through it all are the glories of marriage and, ultimately, the glory of God.

35 Dr. Paul Tripp, What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage

⌘ for love and freedom.

Worship or Idolatry, Knowledge or Love?

Much like the church at Corinth, the modern Evangelical in America is lost when self-control, virtuous living, and purity are viewed as antediluvian objectives! When the only difference between Believers and unbelieving naysayers is where we spend Sunday morning bleary-eyed, hung over:

- Believer - sitting in a Sunday service
- Unbelieving counterpart – Sleeping it off

...then we can't sincerely ask *why* the world watching us disbelieves our sincerity and commitment to show the transforming change in our character and self-control Christ has to offer them too.

"What controls your heart will control your behavior. Remember that by God's design, we're worshipers. Worship isn't first an activity; worship is first our identity. That means everything you and I do and say is the product of worship. So the treasures (things that have risen to levels of importance in my heart) that rule the thoughts and desires of my heart will then control the things that I do. The war between these two kingdoms in ministry is not first a war of behavior; it's a war for the heart. If I lose this deeper war, I'll never gain ground in the arena of my words and actions" ³⁶

Because...everyone worships something.

The CEO worships the approval of shareholders.

The glamorous worship their reflection.

A workaholic worships the recognition of his colleagues, while he sacrifices countless hours to provide for a family he doesn't know.

Everyone worships something.

³⁶ Paul Tripp – What Did You Expect? Redeeming the Realities of Marriage, [Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2010]

Thus, the true battle is not in a checkbook, a weight scale at the gym, awkward 'Eddie Haskell' introductions to attractive strangers, or even on a stage awaiting Simon Cowell's newest quip; no, the battle is in the mind.

As an act of worship, if my life demonstrates my response to what God has declared of Himself, then the impact of this Truth produces astonishment, stillness, and wonder. For that reason, if there is no one like the Lord then why would our worship of Him mimic the consensus standard the world uses? The prophets of Baal jumping around cutting themselves didn't motivate Elijah to grab a knife and hop right in, because after all, *that was how everyone else did it*. In obedience to what the Lord has communicated in Scripture, there MUST be a dramatic difference in our means of appropriately expressing our praise to Him that stands in stark contrast to what the consensus of the society employs.

Again, assimilation is shockingly present in a day and age where a congregation would immediately stand in patriotic reverence when the national anthem is played, but gladly sit with arms folded listening to songs exalting the Creator of all nations. Our point of approval is not horizontal, person to person, but instead vertical, person to Creator, where declaring what God has revealed of Himself in His Word, the outcome is humility, reverence, and awe. Because Christians should know better than to agree with Emil Brunner or Jacques Ellul's assertion that 'technology is today's metaphysic'; where ultimately the only thing that matters is if the outcome works. Throughout Scripture, with scores of examples time and again, the Lord has demonstrated that He is not only concerned with the 'outcome', but also the Biblical means and guidelines to attain it.

In contrast to the Assimilationist's 'Its All Good' mantra, the Isolationist will tell you that the Lord has called us to 'avoidance', and we should use the term 'Christian' as an adjective to justify and endorse our every interaction. As Steve Taylor sang, "I only drink milk from a Christian cow."³⁷ However, unlike the distant and uninvolved God of Deism and the Isolationist mindset, Christ was after all '**Immanuel, God with us.**' (**Matt. 1:23**) He walked among the lost, taught them, ate with them, made Himself fully accessible to the community at large, and with only five syllables changed the funeral of Lazarus into a contest to see who could look the most shocked.

Although not as evident or unsightly, to prevent assimilation, Christians can apply the three primary means of eliminating or reducing radiation exposures: **Time, Distance and Shielding**

³⁷ Lyrics from 'Guilty By Association' by Steve Taylor

Time: Minimize the time that radioactive materials are handled; the amount of exposure occurs as a function of duration of exposure, less time means less exposure.

- How often do I read God's Word? How often am I in community and accountable fellowship to prepare and equip me to interact with those lost outside the church without compromising who I am in Christ?

Distance: Maximize the distance from the radioactive materials; dose is inversely proportional to distance, therefore, greater distance means less dose.

- Are we avoiding areas of known weakness or temptation? Have we confessed these things to those in our congregation for prayer and accountability?

Shielding: Use shielding wherever it is necessary to reduce or eliminate exposure. By placing an appropriate shield between the radioactive source and the worker, radiation is attenuated and exposure may be completely eliminated or reduced to an acceptable level.

- Do I have a community of Believers surrounding me who can help me in areas of weakness and temptation?

We need to be as the Apostle Paul taught, setting an example of Christ for others to imitate, (**1 Corinthians 11:1**), not knowing if we are planting, or watering, but always diligent in our service to others, eagerly praying for the Lord to bring growth. (**1 Corinthians 3:6-7**)

Because as any farmer will tell you, that in proper agricultural practice, whenever the fields are 'white', they simply cannot harvest themselves. (**John 4:35**)

Meat Offered to Idols

Now concerning food offered to idols...therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. 1 Corinthians 8:1,13

"If all Corinthian Christians could have agreed that an idol was nothing and that there was only

one God (v. 4), then they might have eaten the idol meat with impunity. However, such was not the case. All, in fact, did not possess knowledge. The conscience of some Christians was not strengthened on this point by the truth. They were still ignorant and had not come to the point where they could accept eating this kind of meat as a matter of indifference. For them it was wrong, and so to eat it was sin (cf. Rom. 14:23). Paul denied the validity of their scruples, but in the advice which followed he suggested that the solution would be found in love, not in knowledge.”³⁸

In Paul's day it was widely believed that the demon or spirit of the false god the meat was offered to would inhabit the sacrificial meat. Thus, anyone who ate the meat afterwards would then ingest that very same demonic spirit and become possessed! Interestingly, with the introduction of Rock-n-Roll music to the Caucasian populace in the last century, Christian fundamentalists continued this 'obedience by fear' schema in the early 1950s by proclaiming 'The Devil's in the beat!' Independent Baptists taught that if it 'moved your foot before it moved your soul...it was from the Devil!' ...to which the CCM forefather Larry Norman appropriately responded 'Why Should the Devil have all the Good Music?' Years ago Relevant Magazine ran an article I wrote entitled "Why is the Statement 'You Don't Sound Like A Christian Band!' Considered A Compliment" Because, the basic formula remains the same:

Individuals with little to no life experience + Poor Musicianship = Contemporary Christian Music.

Regretfully, given this historical mindset against artistic progress, it is effortless to understand why Christianity had to create the Dove Awards in order to pat itself on the back and why 99% of all music created by Christian artists SUCKS!!!!!!!

Corinth was not very different; their concern was focused on their newfound freedom in Christ without regard for the abysmal manifestation it might produce for Christians with weaker consciences who might still believe in the possible 'divinity' of the forest of idols that surrounded them.

“There is only one true and living God and idols are nothing (cf. Dt. 6:4; Is. 40:25–26). Yet Paul and others observed the great extent of the idolatry in Corinth where many gods were worshipped. Paul does not ascribe divinity to them as if they were legitimate expressions of God. On

38 J.F. Walvoord & R.B. Zuck - The Bible Knowledge Commentary [Victor Books, Wheaton, IL, 1983]

the contrary he says they are so-called. This phrase was used to describe something that was popularly, but erroneously, affirmed. The terms gods and lords were synonymous in pagan religious language. Paul uses them here to balance what he says in 6, 'but' (a strong negative statement) for us there is but one God, the Father, who is the Creator of all things and for whom the Christian exists. Our purpose in life is to serve him, and not simply to have him meet our needs so that we can pursue our own interests (cf. Acts 27:23). Christians are not simply theists. For them there is only one Lord, Jesus Christ, and he is the agent of all that is created (cf. Jn. 1:3) and the one through whom we live. But not all Christians firmly believe that an idol has no power. First-century worshippers would say of an idol, 'That is Athena', believing that the goddess was actually there. Christians were called atheists because they had no statues."³⁹

Therefore, this passage actually has very little to do with dietary restrictions or the horrific onslaught of 'The Apostle Paul Diet' books that infest the shelves of 'religious' retailers; **it has to do with placing love and concern for others above your own liberties and freedoms.**

Because inexorably **“sinning against your brothers and wounding their conscience when it is weak, you sin against Christ.” I Corinthians 8:12**

Your liberty in Christ must be restricted; you must volitionally limit your own personal freedom, at the point that by the exercise of a permissible right a brother or sister in Christ with a weaker conscience would stumble.

For any individual who knows and loves God, “your highest goal will never be the enjoyment of your freedom at someone else’s expense. You’ll know that freedom without love is shallow and worthless. What should you do in a situation where the expression of your freedom may, as Paul said, hurt the conscience of a weak believer? Simple – you don’t push the weaker brother to experience what you do. Rather, you limit your freedom.” After all, as Ganz concludes, **“the Christian life isn’t how much you know, or how strong you are, or how much Christian liberty you possess, but how much you love.”**⁴⁰

39 D.A. Carson - New Bible Commentary: 21st century edition (4th ed.) [Inter-Varsity Press ,Leicester, England; Downers Grove, Ill.,1994]

40 Richard Ganz – 20 Controversies that Almost Killed a Church: Paul’s Counsel to the Corinthians and the Church Today [P&R Publishing, Phillipsburg & New Jersey, 2003]

∴ spiritual gifts

The Ghost and Avoiding the Appearance of Gene Simmons

Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed...now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. I Corinthians 12:1-7

“If we are Christians, we have God’s Spirit in us. In the spirit gives each of us gifts for the building up of our oneness with one another in the church. Furthermore, our oneness with each other directly reflects God’s oneness. Paul writes, “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body.” Now notice what Paul says: “So it is with Christ”(12:12). You expect him to say, “So it is with the church.” But he says, “So it is with Christ.” God in Christ is one, and we who are “Baptized by one Spirit into one body -- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free -- and... given the one Spirit to drink”(12:13) are the body of Christ. Our unity with one another as the body of Christ is a gift of Christ’s Spirit who makes us his body.”⁴¹

All gifts are imparted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of unity and interdependence of one another within the Body of Christ; each believer is entrusted with at least one gift; no believer is given all the gifts. These include:

- Wisdom (12:8a)
- Knowledge (12:8b)
- Faith (12:9a)
- Healing (12:9b, 28e)
- Miracles (12:10a, 28d)
- Prophecy (12:10b, 28b)
- Discernment (12:10c)
- Tongues (12:10d, 28h)

41 Mark Dever - The Message of the New Testament: Promises Kept,[Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2005]

- Interpretation of Tongues (12:10e)
- Apostleship (12:28a)
- Teaching (12:28c)
- Helping (12:28f)
- Administration (12:28g)

“Moreover, the Holy Spirit apportions gifts to individual Christians as he wills (I Cor 12:11). Everyone is gifted by the spirit for service. This means we can serve. It also means we must serve. Whether it’s within or without the walls of the church building, each of us must be working for the common good.”⁴²

And yet “unity” does not need to mean uniformity!⁴³ In each Believer’s gifting there remains a uniqueness by virtue of each individual’s temperament and character. Unless of course, you feel ‘gifted’ musically but have declared you desire to be ‘another’ Chris Tomlin, Hillsong, Mercy Me, etc. In which case, please know **we serve a God of ‘creation’ not a God of ‘imitation’**; ex nihilo not ex materia! Thus, your future as a mascot for your uncle’s septic tank cleaning service looks pretty secure.

Okay, so I made a purchase at Gifts of the Spirit ‘R’ Us and the box is sitting in my living room... but what does it do?

Wisdom - this gift has to do with a mind given over to God and making known God’s will, from God’s Word, the purpose and plan for the church. To have a ‘word of wisdom’ is to present the deep spiritual realities that affect and undergird the lives of God’s people, especially as they apply in the situation of the Church or of individuals in a particular time; this gift is found with good biblical counselors. In **I Chronicles 12:32** we see this gift in the children of Issachar, of whom it is written, the **“man of Issachar... understood the times and knew what Israel had to do.”** This gift may or may not be applicable to picking a perfect March Madness bracket.

Knowledge - the word knowledge is used in the New Testament more than 300 times, with incredible variation of meaning.

⁴² Kevin DeYoung -- The Holy Spirit [The Gospel Coalition Booklets], [Crossway, Wheaton, IL, 2011]

⁴³ Ravi Zacharias

The gift of wisdom is the ability to apply the word of God
The gift of knowledge is the spirit-given ability to understand the word of God.

It is a gift of knowing in a deep and powerful way what the word of God teaches; knowledge refers to profound insight into the word of God.

Faith - it DOES NOT refer to saving faith that every believer possesses, but a higher degree of faith enabling some to trust God in the most difficult situations, when circumstances seem utterly dire.

Healing - mentioned three times in the 12th chapter of I Corinthians, and all three passages in the Greek, the word healing is in the plural. It's possible this is due to the wide diversity of illnesses and afflictions that received healing.

This gift includes:

- Crushing the devil, because Acts 10:38 tells us that Jesus healed “all who were under the power of the devil.”
- Authenticating the word - Acts 4:29- 30
- Substantiates the resurrection of Jesus - Acts 3:15-16
- It turned people to God - Acts 9:32- 35

Healings were a means to bring glory to God and never intended as a vehicle of exploitation to sell ‘anointed ‘prayer hankies’.

Miracles - as with faith, miracles are mentioned three times in **I Corinthians 12:10, 28- 29.**

Three words are used for ‘miracle’:

- I. Dynamis which means “power”; depicts a miracle as a manifestation of divine power.
- II. Semeion which means “sign” ; describes a miracle as that which authenticates the mission of the doer.
- III. Teras which is “a wonder”.

Teaching that God bears witness to His great salvation, all three words are used in **Hebrews 2:4: while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.**

A miracle is 'an event in the external world brought about by the immediate agency or the simple volition of God, operating without the use of means capable of being discerned by the senses, and designed to authenticate the divine commission of a religious teacher and the truth of his message (John 2:18; Matt. 12:38). It is an occurrence at once above nature and above man. It shows the intervention of a power that is not limited by the laws either of matter or of mind, a power interrupting the fixed laws which govern their movements, a supernatural power.'⁴⁴

Prophecy - mentioned 22 times in **I Corinthians 11-14**, stemming from the word prophemi, which means "to speak before an audience," not "before the time." The noun 'prophets' refers to individuals who speak the truth to others. The prophetic office is of such significance that the church is built upon the "**foundation of the apostles and prophets.**" Where prophets spoke Divine revelation, which became the corpus of the Scriptures, this function of the prophetic office is closed because the final revelatory word of Christ is spoken. As **Hebrews 1:1** says, "**in the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets... but in these last days he has spoken**" (the aorist tense of "has spoken" would mean "finally, fully and definitely").

Prophecy as a gift has not ceased, because the fundamental idea of prophecy is the spirit-derived capacity to proclaim the truth of the Word of God to people.

Discernment - this is connected to prophecy in order to affirm that the prophetic ministry is completely biblical. The gift of discernment enables the people of God to identify whether a supposed prophetic word is truly from God. "I am a prophet," or "I have a prophetic message," does not necessarily mean what is shared is consistent with the Word of God.

Tongues – given to the Body of Christ in **Acts 2** at Pentecost, there are four types of tongues:

1. Tongues as a **public** supernatural outpouring and sign to unbelievers [Acts 2:11]
2. Tongues for the strengthening of the church; requires an interpretation [1 Corinthians 14:27]
3. Tongues as a private prayer language [Romans 8:26]
4. Gene Simmons

44 M.G. Easton - Easton's Bible Dictionary, [Oak Harbor, WA, 1996]

for i decided to know
nothing among you
except jesus christ and
him crucified

⦿⦿ Apostle Paul

⌘ notes

⌘ notes

☼ sermon schedule

2/12	Christ-Centered Church	1:1-9
2/19	Christ-Centered Church	1:10-31
2/26	Christ-Centered Church	2:1-16
3/4	Christ-Centered Church	3:1-23
3/11	Christ-Centered Church	4:1-21
3/18	Christ-Centered Church	5:1-6:11
3/25	Resurrection	Our Resurrection - 15:12-34
4/1	Resurrection	Our Resurrection Bodies - 15:35-49
4/8	Resurrection - Baptisms	Jesus Resurrection - 15:1-11
4/15	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Sex: Gift, God, or Gross? - 6:12-20
4/22	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Selfish Lovers/Servant Lovers -7:1-5
4/29	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Singleness - 7:6-9, 25-38
5/6	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Divorce/Remarriage - 7:10-24, 39-40
5/13	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Women and Marriage
5/20	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Men and Marriage
5/27	Sex, Singleness, & Marriage	Grace and Disgrace
6/3	For Love & Freedom	8:1-13
6/10	For Love & Freedom	9:1-18
6/17	For Love & Freedom	11:2-16

7/1	Baptisms	Baptisms
7/8	For Love & Freedom	9:19-27
7/15	For Love & Freedom	10:1-14
7/22	For Love & Freedom	10:15-22, 11:17-34
7/29	For Love & Freedom	10:23-11:1
8/19	Spiritual Gifts	Spiritual Gifts – 12:1-11
8/26	Spiritual Gifts	One Body, Many Parts – 12:12-31
9/2	Spiritual Gifts	Love or Just Noise? – 13:1-13
9/9	Spiritual Gifts	Gifts That Freak People Out -14:1-40
9/16	Conclusion	15:50-58
9/23	Conclusion	16:1-24

