

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

1. "Don't Forget Who You Are"

Study: I Corinthians 1:1-9

Theme: Christians must know their position in Christ before they can deal with their problems in the flesh.

Introduction:

In this series of studies our focus will be on God as He speaks to the churches in Southern California. Let's face it, we claim to be Christians and yet we mimic the unbelieving society around us. We have allowed immorality into our churches. There exists an attitude of individualism, division, and arrogance with regard to gifts of the Spirit. In fact, when we study Paul's letter to the Corinthians we can honestly say: this could be titled "First Californians".

As Paul begins to address this church with all its difficulties, divisions and disorder, where does one begin? Does he appeal to the "rules, regulations and laws"? Or should he make a pitch for human decency or justice and solve these problems with some good ol' willpower? What a lesson for us as Paul holds before them who they are in Christ Jesus and all He has made available for them.

I. CALLED TO BE SAINTS (1:1-3)

A. What does Paul tell about himself in verse 1?

1. Describe this "call". (Acts 9:3-6; 17; 22:11-15)

2. In what way are all Christians "called"?

• John 6:44

• Romans 8:29-30

• Ephesians 1:4-6

• I Peter 1:1-2

- Ephesians 2:4-7

- Ephesians 3:10,21

2. We receive God's grace when the testimony is "confirmed in us". (verse 6) What does that mean? (See Acts 20:21,24; 22:18, John 1:12)

B. Present Benefits (1:5,7a)

1. What present benefit is given believers according to verse 5?

a. We have everything that Christ has to give and He gives everything we need. What does that include? (I Peter 1:3; Colossians 2:10; I Corinthians 3:21)

b. Among the most important of the things we have in Christ are...what? (verse 5) _____
What does that mean?

- Acts 1:8; 4:29,31; Ephesians 6:19; I Peter 3:15

- I Corinthians 2:9; 14; Ephesians 1:17; John 16:13-14

2. Paul moves on from specific provisions to God's general provisions given to believers to serve Him. What is given to every believer? (verse 7)

a. Is Paul referring to individual Christians or to the corporate body? (See I Corinthians 12:27-30)

3. How did Jeremiah respond to his "calling"? (Jeremiah 1:4-5; 20:9)
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- B. Who is Sosthenes? (Acts 18:17)
 - C. According to verse 2, what does it mean to be called a "church" or a Christian?
 1. Explain the word "sanctified".
 2. Explain the word "saints". Who are they?
 - D. Look at Paul's greetings in verse 3. How does God extend "grace" and "peace"?
 - E. From these few verses what have you learned about yourself in **being** a Christian?

II. THE BENEFITS OF BEING A SAINT (1:4-9)

In verses 4-9 Paul summarizes the benefits of believing in Christ. The benefits have three dimensions. Some are past, others are present, still others are future.

- A. Past benefits (1:4,6)
 1. What is the first benefit of being a Christian? (verse 4)
 - a. In order to understand the true meaning and **significance** of God's grace we need to understand that it cannot **coexist** with guilt, human obligation, and human merit. Why is **this** true?
 - b. God has three reasons for being gracious to us. List them:
 - Ephesians 2:8-10

b. What is your understanding of "a spiritual gift"? (I Corinthians 12:7)

C. Future Benefits (1:7b-9)

1. What are we Christians waiting for?

a. Explain what will happen at that time. (I Thessalonians 4:14-17; I Corinthians 15:51-53; Matthew 24:29-31)

b. What two promises are made to the believer in verse 8?

2. We can be sure of God's grace--past, present, and future. Why? (verse 9)

3. What does being "called into the fellowship of His Son...." mean to you?

Application:

Take a good look at yourself from the way God sees you in Jesus Christ! What do you see? What does God tell you? What has He done for you?

As you see yourself as God sees you, now list the areas in your life that contradict that reality and confess them to the Lord.

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2. "Splits and Quarrels in the Church"

Study: I Corinthians 1:10-17

Theme: Fractured fellowship robs the Christian Church of joy and effectiveness.

Introduction:

The Bible states that one of the basic marks of a Christian has to do with his ability to love. "They'll know we are Christians by our love." If that's true then what we are saying when the Church is so torn by division? No wonder our society refuses to listen when the Church speaks!

Few things demoralize, discourage and weaken a church as much as bickering, backbiting and fighting among its members and few things so effectively undermine its testimony before the world. Fractured fellowship robs the Christian Church of joy and effectiveness, robs God of glory, and robs the world of the true testimony of the Gospel. A high price for an ego trip.

The need of the Corinthian Church is the same for the churches of California. In verses 10-17 Paul deals with four basic areas that relate to unity.

I. THE PLEA: DOCTRINAL UNITY (1:10)

- A. When Paul "exhorts" the brethren, what is he seeking to do? (exhort comes from the Greek word "parakaleo". See how it's used in John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7)
- B. What significance is it that Paul appeals to them as "brethren"?
- C. What seems to be the problem in the Corinthian Church?
- D. Paul appeals to them that they should "all agree". What do you suppose that means? On what? Does it mean that Christians cannot have any differences of opinion?
- E. What are issues that often divide churches today?

- F. When there are controversial issues in the Church what ought Christians to do? (Acts 15:2; 6-31, Phil 2:3)

II. THE PARTIES: LOYALTY TO MEN (1:11-12)

- A. From verse 11, what do you see as the root problem of these divisions?
- B. Who were these persons that are mentioned?
- Paul:

 - Apollos:

 - Cephas:

 - Jesus:
- C. How do you see this happening in many of today's churches?
- D. How would you deal with this kind of issue if it were to happen in this church?

III. THE PRINCIPLE: ONENESS IN CHRIST (1:13)

- A. What is the central principle in Paul's argument to confront these divisions? (See Phil. 4:4-6)
- B. How is a Christian church that is divided a contradiction? (See I Cor. 6:17; 12:12-13; Rom. 12:5)
- C. What was Jesus prayer in John 17:21-22 and how are divisions against His nature?

IV. THE PRIORITY: PREACHING THE GOSPEL (1:14-17)

- A. Why do you suppose Paul was thankful that he baptized few people? Who do you suppose did the baptizing?
- B. Who are Crispus and Gaius? (Acts 18:8; Rom. 16:23)
- C. What part does pride play in divisions in the church?
- D. Paul saw his calling to preach the Gospel. (Acts 26:16-18) If we have the right priority in our lives, how will that help us keep from divisive factions?

Application

- 1. What are doctrinal issues you struggle with?
- 2. Who are persons (past/present) you see in the church that people identify with today?
- 3. What do you need to do to bring more oneness in the church?
- 4. Where is your focus or priority when you look at a church?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS**3. "The Wisdom of God's Foolishness"**

Study: I Corinthians 1:18-31

Theme: In God's foolishness, he takes Christ's cross to deliver humanity from sin and to crush man's pride.

Introduction:

During the last decade the image of Christians and the Gospel of Christ has been portrayed with disdain by the television media. Christians who hold to the moral absolutes of the Bible and salvation through Christ alone are portrayed as "Fundamentalists" and "bigots". The television tabloid talk shows of Donahue, Geraldo and Oprah let it be known that whatever lifestyles "people may find to be meaningful, they are doing what is right for them". There are no moral absolutes! Christians who would dare to declare otherwise need to be silenced or mocked to scorn for their foolishness.

Human wisdom, epitomized in philosophy and popular opinion, has always been a threat to God's revelation. Even many Christians today are frantically looking everywhere, except to God and the wisdom of His word, for their values, meaning, guidance and help.

But this is nothing new. Already in Paul's day the wisdom of God was viewed as foolishness. Earlier in this chapter Paul began to attack the Corinthian Christians for their emphasis on human wisdom and pride which resulted in divisiveness in the church. In verse 17, Paul mentions the power of the cross, but now he focuses on it as the true wisdom of God that appears to be foolishness according to worldly wisdom.

I. THE SUPERIORITY OF GOD'S WISDOM (1:18)

- A. Why do you suppose the "cross of Christ" appears to be foolishness to non-Christians?
- B. How did the people of Athens respond to Paul's preaching? (Acts 17:18-21, 32)
- What offended them?
 - Did Paul change his message to accommodate them?

- C. Human wisdom cannot understand the cross. How did Peter respond to it in Matthew 16:22?
- D. To the natural mind the cross is offensive and unacceptable. But how is it the "power of God" for those being saved? (Romans 3:21-25; Colossians 2:14-15; I Peter 3:18)

II. THE PERMANENCE OF GOD'S WISDOM (1:19-20)

- A. Paul uses a quote from Isaiah 29:14 to emphasize that the wisdom of men will be destroyed. What does Proverbs 14:12 tell you about man's wisdom?
- B. According to Romans 1:18-23 what are the consequences of man's philosophy or worldly wisdom?
- C. If men reject God's revelation, what "truth" is left? What sort of wisdom do they have according to James 3:15?
- D. What is the point of I Corinthians 1:20?

III. THE POWER OF GOD'S WISDOM (1:21-25)

- A. With all their supposed wisdom, has the philosophy of man ever been able to know God--much less, come to a personal relationship with Him? (Romans 3:10-11)
- B. Through the "foolishness of what we preach" (verse 21) God makes salvation possible. What has God revealed that all mankind must know in order to be saved? (Look up the following verses.)
 - 1. Romans 3:10-12, 23
 - 2. I Peter 3:18, Romans 3:21-25

3. John 1:12; Romans 4:22-25

4. Romans 6:11-13; Matthew 7:21,24

C. Unbelief is always the basic reason for not accepting God's will and way, but what are some ways unbelief is expressed? (22-23)

1. Explain how people seek for "signs" and "search for wisdom" today when confronted with the Gospel.

2. How can the demands for "signs" and "wisdom" create problems and hindrances to genuine faith to those who seek them? (II Timothy 3:6-7; John 6:28-30,40; John 12:37; Colossians 2:8)

D. According to verses 24-25, what is the true wisdom and power of God?

How so?

IV. THE PERSONAL TOUCH OF GOD'S WISDOM (1:26-31)

A. Suddenly Paul turns the tables on the Corinthians and asks them to reflect on their own status in life. Describe the Corinthian church. Why did God choose them? What is their boast? (verses 26-27)

B. God's wisdom is kind of a paradox. In human thinking, strength is strength, weakness is weakness, and intelligence is intelligence. But in God's economy, how does He work? (verses 28-29; also see 2 Corinthians 12:9-10)

C. What is God's purpose in making salvation possible in this way? (verses 28-29)

D. In verses 29-30, notice God's wisdom as it works for the believer. **When a believer is "in Christ Jesus" what does he receive through Christ? (List and explain each term using the following verses)**

1. I Corinthians 2:16

2. Romans 1:17

3. Romans 6:19

4. Romans 8:23

Application

1. How is our society like and unlike the one pictured in this passage?
2. Where do you see believers often confusing God's wisdom and power from the world?
3. Can you think of any situation today where God uses the foolish, the weak, the lowly as the despised to build His Kingdom?
4. How has God demonstrated His wisdom and power in your life recently?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
4. "Understanding the Wisdom of God"

Study: I Corinthians 2:1-16

Theme: True believers are the only ones for whom the Gospel can be wisdom.

Introduction:

Did you know there is a war on? There is a battle going on....for your mind! Listen to the rhetoric of campaign speeches, economists, advertisers, salesmen, etc. People are continually "battling" to get you to see things their way.

How is this done? It is done by words--clever gimmicks, catchy slogans ("Have it your way at Burger King"; "Drink the udder uncola, drink milk"). Millions of dollars are spent every year to research the psychology of the consumer. They search out viewpoints, attitudes, lifestyles, likes and dislikes of people, all for the purpose of selling a product.

But is this what we ought to do when it comes to preaching the Gospel? Ought we to be so keyed in on the method of communication, that we compromise the message? These are the issues to which Paul is speaking in these first three chapters of I Corinthians.

Paul is addressing a divided congregation, people filled with pride and prejudice, with immorality and injustice. They were forgetting the power of the message of the crucified Christ. Instead they were focusing on the wisdom, knowledge and media techniques of men. In this chapter the apostle focuses on the key factor of how people can understand the wisdom of God.

I. PAUL'S METHOD (2:1-5)

To emphasize the point that the real power in preaching is not due to eloquence, gimmicks, human wisdom, Paul reminds the church of their own experience when they first heard the Gospel.

A. "When I came to you..." From where did Paul come? (Acts 17:22-31) What kind of message do you think these people wanted to hear?

B. From verses 1-4, how would you describe Paul's style of preaching.

- How do you feel about that? Would that go over well in our day?

C. Yet Paul was effective. According to verses 4-5 what does it demonstrate?

- What does this say to those who try to argue people to accept Christianity? What should be our approach in our day?

II. PAUL'S MESSAGE (2:6-9)

Having reminded them that becoming a Christian is not the result of human wisdom or persuasive eloquence, Paul now points out what God's wisdom is all about.

- A. How would you compare the "wisdom of the age" with the "wisdom of God"? (verses 6-7)
- B. In what way is God's wisdom a secret? (Ephesians 1:3-5; 9-10, I Peter 1:12)
- C. According to verse 8, how was God's wisdom misunderstood?
- How is it misunderstood today?
- D. Read verse 9, a quote from Isaiah 64:4, and comment on the phrase "...for those who love Him..." in light of the discussion on wisdom? What's the point here? (Proverbs 23:26)

III. GOD'S MEDIA (2:10-16)

Seeing that God's wisdom is radically different from man's wisdom, the question now arises: How does one acquire the wisdom of God?

- A. What benefits does the Holy Spirit bring to the believer? (Verses 10-13) See also John 3:8; Romans 8:9; John 16:7-13)

- B. Try to explain verses 11-13 in your own words. In light of this, can a **person** become a Christian without being "born again"? Why?

- C. Verses 14-16 compares the "natural man" with the "spiritual man". **What do you understand this to mean?**

- D. According to Paul, then, what is the nature of true wisdom?

- E. Explain verse 15.

Application

1. If you asked your closest friends to describe a wise person, what do you **think** they would say?

2. What difference does having the Holy Spirit within you make in your **life**?

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5. "Growing In Spiritual Maturity"

Study: I Corinthians 3:1-23

Theme: The Christian life demonstrates a growth from a carnal, self-centered lifestyle to a spiritual, spirit-controlled lifestyle.

Introduction:

To the parents of a newborn child, it's exciting to see a child grow and respond to the environment and most of all to them. At first the child cries for his milk, then proceeds to eat baby food and cereal, until finally he develops teeth and eats food all by himself.

This process we consider to be natural. We expect it to happen. But when it does not happen, we know something is wrong. The child is sick, abnormal, it's not responding as it should and we're concerned.

These same principles apply to the Christian's maturing process. When an individual receives Jesus Christ, we can naturally expect growth, maturing. We can look for the normal signs: appetite-hunger for God's word; growth-things are taking shape in his life; and greater self-awareness-of who he is in Christ; a concern for others-a desire to reach out with Christ's love in relationships.

But, as we discover from our study, this doesn't always happen. As Paul analyzes the Corinthian Christians he senses that something is wrong...they are carnal, baby Christians. In this study we will discover some of the essential principles for Christian growth and spiritual maturity.

I. MATURITY IS A RESULT OF GROWTH (3:1-9)

A. According to I Corinthians 2:14-3:3 Paul speaks of three types of persons: List them and give your best definition.

- 1. _____
- 2. _____
- 3. _____

B. Into what category does Paul place the Corinthians and why? (verses 1-3)

- C. What is the significance of how Paul addresses the Corinthians in **verse 1**?
- D. Distinguish between a "man of the flesh" and a "spiritual man"? (Philippians 3:18-21; Romans 6:11-13)
- E. What "fruit" should be evidenced more and more in a Christian's life? (Galatians 5:22-23)
- F. According to verses 5-9, what is the role of the pastors? But who gives the growth?

II. MATURITY IS A RESULT OF BUILDING (3:10-15)

Notice that Paul changes the analogy from a field to the idea of a building (**verse 9**). Spiritual growth results first from the life of God, but also from what a person allows to be built into his life.

- A. In considering the maturing process in a person's life, what are we taught in verses 8-10?
- B. What warning is made in verse 10?
- C. What is the only foundation on which a person must build his life?
- D. Verse 12 describes various kinds of materials we can build in each life. How would you define these materials in the Christian's life?
- E. Who were the "planters" and "waterers" in your spiritual journey? In whose lives have you planted and watered within the past year?
- F. How will the quality of our "work" or growth be revealed in the future? (verses 13-15) What do you suppose this means? (See Colossians 2:16-18)

III. MATURITY IS A RESULT OF ATTITUDE (3:16-23)

- A. What must we understand about ourselves as Christians and why is **this** important?
- B. If every believer is the temple of God, how ought Christians to regard **each** other? What responsibility do we have to each other? (Romans 14:7-8; 15-16)
- C. Much division in the church would be eliminated if individuals were **not** so impressed with their own wisdom. How does Paul speak to this? (verses 18-20, Romans 12:3)
- D. If a congregation were to have 10 men with doctorates who were only **nominal** in their commitment to Christ and His word and 10 other men who **had only** finished high school but were completely sold out to Jesus Christ and **steeped** in His word, who, by God's standards, should lead the congregation? (verses 18-20)
- E. For maturity to take place in the believer, what should be his attitude **toward** leadership and possessions? (3:21-22)

Application

1. How have you expressed worldly wisdom in your life, family and church?
2. What kind of builder are you? What do you think will be left standing when your work is tested?
3. What does it mean for you to become a "fool" for Christ?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

6. "Dealing with Spiritual Pride"

Study: I Corinthians 4:1-21

Theme: Pride must die in you or nothing in heaven can live in you.

Introduction:

Two people come to church, worship in the same building, hear the identical message of Christ's love and forgiveness--yet they remain distant from each other to a past conflict. Why?

A husband and wife have a blow-out, they reach a mutual understanding, but a coolness continues to breeze through the relationship. Why? An elderly woman listens approvingly to a sermon dealing with the Pharisee and Publican. On her way home she says to her husband, "Well, thank God I'm not that Pharisee!" What's the problem in each instance? It's _____!

In our last study we saw Paul's concern for abnormal Christian growth--when self or the flesh is on the throne. Maturity comes when you allow God's life to grow in you, you build good "material" into your spiritual life and you check your attitudes and perspectives. But a key factor that needs to be challenged is one's pride. Pride builds barriers between people and is at the heart of church divisions, splits, and broken relationships.

In this study we will learn how to deal with spiritual pride. Here are five principles to help us deal with spiritual pride.

I. RECOGNIZE WHO YOU REALLY ARE (4:1-2)

Keep in mind what's been happening in the Corinthian church. A popular game played by many Christians today is that of evaluating pastors. We even do that with each other.

- A. How does Paul say Christians should regard their leaders? (verse 1)

- B. What is the key requirement of having a leadership position? (verse 2)

- C. How do you regard yourself? What does it mean for you to be a "steward of the mysteries of God"?

II. REALIZE YOU WILL BE EVALUATED (4:3-4)

Now that very thought of being a steward and being faithful brings Paul to the second principle that deals with pride. Evaluation:

- A. Who does Paul recognize as judging him? _____ How does he feel about that? (verse 3)
- B. When is the evaluation of others helpful? When harmful?
- C. Who have you been critical of this week? With whom did you share it? What motivated you?
- D. Who else will evaluate one's ministry? (verse 4) _____ When is spiritual introspection dangerous and when is it beneficial?
- E. Who, ultimately, must we stand before? _____
- What will be the criteria that He will base His evaluation on? (verses 4b-5, II Corinthians 3:18)
- F. Can you think of an incident this week where pride was evidenced in your life? How do these three principles of evaluation help to put down one's pride?

III. REFER TO THE SCRIPTURES (4:6-7)

- A. How does viewing Paul and Apollos biblically help the Corinthians to appreciate their leaders strengths and weaknesses?
- B. As Paul refers to the scripture, how would verses such as Proverbs 8:13; 11:2; 16:18 help him deal with pride?
- C. As you read scripture, how would Deuteronomy 8:11-19 in light of I Corinthians 4:7 help you keep from pride?

IV. REMEMBER THE CIRCUMSTANCE OF OTHERS (4:8-13)

- A. Describe the contrasts Paul draws between the Corinthian Christians and the apostles in verses 8-13. What basic truth is Paul making with these contrasts?
- B. How can one's blessings and fortunate circumstances bring pride? How does it often result in looking down on others?
- C. Instead of pride, what should be the Christians attitude?-(Luke 12:48)

V. RESPOND AS LOVING PARENTS TO OTHERS (4:14-21)

As Paul closes the section of his letter which deals directly with dissensions and divisions, he appeals to them as a father to his children.

- A. What does Paul urge his Corinthian "family" to do? (verses 14-15)
- B. How are they to "imitate Paul" without becoming "followers of Paul"? (1:12; 2:4)
- C. What characteristics, attitudes and actions of Paul would you like to imitate?
- D. How do you think the Corinthians felt when they read verses 18-21?
- E. What do you learn about Paul from verses 18-21?

- F. If Paul were coming to Rancho Community Church, do you think **we'd** be looking forward to his arrival? Why or why not?

Application

1. What is your disposition toward yourself and others?
2. What must you do to let God deal with your spiritual pride?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

7. "Does the Church 'Dare to Discipline'?"

Study: I Corinthians 5:1-13

Theme: When the church ignores its purity, it forfeits its power to grow and witness.

Introduction:

Karl Menniger, the noted psychologist, wrote a book entitled: "Whatever Became of Sin". In the book he states that people have become so sophisticated in their attitudes that they will describe themselves as "morally deprived", "lacking education", "delinquent", "maladjusted", and "misguided"- but have simply glossed over calling sin-SIN!

Can we not also raise the same question with regard to the church in terms of church discipline? Have we become so sophisticated and wishy-washy in our attitudes toward "sexual freedom" and "do-your-own-thing culture" that we would rather switch than fight...we would rather overlook it than confront it?

How do we, as the church of the 20th century, hold church numbers accountable to Godly living, yet maintain the spirit of love and grace? One of the best scriptural examples and guides is our passage of I Corinthians, Chapter 5.

I. THE IMMORALITY EXPOSED (5:1-2)

A. Read verse 1 and explain your understanding of the problem Paul is addressing.

B. What further aggravates Paul? What do you suppose he means by that?

C. In verse 2 Paul reacts even more to the Corinthians attitude! What do you suppose lay behind this attitude?

1. _____

2. _____

II. THE CORRECTION EXPRESSED (5:3-5)

- A. What action does Paul call for in 5:2b?
- B. What do you think it means to hand someone over to Satan? How would this work to save his Spirit?
- C. Who does the discipline? How would Matthew 18:15-18 play into this scenario?
- D. What is the purpose of excommunication? What does it do for the offender?
- E. In your opinion, how should church discipline be handled? (Gal. 6:1-2) Under what conditions would you expel someone from the church?

III. THE PURPOSE EXPLAINED (5:6-13)

- A. What is Paul's concern for the whole church if the church does nothing? (6) (I Timothy 5:20)
- B. Explain Paul's point by referring to Christ as our Passover Lamb in this context.
- C. How do you put what Paul teaches in 5:11-12 with what he teaches in 4:3-5? And how do we reconcile this with the fact that Jesus sat and ate with publicans and sinners?
- D. How do we communicate an attitude of love and grace, yet take seriously what Paul is teaching here in verse 11?
- E. Someone has said, "If we expect nothing from our church members, then we will get nothing." Do you agree or disagree, why?

- F. How does this passage make you feel about the seriousness of sin in the life of the Christian? Why?

Application

1. What about you--Have you become so "sophisticated" in your attitude toward sin in your life that you simply rationalize it by calling it another name?

What are things in your life that need to be called "sin" and confessed and need to be rooted out?

2. What are areas in our church that we need to confront? How would you suggest we go about it?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
8. "Lawsuits Among Christian Believers"

Study: I Corinthians 6:1-8

Theme: A Christian's primary concern focuses on his relationships, not his rights or possession.

Introduction:

"Now let's talk about the 'bottom line'". Have you heard that phrase: the bottom line? What does that mean? It's been interesting to note that Christians are open to deal with broken relationships, immoral issues, and doctrinal differences, but often become rigid when it affects the "bottom line."

How often have you heard of Christians taking other Christians to court to settle financial disputes? (When was that last time you felt cheated and what did you do about it?)

In this study we find the apostle Paul admonishing the Corinthian believers about their habit of settling their disputes in the law courts. In confronting this evil practice Paul mentions two areas of misunderstanding that these believers had.

I. **THE TRUE RANK OF CHRISTIANS** (6:1-6)

- A. How did believers in Corinth handle their disputes?
- B. If Paul's concern was not that believers might get an unfair hearing on the public courts, what was his true concern?
- C. When Christians put themselves under the authority of the world in these matters, what are they really confessing?
- D. In verse 2, what does Paul state?
- E. If two Christians cannot agree between themselves, how then should they settle the matter? (verses 4 & 5)
- F. Paul was ashamed of the behavior of those whom he had taught. Why do lawsuits among believers hurt the church's testimony?

- G. What was lacking in the Corinthian church between the believers? (I John 3:10-11; I Corinthians 13:1-2)
- H. Sometimes in our society a quarrel between Christians over rights and property cannot help come before a secular court. What would be some instances from your perspective?
- I. If we're taken to court for some reason by a fellow believer what should be our purpose and attitude?

II. THE TRUE ATTITUDE OF CHRISTIANS (6:7-8)

- A. Do you agree with Paul that it is better to be cheated than to go to court against a believer? Why or why not? (Matthew 5:39-40)
- B. Have you ever been cheated or sued? What happened?
- C. Paul points out that when believers take each other to court they already are defeated. Why is this true?
- D. What often happens to people in their relationship to each other after having gone to court?
- E. What ought we as a church to do to help people work through their disputes?
- F. What situations or cases do you think the law courts should handle, rather than the church?

Application

- 1. If we are wronged or defrauded and not carry bitterness what spiritual action must we take first? (Romans 12:1-2; Luke 9:23)
- 2. "A Christian's primary concern should not be to protect his possessions or his rights but to protect his relationship with His Lord and with his fellow believers." Do you agree or disagree?...Why?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS**9. "Living Under New Management"**

Study: I Corinthians 6:9-20

Theme: New ownership results in new management style.

Introduction:

We hear a lot today about corporation buyouts, takeovers and bankruptcies. What's interesting is to note that one corporation may not be making a profit, but after having been bought out, in a few years it's doing much better and showing a profit. What made the difference?

Studies have shown that different management styles can have a dramatic impact on the profit and loss column. When a corporation buys out another corporation it can be expected that the enterprise having been bought out will undergo dramatic structural and procedural changes.

As the apostle Paul has been discussing some of the problems within the Corinthian church--sexual immorality, divisions, lawsuits and jealousies, he makes a profound statement. In I Corinthians 6:20 he reminds his readers of an important fact that must be reckoned with. "You are not your own; you were bought with a price. So glorify God with your body." In becoming a Christian there has taken place a "corporation take-over." The old company is now under new management which expects a new lifestyle.

In this lesson let's consider what it means for Christians to live under the new management of Jesus Christ.

I. THE POWER OF CHRIST'S PURCHASE (6:9-11)

Paul's purpose here is not to give a list of sins that will indicate whether or not one has lost his salvation. Rather, he's describing the character of those not saved. This is "old management style".

- A. How do you suppose Paul raises the question in verse 9 to the Corinthian Christians? (II Corinthians 6:16-17)
- B. How ought believers to regard themselves according to II Corinthians 5:17 and II Peter 1:4?
- C. Examine the list of types of sin and indicate any you do not understand the meaning of. (9-10)
- | | |
|-------------|-----------|
| Immoral | Thieves |
| Idolaters | Greedy |
| Adulterers | Drunkards |
| Homosexuals | Revilers |
| Robbers | |
- D. What does Paul mean in verse 11 "such were some of you."?

- E. Explain what Christ has done for the believer by defining each of the following words.
1. Washed--(Acts 22:16, Romans 3:24-25)
 2. Sanctified--(John 17:16-17)
 3. Justified--(Romans 4:22-25)
- F. In verse 11 what is the significance of referring to "the name..."? (John 16:23-24, Phil. 2:9, Acts 4:10-12)
- G. What is the expectation portrayed here in these verses? (Romans 6:11-14)

II. THE PROBLEM OF SEXUAL PERVERSION (6:12-14)

God's grace alone saves and God's grace alone keeps salvation. A Christian can commit no sin that is not already covered by God's grace. But the Corinthians were using this truth as an excuse to sin. They rationalized their sinful thinking and habits by quoting some of their philosophers.

- A. Read verses 12 and 13. Two popular sayings are quoted by Paul--what are they and how does He answer them?
- B. What spiritual truth about one's body does Paul bring out in verse 13b? According to Phil. 3:18-19 what is a big problem among Christians in Paul's day and ours?
- C. With so much sexual emphasis and pressure put on Christians today how does verse 13 bring a proper perspective? See also I Thess 4:3-7
- D. How does verse 14 add weight to Paul's argument about the proper use of one's body? (I Cor 15:51-53)

III. THE PERSPECTIVE FOR A BODY'S PURPOSE (6:15-20)

Notice, that in dealing with the problem of sexual immorality, he does not spend time referring to laws and commandments. The Christian walk is not a result of something "you've quit doing"; rather, it's a relationship with one to whom you've committed your life.

- A. In John 8:31-32 Jesus said "...the truth will make you free". What truth must Christians understand from verse 15? (Rom 12:5; I Cor 12:12-13, 27)
- B. In addressing the Corinthian Christians who visited prostitutes Paul also speaks to the attitude of casual sex today! According to verses 16-17 why is sex outside the context of a marriage relationship wrong for Christians?
- C. How would verse 19 speak to the issue of pornography? What about alcohol, drugs or overeating?
- D. Sex is a powerful drive within our bodies, how does Paul advise Christians to deal with immoral temptations? (verse 18)
- E. Read verse 18b. Why is sexual immorality a sin against one's own body? How does this relate to verse 15?
- F. How does knowing the truth of verses 19-20 help a Christian to be strong against sexual temptation? (and others as well?)
- G. What options are there for a Christian single to handle the sex drive: suppression? sublimation? Look, but don't touch? Or what?
- H. What else drives you? What, if anything, is mastering you? How can the spirit within help you honor God in all aspects of your body?

Conclusion

Each of us, no matter how protected our lives, will face many temptations. But we ought not to underestimate temptations's power to attract nor overestimate our ability to resist. We are a part of a sexually saturated society. There is no place to "Flee to"....other than relating all of our lives to who we are in Christ Jesus and that He indwells us. What is the basis for your Christian life and ethics?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
10. "Christian Principles For Sex And Marriage"

Study: I Corinthians 7:1-40

Theme: Commitment to Jesus Christ as Lord enhances the physical and spiritual relationship in marriage.

Introduction:

Chapters 7-11 of I Corinthians comprise Paul's answers to practical questions about which the Corinthian believers had written him (7:1).

The first of these questions had to do with sex and marriage, an area which Satan continues to attack the believer even today. As the Corinthian Christians were greatly influenced by the society's morality, so the church today finds more and more Christian single men and women living together, sexual promiscuity is a common practice, and one out of every three marriages fail. Never in the history of the human race has there been such a threat on the home as a stable social unit as today.

There is only one perspective that will enable men and women to find answers to the perplexing problems facing them in their sexual, as well as, married and family life than the biblical perspective. In this chapter the apostle Paul puts forth Christian principles for sex and marriage.

Here Paul answers various questions that still are being asked today: Isn't sex rather unchristian, so Christians should abstain from it? What about divorce? Should Christians married to non-Christians seek a divorce? Is marriage the ultimate relationship for everyone? What about living together without getting married?

I. TO MARRY OR NOT TO MARRY (7:1-7)

- A. Read the following passages and explain the meaning of verse 1. (Genesis 20:6; Ruth 2:9; Proverbs 6:29).... What is he saying about singleness?
- B. What danger does Paul speak to in verse 2?

Scripture gives numerous reasons for marriage. Read the following verses and list five reasons.

- Genesis 1:28

- Proverbs 5:18-19

- Genesis 2:18

- Ephesians 5:23-32

- I Corinthians 7:2

- C. Because of some erroneous belief in the spiritual superiority of total sexual **abstinence**, some overzealous members in the church had decided to set themselves **apart wholly** for God. How does Paul speak to this in verses 3-5?
- D. What are the sexual responsibilities of husbands and wives in marriage? How do you understand God's view of sex in marriage?
- E. Although celibacy is good for Christians who are not married, how must it be viewed? (verses 6-7)
- F. From this section (1-9), why does Paul think it is a good thing for a Christian not to marry?

II. DIVINE GUIDELINES FOR MARRIAGE (7:8-16)

In the USA today about one in two marriages end in divorce. Love today is loudly **acclaimed** and sought after but not much evidenced--even within marriages. In verses 1-7 Paul **establishes** the general principle that singleness as a special gift of God is good, now he shows that as a general principle marriage is the norm.

- A. How does Paul answer the question: "Should those who were married and divorced before becoming Christians remarry?" (verse 8)
- B. If a Christian single does not have the gift of singleness what should he do? (verse 9) What does it mean: "It is better to marry than to burn"?
- C. How would you counsel someone who has strong sexual desires but has **no immediate** prospect for a husband or wife?
- D. How does Paul emphasize the sacredness of the wedding vows? (verses 10-11) **Also read Matthew 19:5-8; Matthew 5:31-32; Malachi 2:16)**

- E. What were Christians to do who were already married to unbelievers, possibly even to immoral and pagan idol worshippers? (verses 12-14)
- F. How is a Christian wife a blessing to an unbelieving spouse and family? (verse 14)
- G. When an unbelieving spouse wants to leave the marriage, what advice does Paul give? (15-16)

III. CHRISTIANS AND SOCIAL REVOLUTION (7:17-24)

Much has been said and written about the social role and responsibility of the church. Often we Christians have wondered how and to what extent we should be involved in promoting social, economic and political change.

- A. What is the rule Paul lays down "in all the churches?" (verse 17)
- B. Christ made it clear that he did not come to instigate an external social revolution (John 18:36). What was Christ's mission (Luke 19:10) and what is the mission of the church? (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 1:9-10; 3:8-10)
- C. If the primary purpose of the gospel is to change people, not change society, then how would this rule apply to changing one's non-Christian religious affiliation?...Changing one's professional career?...Changing an unjust situation?
- D. What is the most important thing to God? (verse 19)
- E. In verses 20-24, Paul's point was not to approve of slavery or to suggest that it was good. What would you say is Paul's primary point here?

IV. REASONS FOR REMAINING SINGLE (7:25-40)

In this discussion of marriage and singleness, Paul has made it clear that neither state is spiritually better than the other. Being married or remaining single has nothing to do with spirituality. Spirituality is based on obedience to God. But for the person to whom God has given the gift of singleness, that state has many practical advantages.

- A. As Paul refers to the "present distress" what would you think is in Paul's mind as to why it might be better to remain single? (verses 25-28)
- B. Marriage is a legitimate option, but what other concerns about marriage does Paul point out? (verse 28)
- C. Today it has become increasingly difficult, because of close attachment to families, to get Christians to be strongly dedicated to serving the Lord. How does Paul speak to this in verses in verses 29-31?
- D. Marriage does not prevent great devotion to the Lord, and singleness does not guarantee it. But what advantage to singleness does Paul bring out in verses 32-35?
- E. In verses 36-38, how is Paul's advice to the engaged couple different from what he said earlier in chapter 7? What is an important criteria for marrying someone? (II Corinthians 6:14)
- F. In verses 39-40, is Paul's advice about remarriage any different that what he said about marriage? Why? Why not? Is remarriage always the ideal?

Application

1. What are advantages of being single? Of being married?
2. How does singleness or marriage help one's service for Christ? Hurt it?
3. What is one lesson you have learned from this study? What changes will you make this week because of it?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
11. "When Is It Wrong To Be Right?"

Study: I Corinthians 8:1-13

Theme: The difference between being a carnal Christian or a spiritual Christian is never theological knowledge...but Christian love.

Introduction:

The average Christian doesn't have much trouble in distinguishing between things that are really good and things that are really bad. But when it comes to that wide, slippery no-man's land of doubtful issues, most of us start to scratch our heads. "Go to church on Sunday?" That's fine! "Commit adultery." Absolutely not! These are black and white issues, and they don't ordinarily cause serious problems, at least in the sense in knowing right from wrong.

But how about movies? Dancing? Men wearing earrings? Smoking? A social drink? Eating in a restaurant on Sunday? Cards? Miniskirts? Rock music?... Now the picture fades from black and white to varying shades of gray. In many cases Christians even in the same church, not to mention different parts of the country, cannot agree as to whether these and other similar ethical issues are legitimate pursuits for Christians or not.

Back in Corinth there may not have been many arguments about movies or miniskirts, but they had the same type of problems. The main point for contention focused on--of all things--eating meat offered to idols. They struggled with the question: "Was eating of meat offered to idols the same as worshipping the idol to which it was sacrificed? Might it be what the Bible calls "an appearance of evil?"

Chapters 8-10 deals with the problem in detail. It is extremely important to us because it gives us basic principles of Christian ethics which will help us deal with the many doubtful, amoral questions that may touch our lives.

- I. **THE CONTRAST BETWEEN KNOWLEDGE AND LOVE (8:1-3)**
- A. As Paul begins to discuss the issue of eating meat offered to idols, what basic principle does he set forth in verse 1?
 - B. Explain Paul's comparison between love and knowledge. What makes his statement true?
 - C. What are Christians challenged to do according to Ephesians 4:15?
 - D. Explain the meaning of verses 2-3 in light of John 14:21, I John 5:1 and Philippians 2:4.

II. THE CONTENT OF TRUE KNOWLEDGE (8:4-7)

Paul pauses for moment to set forth the line of argument of those who have the correct **knowledge** concerning eating of meats offered to idols. These people had good theology and sound **doctrine**.

- A. Read verses 4-6. what knowledge did certain Corinthians have about idols? (See Isaiah 44:9-20)

- B. What knowledge did Corinthian Christians have about God? (verses 4-5, **Deuteronomy 6:4**; Isaiah 42:8; 43:10, 44:6)

About Jesus? (verse 6)

- C. What is the main point of verses 4-6? (See Psalms 115:4-7; Acts 19:26)

- D. Notice that Paul did not involve some kind of **commandment** or "church law". **What** was the decision of the Jerusalem council regarding matters as these? (Acts 15:29)

- E. Why do you suppose Paul didn't dismiss this whole issue by quoting the "church law" spoken by the Jerusalem council?

- F. What additional truth does Paul remind them of in verse 7, one they must have **known**, but did not take into consideration when exercising their spiritual liberty?

III. THE CONSIDERATION OF LOVE OVER KNOWLEDGE (8:8-13)

- A. What important truth is summarized in verse 8? (Mark 7:15; Acts 10:10-16, 28; I Timothy 4:4)

- B. What makes something "wrong" for us which normally would be "right"? (verse 9)

- C. What does it mean to have a "weak conscience"? Why is it important to **help guard** a person's conscience? How do we strengthen a conscience?

- D. What conclusion does Paul come to in verse 13? How is this conclusion **different** from legalism?

Application

1. As a member of the church of Corinth, would your conscience have been **weak or strong** on this issue? Why?
2. What were the greatest stumbling blocks for you growing up?
3. What have you done that didn't bother you, but caused someone else to **stumble**?
4. How have others used this concept of "causing your brother to stumble" in a **way that you** felt manipulated?
5. Where do you need to make a decision more on the basis of love than of **knowledge**?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

12. "What About My Rights?"

Study: I Corinthians 9:1-27

Theme: The key to having a concern for the conscience of others rests on yielding one's rights to God.

Introduction:

"But I've got rights too, you know!" Isn't that our first reaction when we're called upon to bend to certain "absurd convictions" of other Christians? We too have rights, we too have freedom in Christ...and often it's hard to accept the convictions of others, especially when we "know" they're wrong!

If we don't resolve the emotional conflict, often it results in feelings of bitterness and contempt. When our rights come into some kind of conflict with the conscience of others--what are we to do?

Let's review our study from Chapter 8. There the apostle Paul set out the limits of Christian liberty, limits that are to be determined by brotherly love--not legalism. He summarized the principle in 8:9--"Take care lest this liberty of yours somehow become a stumbling block to the weak." Our rights end when another is offended.

Now, in chapter nine, the apostle illustrates three principles that he followed in his own life. When it comes to "my rights" there first must be the recognition of one's rights, then a realization of what it means to belong to Christ, and finally, a response to Christ as Lord.

In our study let's discover the principles Paul follows in yielding his rights to Christ.

I. I KNOW MY RIGHTS (9:1-14)

- A. In 9:1 Paul raises a variety of questions, what is he implying here?
- B. Why do you suppose Paul makes such an issue about being an apostle?
- C. What two proofs does Paul give of his apostleship (9:1-2)?
- D. What rights does Paul list that all apostles are entitled to? (9:3-7)
 - 1.
 - 2.
 - 3.

- E. Financial support was a big issue for the apostles. In verses 7-12, how does Paul **prove that** he is entitled to support from the Corinthian congregation?
- F. What rights can you claim for yourself as a Christian?
- G. If he's entitled to this support, why didn't Paul claim this right? (9:12b)

In what way could his financial support hinder his missionary work?

- H. In verses 13-14 Paul further states the bases of the apostles' right for financial support from churches he serves. What are they?

II. I TRANSFER MY RIGHTS TO CHRIST (9:15-23)

In this section Paul spells out his strategy of how to prevent bitterness, anger, and resentment from affecting one's feelings toward those who have weak consciences.

- A. Explain what Paul is saying in verse 15? (I Thess 2:9; 2 Thess 3:8; 2 Cor 11:8-9, Acts 18:33-35)
- B. What compels Paul to preach the gospel and what is his reward or prize for faithful service? (16-18, 23)
- C. In verses 19-23 what is Paul's missionary strategy? How do you respond to this?
- D. How does being "all things to all people" (verse 27) free up Paul to be truly himself?
- E. If this strategy is to work for us, what two principles do we need to understand and act on?
 1. I Corinthians 6:19-20
 2. Romans 12:1-2

- F. How closely would you be willing to identify with someone to win them to **Christ**? How concerned are you for the lost?
- G. Looking at Paul's strategy, how does one keep from being hypocritical or two-faced?
- H. At what point does Paul become inflexible and intolerant? (Compare Acts 16:3 with Gal 2:1-5)

III. I YIELD MY LIFE TO CHRIST'S CONTROL (9:24-27)

In the last few verses Paul takes another approach. To yield one's rights to the Lord is not easy, it will take the strictest discipline of self.

- A. What is the point of the foot race imagery?
- B. How does one compete in the Christian life to get the prize? See Phil 3:12; Eph 4:17-24.
- C. Define the following terms from a Christian perspective:
 - 1) "race"
 - 2) "prize/crown"
 - 3) "strict training"
 - 4) "beating the air"
 - 5) "disqualified"
- D. In the Christian's "race of life" we need to know our goal. What is it according to the following verses?
 - 1. 2 Cor 3:18; Rom 8:29
 - 2. 2 Cor 5:18-21

3. Eph 4:1-3; 13-16

4. I Peter 4:10-11

E. In racing terms, how would you describe your training and the race you're **running** for Christ?

F. How would you compare yourself with acquaintances who became Christians when you did?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS**13. "Pitfalls of Smug Complacency?"**

Study: I Corinthians 10:1-33

Theme: Spiritual experience does not guarantee spiritual maturity.

Introduction:

Someone once said that it's the preacher's job "to comfort the afflicted and to afflict the comfortable." How true! There are times when we Christians need to be affirmed, assured, and uplifted. But there are also times when the attitudes "we have pretty well arrived"..."we are spiritually better"...."we know the Bible"...and develops a smug, complacent attitude. In time like these - instead of being affirmed and assured - we need to be "afflicted."

As Paul writes this 10 Chapter in his letter to the Corinthians Church, he "afflicts" this smug, complacent attitude. In chapters eight through ten, Paul has been dealing with a current problem that has created division in the church - eating or not eating meats offered to idols. In Chapter eight, Paul has shown that love, not "right theology" must be the basis of Christian behavior. In Chapter nine, he urges his readers to never allow their personal rights to come in the way of winning others to Christ.

Now Paul's primary concern is that these Christians not take their Christianity for granted by becoming smug in their relationship with God. The simple truth is this: "spiritual experience is no guarantee for substitute for spiritual maturity!"

I. THE DANGER OF OVER CONFIDENCE (10:1-13)

A. The assets of liberty (1-4)

1. Carefully read verses 1-4, to what period in Israel's history is Paul referring?
2. What three blessings are mentioned here? (vs. 1-4)
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
3. How are these historical experiences similar to the Christian's sacraments of baptism and Lord's Supper.

B. The Abuses of liberty (5-10)

1. Did the fact that the Israelites all experienced the same religious things protect them? What happened? Why?
2. What four major sins disqualified the Israelite from God's service?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
3. What truth does this history teach the believer?
 - a. I Cor. 9:24,27
 - b. 2 Tim. 2:21-22

C. The Application of Liberty (11-13)

1. What was the purpose of this lesson of history for the Corinthians.
2. What would be the warning to us today?
3. How does God demonstrate His faithfulness in temptations?
4. What lessons have you learned from the temptations you faced successfully? Not successfully?

II. THE TRUTH ABOUT IDOLATRY (10:14-22)

As Paul has made clear in (1-13) idolatry, immorality, and complaining against God are not gray areas, they are outright sins. Christians have no liberty here. In the next few verses the apostle explains why the sin of idolatry is especially abominable to God.

1. What is the relationship between idols and demons? Which is more dangerous? (14-15)
2. What is idolatry and in what ways do people participate in idolatry?
 - Rom. 1:21-24
 - Rev. 19:10; Col. 2:18
 - Rev. 9:20
 - Matt. 6:21
 - Phil. 3:18-19
3. How does the Lord's Supper fit into this discussion? What should the Supper remind us of? Jn. 6:35-37; 53-56; I Cor. 6:19-20

4. What decision does Paul say the Corinthians have to make? What are the consequences of this decision? (21-22; Mt. 6:24)

III. USING YOUR FREEDOM FOR GOD'S GLORY (10:23; 11:1)

Paul's central message in this passage, and the Bible's central message for believers in all ages, is summarized in verse 31. God created man to glorify Himself, and that is man's purpose in life. In this section Paul explains what believers must understand about their Christian freedom if they are to glorify God in everything they do.

1. Search out verses 23-30 and list four basic principles to guide us in using our Christian liberty for God's glory.
 - Vs. 23
 - Vs. 24
 - Vs. 25-27
 - Vs. 28-30
2. What is the underlying purpose of Christian freedom? (31-32)
3. What practical suggestion (in verses 33-11:1) does Paul make for following the principles of Christian liberty?
4. What is one thing today from your perspective that corresponds to the problem of idol meat in Paul's culture?
5. What does it mean to "bring glory to God"? How do we glorify God by seeking the good of others?

APPLICATION

"Stepping stones or stumbling blocks" these are the two options before us as we live our Christian walk. It's all a matter of perspective, where is our focus! Do we focus on "my rights" or are we willing to say "Lord Jesus, live your life through me"?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

14. "Male Chauvinism vs. Biblical Principles"

Study: I Corinthians 11:2-16

Theme: The principle of husband authority and wife submission arises out of God's purpose of order and of being a compliment.

Introduction:

The church of Corinth (like our churches in California) was riddled with problems and tensions. When people came to Christ, they tended to allow their old carnal natures to dictate their attitudes and behavior, rather than allowing their new nature and biblical directives to determine them. In chapters 8-10 Paul addressed the issue of personal rights, and handling differences of conscience. In chapters 11-14, Paul now addresses problems that arose in the worship services: the place of women in the church, the meaning of the Lord's supper, and the proper use of spiritual gifts.

In today's lesson we'll study the role of women in the church. With the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ the role of women became a battleground in the Corinthian church. Likewise during the last several decades of our society that battleground also has invaded the church. The struggle for women's rights has escalated to a place of imbalance that threatens the relationships between men and women and even the family. In our day, our cultural attitudes and demands, rather than scripture, have set the agenda for the church. In this lesson we will learn how Paul spoke to the male-female roles and relationships of his day and seek to apply it to our day.

I. THE PRINCIPLE STATED (11:1,2)

Paul begins his corrective by stating succinctly the basic divine principle he is going to discuss.

- A. When Paul writes of "traditions", how is it used here? (2 Thess 2:13-15)
- B. When we have questions about lifestyle, relationships, and male-female roles what must be our authority? (2 Tim 3:16-17, 4 Tim 2:15)
- C. Put into your own words the basic principle Paul establishes in verse 2. Also how would you explain the principle of "authority and submission".

II. THE PRINCIPLE APPLIED (11:3-6)

It is best to understand that Paul is referring here to activities of believers in ministry before the Lord and the public, where a clear testimony is essential.

- A. In the Corinthian culture, prostitutes did not cover their heads. What specific problems would this create for women in the Corinthian church who wanted to exercise their freedom in Christ by not wearing a veil?
- B. Also the veil was a symbol of a wife's submission to her husband. In spite of this some Corinthian women started a women's liberation movement. What is Paul's solution? (vs 3)
- C. Is submission of a wife to her husband optional or a doctrinal principle for all cultures? Why? (also see Eph 5:24)
- D. Explain Paul's point in verses 4-5. Is wearing a veil optional or a doctrinal principle for all cultures, for all time? Why?

III. THE PRINCIPLE DEFENDED (11:7-10)

As has been mentioned, covering the head appears to have been a customary symbol of subordination in the Corinthian culture. But the principle of a husband's leadership is not a matter of custom but a matter of God's order and creation.

- A. What unique distinction does the male hold? (vs 7)
- B. How did the sin of Adam and Eve upset the husband/wife relationship? (Genesis 3:16-17)
- C. What unique, distinct role does the woman play? Explain. (vs 7)
- D. What further truth does Paul point out to substantiate that a woman's role is to submit to her husband? (verses 8-9)

E. Why do you suppose Paul brings in "because of the angels"? (vs. 10)

IV. THE PRINCIPLE HARMONIZED (11:11-12)

A. Lest men abuse their authority over women, what does Paul remind **the men** of?

B. Verse 12 states that men and women are mutually interdependent. How do you see this work out in the church?

V. THE PRINCIPLE RESPONDED TO (11:13-16)

Paul asks the Corinthians to disregard his apostolic authority for a moment and think it through.

A. The principle of authority and submission is not only given by God in **His divine revelation** but is self-evident from God's creation itself. How so? (verses 13-15)

B. How would these verses speak to the confusion of male and female identities through dress and roles today?

C. Do you think, from these verses, that it is wrong for men to have long hair? How long is too long? How short can women cut their hair? How much of this is cultural preference?

CONCLUSION

The gospel of Jesus Christ has set us free indeed, but in the context of living it out and in the expression of our worship to God we also need to be sensitive to our cultural norms. As we have seen, the basic problem in Corinth wasn't wearing veils or in having long or short hair, as such, but maintaining the divine order of the sexes. This is a classic case of Paul's doctrine - of women being submissive to men - remaining constant; **whereas** his decision -wearing veils to church - is culturally conditioned.

What change in your understanding or attitude has resulted from this lesson?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
15. "Eat And Drink, But Be Mindful!"

Study: I Corinthians 11:17-34

Theme: Worthy participation in the Lord's Supper requires a heartfelt examination of one's relationship with the Lord and fellow body members.

Introduction:

As if the scandal of female immodesty in church were not enough to spoil a wonderful atmosphere, the pride and prejudice in the hearts of the Corinthian Christians even corrupted the Communion services. In fact, the trouble in Corinth over the Lord's Supper ruined a lovely practice of the early church. This was the "Agape", the Christian love feast.

Today the love feast has so nearly passed into oblivion that few Christians even know about it. But early Christians would gather for a meal together, take a traditional collection for the poor and then close by taking the symbolic elements of the Lord's Supper. Undoubtedly all would bring something to the "Agape", but the rich were expected to bear the majority of the responsibility. In that way the poorer families could enjoy at least one luxurious meal a week.

In the Corinthian church, however, the "Agape" had degenerated drastically. In this study, as we view the problems in this church, we can also discover the meaning of the supper and how to participate in it in a worthy manner.

I. PROBLEMS SURROUNDING THE LORD'S SUPPER (11:17-22)

- A. When Paul introduced the discussion of women's head coverings, Paul praised the Corinthians (11:2). But how does he introduce this next issue? (11:17)
- B. What do you think is Paul's emphasis with the phrase: "Giving...instruction" or "directives"? (vs 17)
- C. In verses 18, 21, and 22 Paul points out two problems in the Corinthian church. What are they?
 - 1. (18) (I Cor 3:3-4)
 - 2. (21-22)
- D. Explain what Paul means in verse 19? (Acts 6:1-7; I Thess 2:4)

- E. The specific "Corinthian disorders" identified by Paul, were disunity, lack of love, gluttony and drunkenness. In what ways do we distort the meaning of the Lord's Supper in the modern church?

II. PURPOSE OF THE LORD'S SUPPER (11:23-27)

- A. What historical background does Paul remind the Corinthians of concerning the first Lord's Supper? (vs 23) Why is this important in speaking to the problem issue?
- B. What does the "bread" represent in the Supper?
- C. When you hear the words, "This is my body", what do you remember about Jesus?...How does it make you feel when you read: "...for you"?
- D. What does the "cup" represent in the Supper? (Heb 9:28)
- E. How does the Lord's Supper relate to the Passover? Compare Jesus' blood with the Passover lamb. See Exodus 12:5-14.
- F. What is a person doing when he/she participates in the Supper? (Jn 6:35; 53-58)
- G. What proclamation do we Christians make every time we take the Lord's Supper? (vs 26)
- H. How is the Lord's Supper a reminder of His second coming? (vs 26)

III. PREPARATION FOR THE SUPPER (11:27-34)

Again Paul returns to warning. It is possible to come to Christ's table in an unworthy manner.

- A. Think of the phrase "in an unworthy manner". What are some ways **which** would be "unworthy" to come to the Lord's table according to your understanding? (What were the Corinthians guilty of?)
- B. To come unworthily to the Lord's table would result in what kind of consequence? (verses 27,29) Explain what that means.
- C. Every time a Christian comes to the Lord's table what should he do? (vs 28) How would you do that? What would you look for?
- D. We are challenged to "discern the body". What are various ways you might interpret that phrase?
- I Cor 10:16-17
 - I Cor 12:12,27; Matt 18:32-35
- E. What type of chastening could take place on those who refuse to "discern the body" and examine themselves? (vs 30)
- F. What is the remedy for dealing with unworthiness? (verses 31-32) (I Jn 1:9) (Matt. 5:23-24)
- G. Paul closes by admonishing the Corinthians to get their lives and their attitudes straightened out. What practical suggestions does he make? (verses 33-34)

CONCLUSION

1. Why is celebrating the Lord's Supper significant in your life?
2. How do you prepare yourself prior to partaking of communion?
3. How could the Lord's Supper take on more significance in your life?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS
16. "Spiritual Gifts: Their Use and Abuse"

Study: I Corinthians 12:1-31

Theme: God enables the body of Christ to do the work of Christ by equipping every believer with a spiritual gift.

Introduction:

According to Webster's Dictionary, etiquette consists in the "rules of conduct, action, or practice binding on members of a profession, especially in their relations with one another". This also applies to Christians as they assemble for worship, there are also rules of etiquette.

At the Corinthian assembly these rules were boldly and habitually disregarded. From chapter 11, we saw how some of the women were disregarding modesty in the way they dressed, and also how their observances of the common meal had disgraced the Lord's Supper. Now as we look at chapters 12-14, we learn that even the use of the gifts of the Spirit, true humility, etiquette and common courtesy were brushed aside. They were more concerned about the attention, recognition and honor they received through the use of gifts than in the service it ministered. Parading their ability to speak in other tongues was more important to them than love relationships. Selfish motives had corrupted a sacred blessing. Having begun in the spirit, they were now living in the flesh.

These chapters also speak to us today as we try to respond to the "charismatic" movement, as we have a tendency to seek unity in conformity, and as we tend to view Christianity individualistically, instead of corporately.

- I. TEST THE GENUINENESS OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:1-3)
- A. What does Paul say in verse 1 to indicate the importance of the subject of spiritual gifts?
 - B. Explain verse 2. How are believers "led astray to the dumb idols"? See Eph. 4:17-18, Titus 3:7.
 - C. What criteria does Paul give in verse 3 to discern that one is using gifts by the spirit of God? Why is this important? (1 John 4:1-3)
 - D. How informed are you of spiritual gifts? Write a definition of spiritual gifts and list your gifts.

II. UNDERSTAND THE SOURCE AND PURPOSE OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:4-7)

- A. In verses 4-6, how are the "gifts" distinct from "service"....from "workings"? What is the point here?
- B. What is meant by "varieties"?
- C. Differentiate between "spiritual gifts" and "the fruit of the spirit". (Gal 5:22-23)....and natural talents/giftedness?
- D. From verse 7, what is the purpose of spiritual gifts in the church? Who has them? How are they received?
- E. How and where are you using your spiritual gift?

III. ACCEPT THE DIVERSITY OF SPIRITUAL GIFTS (12:8-11)

- A. Examine the list of spiritual gifts and give a brief definition of each.
- Wisdom
 - Knowledge
 - Faith
 - Healing
 - Miraculous powers
 - Prophecy
 - Distinguish between spirits
 - Speaking in tongues
 - Interpretation of tongues

- B. Is this list exhaustive? See Romans 12:4-6; Ephesians 4:11 & 12; I Peter 4:9 & 10. What others might be added?
- C. What important truth is brought out in verse 11?
- D. How are these spiritual gifts discovered, developed and used in the church?

IV. RECOGNIZE THE UNITY IN MIDST OF DIVERSITY (12:12-19)

- A. In verses 12-13, what four ways does Paul stress the unity of believers?
- B. According to verse 13 when does the believer receive the "baptism of the spirit"? (John 3:34, Romans 8:9, 2 Peter 1:3-4)
- C. In verses 14-15 how does Paul use the body imagery to make a very important point? What is his point?
- D. What in the church's body life would be equivalent of...
- The eye?
 - The foot?
 - The weaker?
 - The less honorable?
 - The presentable/unpresentable parts?
- E. How is each part to be treated, respectively, and why? (verses 18-21)

How does this speak to jealousy and discontentment? (verses 18-19)

V. WORK TOWARD INTERDEPENDENCY, NOT INDEPENDENCY (12:20-31)

- A. As you read verses 20-21, how does the doctrine of spiritual gifts speak to false humility?... spiritual pride?...envy?
- B. Mutual support and encouragement is necessary to avoid both inferiority feelings and overconfidence. What else does it do according to verse 25?
- C. How does a sore back, hang nail or ingrown toenail affect the whole body? What theological truth can we draw from that experience? (verse 26)
- D. Notice the gifts and provisions the Lord has given His church (28-30). What is the purpose of raising a question when addressing each gift listed? (verse 12:11)

APPLICATION

1. Suppose Rancho Community Church was organized around spiritual gifts: what would it look like?
2. What would it take to develop a church that would function on the basis of a proper understanding and use of spiritual gifts?
3. Which gifts mentioned in verses 28-30 do you have?
4. Why do you think God gave you this gift? How will you use your gift to build up and to unify this body?

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

17. "Something Greater Than Spiritual Gifts"

Study: I Corinthians 13:1-13

Theme: Spiritual gifts must operate in the context of Christ-like love in order to build up the Body of Christ.

Introduction:

The ability to minister in the Body of Christ using spiritual gifts is a necessary privilege. Spiritual gifts are distributed among the members of the Body according to the designs and purposes of God Himself. As a result each Christian will have one or more gifts to edify the Body.

But instead of edifying the church, some Christians, began to use certain gifts - speaking in tongues - as indicators of spiritual maturity. Those who spoke in tongues were considered to be first-class Christians, and those who did not were considered rather second rate. The difficulty did not spring from the possession of the gift of tongues, but from the attitude with which it was being used.

Sandwiched between Chapter 12 and 14 is perhaps one of the most well known passages on love in the Bible. What does this great love chapter have to do with the trouble the Corinthians were having with their spiritual gifts? The key is found in 12:31: "Earnestly desire the more valuable gifts and I will show you a still more excellent way." The problem Paul points out, is not with the gift or gifts, but it's a problem of fruit (Gal. 5:22-23) or lack of spiritual maturity.

In other words, there is a direct relationship between one's sanctification and the "fruit" of the spirit in his life, but there is no such relationship between sanctification and the possession of spiritual "gifts". A person's spiritual maturity cannot be gauged by the gifts he possess, but by the love he expresses.

I. THE PROMINENCE OF LOVE (13:1-3)

- A. Just what was the nature of tongues in the Corinthian Church?....(Compare Acts 2:4,7-11 with I Cor 14:2,4,14.)

- B. Paul speaks of having "love". What are different meanings of the word love (in the Greek) and what kind of love is he speaking of here?

- C. What is the difference between "Gifts of the Spirit" and "Fruit of the Spirit?" (Gal. 5:22-23)?

D. List the great acts a person can accomplish in verses 1-3. What do they **mean**.....now explain how you can do them "without love".

E. In verses 1-3, Paul contrasts love with various gifts. Why is love so much **greater**? What does it mean?

II. THE PRACTICE OF LOVE (13:4-7)

In fifteen short, descriptive phrases, Paul now describes what this love is. Notice that they are described, not by adjectives, but in verbs.

From verses 4-7 find and list the nine qualities of love. Write out a definition of **each**, then find another verse using that word.

Quality

Definition

Cross Reference

A.

B.

C.

D.

E.

F.

G.

H.

I.

III. THE PERMANENCE OF LOVE (13:8-13)

Paul has shown that love begins within the heart, it must be the motive and basis for using our gifts; love must show itself in certain kinds of actions and relationships. Now as he concludes, he seeks to show that love is the greatest because it's permanent.

- A. In contrast to the permanence of love, how and why will (gifts) prophecy, tongues and knowledge come to an end (verse 8)?

- B. How is "love" the completion of spiritual gifts (what is the purpose of gifts - Eph. 4:13-16; Rom 8:29; II Cor. 3:18)?

- C. What is the "perfect" that will come?

- D. Compare love with faith and hope. Why is love greater than the other two?

APPLICATION

1. Give yourself a "love life" evaluation. How would you rate yourself in the nine qualities on a scale of 1-5 with 5 as being high.

GOD SPEAKS TO CALIFORNIANS

18. "About Speaking in Tongues in the Church"

Study: I Corinthians 14:1-33

Theme: The problems surrounding speaking in tongues involve the attitudes of Christians rather than the gift itself.

Introduction:

More and more we have become aware of a charismatic movement in the Christian Church. In many respects its been very positive as Christians are finally waking up to the person and power of the Holy Spirit. We're living in exciting times as many Christians are coming alive in their relationship with the Lord.

But along with the fresh awareness and the gifts of the Holy Spirit, some nagging questions and problems have developed which have created tension between Christians. It centers on the gift of tongues. "Are those who speak in tongues more spiritual than those who are not?" "Are those who speak in tongues "baptized with the Spirit" and others not"? "Upon becoming a Christian, does a person just receive Jesus as Savior and Lord, then later receive the Holy spirit as a second blessing?" "Should every Christian seek the gift of tongues as the primary evidence of the Holy Spirits power"?

The tension resulting from how these questions are answered has caused some Christian to totally reject the gift of tongues - to the point of ostracizing those who have the gift. On the other hand, there are those who speak in tongues who reject or look down on non-tongue speaking believers.

This problem is not new. Even the Apostle Paul had to address the problem in the Corinthian Church. In our study of Chapter 14 we will examine Paul's teachings on "Speaking in tongues in the Church." By in large, we discover, that the problem is not the gift, but the attitude of the believers. "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but lack love, I am a sounding brass and tinkling cymbal."

I. THE POSITION OF THE GIFT OF TONGUES (14:1-19)

1. How does Chapter 14 link with Chapter 12 (see 14:1 and 12:31)? What place do Chapter 13 and Love have on Paul's teaching about spiritual gifts?
2. Notice the command Paul gives in 14:a. What is he saying and why do you suppose he's giving them in that order?
3. Paul now proceeds to compare two gifts which were being exerised in the church at Corinth: Tongues and prophecy. Why do you think he chooses these two gifts?

4. How would you define the gift of:

a. Prophecy

b. Tongues

5. Compare the two gifts (2-5)

Tongues

Prophecy

a. Directed to _____

a. Directed to _____

b. Content: _____

b. Content: _____

c. Edification: _____

c. Edification: _____

6. What is the chief test of the importance of a spiritual gift in the Body? (See vss. 3;4;5;12;19)

7. On the basis of this test, which of the two gifts is most important and why?

8. What is Paul's basic argument in verses 6-12?

9. In reading verses 13-19, what does it have to say to congregations that major on feelings to the exclusion of understanding?

10. Is Paul saying here that tongues are bad? When is it right to exercise the gift of tongues? (See 18-19)

II. THE PURPOSE AND PROCEDURE FOR THE GIFT OF TONGUES (14:20-28)

1. What is the primary purpose of the gift of tongues according to vss. 21-22? (See: Isaiah 28:9-12; Deut. 28:49; Luke 19:44)

2. How would you explain Verse 23 in light of what you just learned from verses 21-22? (2 Cor. 12:12; Rom 15:18-19)

3. What then brings unbelieving men and women to faith in Jesus Christ? (24-25; Rom 10:17)
4. When believers come together for worship and use their gifts, what must be the primary purpose? (Vs. 26)
5. What rules does Paul set forth regarding the use of the gift of tongues during worship? (27-28)

III. THE PROCEDURE FOR PROPHECY (14:29-40)

1. The focus is on orderliness in worship. Guidelines were set down for the use of tongues in worship. Now he sets guidelines for the gift of prophecy. Why would rules be necessary to govern the use of prophecy in worship?
2. In Vss. 29-33a Paul give form to regulations for prophesying. List them.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
3. When prophets spoke in a meeting, the other prophets present were to pass judgement or weigh carefully what was being said. What possible standard might they use (1Jn. 4:1)? What gift might they also have? (1Cor. 12:10)
4. From the instruction given in vss. 33a, what picture might you get of the worship in a Corinthian Church?
5. Why do you suppose these versus concerning women are placed into this context? (34-35)

6. The Corinthians were putting themselves above Scripture, either ignoring it or **interpreting** it in ways that fit their predisposed notions. How does Paul respond to this **attitude**?

7. How should we regard the authority of Scripture? (2 Tim 3:16-17)

8. Paul concludes the chapter with a summary exhortation which is still applicable today. What is the bottom line as to how gifts should be used in the Body of Christ? (Vs. 40)

CONCLUSION

Are those who have not spoken in tongues second rate Christians? Tongues is not a fruit of the spirit, like love; it is a gift which only selected body members have (I Cor 12:11,18). Actually those who do not love can be viewed as being "second rate".

If you have never spoken in tongues - don't worry about it! Just keep using whatever gifts God has given you. If you do have the gift of tongues "praise the Lord" for it, but do not feel proud of yourself, better than others or require it of fellow believers. If you do, then you violate the biblical principle of love which Paul tried so hard to establish in these chapters. You may have the gift of tongues, or faith, or knowledge or prophecy, but remember - if you lack the fruit of love, then you fail to make your gift effective and edifying.