

1 Corinthians

CHAPTER 11:17-16:24

Companion Bible Study



St. John's
Vancouver



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Study 19



1 Corinthians 11:17-34

As Paul continues to address problems in worship practices in the Corinthian church, here he is writing regarding divisive practices when sharing (or not!) the Lord's Supper. Instead of a holy meal taken together as God's people, they cling to Greco-Roman socio-cultural practices that elevate some and humiliate others (vv. 17-22). Paul reminds them of the rich meaning of sharing in the breaking of bread and drinking of the cup, pointing to Christ's death on the cross and return in the future (vv. 23-26). In conclusion (vv. 27-34), he urges them to reflect on their conduct towards each other in sharing this meal so that when they come together, it will not be for judgment.

1 Corinthians 11:17-34

17 But in the following instructions I do not commend you, because when you come together it is not for the better but for the worse. **18** For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you. And I believe it in part, **19** for there must be factions among you in order that those who are genuine among you may be recognized. **20** When you come together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. **21** For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal. One goes hungry, another gets drunk. **22** What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.

23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body, which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. **29** For anyone who eats and drinks without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment on himself. **30** That is why many of you are weak and ill, and some have died. **31** But if we judged ourselves truly, we would not be judged. **32** But when we are judged by the Lord, we are disciplined so that we may not be condemned along with the world.

33 So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for one another—**34** if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home—so that when you come together it will not be for judgment. About the other things I will give directions when I come.

Notes:

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

B Look Closely

This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and contrasts
- Commands and promises
- Connecting words: *for, therefore, but, so that*

C Look Structurally

This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What is the flow of thought?
- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. Summarize the "problem" in the first few verses - what is the issue and what effect is it having in the Corinthian community - practically, socially, spiritually?
2. Read verses 23 through 26 once more. What does the bread represent? The cup? What are they to remember and proclaim in observing the Lord's Supper?

STEP 2: What Does It Mean?

A Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

- Read the passage before and after. How do they impact the meaning of the immediate text?
- Are there themes from the whole book or letter that are in your passage? What do they add to the message of the whole book?
- Are there OT or NT passages to be looked up?
- Big Bible themes?
- What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. How does Paul’s reminder of the meaning of the Last Meal challenge the Corinthians’ practice? How does this reminder inform Paul’s commands in verses 28 and following?
2. When Paul talks about examining themselves, what do the surrounding verses suggest is the focus of their examination? Where do you see this focus including their relationship with each other as well as their individual relationship with God?

C Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. In the Greco-Roman context, how should the Corinthian church be a community of contrast when it comes to sharing the Lord's table? See study notes for context.
2. Judgment is mentioned throughout verses 27–33. Why is their behavior unworthy (v. 27)? How (or in whom) do we find our worthiness to partake?

C

What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

A

This step is for responding in faith. Here are some questions to ask:

- How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live?
- Is there a sin to confess?
- A promise to claim?
- An example to follow?
- A command to obey or knowledge to embrace?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Reflect on your most recent experience sharing in communion. In light of Paul's words to the Corinthians, what does "examining yourself" evoke?
2. Can you think of an example of a shared experience in our church family that might risk separating rather than uniting in Christ? As St. John's Vancouver, how are we challenged to re-examine our lives together in light of this passage - especially the dynamic of the have / have-nots, as Christ's body and members of a new covenant community?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 11:19

Paul is likely making a point with multiple meanings - pointing to the inevitability, it may seem at times, of divisions. But he may be making an ironic joke of sorts — their desire to “divide” to show who is more elite than another in this world serves not to elevate them for commendation in God’s kingdom but for judgment.

1 Corinthians 11:20

Paul here is addressing the practice of sharing in a communal meal. Before developing into the ceremonial and sacramental practice we observe today during the church service, early Christians would gather to break bread and share a cup together in the setting of a home church.

For Greco-Roman context for dining practices, here is an excerpt from Pliny the Younger (61– c. 113), a Roman lawyer, author, and politician:

“The best dishes were set in front of himself [the host] and a select few, and cheap scraps of food before the rest of the company. He had even put the wine into very small flasks, divided into three categories ... one for himself and us, another for his lesser friends (all his friends are graded) and the third for his and our freed persons.”

Anthony C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, New International Greek Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 861.

1 Corinthians 11:23–26

We often read this passage during the institution of the Lord’s table — it is helpful to remember that in its original setting, Paul is reminding divisive Corinthians about being a new covenant people, united in Christ’s body, recalling his self-giving death on the cross. He will develop the “body of Christ” thought more fully in the next chapter.

1 Corinthians 11:27

Out of context, these verses might suggest that a posture of intense introspection is necessary to make sure we are partaking in a worthy manner. In context, Paul expands the view to include our treatment of one another. And, ultimately, it is not just their brother or sister they are guilty of offending, it is the very body and blood of the Lord himself.

1 Corinthians 11:29

Paul may be intentionally playing off of the double-meaning of “the body” — reflecting on the body and blood of Jesus also challenges them to reflect on the needs of their brothers and sisters in their midst.

1 Corinthians 11:30

Paul may be referring to the effects of not sharing in the communal meal on the “have-nots.” That is, the judgment may refer to being held accountable for their brother/sister going hungry when in need and resulting in their weakness, illness, or death.

1 Corinthians 11:33

“...wait for one another..” — more than just meaning, “wait to start eating until everyone has arrived” (manners), Paul may be boldly inferring that the Corinthians are to imagine a new community that *welcomes* each other rather than continuing to observe Corinthian status differences during shared meals where the wealthy have better and more portions than the less well-off. **See note for 11:20 for context.**

Study 20



1 Corinthians 12:1-13

Paul begins a new section from chapter 12:1-14:40 in response to the enquiry by the Corinthian church regarding spiritual gifts. There continues to be an ongoing misunderstanding about what it means to be spiritual, with church members focusing on a few 'spectacular' gifts, especially tongues, as the signature gift to demonstrate supernatural power. Their self-perceived, superior giftedness resulted in a "I have no need of you" (12:21-26) attitude. In contrast, Paul will amplify their unity and new identity as people of the Spirit. "There is to be no spiritual elite in the church. Spiritual gifts are not indicators of one's spiritual status." (Garland, pg. 560)

1 Corinthians 12:1-13

1 Now concerning spiritual gifts, brothers, I do not want you to be uninformed. 2 You know that when you were pagans you were led astray to mute idols, however you were led. 3 Therefore I want you to understand that no one speaking in the Spirit of God ever says "Jesus is accursed!" and no one can say "Jesus is Lord" except in the Holy Spirit.

4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of service, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who empowers them all in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. 8 For to one is given through the Spirit the utterance of wisdom, and to another the utterance of knowledge according to the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healing by the one Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another the ability to distinguish between spirits, to another various kinds of tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. 11 All these are empowered by one and the same Spirit, who apportions to each one individually as he wills.

12 For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. 13 For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body—Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

Notes:

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

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This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

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- Commands and promises
- Connecting words:
for, therefore, but, so that

C Look Structurally

This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What is the flow of thought?
- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. How do verses 1-3 challenge the idea that some Christians in Corinth are more spiritual than others? Why would Paul bring this up at the start of this section?
2. Why does Paul reiterate the 'same Spirit', 'same Lord,' 'same God,' 'who empowers?'

STEP 2: What Does It Mean?

A

Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

- Read the passage before and after. How do they impact the meaning of the immediate text?
- Are there themes from the whole book or letter that are in your passage? What do they add to the message of the whole book?
- Are there OT or NT passages to be looked up?
- Big Bible themes?
- What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. What do these verses teach us about the role of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer? (especially v. 3,4,7,11)
2. In addition to 1 Corinthians 12, Paul mentions different types of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6-8 and in Ephesians 4:11. Why does Paul seem to focus on more 'supernatural' type gifts here? Why might tongues be mentioned last in the list? (see also v. 28)

C

Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Who is the focus of unity in this section? Why is this significant for the Corinthian church?
2. How does v.13 rebuke the proud Corinthian believer while at the same time encourage the insecure believer?

C

What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

A

This step is for responding in faith. Here are some questions to ask:

- How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live?
- Is there a sin to confess?
- A promise to claim?
- An example to follow?
- A command to obey or knowledge to embrace?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Have you been tempted to think of other Christians as more 'spiritual' than yourself? If so, why? How does this passage challenge your thinking?
2. Some churches have been described as more 'spirit-led' or 'spirit-filled' than others. What causes people to make these kinds of judgments? Why is that dangerous?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 12:1-3

Paul contrasts the Corinthians' previous pagan religious life, in which they were carried away to idols incapable of speech, with their new life in Christ. Everyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Lord is directed by the Holy Spirit. All believers share this as the basis of their new life. This reality will deny any claim that some people are more spiritual than others based on spiritual gifts, especially those perceived to be miraculous in nature.

1 Corinthians 12:4-6

Garland notes that spiritual gifts are not a badge of spirituality but a mark of grace. Instead, everyday acts are now rendered on par with the so-called 'supernatural gifts.' Unity is stressed over individualism.

1 Corinthians 12:7

The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the whole body of believers. Each believer has one, but they are not necessarily the same.

1 Corinthians 12:8-10

The list of gifts outlined by Paul address the specific situation in Corinth, and most are related to speech. Garland suggests that the gifts come in the order of importance as regards the benefit of the body. Ministry of the word benefits the church most and strengthens its mission to the world (Garland, pg. 581).

Wisdom: A catchphrase for the Corinthian community, Paul contrasts status seeking human wisdom with divine wisdom. This gift relates primarily to the revelation of God in the cross — to have "God-given insight into the mysterious purposes and workings of God in and through Jesus Christ." (Thielton, Morris, & Garland)

Knowledge: To have insight to what God is doing in the world (2:12-16) as well as a habit of mind to reflect on temporal things. Not a gift given primarily in the moment ('flashes of insight' or coded messages for individuals).

Faith: Not 'saving faith' which is given to all believers. Rather a mysterious surge of confidence in the almighty, sovereign God. It gives the Christian an 'otherly' certainty that God is going to act.

Gifts of Healing: The plural reference notes diversity within the gift. "It does not refer to the power to heal all diseases but to instances of actual healing... At various times, individuals become agents of God's healing power in another's life." (Garland, 582)

Working of miracles: The plural nature of this gift overlaps with healing but not all miracles are healings. The literal translation from Greek is 'actively effective deeds of power.' In other words, "some may receive a particular gift from the Spirit to advance the gospel against oppressive forces for the benefit of all... the effective deeds operate with power to overcome spiritual or earthly forces of opposition." (Thielton, pg. 955-56)

Prophecy: "... combines pastoral insight into the needs of persons, communities, and situations with the ability to address these with a God-given utterance or longer discourse (whether unprompted or prepared), leading to challenge or comfort, judgment, or consolation, but ultimately building up the addressee." (Thielton, pg. 964-65; Garland, pp. 582-83).

Even if the speaker believes that their 'word' has come from the Holy Spirit, people are fallible and all claims to prophecy must be weighed. (14:29)

Study Notes

Distinguishing between spirits: As the discerning of spirits is closely related to prophecy, Garland focuses his definition as a gift that enables one to ascertain whether someone is preaching 'another gospel' or 'another Christ.' Considering the Corinthian enthusiasm for manifestations of the Spirit (14:12), discernment is necessary. Thiselton includes the capacity to **a)** discern genuine activity of the Spirit from human attempts to replicate it and **b)** pastoral discernment of the ways in which the Spirit of God is working. These two approaches are not mutually exclusive.

Various kinds of tongues: Unfortunately, speaking in tongues in Corinth represented a high status indicator. This, however, has already been contradicted in this section. Paul considers tongues to be a natural part of Christian experience, though not for everyone. (12:30)

Tongues is a language inspired by the Spirit with utterances addressed to God and not people. Although not a language of normal human discourse (different to languages in Acts 2:4–8), it is not incoherent babbling (13:1). Ultimately it is for the benefit of the individual and not the corporate body unless interpreted. Finally, as Garland helpfully notes, there is no indication that tongues stem from an ecstatic state or trance. Rather, "It is an expression of profound emotion from the deepest recesses of the soul that can be vocalized in prayer, (14:2,14,28), singing, praise, and perhaps the 'sighs too deep for words.' (Romans 8:26)

What tongues is not: a necessary indication of a subsequent 'filling' of the Holy Spirit after conversion.

Interpretation of tongues: Is a necessary companion to tongues in order for it to benefit the body of believers. It isn't a word for word translation but more likely a translation of the meaning of what was uttered.

1 Corinthians 12:11

Virtually every Greek word and phrase is used to restate the principle in verses 4–7. The Spirit is sovereign in the distribution of these gifts and there can be no boasting or sense of inferiority.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13

"Every Christian has been made a part of one body and immersed in (or by) the Spirit... there is unity in plurality, not not uniformity — individual integrity remains." (Garland, 590–91)

Study 21



1 Corinthians 12:14–31

In the previous passage, Paul began using the metaphor of a physical body to explain the oneness of all believers. They are all baptized into Christ and all drinking the one Spirit. He now expands the comparison by showing how that one body is made up of a variety of individual parts, all of which are indispensable.

1 Corinthians 12:14-31

14 For the body does not consist of one member but of many. **15** If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **16** And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. **17** If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where would be the sense of smell? **18** But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. **19** If all were a single member, where would the body be? **20** As it is, there are many parts, yet one body.

21 The eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you," nor again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." **22** On the contrary, the parts of the body that seem to be weaker are indispensable, **23** and on those parts of the body that we think less honorable we bestow the greater honor, and our unpresentable parts are treated with greater modesty, **24** which our more presentable parts do not require. But God has so composed the body, giving greater honor to the part that lacked it, **25** that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. **26** If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together.

27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. **28** And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. **29** Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? **30** Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? **31** But earnestly desire the higher gifts.

And I will show you a still more excellent way.

Notes:

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

B Look Closely

This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and contrasts
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- Connecting words:
for, therefore, but, so that

C Look Structurally

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- What is the flow of thought?
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D A Few Questions to Consider

1. How does thinking about the physical body help us understand our relationship to one another within the Body of Christ?
2. Which parts of the body are saying "I don't belong"? Which parts are saying "I don't need you"? Who within the Corinthian church would be likely to have the first attitude and who the second? What reassurance does he give to the first group? What corrective does he give to the second group?

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Is it possible to be a Christian without being part of the church? Why? Why not?
2. What parts naturally receive honor within the church? How can we relate within the church to properly honor one another?
3. Why do you think Paul lists apostles first, prophets second, and teachers third? What do they have in common? Is there a reason he lists “various kinds of tongues” last?

C

What’s the Main Idea?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 12:23

The “unpresentable” parts are probably the reproductive parts and/or breasts which, though covered in modesty, have the essential function of giving and sustaining life.

1 Corinthians 12:28

“Apostles” were those who had seen the Lord after his resurrection (1 Corinthians 9:1) and were specifically called, commissioned and equipped by him to preach the gospel to the world. Their ministry was confirmed by the Spirit through signs, wonders and miracles (2 Corinthians 12:12). The Greek word means “one who is sent.”

Apparently prophets ministered the Word of God in a variety of ways including discernment, revelation, teaching and preaching. 1 Corinthians 14:3 says they “speak to the people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation.”

1 Corinthians 12:31

The “higher gifts” are those sought with love as the motive (chapter 13) and that “build up the body of Christ” (14:5).

Study 22



1 Corinthians 13:1-13

Paul has been using the metaphor of the human body to help the Corinthians understand that they are one in Christ and that they all need each other. Now his argument takes a turn as he shows them a “more excellent way.” The missing ingredient in all their conflicts and divisions, the one thing that will truly bind them together as one in the body of Christ, is love.

1 Corinthians 13:1-13

1 If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. **2** And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing. **3** If I give away all I have, and if I deliver up my body to be burned, but have not love, I gain nothing.

4 Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant **5** or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; **6** it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. **7** Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

8 Love never ends. As for prophecies, they will pass away; as for tongues, they will cease; as for knowledge, it will pass away.

9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part, **10** but when the perfect comes, the partial will pass away. **11** When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I gave up childish ways. **12** For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known.

13 So now faith, hope, and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love.

Notes:

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D A Few Questions to Consider

1. What might motivate these impressive, powerful actions listed in vv. 1-3? Why do you think they are "nothing" without love?
2. What things does love do according to vv. 4-8 and what does it not do?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 13:1

Paul is describing a piece of brass that amplifies sound and a cymbal that crashes and clangs. Both make a lot of noise but neither is capable of producing a melodious musical sound.

1 Corinthians 13:10, 12

“When the perfect comes” and “then we will see face to face” refer to the Day of the Lord, when Christ returns and we are resurrected and transformed. Read Romans 8:18-27 for more on our present struggles and the hope of that Day.

Study 23



1 Corinthians 14:1-25

Paul began to address spiritual gifts in chapter 12 and this continues with a specific focus on tongues in chapter 14 and where he contrasts this gift with the gift of prophecy. He is explicit in re-stating the purpose of spiritual gifts — to build up the body of Christ (12:7; 14:12), but there is more. The 'love chapter' sits right in the middle of these two passages, providing the Corinthians continued context which should be the motivating factor in their behavior.

1 Corinthians 14:1-25

1 Pursue love, and earnestly desire the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy. **2** For one who speaks in a tongue speaks not to men but to God; for no one understands him, but he utters mysteries in the Spirit. **3** On the other hand, the one who prophesies speaks to people for their upbuilding and encouragement and consolation. **4** The one who speaks in a tongue builds up himself, but the one who prophesies builds up the church. **5** Now I want you all to speak in tongues, but even more to prophesy. The one who prophesies is greater than the one who speaks in tongues, unless someone interprets, so that the church may be built up.

6 Now, brothers, if I come to you speaking in tongues, how will I benefit you unless I bring you some revelation or knowledge or prophecy or teaching? **7** If even lifeless instruments, such as the flute or the harp, do not give distinct notes, how will anyone know what is played? **8** And if the bugle gives an indistinct sound, who will get ready for battle? **9** So with yourselves, if with your tongue you utter speech that is not intelligible, how will anyone know what is said? For you will be speaking into the air. **10** There are doubtless many different languages in the world, and none is without meaning, **11** but if I do not know the meaning of the language, I will be a foreigner to the speaker and the speaker a foreigner to me. **12** So with yourselves, since you are eager for manifestations of the Spirit, strive to excel in building up the church.

13 Therefore, one who speaks in a tongue should pray that he may interpret. **14** For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays but my mind is unfruitful. **15** What am I to do? I will pray with my spirit, but I will pray with my mind also; I will sing praise with my spirit, but I will sing with my mind also. **16** Otherwise, if you give thanks with your spirit, how can anyone in the position of an outsider say "Amen" to your thanksgiving when he does not know what you are saying? **17** For you may be giving thanks well enough, but the other person is not being built up. **18** I thank God that I speak in tongues more than all of you. **19** Nevertheless, in church I would rather speak five words with my mind in order to instruct others, than ten thousand words in a tongue.

20 Brothers, do not be children in your thinking. Be infants in evil, but in your thinking be mature. **21** In the Law it is written, "By people of strange tongues and by the lips of foreigners will I speak to this people, and even then they will not listen to me, says the Lord." **22** Thus tongues are a sign not for believers but for unbelievers, while prophecy is a sign not for unbelievers but for believers. **23** If, therefore, the whole church comes together and all speak in tongues, and outsiders or unbelievers enter, will they not say that you are out of your minds? **24** But if all prophesy, and an unbeliever or outsider enters, he is convicted by all, he is called to account by all, **25** the secrets of his heart are disclosed, and so, falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you.

Notes:

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D A Few Questions to Consider

1. The opening verse begins with two commands. What is the relevance of putting these two commands together?
2. What are the contrasts Paul is pressing in this section?

STEP 2: What Does It Mean?

A Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

- Read the passage before and after. How do they impact the meaning of the immediate text?
- Are there themes from the whole book or letter that are in your passage? What do they add to the message of the whole book?
- Are there OT or NT passages to be looked up?
- Big Bible themes?
- What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. Why does Paul spend so much time presenting the gift of prophecy as greater than the gift of tongues? What point is he trying to make?
2. How does the principle point in this passage apply to the issues raised by Paul in previous chapters? (v.12)

C Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. What immediate goal should spiritual gifts serve when the Christian church gathers together in worship? How does the gift of prophecy benefit the unbeliever?
2. How does Paul seek to challenge the Corinthian church to re-focus their inward looking gaze outward to the church, and to outsiders?

C

What's the Main Idea?

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

A

This step is for responding in faith. Here are some questions to ask:

- How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live?
- Is there a sin to confess?
- A promise to claim?
- An example to follow?
- A command to obey or knowledge to embrace?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Are you aware of the gifts/skills/abilities that God has given to you? How are you using these gifts to serve the body of Christ?
2. How can you encourage fellow believers, who feel they have nothing to offer, to serve the body of Christ?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 14:21-22

These verses look as though Paul contradicts himself with what follows. However, he is actually paraphrasing Isaiah 28:11-12 and adapting it to the Corinthian context. To summarize, think of Paul saying: Be mature and think about what is written in the law. In Isaiah God spoke to Israel with foreign words as a sign of judgment on them as unbelievers. When you speak in uninterpreted tongues in church you're not just making your brothers and sisters feel like foreigners (something he addresses in the passage), you're speaking a sign of judgment on them as if they were unbelievers. Don't create that situation. Prophecy therefore, is a sign that God is amongst the people.

Study 24

1 Corinthians 14:26–40

“If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal.”

1 Corinthians 13:1

The above verse is the backdrop for where we find ourselves in Chapter 14:26–40. Boasting in their own showy spirituality has been a persistent issue for the Corinthians. Now, Paul addresses their clanging speech practices and confronts them with the God of peace. After the previous verses discuss the primacy of prophecy over tongues, it is orderly worship for the sake of building each other up that is the main concern.

As in chapter 11:2–16, care is required in how we understand these words on women speaking in church as context is key. Our goal is to get as “close” to the text as possible — in its original setting — to discover what is timeless.

1 Corinthians 14:26-40

26 What then, brothers? When you come together, each one has a hymn, a lesson, a revelation, a tongue, or an interpretation. Let all things be done for building up. **27** If any speak in a tongue, let there be only two or at most three, and each in turn, and let someone interpret. **28** But if there is no one to interpret, let each of them keep silent in church and speak to himself and to God. **29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others weigh what is said. **30** If a revelation is made to another sitting there, let the first be silent. **31** For you can all prophesy one by one, so that all may learn and all be encouraged, **32** and the spirits of prophets are subject to prophets. **33** For God is not a God of confusion but of peace.

As in all the churches of the saints, **34** the women should keep silent in the churches. For they are not permitted to speak, but should be in submission, as the Law also says. **35** If there is anything they desire to learn, let them ask their husbands at home. For it is shameful for a woman to speak in church.

36 Or was it from you that the word of God came? Or are you the only ones it has reached? **37** If anyone thinks that he is a prophet, or spiritual, he should acknowledge that the things I am writing to you are a command of the Lord. **38** If anyone does not recognize this, he is not recognized. **39** So, my brothers, earnestly desire to prophesy, and do not forbid speaking in tongues. **40** But all things should be done decently and in order.

Notes:

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

B Look Closely

This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and contrasts
- Commands and promises
- Connecting words:
for, therefore, but, so that

C Look Structurally

This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What is the flow of thought?
- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. What are the two kinds of speech Paul is addressing here? What is the issue with how each is being practiced?
2. How does the beginning of this section (v. 26) and the end (v. 40) speak to the emphasis of this passage?

STEP 2: What Does It Mean?

A Look at the Context

This step is for linking your observations together to get at the purpose(s) of the passage.

- Read the passage before and after. How do they impact the meaning of the immediate text?
- Are there themes from the whole book or letter that are in your passage? What do they add to the message of the whole book?
- Are there OT or NT passages to be looked up?
- Big Bible themes?
- What do you think the original intention of the passage was?

B A Few Questions to Consider

1. Why should a church service be conducted “decently and in order?”
2. Paul expects that women will pray, prophesy and learn in church (11:5; 14:31), and the previous verses indicate that all will contribute to speaking in the service. Given this context and the setting of verses 33–35, summarize the main concern.

C Stop to Pray

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Reflecting on this chapter in light of chapter 13, how would love for one another change their speech practices in church?
2. What are some principles from this passage to discern when is a “time to speak” and when is a “time to keep silence”?

C **What’s the Main Idea?**

STEP 4: What Does It Mean for Me?

A

This step is for responding in faith. Here are some questions to ask:

- How are these revealed truths going to change the way I live?
- Is there a sin to confess?
- A promise to claim?
- An example to follow?
- A command to obey or knowledge to embrace?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. Sometimes a choice is presented between an “orderly” service and a spontaneous “spirit-led” service. Why is this a false choice in light of this passage? What is a danger in over-correcting one direction or the other?
2. How does this section convict you of how you interact with fellow believers in Bible study? Are you speaking (or not) in a way that edifies and encourages?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 14:26

This isn't a list of the suggested order of service but the chaotic nature of what was happening in Corinth - individuals seeking to promote one gift over another, and themselves in particular.

1 Corinthians 14:27-29

"Speaking in tongues" & "prophecy" — see study notes in chapter 12 regarding spiritual gifts.

1 Corinthians 14:32

"...subject to the prophets" — Paul is saying, in effect, "you can control your gift" so that worship can be conducted in order for the benefit of others.

1 Corinthians 14:33a

A helpful companion passage is James 3:16-18.

1 Corinthians 14:33b-35

This is a challenging passage and, like 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, a "close" reading in its original setting is essential. It is admitted that there is not space in this study to adequately address all that should be said regarding women in ministry.

First, see how in 1 Corinthians 11:5, women are praying and prophesying in church. Secondly, in the preceding verses in this section, note that in verse 27 — "If any speak in a tongue..." and verse 31 — "...so that all may learn and all be encouraged" seem inclusive of men and women. Hence, the issue appears to be disruptive and shameful speech — an issue of the *manner* and the *content* of the speech.

Now, considering the ones speaking, culturally, as in 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the conduct of women in church is communicating more than we can fully appreciate at our distance. Nonetheless, we can infer that their speech practices within their cultural setting at their gatherings is shameful and not done with decency and order. Further, in this larger section, the other injunctions to silence (v. 28 & v. 30) are within the "decency and in order" impulse. So this is where the "weight" of Paul's words for women is pulling: speaking and listening in ways that contribute to everyone's mutual edification.

In the second part of v. 34, it is not clear what Paul is referring to when he says, "...as the Law also says" as there is not a clear reference to a specific OT passage. However, Jesus summarizes the Law and the Prophets "...you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). Therefore, at root is a lack of love of God and lack of loving neighbor rightly, which connects Paul's emphasis in Chapter 13 on love.

Verse 35 might suggest that the disorder is present among married women, otherwise Paul's words to "ask their husbands" exclude those who are unmarried or widowed. This might further imply that the issue is domestic — some wives of the prophets (see verse 31) — and spilling over into public worship. Another scenario is that Paul's deeper concern is that of appropriate learning for those teaching (v. 35). Given that women did not have access to educational opportunities, some have suggested that Paul here is moving in a positive direction by advocating that women *do* receive instruction. But there is not scholarly consensus on these possibilities.

Given these considerations, the timeless truth and central issue of the whole passage frames these words regarding women: they serve a God of peace, not confusion, and should likewise cooperate within a public worship setting so that all may learn and be encouraged, loving God and loving neighbor.

1 Corinthians 14:37–38

Paul once again addresses the issue of Corinthian self-confidence. The truly spiritual will acknowledge Paul's authority ultimately comes from the Lord: "Paul, called by the will of God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus" (1 Corinthians 1:1). They continue to seek their own "recognition" and Paul challenges them directly on this.

Study 25



1 Corinthians 15:1-11

In this passage Paul reminds the Corinthians of the undisputed things of first importance: that Christ died for our sins, that he was buried, and that he was raised, all according to Scripture and attested to by eye-witnesses. This solemn reminder is a prelude to the next issue he is going to address - those who say there is no resurrection.

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

B Look Closely

This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and contrasts
- Commands and promises
- Connecting words:
for, therefore, but, so that

C Look Structurally

This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What is the flow of thought?
- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. Paul uses the word "you" nine times in vv.1-2 and one more time in v.11. What does each "you" say about the Corinthians?
2. What three historical facts does Paul emphasize? Why are they of "first importance"?
3. How does Paul establish that they are attested historical facts?

STEP 3: What Does It Reveal?

A

This step is for considering the timeless truths of the passage in light of the gospel. Here are some questions you could ask:

- What does it reveal about God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit?
- What aspects of the gospel are we being reminded of?
- What is revealed about our sin? The world?

B

A Few Questions to Consider

1. What has been accomplished for us in Christ's death, burial and resurrection?
2. What does the fact that these things are "according to Scripture" tell us? How serious is it for a church to move away from these truths?

C

What's the Main Idea?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 15:1

As he has several times in this letter, Paul is emphasizing the priority of preaching in the spread of the gospel. Preaching is the primary means God uses to proclaim his message to the world with power. (1 Corinthians 1:17, 21, 23; 2:4, Romans 10:14).

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

The fact that the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus were “according to Scripture” confirms that they were predicted in God’s Word and were a fulfillment of God’s plan and purposes. Jesus explains this in Luke 24:26, 27.

1 Corinthians 15:5

'Cephas' is Aramaic for Peter.

1 Corinthians 15:6

We have no other account of this appearance to 500 brethren but clearly some of them were still available to confirm it. When Paul refers to those who have died as “fallen asleep” he alludes to their future awakening to new life on the Day of the Lord.

1 Corinthians 15:7

This is most likely a reference to James the brother of Jesus, who was not a believer but became one (Galatians 1:19), perhaps through this appearance.

Study 26



1 Corinthians 15:12-34

Paul has just reminded the Corinthians of the core message of the gospel and its first importance. He now outlines very specifically, the real and practical outcomes of what it would mean if Christ had not been raised from the dead; our faith would be futile and we would still be in our sins.

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

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- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. What are the consequences of *not believing* in the resurrection?
2. What are the consequences of *believing* in the resurrection?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 15:20

'Firstfruits' is a reference to the first sheaf of the harvest brought into the temple and offered to God. It does not imply that Jesus was the first to be raised from the dead (he had raised others from the dead). Rather, his resurrection is the first of its kind; a pledge and proof of the resurrection of his people.

1 Corinthians 15:21-22

Just as Adam's sin had a universal effect on all people after him, so Christ's resurrection will bring life to all who come to him. (Romans 5:12-21)

1 Corinthians 15:23-24

The resurrection of Christ begins a chain of events which will culminate in the second coming of Christ. Christ has been raised first and this will be followed by those who belong to him, then comes his return. Garland notes the hope for Christians in these verses, "It means also that the resurrection of Christians is not merely an arbitrary, isolated occurrence but is grounded in the cosmic victory of Christ over the power of death itself." pg. 708

1 Corinthians 15:27-28

God the Father has given complete sovereignty to Christ over all creation. Jesus has accomplished what he came to do and will return to defeat once for all, the enemies of God. As the Son, he will then render or offer the kingdom back to God who is the source of all "...so that we may cleave completely to God." (Calvin 1960:327)

"God may be all in all" refers to the complete supremacy and unchallenged reign of God alone.

1 Corinthians 15:29

Although a difficult verse to interpret, there is agreement that it is not a reference to vicarious baptism. It may either mean that someone is baptized with a view toward being reunited with their loved one in heaven or simply put, what is the point of being baptized (which signifies that I am dead to sin and alive in Christ), if there is no resurrection?

1 Corinthians 15:30-32

It would be pointless for Paul to risk his life for the sake of the church if the resurrection were not a reality. Paul is writing from Ephesus and the reference to fighting with beasts is metaphorical.

1 Corinthians 15:34

Paul warns the Corinthians to 'snap out of it' and to not be deceived. Their ignorance of God will allow them to be misled.

Study 27



1 Corinthians 15:35-49

"How are the dead raised? With what kind of body do they come?" These are the two questions Paul addresses in this passage as he continues to correct the confused Corinthians' views on the resurrection. To answer the first question, Paul draws an analogy from a seed. For the second, he contrasts the "natural" with the "spiritual." With both, he challenges their imaginations and points to the glorious transformation to come - "we shall also bear the image of the man of heaven."

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

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- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. How does comparing the body to a seed in verses 36-37 address the Corinthians' question in verse 35?
2. What contrasts does Paul make throughout the passage?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 15:36

"You foolish person!" This may seem harsh but look elsewhere in scripture where it discusses "the fool": "A fool says in their heart, 'There is no God' (Psalm 14:1). The root of this foolishness is as one commentary puts it: "this fool fails to take into account the creative power of God" (Garland, 727).

1 Corinthians 15:36–37

"Sow...kernel...dies" Paul is not making a scientific comment as we would understand it (i.e. a seed doesn't "die" when planted) but an analogy based on the transformation a seed undergoes.

1 Corinthians 15:38

It's easy to think that Paul has a negative view of the body. However, the emphasis here is on the transformation to come rather than a disparagement of our current state. Paul was well aware of "gnostic" heresies where the spiritual was elevated to such an extent that two serious distortions were occurring: 1) purging the "evil" of their bodies through extreme ascetic practices to emphasize the spiritual; or 2) indulging in whatever they wanted with their bodies, thinking there would be no effect on their spirit. Paul promotes continuity and connection but emphasizes transformation to such an extent that what came before will pale in comparison.

1 Corinthians 15:43

"dishonor / glory" — See note for 15:38 above.

1 Corinthians 15:44

"Natural / spiritual" The word for "natural" here is the same Greek root behind the word "psyche." Spiritual does not mean "disembodied." Here, Paul is pointing more to "origins" — he might have put it this way — "it began as a body animated by breathing; it will become a body animated by the spirit."

1 Corinthians 15:47, 49

Adam — "man of dust" — again, Paul is contrasting where something started and what it will become. As Adam was created from dust (Gen. 2:7), to dust he would return (Gen. 3:19). However, in the transformation to come, those "of heaven" will be imperishable.

Study 28



1 Corinthians 15:50-58

These verses close out Paul's correction to the confusion the Corinthians had about the resurrection (see 1 Corinthians 15:12). The importance of right belief on this topic is paramount as nothing less than the foundation of their faith is at stake (1 Corinthians 15:17). In verses 50-58, Paul guides the Corinthians through the transformation to take place, the victory of Christ over death, and finally how to live life now in light of their future hope.

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

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C Look Structurally

This step is for looking at the whole passage and how the ideas are grouped together. Ask:

- What is the flow of thought?
- Give each group a heading
- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. What changes do we see Paul pointing to in the first few verses?
2. What is the "victory" Paul is talking about?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 15:50

"...flesh and blood...cannot inherit the Kingdom..." In response to their concerns over exactly what state their bodies might be in, Paul switches to a metaphysical argument: their bodies, in their earthly forms, will not be what enters into the new reality. But, like a seed, what is to come will be a transformation. Similarly, "...corruptible..." refers to their present bodily form, which will not last.

1 Corinthians 15:51

"...mystery" refers to what can only be revealed by God, not arrived at by human deduction. "Sleep" refers to death. While there was a belief that Christ's return could be imminent (Mark 13:32), Paul's language points more to the transformation to take place than the timeline. In effect, whether already dead or still living when Christ returns, *all* will be changed.

1 Corinthians 15:52

"...trumpet..." refers to the imagery of the announcement of Christ's arrival and the summons of his people. The book of Revelation uses this imagery widely.

1 Corinthians 15:53–54a

"...put on..." Refer back to verse 37 and Paul's imagery of a "seed." While there will be continuity, there will be a transformation, ultimately into the mystery of bearing "the image of the man of heaven" (Jesus, v. 49).

1 Corinthians 15:54b

Paul is paraphrasing from Isaiah 25:8.

1 Corinthians 15:55

Paul is paraphrasing from Hosea 13:14.

1 Corinthians 15:56

"...the power of sin is the law." Here, Paul is pointing to a weighty theological reality that he expands more fully elsewhere (e.g., Rom. 4:15; 5:13; 7:5, 8, 13). The law is unable to ultimately save from sin and instead serves to reveal the power of sin. However, "Through Christ alone come the gracious forgiveness of sins, redemption from the law, and the resurrection from the dead" (Garland, 746). It is the last point — resurrection from the dead — that is Paul's pressing concern for the Corinthians.

Study 29



1 Corinthians 16:1–24

This final chapter gives us a window into Paul's life as he travels and spreads the gospel. We meet his gospel companions and fellow workers, and see the connections between the churches he and others have planted and watered. His final commands and closing pronouncements are given with the authority of an apostle and with great love.

1 Corinthians 16:1-24

1 Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. **2** On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come. **3** And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. **4** If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me.

5 I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, **6** and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. **7** For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. **8** But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, **9** for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries.

10 When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. **11** So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers.

12 Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity.

13 Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong. **14** Let all that you do be done in love.

15 Now I urge you, brothers—you know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and that they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints— **16** be subject to such as these, and to every fellow worker and laborer. **17** I rejoice at the coming of Stephanas and Fortunatus and Achaicus, because they have made up for your absence, **18** for they refreshed my spirit as well as yours. Give recognition to such people.

19 The churches of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Prisca, together with the church in their house, send you hearty greetings in the Lord. **20** All the brothers send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

21 I, Paul, write this greeting with my own hand. **22** If anyone has no love for the Lord, let him be accursed. Our Lord, come! **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. **24** My love be with you all in Christ Jesus. Amen.

Notes:

STEP 1: What Does It Say?

A Pray

B Look Closely

This step is for marking the text and looking at the words and phrases for any:

- Repetitions and contrasts
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- Connecting words:
for, therefore, but, so that

C Look Structurally

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- What does this tell you about the authors' emphasis?

D A Few Questions to Consider

1. Where are the places Paul has gone and hopes to go? What determines when and where he goes?
2. Who does Paul mention in these closing remarks? What information does he pass on, what praise and commendations does he give? Why might he be concerned for how the Corinthians treat Timothy?

Study Notes

1 Corinthians 16:3

There were many poor in the church in Jerusalem and the other apostles had asked Paul to remember the poor which he said he was eager to do. (Galatians 2:9-10)

1 Corinthians 16:13

“Act like men” is an exhortation for all believers, not just men. The expression is used in the Old Testament and carries the idea of courage and strength, even in the face of danger.

1 Corinthians 16:17

Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus were from Corinth. Paul longed to be with the Corinthians and the coming of these three helped to fill the gap and refresh his spirit.

1 Corinthians 16:19

Aquila and Prisca were husband and wife, fellow tent-makers with Paul, who in the past had settled in Corinth. A church was meeting in their home and they were deeply engaged in the work of the gospel.

1 Corinthians 16:20

The “holy kiss” is mentioned frequently in Paul’s letters as well as in 1 Peter. It was a common practice that confirmed the bond of love between believers.

1 Corinthians 16:21

Paul had no doubt dictated the letter but was now signing it “in his own hand.”

Be imitators
of me, as I
am of Christ.

1 Corinthians 11:1



