**KINGDOM PROBLEMS**

*Forty Daily Devotionals*

*From 1 Corinthians*

*(Based on the NKJV)*

*Seminole Baptist Church*

*3330 Mission Road*

*Tallahassee, FL 32303*

***Daily Reading Schedule***

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| **Day** | **Scripture Reading** | **Date** |  | **Day** | **Scripture Reading** | **Date** |
| 1 | 1 Corinthians 1:1-13 |  10/30 |  | 21 | 1 Corinthians 10:21-30 | 11/19 |
| 2 | 1 Corinthians 1:14-25 | 10/31 |  | 22 | 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:7 | 11/20 |
| 3 | 1 Corinthians 2:1-10 | 11/1 |  | 23 | 1 Corinthians 11:8-16 | 11/21 |
| 4 | 1 Corinthians 2:11-3:4 | 11/2 |  | 24 | 1 Corinthians 11:17-27 | 11/22 |
| 5 | 1 Corinthians 3:5-17 | 11/3 |  | 25 | 1 Corinthians 11:28-12:3 | 11/23 |
| 6 | 1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7 | 11/4 |  | 26 | 1 Corinthians 12:4-13 | 11/24 |
| 7 | 1 Corinthians 4:8-21 | 11/5 |  | 27 | 1 Corinthians 12:14-23 | 11/25 |
| 8 | 1 Corinthians 5:1-13 | 11/6 |  | 28 | 1 Corinthians 12:24-31 | 11/26 |
| 9 | 1 Corinthians 6:1-10 | 11/7 |  | 29 | 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 | 11/27 |
| 10 | 1 Corinthians 6:11-20 | 11/8 |  | 30 | 1 Corinthians 14:1-9 | 11/28 |
| 11 | 1 Corinthians 7:1-9 | 11/9 |  | 31 | 1 Corinthians 14:10-20 | 11/29 |
| 12 | 1 Corinthians 7:10-20 | 11/10 |  | 32 | 1 Corinthians 14:21-30 | 11/30 |
| 13 | 1 Corinthians 7:21-31 | 11/11 |  | 33 | 1 Corinthians 14:31-40 | 12/1 |
| 14 | 1 Corinthians 7:32-40 | 11/12 |  | 34 | 1 Corinthians 15:1-15 | 12/2 |
| 15 | 1 Corinthians 8:1-13 | 11/13 |  | 35 | 1 Corinthians 15:16-30 | 12/3 |
| 16 | 1 Corinthians 9:1-8 | 11/14 |  | 36 | 1 Corinthians 15:31-40 | 12/4 |
| 17 | 1 Corinthians 9:9-18 | 11/15 |  | 37 | 1 Corinthians 15:41-50 | 12/5 |
| 18 | 1 Corinthians 9:19-27 | 11/16 |  | 38 | 1 Corinthians 15:51-58 | 12/6 |
| 19 | 1 Corinthians 10:1-10 | 11/17 |  | 39 | 1 Corinthians 16:1-11 | 12/7 |
| 20 | 1 Corinthians 10:11-20 | 11/18 |  | 40 | 1 Corinthians 16:12-24 | 12/8 |

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:1-13** | **DAY 1** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 1:11** |

***“Division”***

While the opening verses of this letter contain a salutation and then an expression of appreciation, one of the main issues within the church at Corinth, *division*, is dealt with immediately. Paul appealed to the “brothers” (meaning Christians) that they come to a sense of unity in what they believe and do. He appealed to them in the name of Jesus Christ. It is clear that Paul is urging these believers to surrender to the authority of Christ in church matters, because we see the name of Christ 12 times in just the first 13 verses of this book! As a matter of fact, verses 5 and 11 are the only verses in the first 13 verses that do not contain this name. In the gospels, the name Christ usually appeared with the article “the” preceding it and was used in reference to Jesus being the anointed One – the Christ that was to come. In the letters of Paul this word was used without the article as another name for Jesus. Someone from the household of Chloe had reported to Paul that there was division among the believers at Corinth. As a result, Paul appealed to individual believers to surrender to the authority of Christ. In doing so, any and all divisive issues could be quickly and completely resolved in a way that everyone could feel like they had “won.” It is clear (from Paul’s response to the groups that pledged allegiance to him, Apollos and Peter,) that Christians should pledge their allegiance to the One who had died for them on the cross!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Kingdom Problems**, such as division,exist in all churches and in the church as a whole. **Reaffirm** your allegiance to Christ alone and **encourage** others to be faithful to look to him for the strength that is necessary to follow Christ on a day to day basis. **Commit** your life to his service and encourage your fellow believers to do the same.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:14-31** | **DAY 2** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 1:20** |

***The Wisdom of God***

Today’s focus verse is filled with questions. Paul wants to know how the wisdom of man compares to the wisdom of God. In placing too much faith in other men, no matter how noble and committed they might be, these early believers were making a fatal error and exercising poor judgment. Compared to the wisdom of God, the wisdom of even the wisest men seemed foolish. Just as it did for the original Corinthian Christians who read this letter, verse 21 directs our attention from human wisdom to the wisdom of God. God’s wisdom allowed Paul to preach Christ crucified and to call people to open their hearts in faith and believe the gospel. He seems to be asking each listener to review their own spiritual qualifications and come to one conclusion: “No one can boast of anything but God’s wonderful love and grace that has been revealed to us in Christ Jesus.” In other words, no one is saved because of who *they* are or what *they* have done. All who receive salvation do so entirely because of what Christ has done and who He is! It is through Christ alone that believers can be made righteous before God.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Humble** yourself before God as you walk through this day. **Look** at others around you and **realize** that the only difference in the life of the most wretched, fallen person you see today and you is Christ! **Praise** him for your salvation! **Reserve** all of your glorying and boasting for the Lord!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:1-10** | **DAY 3** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:1** |

***“The Testimony of God”***

Paul wanted the Christians at Corinth to know one thing: He had not come to them trying to appear wise or scholarly. He came to them to share God’s truth with them and to do it in the simplest way possible. He had gone to great extremes to preach only the true gospel – God’s simple plan of salvation – the story of the crucified and risen Christ. Paul’s preaching was not with wise and persuasive words. He did not rely on catchy presentations or emotional appeals to call people to accept Christ as Savior and then follow him as Lord. He relied on the Holy Spirit of God to draw people to Jesus as he lifted him up before them, “in weakness and fear, and with much trembling.” This was all done to help Paul’s readers understand that he depended entirely on the Holy Spirit and the authority of Christ to enable and empower him to preach the gospel to people. Paul spoke of those who were “mature” (v. 6) and stated that he did have a deeper message for those who were growing in the faith and knowledge of Jesus. But, even then, the message was not one filled with the wisdom of this world. Such wisdom was beyond any that the eyes of men had ever seen or the ears of men had ever heard. No human mind could have possibly conceived the story of Christ and the cross because the cross was a despised object among the people of New Testament times. Only God himself could possibly draw anyone to salvation through the story of the cross and crucifixion.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to try to add anything to what God has already so clearly stated through the sacrifice of his one and only Son, Jesus. **Avoid** trying to appear wise or spiritual to anyone. **Lift** Jesus up and he will draw all men unto himself.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 2:11-3:4** | **DAY 4** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 2:11** |

***“The Things of God”***

Paul reminds his readers that no one possesses the ability to know another man’s thoughts. In the same way, no one can better understand what God is trying to say to us than the Spirit of God himself! It is through the leadership and direction of God’s Spirit that we learn how to be saved and how to be servants after we are saved. Since the walk and warfare of the believer is a spiritual matter, people who are not indwelt and led by the Spirit of God might consider some of what a believer is called to do to be foolish simply because they cannot understand why we would make such a commitment to someone who lived and died 2,000 years ago. Since we have the mind of Christ to lead us, we may often appear to be walking in opposition to what the world may consider wise, profitable and productive. Paul concludes that believers who look to man, and man’s wisdom, as their final spiritual authority are worldly, immature believers who are still in need of spiritual milk instead of solid food. It wasn’t that they did not *need* solid teaching, but that they were *not ready* for it. Division within the church is to be considered as being worldly and as if we were “mere men” rather than a people who have submitted our lives to Jesus Christ and his authority.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Commit** to daily Bible reading and prayer. **Ask** God to grow your faith and your involvement in the work of the church. **Seek** out a position of service and be faithful to **fulfill** it. **Make** Jesus Christ more than your Savior – make Him the Lord of everything!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:5-17** | **DAY 5** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 3:16** |

***Love Those “3:16’s!”***

While I know that it is purely coincidental, I find that some of the most powerful words in the Bible are found in the “3:16” references. The letter of 1 Corinthians serves as just another great example of this fact. This “3:16” includes the first of the ten “Do you not know” phrases that are included in this letter. Later on, in 1 Corinthians 6:19, Paul will speak of each and every believer being a temple of the Holy Spirit. However, in this verse, Paul is speaking to the church as a whole. The “you” in that verse is plural in the original language while the “temple” is singular. What Paul is saying to the believers here is that we, being many, make up the one body of Christ. Since the issue being addressed at this moment is division, then, in context, this verse should be viewed in the light of the subject and used to promote unity in the body of Christ. For the purposes of Christ to be fulfilled in the church, all of the individual parts must become one in their commitment to Christ if men are to see Christ and Christ alone. When we fail to maintain Christian unity, we “defile” (v. 17) the temple of God. When men view our lives it is important that they see that we are faithful in our commitment to place Christ and his purposes above our own will and personal desires.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Consider** your church life and ask God to show you how committed you are to the desires of the church body as a whole. **Ask** yourself if you are in this for what you can *give* or just for what you can *get*. **Pray** for our church today, specifically asking Him to give us unity in purpose.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 3:18-4:7** | **DAY 6** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 4:5** |

***“The Counsels of the Heart”***

The people of Corinth were Greeks – and Greeks, at least in New Testament times – considered humility to be a sign of weakness and not a trait common among great and learned men. Paul concludes this section on division with a reminder that all true, Christian behavior must be measured against the “counsels of our hearts” (4:5). If anyone who ministers desires praise, then that person should patiently wait until the end of his race and seek only to be praised by the Lord. If the believers at Corinth would see their own, personal ministries as Paul and Apollos saw theirs, then each one would know that we are all mere servants of Christ and that Christ is the only one who should be praised at any time and for any reason! Verse 6 clearly indicates that there is no justifiable reason for any one believer to be “puffed up” or to “take pride” in themselves over others. Paul desired that the Corinthians believers might “learn” (v. 6) from the examples that he, Apollos, and others had set for them. The word “learn” in verse 6 means “to practice what you are taught” and is very closely related to the word that is translated “disciple” elsewhere in the Bible. The kind of pride that Paul is warning against is the kind of pride that causes people to compare themselves to others and judge themselves against what they see in others.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Submit** to Christ and his purposes and allow them to be first and foremost in your life. **Compare** yourself to no one but Christ and humility will always accompany you. **Refuse** to allow any seed of selfishness to flourish in your own heart and life and **trust** others to do the same. **Test** your own heart against selfish motives before speaking or reacting to what someone else has said or done.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 4:8-21** | **DAY 7** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 4:14** |

***A Stern Warning***

Paul’s true desire was that all men would become believers and that all believers would become devoted followers of Christ by being everything that God wanted them to be. Because he loved the Christians at Corinth as a father might love his own children, he issued a stern warning in order to try to bring about a change in some of the attitudes and behaviors among them. He apparently knew that not all of the Christians there would respond positively to his appeal. He knew that some had become “puffed up” (v. 18) and that those arrogant individuals were probably the ones who were causing the division in the church. Paul knew that a father who truly loves his children must be willing to discipline them when it was the appropriate thing to do. He was going to leave it up to them. Did they desire that he come to them with a “rod” or “in love and a spirit of gentleness” (v. 21)? How the believers at Corinth behaved as spiritual *children* was going to determine how he was going to behave as a spiritual *father*.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Avoid** God’s chastening by **heeding** God’s commands! **Remember** that God promises to chasten those whom He loves – and that the chastening hand of God against sinning believers is a sure sign that we are truly His children! As a parent, use discipline wisely and never without warning.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 5:1-13** | **DAY 8** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 5:1** |

***The Sad Report***

Thus far, Paul has had to deal only with the problem of spiritual *division* in the church. He now has to change the subject and begin to deal with spiritual *disorder* within the church. A second major concern in the report received about the new church at Corinth centered in their failure to deal with a sin issue within their membership. Pride is a dangerous thing because it is the opposite of love in the sense that it promotes self over others. The same pride that had caused disunity among the church membership had resulted in the church showing indifference to a very bad situation. A member of the church was having an affair with “his father’s wife.” The language there clearly indicates that this was an affair with a step-mother. This kind of relationship was clearly prohibited by Old Testament law (Lev. 18:8 and Deut. 22:22) and was a violation of Roman law in that day. This situation did not seem to shame some of the church members at all! It was difficult for Paul to understand how these people could be filled with so much pride while something like this was commonly known to be going on within their church. He encouraged the church to take disciplinary action against this believer if there was no remorse or repentance. Verse 9 seems to indicate that there was an earlier letter written by Paul to this same group of believers. In that letter he had warned them not to associate with sexually immoral people whether unsaved or, especially, saved. His recommendation was that they expel the sinning brother from the fellowship.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Realize** that church discipline may sometimes seem harsh, but that it must always be exercised in the best interest of the church body as a whole. As believers, we must **judge ourselves** by comparing our own lives to God and his Word on a regular, daily basis. In doing so, we will certainly avoid having to be judged by others.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:1-10** | **DAY 9** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 6:7** |

***“An Utter Failure”***

 A third concern in the report brought to Paul was the inability of the believers at Corinth to resolve personal conflicts and disputes among themselves. It should be made clear that Paul was referring to civil matters here and not criminal matters that should be handled by the state and not the church. The fact that Paul is referring to civil matters here is understood from the words “wronged” and “cheated” in verse 7. Learning what should be resolved in the *church* and what should be resolved in the *courts* is part of our learning to render to Caesar that which is Caesar’s and to God that which is God’s (Matthew 22:21). Paul reminded these Christians that they were to ultimately judge the world. How could a people that God deemed capable of someday judging the world not be capable of judging such civil matters among themselves without having to drag one another to court? Paul asked these prideful, arrogant people if it was possible that there was not a single person among them that was able to judge disputes among fellow Christians. Instead of settling their personal differences among themselves, the Corinthian believers were obviously going to law against one another while the unbelieving world watched them doing it. Please understand that this does not grant permission for the church to deal with criminal matters and not report criminal activity to the proper authorities. Whether one Christian decides to forgive the other or not, criminal matters should be reported and recorded for the safety of others.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Learn** to distinguish between what should be resolved within the church and what should be resolved within the courts. Church discipline should never supersede the law. When it comes to conflict, render to Caesar only that which belongs under his jurisdiction.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 6:11-20** | **DAY 10** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 6:11** |

***“Were” Versus “Are”***

At some time in the past, some of the believers in Corinth had been guilty of the sins listed earlier in verses 9 and 10. However, things were to be different in their moral lives now that they had been saved. It is important to note that Paul said, “And such *were* some of you” and not “and such *are* some of you”! The Christians at Corinth were to avoid practicing the sinful deeds of their past. Paul was quick to remind them that inappropriate behaviors exercised under the umbrella of liberty could lead to activities that were spiritually allowable but not spiritually beneficial (v. 12). Christians are not to partake in things that are not spiritually beneficial. And, certainly, sexually immorality is not spiritually or physically beneficial in any way. There is no excuse for believers to behave in such ways. We are to be uniting ourselves with the Lord and becoming one with him rather than becoming one with the world. Paul states that sexual sin is a sin against our own body. In verse 19 we see that our physical body is the abode, or temple, of the Holy Spirit. Since the Holy Spirit actually dwells within us, and since our lives are not our own, but have been “bought with a price” (v. 20), we are to honor God in our body. Peter will later tell us that the “price” with which we were “bought” was nothing less than “the precious blood of Christ” (1 Peter 1:19).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** the story of Joseph running away when another man’s wife enticed him to commit an immoral act with her and **ask** God to give you the wisdom to know when to *fight* and when to *flee*.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:1-9** | **DAY 11** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 7:1-2** |

***Some Difficult Questions***

Paul now moves from his discussions on division and disorderly conduct to some other difficult questions. One of those questions had obviously been about whether or not Christians should marry. We will deal with Paul’s response to this question in the next few devotionals. Paul concludes that it is a good thing if a “man” can live without being married. It is important to note that the word translated “man” in 7:1 is the Greek word that can mean a person of either sex. However, his inclusion of the word “woman” in the same verse gives us a strong indication that we have some “man to man” talk going on here! What Paul actually states is that it was a good thing if a person could live single and not sin. However, since that was impossible for some Christians, then it was best that believers be in a committed, marital relationship. In the fulfillment of their marriage relationship, the man and woman are able to better live without becoming involved in sexual immorality. The world would have us believe that sexual immorality is a very normal thing; however, we know that it is not a “normal” thing at all for a believer. Marriage partners should avoid depriving one another unless it is for a specified time of fasting and prayer. Obviously, verse 8 reveals that Paul was not married. Since Paul had been affiliated with the Pharisees, and since marriage was a requirement for membership into that sect, we have to assume that Paul was either a widower or divorced.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Believe** that everything that God says to us in His Word is always said in our best interest and for our benefit. **Recognize** that the Bible restricts sexual relationships to legally married men and women. **Pray** for your spouse today and **express** your love and commitment to him or her.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:10-20** | **DAY 12** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:17** |

***Marriage and Divorce***

It is very clear from these verses that God’s best plan is that married people learn to live with one another and that divorce should be avoided whenever possible. We are not to assume that God loves a divorced person any less than he loves someone who has never been divorced. We should also avoid concluding that divorced people are not eligible for service or qualified to do great things for God and his glory. Paul clearly states that what he is about to teach is something that he received from the Lord. In today’s Scripture Paul teaches those who *are* married to do everything within their power to *stay* married. If an unbelieving person leaves their spouse simply because they are a believer, then the believing person is not bound to try to force that person to remain married to them. However, if a believer can live in peace with an unbeliever, then the marriage vow should be honored. Every Christian couple should do everything possible to build a strong, healthy marriage. Running from one situation to another may just mean that you are simply carrying your same baggage to a new address. If you have been divorced and are now remarried, then be fully committed to this marriage and do everything within your power to make it a success.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Remember** that God has no perfect children! **Praise** God for your marriage partner and **pray** for him or her daily. Do everything within your power to **make them feel loved and appreciated**.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:21-31** | **DAY 13** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 7:21-23** |

***A Secret to Success in Marriage***

Today’s verses continue Paul’s response to the questions that the Corinthian believers had asked about marriage and contain a very important truth for success in any relationship, whether fraternal, social, vocational or marital. In verses 21 – 23 Paul explains that the believer, who has been bought with a price, is now a servant of the Lord as well as a servant to any current master. As such, the saved servant should no longer view his service as being to his earthly master alone, but to his heavenly Master as well. As such, when we serve others, we should serve them as if we are doing that service to Christ. So, when we consider our marital relationship, and the responsibilities thereof, we should view our commitment to that relationship as a service to Jesus Christ. The key to a strong marital relationship is submitting and serving one another while honoring the Lord through our commitment to our marriage partner. It is not difficult to see the urgency in Paul’s words when he states, “The time is short” (v. 29). Paul was encouraging the Corinthian believers to make their devotion to the Lord the first priority in their lives. If, and when, they did that, all of their other relationships would fall into place.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Allow** no relationship or responsibility to become more important than your relationship with Christ. **Be obedient** to the Lord and all other relationships and responsibilities in your life will benefit from it. **Serve** him and you will learn how to **serve** others.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 7:32-40** | **DAY 14** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 7:32-33** |

***Undivided Devotion***

One of the reasons that Paul had chosen to remain unmarried was so that he could serve the Lord with an undivided devotion. Speaking to those who desired to serve Jesus, Paul stated that he would prefer that they be “without care” (v. 32). The word that is translated “care” here is translated “concern” in other translations of the New Testament. Paul clearly explained what he meant by the word “care” by explaining that an unmarried man could be completely devoted to the Lord’s work while a married person had to serve the Lord while being careful not to neglect his marriage relationship or marital responsibilities. As a result, Paul felt that the married man might find difficulty in pleasing the Lord and his spouse at the same time. It was no different for women. The unmarried woman could be totally devoted to the Lord in both body and spirit while the married woman, as a result of her marriage commitment, had to take into consideration her earthly responsibilities and find a way to serve both the Lord and her family. Paul encouraged those who lost a spouse to consider staying single and suggested that they might be “happier” (v. 40) if they decided not to remarry and committed all of their attention to the service of Christ. But, they were free to remarry if they so desired. However, they were to be careful to marry someone who was also a committed follower of Christ. As such, it would be easier to serve God without conflict or an undivided devotion.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Be committed** to Christ, whether single or married. S**erve** the Lord *with* your spouse. **Make** your commitment to Christ a central point in your marriage relationship. **Serve** Christ in such a way that your decision to follow Him is a *help*, and not a *hindrance*, to your marriage relationship.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 8:1-13** | **DAY 15** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 8:1** |

***Moving On***

The first word of chapter 8, (“Now,”) lets us know that Paul has said what he is going to say about marriage and he is ready to move on to the next problem that was hindering the church members at Corinth. Another matter of concern to the believers there was the issue regarding whether or not a Christian should eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols. Meats that had been offered to pagan gods were often eaten by the priests, shared in a fellowship meal by the pagan worshippers, or sold in the market. Some Christians believed that eating this meat meant that they were condoning, or maybe even participating, in the worship of idols. Not all believers agreed with that opinion. Some believed that, since an idol was nothing, and there was only one true God, then meats offered to idols were just cooked on a pagan grill but still okay to eat. As such, these affordable delicacies could be purchased and eaten without anyone coming to any spiritual harm. Paul agreed that meats that had been offered to idols were just that – meats - but asked the believers to be considerate of new, immature believers who might not have come to this knowledge and to be careful not to eat these meats if it caused confusion. They were to especially avoid eating these meats in the pagan temple itself since that might cause others to think that they were participating in idol worship.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Always** be considerate of new Christians and seek to **live** in such a way to be an encouraging witness to them. **Realize** that it is fine to exercise your Christian liberties, but always do so cautiously and with concern for the spiritual well-being of others.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:1-8** | **DAY 16** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 9:7** |

***Privilege vs. Priority***

Paul begins the next section of his letter with a long list of questions concerning privileges. Take a moment and circle the question marks that you find in the first 8 verses of chapter 9. Paul is following up on his comments about Christian liberty and using Barnabas and himself as an example. He mentions several things that servants to the church might be allowed to do. Paul believed that it would be fine if he were to marry. After all, men like Peter, and the Lord’s brothers, were married and still serving in ministry. He also believed that it would be appropriate for him and Barnabas to accept financial support from the churches. After all, didn’t soldiers receive pay for their commitment to their nation? And didn’t farmers have the privilege of eating from the fruit of their gardens and vineyards? Couldn’t a shepherd rightfully have some of the milk produced by his flock? Paul considered all of these things privileges which men like he and Barnabas could appropriately accept. But, for Paul, and others like him, it was not just a matter of what *could* be done; rather a matter of what *should* be done. Accepting such privileges should be allowed with priority given to the work of the church and the cause of Christ. We should never allow ourselves to indulge in any privilege that makes the work of the ministry a lower priority in our lives. Weigh every “right” to make sure that it is the “right” thing to do at the current time and in the current situation.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Evaluate** your own schedule of activities to see if you are placing *privileges* above *priorities*. **Consider** the words of Matthew 6:33 and **strive** to keep God, and your responsibilities to Him, first and foremost in your life.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:9-18** | **DAY 17** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 9:9** |

 ***The Right Answers!***

Our focus verse begins by saying “For it is written in the law of Moses.” The answers to the questions that these Christians had about Christian liberty were to be found in the Word of God! We can choose to seek answers to all of the questions about what a Christian can do from men and we will find ourselves torn between several opinions with many of them sounding like the right answer. Or, we, like many, can choose to take a poll of counselors until we find someone who says exactly what we want to hear. However, the issue of Christian liberty must always come down to what God says to you from his Word. When it comes to issues of liberty, we should be careful not to impose our personal convictions on others. However, neither should we allow others to impose their spiritual preferences on us. Paul had the right to do whatever any of the other apostles were doing, if, and only if, it was something that God was directing him to do. Our Christian rights never supersede God’s right to ask us to do anything that He may desire. If God wants us to refrain from eating meats, taking salaries, marrying a wife, or anything else, then we should be faithful to whatever God tells us. While many answers may sound right, the only right answer is to always do what God’s Word instructs us to do and what allows us to reach more people for Christ.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Avoid** accepting what others do (or do not do) as what is right (or not right) for everyone. **Allow** God to lead you and grow you as you spend time with him in His Word. **Remember** that our preferences and privileges are sometimes subject to opinion but our convictions must always be based on God’s Word.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 9:19-27** | **DAY 18** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 9:19** |

***The Ultimate Goal***

Why should a believer be so concerned about what others might see and think? Paul answers that question in the first verse of today’s reading. We are to be concerned about what everyone thinks about *us* because we want to influence what everyone thinks about *Christ.* The ultimate goal of every Christian should be to lead others to a personal faith in Jesus Christ. If that means that we compromise on some of our preferences and sacrifice some privileges along the way, so be it. Although Paul knew that he was no longer under the law, he honored the law and attended synagogue worship so that he might have more opportunities to win his fellow Jews to Christ. He did not force Judaism on his Gentile listeners, but simply preached salvation through Christ to them. Paul was willing to do whatever he could do without compromising God’s commands if it would help him win someone to a saving knowledge of Christ. All of his decisions about preferences and privileges were based on what might afford him more opportunities to preach the gospel to those who were without Christ. When he spoke of running a race, he was speaking in terms which any Greek would understand. They were familiar with races and crowns. They honored their sports heroes and champions and held them in the highest esteem. Paul is trying to help them to understand that winning others to Christ is to be the ultimate goal for all believers.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Never** lose sight of the ultimate goal! **Remember** that Christ came to seek and to save those who were lost and that He has now assigned that awesome responsibility to His church!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:1-10** | **DAY 19** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:7** |

***Some New Testament “Thou Shalt Nots”***

Paul has been answering questions about Christian liberty and dealing with some confusing issues (like eating meats that had been offered to idols). Such matters were the cause for some of the division in the church at Corinth. Obviously, some felt free to eat the leftover offerings from pagan temples and others felt that it was a wrong thing for a Christian to do. Anytime that one Christian tries to impose a personal preference on another Christian, an opportunity for division is created. Some believe very strongly about some things for which there is no specific chapter and verse in the Bible. In those cases, we should honor our personal beliefs about such things without trying to impose them on others. However, where there is a Scriptural precedent, then it should apply to all believers. Since the Corinthian believers were so concerned about what they *could not* do, Paul decided to give them a short list of things that they definitely *should not* do! They should not be ignorant of Bible history and the ways that God has dealt with his people in the past (10:1). They should not be idolaters or be involved in pagan activities (10:7). They should not commit sexual immorality (10:8). They should not test the Lord’s patience as Israel had done in the past (10:9). And, just as it clearly states in 10:10, they should not “complain”. All of these issues had a Scriptural precedent and were, therefore, applicable to all of the Corinthian believers

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Base** your personal life on Scriptural certainties and there will be no confusion as to what you should and should not do. **Listen** to and **obey** God in all matters. **Search** out biblical answers to all of your spiritual questions.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:11-20** | **DAY 20** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 10:11-12** |

***Be Careful!***

We should learn from what we read about those who attempted to follow God in the past. God had a very good reason for recording everything that is given to us in the Bible. It is our responsibility to seek out those reasons and apply the things that we learn to our daily life. We are urged to “take heed” or to “be careful” (v. 12) so that we can avoid falling into the same traps and temptations as our spiritual ancestors. It is best to remember that there is no temptation out there that has not been faced before. Anything that anyone in Bible history ever did to dishonor God could find its way into our lives. However, God is faithful to us, in that, although he will allow us to be tempted, he will not allow us to be tempted beyond that which we can bear and he will faithfully show us a way to avoid sinning when we are tempted. How does he show us those ways to escape falling into temptations snares? One of those ways is through the lives of those who walked with him in the past. We can all learn from Joseph’s story and how he ran away from the temptations presented by the wife of his master. We can also learn from the sad story of David, a good man who fell into a very dark situation that caused such an evil impact on the lives of many people.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Read** from your Bible daily and apply what you read to your personal life. Recognize that God refers to these stories as “examples” (10:11) from which we can be blessed to the point of obedience! **Learn** from the stories that God has carefully recorded for us. It is a wise Christian that will *read*, and *heed*, the lessons that God has provided for us in the Bible.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:21-30** | **DAY 21** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 10:23** |

***The Final Answer***

It may seem that Paul has talked a long time while trying to answer the question about eating meats offered to idols, but he has used this question to address the much broader issue of Christian liberty and has dealt with other issues along the way. Paul’s final answer sounds much like what Jesus said when he stated that a Christian could not serve God and money (Matthew 6:24). Paul clearly states that a Christian, “cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons, too; you cannot partake of the Lord’s Table and of the table demons” (v. 21). So, even if some things are “lawful” (permissible) for a believer, it is always best to choose to do what is most “helpful” (beneficial) to the church body as a whole. As Christians, we should be thinking more about what will best help us to build the body of Christ and make it stronger. We must learn that our personal freedoms should not become a hindrance to others. So, Paul’s final answer is that we should be careful to avoid doing things that may hinder the spiritual growth of others without totally living our lives in a futile attempt to please others. It is not always going to be easy, but we all have the Holy Spirit to help us to make the right decisions along the way.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Be** considerate of others. **Seek** to be a good witness in all things and at all times. **Realize** that there will always be those who will be judgmental and critical of us no matter how we try. When it comes to personal preferences, always **seek** a path that is marked by biblical precedence and that will best benefit the cause of Christ and his church.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 10:31-11:7** | **DAY 22** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 10:31-33** |

***All for the Glory of God***

Paul’s “Final Answer” that we read about yesterday was based on three principles that are clearly defined in the last three verses of chapter 10. Whatever decisions we make about what we eat or drink, we should make that decision with the glory of God in mind. In other words, do what you do for the glory of God alone and not to follow some other person or to seek glory for yourself. He then stated that he tried to please others as much as possible and that he tried very hard not to be a cause for someone else to stumble. He also stated that he based his decisions about preferences on what was good for others more than on what was good for him. So, the principle is this: “God and his glory is the first consideration in all of our decisions, what is in the best interest and is most edifying to others is second, and we come last.” It sure sounds a lot like what Jesus said when he told us to, “Love the Lord our God with all of our heart . . . and to love our neighbor as ourselves.” Paul urged the believers at Corinth to follow his example since he was following the example of Christ. He then praised the Corinthian Christians for holding fast to the teachings that he had passed on to them. His comments on prayer reemphasized the fact that whatever the believer does, whether in our *public life* or in *private prayer*, God’s glory is to be the foremost consideration.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Practice** putting God first, others second, and self last. **Memorize** the “Great Commandments” and **make** them a life priority every day. We are never more like Christ than when we are humbly putting God first and others second. **Obey** the Great Commandments to love God with all of your heart and to love your neighbor as yourself.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:8-16** | **DAY 23** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:16** |

***Public Worship & Private Lives***

In yesterday’s verses, we read where, in Bible times, a man was to pray with his head uncovered while a woman was to pray with her head covered. In complying with these simple rules, believers showed their submission to God and God’s plan for authority in relationships. Paul continues this line of reasoning by saying that man (meaning Adam) was not created from woman (meaning Eve) but that woman was created from man. Every man since Adam has been created from a woman. Because of this, we should understand that God did not create man and woman to operate independently of each other. Both are to *work* and *worship* together in such a way that brings glory to God. But submission was not just something that should be exhibited in public worship. If it was not something that was carried home from church with them, then the humility and submission that was exhibited in the public worship and prayer services was nothing more than those hypocritical public prayers and offerings made by the Pharisees when they desired to appear to be spiritual in the eyes of anyone who might see or hear them. Christians should be as humble and submissive to God’s authority in their *private* lives as they are at public worship. Again, this all ties back to freedom. In verse 16 Paul clearly states that this is not to become a point of contention within the church.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Submit** your life to God, whether you are worshiping *publicly* at church or *privately* at home. **Exhibit** genuine humility in all of your life roles – especially in the role that you are called to fulfill at home and with your family.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:17-27** | **DAY 24** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 11:21** |

***The Lord’s Supper***

When our private, personal lives are not fully committed to the Lord, our lack of commitment will soon begin to manifest itself in our public worship. In the case of the Corinthian Christians, one of the ways that their lack of commitment was being manifested was in the way that they were abusing the Lord’s Supper. They had turned what was intended to be a very private and personal memorial for believers into a public feast that drew large crowds – with many people coming for the physical food more than for the spiritual blessing. Because of the way that these believers were observing the Lord’s Supper, Paul felt that they were actually doing more harm than good when they served it. This proved to be yet another cause for division among the believers. In an observance that was to show forth unity – they had division. In a supper that was to show forth humility – they were serving themselves first and leaving others with nothing while some were even partaking of the wine in excess. To partake of this supper in an unworthy manner meant to do it in such a way that did not memorialize the suffering of Christ and to honor his great gift of salvation. By turning this supper into a public feast, they were dishonoring the Lord and they were certainly not using it as a living witness of what he had accomplished for them on the cross.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to lose your intimacy with God. **Protect** your spiritual life by carefully observing the way you go about the things that you do for God. **Live** in such a way that your entire life will be a living witness of what God has done in your heart.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 11:28-12:3** | **DAY 25** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 11:28** |

***Self-Examination***

The only way to correct the division and disorder in the Church at Corinth was for each individual to examine his or her own life and make the necessary change in their own attitude and actions. Each person (the word “man” in the original is the word that refers to man as a species and, therefore, means any person, whether male or female) was to examine (test or prove) himself before partaking of the Lord’s Supper. This was to be done every time that the supper was served. This allowed this special service to be a remembrance of Christ and his supreme sacrifice and a reminder to all believers that we should be willing to live sacrificial lives for the One who gave His all for us. The Lord’s Supper was not a time for self-indulgence – but, rather, it was a time for self-examination. The bigger picture of “Christian liberty” needs to be remembered as we continue to study this book. Thus far, we have seen that the pursuit of personal liberties and preferences among the believers had led to disunity, division and disorder. As such, the church, when operating as multiple, individual units, had become dysfunctional. The word “now” in 12:1 is an indicator that Paul is moving on to the next question. Ultimately, the answer to this next question will prove to be the answer to almost all of the issues in the church. One thing was sure; God’s Spirit was to be the *cure* and not the *cause* for confusion and division in the church.

**Prayer Emphasis**

* **Take** a look into your own heart and see if there are any selfish motivations behind your service in the church. **Examine** your efforts to see if they are Spirit-centered or self-centered. **Allow** the observance of the Lord’s Supper to remind you to check the motivations of your heart and service.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:4-13** | **DAY 26** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 12:4-6** |

***Unity in Diversity***

We see the words “diversities” and “differences” three times in 1 Corinthians 12:4–6. It is very interesting that those verses also have the word “same” in each of them. The word “different” was used to describe the gifts that were bestowed upon individuals in the church while the word “same” was used to describe the God from whom they were received. “Different” was about the various *services* that Christians could provide for one another while “same” was about the *source* from which that ability to serve was derived. It is obvious that the desires of the flesh had led to selfish ambitions in the church at Corinth and selfish ambition had led to disunity. Since the gifts were given to allow the church as a whole to be strengthened by the ministry of the individual members, then the church would find unity in their diversity. Nine specific gifts are mentioned in verses 7-10, with each one serving to make the entire church body stronger as a whole. The gifts were selected and distributed by the Holy Spirit. Take a moment and circle the word “one” every time you find it in verses 11-13. Only God could take *different* people and use them in *different* ways to bring the church to a place of being *one* in Him!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Live** to benefit the body as a whole and not just yourself and your individual needs. **Consider** the needs of the church as a whole when you make decisions about service. **Seek** to discover your personal, spiritual gift and to **employ** it in service to the Lord and his church.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:14-23** | **DAY 27** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 12:18** |

***Mutual Dependence***

Just like the human body is not made up of one part, but many, so the church is made up of many individuals who serve as a part of one, complete body for Christ. No individual part of the body should ever consider itself to be *superior* or *inferior* to any other. Each part of the body has a mutual dependence upon the other parts. Verse 18 tells us that God, himself, “set” (arranged) the different parts “as He pleased.” Just as the human body is no accidental result of some haphazard action or event in the past, so it is with God’s spiritual body, the church. There is a “divine design” in the way that the church is put together. Through that design, the church is enabled to pursue and accomplish a divine purpose when its different parts work together to fulfill the Lord’s purposes. No one part of the body should think that it can operate independently or separately from the others. If any part of the body is severed from the whole, the severed part will soon die and the body will suffer a great loss of ability or mobility. Without all of the individual parts being fully functional, the church itself cannot be fully functional. We all need each other if we are going to succeed in our divine mission.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Value** the ministries of others. **Express** appreciation to someone who serves in a different ministry than yours today. **Pray** for all of our church volunteers and workers on a regular basis.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 12:24-31** | **DAY 28** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 12:24** |

***“Honor”***

The word translated “honor” in verse 24 is a word that means “value” or “price” and is translated that way in other places in the New Testament. By putting all of the different “parts” of the body together, and making them mutually dependent upon one another, God has created a ministry plan that gives value to every member of the church. As such, there are no big or little jobs in God’s church! Every member is vitally important to the overall ministry. Verse 25 clearly states that there should be no division in the body because each part of the body should have an equal concern one for the other. The unifying head of the body is Christ. Verse 28 says that God “appointed”, or literally, *assigned* different people to different roles of service and *equipped* them to serve in those capacities. Can all serve in the same ways? How awkward would it be if everyone in the church decided to preach a sermon in next Sunday’s worship service? How confusing would it be if everyone decided to “lead” in prayer at the same time? How much harmony would we have if everyone decided to present their own special musical presentation at the same time? When we realize that none of the individual parts of the body could be functional without the full participation and support of the others, we learn that all believers bring great value to the church.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Value** your Christian friends and fellow church members and **support** them in their efforts to serve the Lord. **Respect** their role and the service that they provide to the church. **Remember, e**very believer has the potential, and the responsibility, to bring great value to the church.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 13:1-13** | **DAY 29** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 13:1-2** |

***The Unifying Ingredient***

Some scholars think that the words of the 13th chapter were composed separately from the rest of this letter and then inserted here - almost like the words of a song or poem might be inserted into a sermon. Whether it was composed prior to or at the same time as the rest of the letter, it is still, no doubt, divinely inspired by the Holy Spirit of God. Paul is emphasizing that all of the spiritual gifts mentioned earlier are to be exercised in, and empowered by, the love of God. Without love, all of our efforts will just sound like a loud noise that gains the attention of people for a moment and then is soon forgotten. This is a beautiful section of Scripture that accomplishes several important things: 1) it helps us to understand what true love is (v. 4), 2) it helps us to understand what true love is not (v. 5), 3) it helps us to understand some of the things that love does and does not do (v. 6), 4) it reveals some things that love always does (v. 7), and 5) it includes one thing that love never does (“fail” v. 8). All of this might not be as clear to the church as it would be later when their understanding would be enlightened and expanded. Corinth was famous for its production of bronze mirrors. Although those mirrors were functional, the image that they displayed was far from perfect. Paul wanted these believers to understand that the love that they expressed while attempting to serve the Lord would help to cover their personal and spiritual imperfections.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Seek** to serve in love and let it be your one, true motivation for service to Christ. **Express** love to others, especially to those in your family.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:1-9** | **DAY 30** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 14:1** |

***“Pursue Love”***

The word translated “pursue” in verse 1 means to pursue, to run after, or to seek something diligently. Paul is here encouraging the Corinthian believers to forsake the pursuit of their personal preferences and selfish ambitions and to pursue love. At the same time, he told them that they should “desire spiritual gifts.” This is the same word that is translated “covet” in some translations of the Bible. The implication is that the believer is to show some initiative in their pursuit of serving God in love and spiritual giftedness. The last part of verse 1 places a special emphasis on the gift of prophecy. The emphasis on tongues in verses 2-10 is a clear indicator that the members of the church at Corinth had placed a special emphasis on that gift and that the gift was being used by so many that no one was able to benefit from the confusion that it was causing in the services. “Everyone” who exercised their gift of prophecy, however, was said to benefit the church by strengthening, encouraging, and comforting its members while speaking in tongues seemed to be more for self-edification. Paul was not commanding them not to speak in tongues. He was, though, teaching them that public worship was for the edification of the body as a whole and not for the showcasing of individual gifts. The fact that Paul uses the word translated “tongues” 21 times in 1 Corinthians and only 3 other times in the remainder of his letters is a pretty good indication that there was some abuse of this area of gifting within this church.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Seek** to use your spiritual gift in such a way that the entire church can be strengthened, encouraged and comforted. **Ask** God to help you discover and develop your personal, spiritual gift.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:10-20** | **DAY 31** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 14:18-19** |

***“Voices”***

The word translated languages” in verse 10 is the same word that was used to describe the sound of a pipe or harp in verse 7 and of a trumpet in verse 8. In each of those cases, it was stressed that the sound made by these instruments should be clearly distinguishable. Human sounds (words) needed to be clearly distinguishable as well if the church was to understand their meaning and learn from their use. Without interpretation, tongues could be like having someone stand up and speak in a foreign language that no one understood. This kind of church experience could easily lead to frustration for the speaker and the listeners. Just like the “sound” of the trumpet (as referred to back in verse 8) was to solicit a certain action or reaction from an army standing ready to do battle, so the words spoken in a public worship service should be clearly spoken and presented in such a way that every soldier/saint knows what they are being asked to do. Paul emphasized the value of prophecy over tongues by saying that he “would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also” (v. 19).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Notice** that Paul emphasized the importance of instructing others over his own, personal gratifications. **Seek** to be as unselfish as possible in your every activity. **Minister** and **speak** in such a way that everyone will understand what they are being asked to do for God.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:21-30** | **DAY 32** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 14:22** |

***A Sign for Unbelievers***

Verse 22 of today’s reading clearly states God’s intention for the use of tongues when Paul states that “tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers.” The word translated “sign” here is translated “miracle” in other places in the New Testament. The Day of Pentecost was a perfect example of how tongues, like miracles, could be used to gain the attention of unbelievers so that they could hear the gospel message in a clear and distinctive manner. The fact that the various people heard foreigners speaking in their own languages caused them to stop and listen. It was a “sign” to them that something supernatural was taking place. Believers, Paul argued, would benefit more from prophecy. Verse 26 clearly indicates that people with different gifts were allowed to exercise their gifts in church services. However, all exercising of spiritual gifts had to be done in such a way that the entire body was strengthened from it. Notice that Paul used the word “if” when he spoke of tongues being used in a public service (v. 27). That is a clear indication that tongues were not a part of every service and certainly not a requirement for public worship. “If” someone spoke in tongues, and “if” there was no one there to interpret, the speaker was instructed to keep quiet “in the church” and speak to himself and God. Two or three “prophets” were to speak in the public services and the people were to carefully consider what was taught. Obviously, there were occasions where someone spoke spontaneously, as they were inspired by the Lord.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Refuse** to restrict the moving of God’s Spirit in worship services. It is fine to have an order of service, but the Spirit should feel free to interrupt us anytime that He so desires. Understand that all spiritual gifts are appropriate when used at appropriate times and in appropriate situations*.*

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 14:31-40** | **DAY 33** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 14:40** |

***“One by One”***

It is obvious that there was to be order, and not confusion, when spiritual gifts were employed in public worship. This was to be the case no matter *what gift* was being exercised or *when* it was being exercised. When the teachers (prophets) taught, they were to do so “one by one” or, as some translations state, “in order.” Even though there might not have been a specific “Order of Service” for public worship, the worship services were to be orderly and without confusion. All this fits well with the earlier instructions regarding spiritual gifts. The different parts of the body were to work together to perform as one unit. As such, the different gifts, when exercised, each had their proper place and role in public worship. Paul clearly stated that God was not the author of “confusion” (disorder) but of peace (v. 33). The instructions that Paul is giving to the Corinthian believers were the same that had been given to the other “churches” There are some extreme views, both ways, on the subjects of the role of women and the exercising of spiritual gifts in public worship. We should be careful to avoid being too extreme in our position on either issue. When things are done “decently” and “in order” then God will be glorified when we assemble ourselves for worship.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Respect** the beliefs of others and **refuse** to be critical of other churches that preach the gospel of salvation by grace. **Remember**, no fellow believer is our competitor or enemy. Pray that our public worship will be free from confusion and honoring to God at all times.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:1-15** | **DAY 34** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 15:3-4** |

***Keeping Things in Perspective***

The word “moreover” is a clear indicator that Paul is again moving on to another subject. It seems that he has saved the best reason for the church to operate without strife and confusion for last. When weighed against the soon return of Christ, and our short-lived opportunity to do his work here, any issue that might cause division in the church should seem petty and unimportant. Paul clearly stated that what he was going to say about the resurrection was information that he had received (been taught) and was passing on to them. “First of all” (of first importance) was the fact that “Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (vs. 3-4). Just as surely as he had appeared to Peter, the twelve, and more than 500 other individuals, He was to soon appear to these Corinthian believers. Paul’s humility is clearly exhibited in verses 8 and 9. It is obvious that his former role as a persecutor of the church left him with many sad memories and deep regrets. However, God’s grace had transformed this *persecutor* into a *preacher* and Paul did not allow God’s grace to be wasted on him. He sought to live and serve in such a way that God’s grace would not have been bestowed upon him “in vain” (v.10).

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Realize** that a proper perspective about the soon return of Christ and the rapture of the church causes all of our religious differences to seem unimportant. **Serve** Christ today like you really believe that He could return at any moment. Keep your eyes on the *skies* and you better keep your eyes on the *prize*!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:16-30** | **DAY 35** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 15:20** |

***“The Firstfruits”***

Paul wanted the church members at Corinth to know that he did not consider himself to be either vital or irreplaceable when it came to ministry. Speaking of the other apostles, Paul said that the message could have come from any of them and it would have had the same power and life-changing effect upon them. It was their personal faith in the *message,* and not the *messenger,* that had saved them. Paul then turned his attention to addressing some issues concerning bodily resurrection. To deny a bodily resurrection was to deny that Christ himself had risen from the dead. Paul wanted these Christians to understand the serious consequences that accompanied this kind of unbelief. A gospel without the resurrection was “futile.” If there was no resurrection, then the apostles, including Paul, should be dealt with as false witnesses. By faith, Paul was able to boldly conclude that, “Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (v. 20). In the Old Testament, the “firstfruits” were an indicator of what was to follow, but in much more abundance. As such, the resurrection of Christ was to be an indicator of the fact that all believers could look forward to a bodily resurrection and a reunion with all of those who have gone to heaven before us.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Discipline** yourself to prioritize sharing the gospel over debating doctrine with other believers. **Believe** that our time and opportunities to share the gospel are coming to a close. **Remember**, it is the message and not the messenger that is most important!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:31-40** | **DAY 36** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 15:32** |

***The Risk of Reach!***

Since the day of his personal conversion, Paul had sought diligently to win other people to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ. Many times his efforts to reach out to others had come at a great price. Why would he have chosen to face so much opposition and persecution if he did not fully, completely, and totally believe that the gospel was from God? If the resurrection was only some “pie in the sky” and “feel good” kind of teaching and preaching, then he probably should have given up the ministry entirely! He warned the believers at Corinth against being misled by associating with the wrong people. If people refuse to believe in Christ, and His resurrection, then we should preach the truth to them. If they refuse to believe the truth, we are not to compromise what we believe when we are around them. Paul warned that there were going to be some who would not understand about the resurrection. He suggested a simple analogy: Just like a seed is sown in one form only to come forth from the ground in another form, so it is with our resurrection. Our earthly bodies will be sown, as they are now, into the grave only to someday emerge as a supernatural, heavenly body. If people want us to “explain” that, then we should ask them to “explain” how an oak tree can grow from an acorn. It just happens because God makes it happen! Amen!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Accept** Christ as your Savior today. If you have already accepted Christ, then **share** him with someone else. **Consider** this thought daily: *All people, everywhere, need to be born again if they desire to experience heaven when they die.*

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:41-50** | **DAY 37** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 15:42-44** |

***A Perfect Body***

Can you imagine how wonderful it would be to live in a perfect body? The body in which I currently reside is far from perfect. As a matter of fact, it is so imperfect that it will someday quit on me altogether and die. When that happens, it will be so useless that, after whatever reusable parts can be harvested, the remains will be burned or buried until the day of the resurrection. My current body is perishable! However, my new body, the one I have on order from God & Son Inc., is imperishable! It will never get sick or fail me in any way. It will never die. One day, the human part of me will be put away in dishonor only to be raised again in glory. It will be put away in weakness only to be, eventually, raised in power! It will be put away a natural body that will return to nature itself, but it will be raised a supernatural body that can return and dwell in the presence of God! Just as surely as there is a natural body in which I *now* reside, there will be a spiritual body in which I will *someday* reside. To get to that spiritual body, I have to live through this current phase of life in the natural. When I die, the part of me that belongs here will stay here, but the part of me that belongs to God will go to be with Him in heaven. Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. Because of that fact, we have to leave this old body behind when we die with full faith that God will give us the spiritual body that he has promised to us.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Respect** your earthly body. Take good care of it. **Realize** that it is God’s temple and that the Holy Spirit abides with us here. **Thank God** for his presence within you.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:51-58** | **DAY 38** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52** |

***The “Mystery”***

After answering so many questions Paul decided to answer an unasked question. After discussing the resurrection of the dead in Christ, Paul moved on to explain how things will be for those who are alive when Christ returns to rapture His church. The interest of every listener had to be peaked as Paul stated, “Behold, I tell you mystery.” A New Testament “mystery” was something that was not told in the Old Testament but was then being revealed to believers in New Testament times. That is why Paul had to “tell” them what the “mystery” was. Paul explained that someday, without warning, a trumpet will sound. When it does, believers who are alive on earth at that time will be “changed.” Our perishable (natural) bodies will become imperishable (eternal) – never to be weakened again by age or threatened again by sickness or death. Believers will realize that the curse of Adam has been eternally broken and that Satan’s temporary victory in Eden will be totally reversed. Rather than wait until that moment, Paul began to offer thanks to God for “the victory” then and there! Because of this ultimate victory, believers should in this life be firm in their faith – allowing nothing to limit their work for the Lord. Since we are absolutely convinced about the resurrection of the dead and the rapture of the church, we know, beyond any shadow of doubt that our work for the Lord is not in vain.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Visualize** you being resurrected or raptured and then changed completely into a complete person that can never again fail or disappoint anyone – especially God! Look **forward** to the Lord’s return and **look** **around** for something to do for God today!

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 16:1-11** | **DAY 39** |
| **Focus Verses: 1 Corinthians 16:1-2** |

***God’s Finance Plan***

The believer that realizes that the work done for Christ in this life is not “in vain” (15:58) will be willing to invest in ministry so that we can continue to reach people until the day of the resurrection and rapture of the church. The word translated “in vain” in the final verse of yesterday’s reading literally means “empty.” When we invest in God’s Kingdom, we are not going to come up “empty.” It is clear from today’s verses that God fully expects every believer to give to the work of the church on a regular, systematic basis. Our giving should be based on a percentage of what God has given us. If all believers would be faithful to the teaching of verses 1-2 of this chapter, there would be no need for special offerings, or “collections,” to be taken to support worthwhile causes. Notice that Paul wisely disassociated himself from the handling of the church’s money. As such, the Corinthian believers were to select someone to handle the money collected in the offerings and make sure that they got to where they needed to be. Paul let them know that he planned to come and spend some time with them, but, until he could, he was going to send Timothy to minister to them.

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Review** your giving record and see if you have been faithfully investing in the work of the church. **Commit** to being faithful with a regular gift that reflects your appreciation for what God has given to you. **Trust** God enough to be faithful to Him in giving.

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| **Scripture Reading: 1 Corinthians 16:12-24** | **DAY 40** |
| **Focus Verse: 1 Corinthians 16:14** |

***In Closing***

As Paul began to close this letter, he touched on several issues of importance. Apparently, one of the things that the church had communicated with him about was a visit from Apollos. If you recall, Apollos was a favorite preacher among many of the believers in this church (See 1:12). Paul had obviously relayed that request to Apollos, but had to report to the church that he was not able to make a commitment to visit with them at that time. Take a moment to review these closing verses and circle the word “love” every time that you see it. Just as love had been the answer to most of the problems in the church, love now will be the key ingredient to their sustaining a ministry for Christ until His return. Verse 14 says it all! They were to do everything that they did in love. Verse 22 declares that the one, true measure for ministry is love. If anyone in the church refuses to season their talk, or walk, with love for Jesus Christ, then let that person be marked and separated from the body before their spirit could contaminate the rest of the church. Those who did not exhibit true love for the Lord Jesus Christ were to be “accursed.” Paul’s closing prayer was, “O Lord, come!” This should be the prayer of every believer today. We should be looking forward to the moment that we will be with our Lord in Heaven without forgetting to be looking around for someone to take on that glorious trip with us!

**Prayer Emphasis:**

* **Thank God** for His helping us through all of our **Kingdom Problems**! Pray for churches everywhere and ask God to strengthen them in their work for Him. **Contact us** at seminolebc@centurylink.net or 850-562-8069 if we can pray for you or help you in any way.