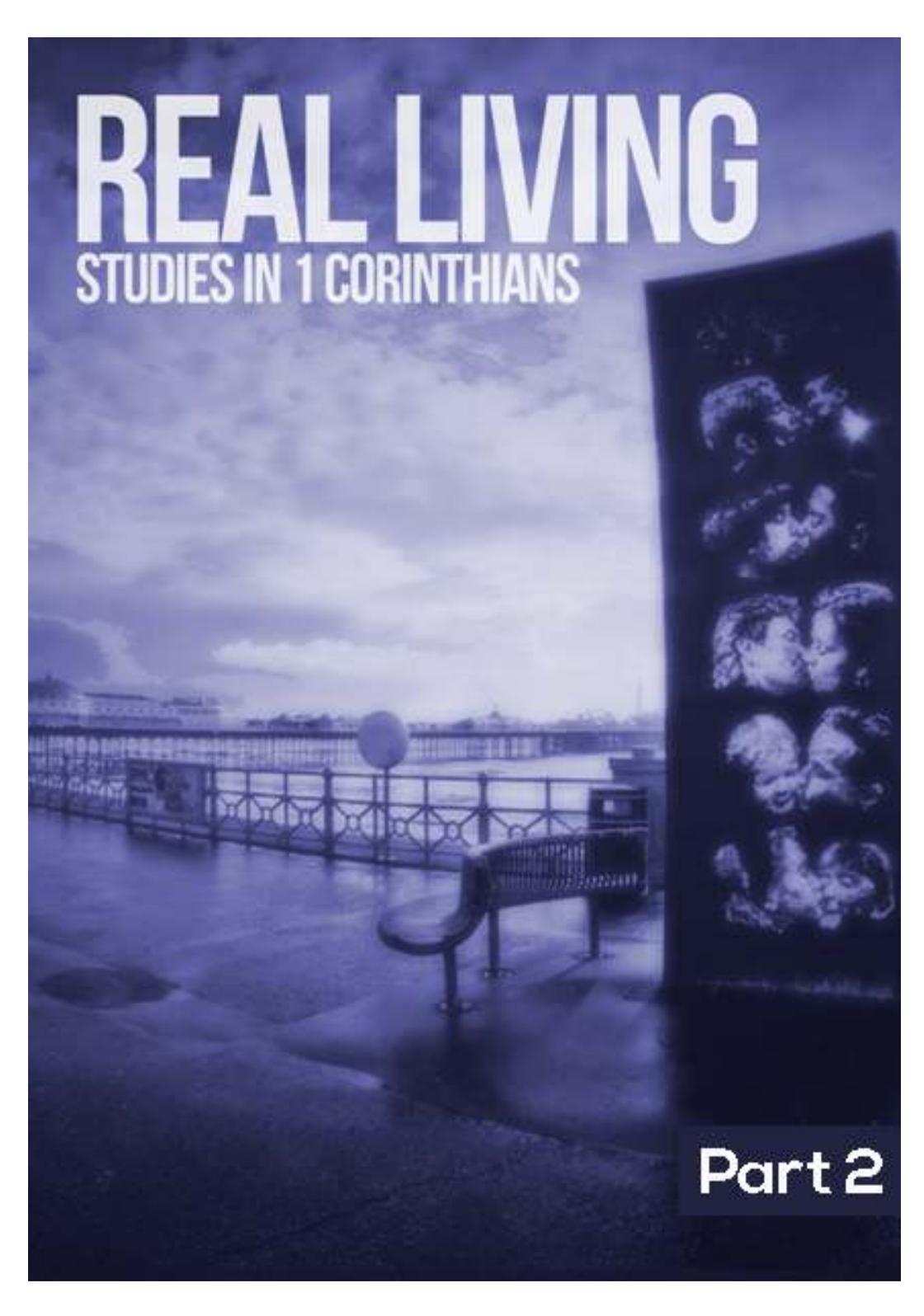


# REAL LIVING

STUDIES IN 1 CORINTHIANS



Part 2

# Introduction - Studies in 1 Corinthians 8-16

## Unity, Freedom and Diversity

The second half of 1 Corinthians continues to help us explore how to really live and love in Brighton today.

Our faith in Jesus Christ means we have great freedom, but that freedom is not to be expressed in living for ourselves, but in courageous love - for our brothers and sisters in Christ and for those who still need to hear and understand the wonderful good news of Jesus Christ.

I hope and pray that this study will help you as a community both grow in your love for each other within your community and grow in your heart to do what it takes to reach out as a community to others. To do both of those things we need the empowering of the Holy Spirit, and I hope this study will help you better understand the different gifts he gives us, and how to use them lovingly to serve others.

As we look at these studies as communities I hope it helps us in our togetherness in Christ and His word. We will also be going through the book of 1 Corinthians in our Sunday morning messages so do feed back to Tim or I any of your reflections from the Bible studies or talks.

The bible studies are deliberately designed to be flexible recognizing the many different types of communities that meet.

### How do the studies work for my group?

If your community meets to study the Bible once every 2 weeks - then I recommend doing studies - 2, 4, 6, 8, 10 and 11.

If your community/group meets each week for Bible study then there should be enough studies, including the extra studies, to cover each week.

Feel free however frequently you meet to only use some of the questions (as appropriate for your setting). It is worth trying to use at

least one question from each section i.e. one **Connect** question, one **Discover** question, and one **Apply** question.

Finally there are some communities and groups where they meet less frequently only monthly or so for Bible study, while in some seasons that is appropriate, perhaps this is a season to explore as a group trying to meet more regularly like every other week, this would enable some of your discussions not only to keep up with both the sermons on Sunday and the studies.

The most benefit will come from doing these studies alongside the appropriate sermons in the morning, but don't worry if you get slightly out of sync, either ahead or behind.

May the Lord bless you as you study His word, May it help us with "Real living".

David

# 1. Real Living: The Ethics of Consumption

## 1 Corinthians 8

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Sermon preached on 12th January

### Connect

1. Eating a meal - a simple thing, or is it? Tell the person next to you about meals you had as a family growing up - or Christmas meal. What were the unspoken rules/conventions?

### Discover

There was an issue in the Corinthian church over meat which had been left over from pagan sacrifices, and might be used for feasts or sold in the market. Some felt that it was wrong to eat; others disagreed.

#### Read 1 Corinthians 8

2. If we use something, why would it matter where it comes from?
3. Why do you think this had become an area of contention?
4. What are the different out-workings of knowledge and love? Why is this?
5. Jesus was one who had all knowledge, and yet was loving. How did he demonstrate **verses 2 and 3**?

6. From **verses 2 and 3** how would you complete these statements?

- We don't know \_\_\_\_\_
- Knowledge is not the same as \_\_\_\_\_
- Knowledge without love can lead to \_\_\_\_\_
- God is more concerned about our \_\_\_\_\_ than our \_\_\_\_\_ (**verse 3**)

7. How might knowledge without love show itself in a preacher/doctor/gossip situation at work?

8. What contrasts do **verses 4 and 7** draw between idols and God? (see also **Psalms 135:15-18**)

9. What freedom does this give us? If we didn't know this, how might we feel (described in **verse 7**)?

#### Read verses 9 and 10

10. Are ethics a personal issue or a community issue? How does this relate to **verses 2 and 3**?
11. Can you think of examples of actions or behaviours which are taboo for some Christians, but no big deal for others? How do you feel about using money or goods which may have come from dubious sources? Does it count if you are ignorant of where it comes from? Do you have your own personal rules on this?

## Apply

12. If we do what we suspect may be wrong, what effect does it have on our conscience?

Read verse 13 and Romans 14:13-15

13. How could you act in love when you are spending time with:

- A new Christian with no background in Christian things
- A Christian from another culture
- A child or young person watching your behaviour
- A non-Christian friend watching your behaviour

## Pray

Pray for one another that we will know our own minds, base our principles on Christ and the freedom he has offered us, act in knowledge rather than ignorance, but primarily act in love, and not condemn others.

## 2. Real Living: Laying Aside our Rights/ 1 Corinthians 9

All things to all men

Sermon preached on 19th January

### Connect

1. Before reading passage think of the phrase 'all things to all men'. What does that mean for you? Is it a positive or negative thing?

Frank Sinatra's 'My Way' is very popular at funerals:

*"For what is a man, what has he got?  
If not himself, then he has nought  
To say the things he truly feels and not the words of one who kneels  
The record shows I took the blows and did it my way!"*

2. Is this a good epitaph for life?

### Discover

3. What positions and freedoms does Paul claim in verses 1-6? What style does he use to do this? **Verse 5** - Paul did not marry. Does this help us understand his meaning?
4. **Verses 7-11 and verses 13-14** describe another principle, that those who serve the church should be supported by the church. Does this principle make sense to you?

5. How does the last part of **verse 12 and verse 15** change his argument?
6. Look back at last week's study. There is a principle in verse 8: how are these verses (and, as we'll see, the rest of the chapter) a demonstration of this principle?
7. How does this remind you of Jesus and what he did?
8. What is it that gives Paul this enormous compulsion to preach, literally whatever the cost?
9. How could **verse 17-18** encourage those who serve as volunteers?
10. **Verses 19-23** are key verses to understanding contextual mission – that is, trying to reach people with a strong awareness of their culture and context.

This was a particular issue at the time in relation to those still 'under the law', i.e. following Jewish/Old Testament law, as supposed to 'Christ's law', i.e. Jesus' teachings, and the freedom that Jesus' sacrifice on the cross gave from the Old Testament sacrifices. There is more on this in **Acts 21**.

11. What is Paul's overriding motivation in this passage? What are his goals? What is his aim?

12. How important do you think it is to accommodate yourself to culture for the sake of reaching others? Have you ever deliberately done this?

### Read verses 24-27

13. How does the image of a race portray how Paul sees his ministry and his life? Does it help you in your own?

### Apply

14. How would you know when your allegiance to Christ, or your integrity as a Christian, was compromised by your desire to 'fit in'? What would be the warning signs?
15. What are the things you would be willing to change and not change?
16. Where are your boundaries? Is the diagram on the next page helpful to you?

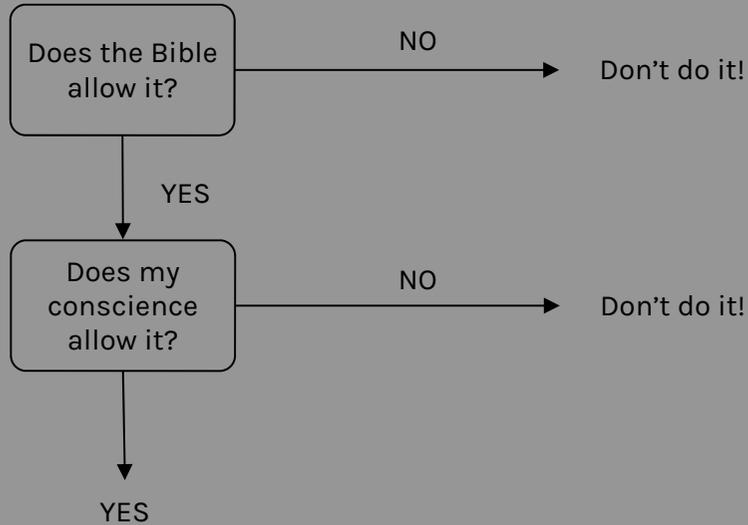
### Pray

There's a saying: 'rules are there to be broken'. It's as if Paul is saying: 'rights are there to be laid aside'.

- Thank God for the ways Jesus laid aside his rights.

- Pray for each other to know the freedom of the rights we have in Christ, and the freedom to lay down our rights sometimes 'to become all things to all people so that by all possible means I might save some'. (**Verse 22**)

Taken from: 'True Spirituality' by Vaughan Roberts



Three further questions:

Area of Freedom

What is the effect on other Christians?  
(*Love is more important than knowledge.*)

What is the effect on non-Christians?  
(*The Gospel is more important than rights.*)

What is the effect on my spiritual life?  
(*Spiritual health is more important than freedom.*)

## 3. Real Living: Faith, Hope and Focus

### 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Sermon preached on 26th January

#### Connect

In this chapter Paul reminds the Corinthians of the 'grand narrative' – the experiences of God's people from ages before which may help them.

- Do you think it is important for us to know stories like these? What are the ways it can help us as Christians to have a 'big picture' of God's actions from the beginnings of his dealings with people?

#### Discover

Read 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

The stories mentioned in **verses 1-4** were miracles the early Israelites experienced: God guided them through the desert by a pillar of cloud, having already rescued them from slavery by parting the sea for them to cross over. He provided daily "manna" as food over many years, and wonderfully brought water from solid rock for them to drink. Sadly, because of disobedience the generation rescued from Egypt were allowed to die out before they reached the Promised Land.

- If you had seen God do amazing miracles as the Israelites had, do you think you would make assumptions about your relationship with God?
- What specifically were the "evil things" that they did in **verses 7-10**?

4. Why does Paul use these examples? How do they relate to the problems in the Corinthian Church?
  
5. **Verse 8** refers to a passage in **Numbers 25:1-9** (there is a discrepancy in the numbers, but Paul's point is the scale of it, not the exact number). What is the link between self-indulgence and self-destruction?
  
6. The Israelites were quick to grumble and quick to blame. How can we counteract the culture of blame that we live in?

#### Read verse 12

7. What are some of the dangers of thinking you are standing firm?
  
8. What is the difference between confidence in our faith and complacency?

#### Read verse 13

9. What are some of the temptations that are common to man? Did Jesus face them?

### Apply

10. Do you have any examples you can share of **verse 13**, of “ways out”/ interventions? How have you seen God do this, or how might He do it?

11. What assurance does this give you about God's faithfulness/ character?

### Pray

*“Neither in presumption nor in despair does there lie any power to renew life, but only in the hope that is enduring and sure.... Hope goes on its way through the midst of happiness and pain, because in the promises of God it can see a future also for the transient, the dying and the dead... The Christian hope is directed towards a new creation of all things by the God of the resurrection of Jesus Christ.”*

**Jurgen Moltmann from ‘Meditation on Hope’**

Pray for each other that we would not live this week in either presumption, or in despair, but in this hope.

# Extra Study - Real Living: Standing Firm

## 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

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### Connect

1. Did you learn the classic Old Testament stories in Sunday school? In pairs or small groups, try to give a short retelling of the stories Paul is referring to in **verses 1-4**. Be creative if you wish - drawings, act it out, key words to include, actions...

### Discover

In **verses 1-6** Paul reminds the Corinthians of the 'grand narrative' - the experiences of God's people from ages before which may help them.

2. Do you think it is important for us to know stories like these? What are the ways it can help us as Christians to have a 'big picture' of God's actions from the beginnings of his dealings with people?
3. If you had seen God do amazing miracles as the Israelites had, do you think you would make assumptions about your relationship with God? What was the evil that they did?
4. Why does Paul use these examples? See also **Romans 15:4**
5. **Verse 8** refers to a passage in **Numbers 25:1-9** (there is a discrepancy in the numbers, but Paul's point is the scale of it, not the exact number). What is the link between self-indulgence and self-destruction?

Thistleton explains **verse 11** as referring to the age we're in, between Jesus' resurrection and Jesus' return.

*"The practical point is that 1) because Christians still live within the continuing world order, they must guard against presumption and heed moral exhortation; but 2) because they belong to the new age, they have access to a definitive disclosure of God's will and access to divine grace in Christ. Their relation to the old underlines the need to talk warnings seriously; their relation to the new addresses doubt and anxiety on the journey of pilgrimage, self-discipline and growth."*

### Read verse 12

6. What are some of the dangers of thinking you are standing firm?
7. What is the difference between confidence in our faith and complacency?

### Read verse 13

8. What are some of the temptations that are common to man? Did Jesus face them?

### Apply

9. The Israelites were quick to grumble and quick to blame. How can we counteract the culture of blame that we live in?
10. Do you have any examples you can share of **verse 13**, of 'ways out'/ interventions? How have you seen God do this, or how might he do it?

11. What assurance does this give you about God's faithfulness/ character?

## Pray

*"Neither in presumption nor in despair does there lie any power to renew life, but only in the hope that is enduring and sure.... Hope goes on its way through the midst of happiness and pain, because in the promises of God it can see a future also for the transient, the dying and the dead... The Christian hope is directed towards a new creation of all things by the God of the resurrection of Jesus Christ."*

**Jurgen Moltmann from 'Meditation on Hope'**

Pray for each other that we would not live this week in either presumption, or in despair, but in this hope.

## 4. Real Living: It's my Right, it's my Privilege

1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1

Sermon preached on 2nd February

### Connect

1. What do you flee from? What is the motivation?

Read verses 12-14

2. Thinking about last week's study, what practical steps have you taken - or could you take - to flee from temptation and idolatry? Again, what is the motivation?

### Discover

Read verses 16-17 which are about what we call communion.

3. What does participation demonstrate? Read **verse 17**. In what ways does taking part in communion display unity? Can it create unity?

**Verses 18-21** are talking about the pagan feasts and offerings. **Read chapter 10:20**: there seems to be a distinction between participating in idol worship, and eating food that has been used in it.

4. Compare **chapter 8:4**. How important is context in Paul's argument?

5. In matters of ethics, do you think God takes account of the context in which we find ourselves?
6. Can you think of any examples in the Old Testament where people have made a stand against idol worship? What lessons is Paul teaching from Israel's history?

#### Read verse 22

7. What is the Lord's jealousy?
8. Why would 'drinking the cup of the Lord and demons' imply they think they're stronger (**verse 22**)?

#### Read 1 Corinthians 10:23 then 6:12

9. Like bookends around Paul's argument, what do we learn from them both? Do you think **verse 24** is a summary of his point?
10. "Anything is permissible" – how would people say that today to justify their choices? When do we say it – or think it – to justify our choices?
11. Are we more aware of rights or privileges? What are the key rights and privileges we have as Christians?

## Understanding conscience

12. What does our conscience come from? How do you know when your conscience is at work? What does it feel like?
13. Can you tell the difference between the accusation of the enemy and God working through your conscience? What is the difference? How are **10:13** and **10:24** helpful in this?

#### Read verses 29-33

14. Can you think of ways Jesus lived this out?

## Apply

15. What are the key attitudes to foster in our dealings with others on questions of culture and conscience? What is our aim in this?

#### Read 1 Corinthians 11:1

16. Do you have people whose example you follow?
17. There seems to be a higher principle in conscience, rights and privileges of love. Pray for each other to have these attitudes in our situations and relationships this week.

# 5. Real Living: The Tricky Bit about Hair

## 1 Corinthians 11:2-16

Sermon preached on 9th February

### Connect

1. Would you ever describe yourself as a feminist (whether you are male or female)?
2. When Jesus was on earth, what do you notice about his relationships with women?

### Discover

#### Read verse 3

These are contentious verses. The word 'head' can mean source, as in head of a river, or head in authority. Vaughan Roberts writes:

*"Christ's headship over Christians does not demean us, but rather enables us to flourish into the people that we long to be. He was so committed to our welfare that he was willing to go to the cross so that we might enter into the relationship with God for which we were made. In the same way, a wife will blossom if she is married to a husband who exercises his headship not to please himself, but in the interests of what is best for his wife, even if that kills him."*

3. What does Paul mean by saying the head of the woman is man' (**verse 3**)? How does his reference to the relationship of Christ and his father help us?

4. What truth is taught in **verses 11-12**? How does this add to the picture?

Verses 4-16 are to do with the cultural practice of covering heads in church. In Paul's day, men uncovered their heads in worship to signify respect. Wayne Grudem, author of 'Systematic Theology' writes:

*"Paul is concerned about head covering because it is an outward symbol of something else. But the meaning of such a symbol will vary according to how people in a given culture understand it. It would be wrong to require the same symbol today if it carried a completely different meaning."*

(From 'Evangelical Feminism and Biblical Truth', full article at [bit.ly/1a8abqJ](http://bit.ly/1a8abqJ))

5. Head coverings then were a way people distinguished between genders, but also between married and unmarried. What are some of the ways we distinguish between genders and use symbols to tell if someone is married or unmarried now?

*"The women were no longer segregated [as they had been in the synagogue] and they began to take an active role, which included praying and prophesying in churchy meetings (1 Corinthians 11:5). The changes were sudden and dramatic, so it is not surprising that they resulted in confusion, which led to some in Corinth taking the revolution too far. Paul writes in 11:2-16 to correct them."*

**'True Spirituality' by Vaughan Roberts**

6. Why does Paul feel it's helpful to use symbols to demonstrate our gender/marital status in the context of public worship?

7. Some people feel that these verses are a timeless principle, and that women should wear head coverings in church today. How do you

feel about this? How does the previous chapter on conscience help in this?

The meaning of **verse 10** is not clear. Angels are sometimes mentioned as guardians of the created order. The verse literally says 'she should have authority on her head' – so could be understood as a sign of her own authority, but also of her freedom as a woman to play her role.

8. Do you think men and women have different roles?
  
9. What things should we be careful about in our dress and behaviour?
  
10. How can we have and express suitable submission and humility towards God in worship and public prayer?
  
11. What can we learn from this passage about the relationship between our inward identity and our outward appearance? What is God most concerned with?
  
12. Do we ever give the impression to others that we have an over-familiar relationship with God?

## Apply

13. Are we submitting to one another when we gather (to spouses, leaders, fellow-worshippers)? If we are not, how does this spoil the worship?

14. What would it look like for us to more greatly 'inhabit' our unique role and freedoms as a man or woman in Christ?

## Pray

Pray for each other ideally in pairs of the same gender to have security in our identity, and to understand our role better in our family or marriage or in the church.

# 6. Real Living: Thinking about Communion

## 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

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Sermon preached on 16th February

### Connect

1. Have you had an experience where you've gone into a social situation and felt left out or unwelcome?

What are the signs that you have not been considered? What are the things that would have made a difference?

### Discover

2. Go back to **10:17**: 'We, who are many, are one body, because we all share in one bread' - what does this say about God's view of our unity?

Read verses 17-22

3. What is going on here? What does it expose?
4. Think about the meals Jesus had. Use specific examples if you can. How are they a contrast to the meals the Corinthian church seem to be having?

Read verses 23-26

5. When do we hear these verses in church? Can you describe your state of mind at that point? How do you prepare your heart and mind for communion?

The Lord's Supper - what we call communion, others call Eucharist (which means 'thanksgiving') - was first celebrated by Jesus in connection with the Passover meal. The broken body is a symbol of Christ's body given for sinners. The Passover meal remembered the 'passing over' of the angel of death described in Exodus 12 - and the Lord's Supper remembers Jesus' death for sinners.

6. What do we do when we have the communion meal?

Read verse 27

7. Are any of us worthy when we come to the Lord's Supper? If we fail to live in unity, how is this denying the meaning of what Christ did on the cross (**see verse 29**)?

Read verse 29

8. If this is referring to the body in terms of the church, rather than his body on the cross (as the context implies), what can we do to prepare ourselves for communion? Is it enough just to have a personal relationship with God? What social divisions may wrongly influence our attitudes?

Read 29-33

9. What do these verses reveal about God's fatherly discipline of his children? **Read also Hebrews 5:-11**. Why does God discipline us? What is he trying to teach us?

*“Love for those who like us is ordinary  
Love for those who are like us is narcissistic  
Love for those who are unlike us is extraordinary  
Love for those who dislike us is revolutionary”  
(from Vaughan Roberts ‘True Spirituality’)*

10. What kind of radical love does Christ call us to? How did he demonstrate that in his own life?

11. Where does the power and motivation to love like this come from?

## Apply

12. Write a private list, honestly, of those in a church setting who you are least likely to be warm or welcoming towards, or those you are least likely to notice. **Read Galatians 3:28.**

## Pray

Pray for each other to overcome prejudice.

Thank God for the gift of the Lord’s Supper.

**You could celebrate communion together as a group.**

# 7. Real Living: What are my Spiritual Gifts?

## 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

Sermon preached on 23rd February

## Connect

1. What kinds of gifts does today’s society seem to value in people? What gifts do young people aspire to have?

## Discover

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-11

### The Role of the Holy Spirit (verses 1-6)

2. What attributes/roles are ascribed to the Holy Spirit in this passage?

3. What does **verse 3** tell us about how a person comes to faith in Christ?

4. How might that influence our witness and praying for those who don’t know Him?

5. How do **verses 4-6** help us to understand the Trinity and the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit?

## The Role of Spiritual Gifts (verses 7-11)

6. Why are spiritual gifts given to believers? What should be our motivation for desiring Spiritual Gifts?
7. What do you think is the difference between the message of wisdom and the message of knowledge (**verse 8**)?
8. **Verse 9** refers to the gift of faith – surely all believers have this? Why do you think Paul mentions it specifically?
9. Can you think of any examples of believers who have displayed extraordinary faith?
10. How does **verse 11** help us understand why certain people have some gifts and others don't?

## Apply

11. **Verse 7** refers to spiritual gifts being intended for 'the common good'. How is this a challenge for us, living as we do in such an individualistic society, where personal fulfilment seems to be prioritised over the common good? How can we respond to this challenge?
12. What spiritual gifts would you like to see more of in our church? How about in your own life?

## Prayer

God's word encourages us to ask the Holy Spirit to give us spiritual gifts (**see Luke 11:11-13 and 1 Corinthians 12:31**).

Spend some time in pairs or small groups praying for one another to be filled with the Holy Spirit and to be equipped with spiritual gifts, for God's glory and for the edification of the Church.

Pray for Holland Road Baptist Church, that as a body of believers we would 'not lack any spiritual gifts' (**1 Corinthians 1:7**). Pray that those who have been blessed with spiritual gifts would use them wisely and boldly.

# Extra Study

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## Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. How do we understand the word 'gift'? What is the best gift you have ever been given by another person?

## Discover

Read **1 Corinthians 12** verses 1-11.

3. What is the relationship between the Holy Spirit and spiritual gifts?
4. Compare the list of spiritual gifts in **verses 7-10** with fruits of the Spirit in **Galatians 5:22-23**. What are the differences between the Spirit's fruit and His gifts? How are they related? (**See also 1 Corinthians 13:8**).
5. How might spiritual gifts be said to be different from abilities or talents?

## Apply

6. What spiritual gifts have others in the church used to bless you and the wider body of believers at Holland Road?
7. How can we receive spiritual gifts from the Holy Spirit?

## Prayer

Spend some time praying on your own asking the Holy Spirit to indwell you (maybe listen to a quiet worship song whilst you do this). Perhaps you need to ask forgiveness for not acknowledging the Holy Spirit is as much a part of the Godhead as the Father and the Son.

Pray as a group or in pairs that you would 'live by the Spirit and keep in step with the Spirit' (**Galatians 5:25**) in all areas of your life.

# 8. Real Living: Knee, Neck or Big Toe

## 1 Corinthians 12:12-30

Sermon preached on 2nd March

### Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. Have you ever done a personality test, gift test? What were you? Did it help?

### Discover

Read verses 12-14

3. Look particularly at verse 13. Why would this have been so radical for the first readers of this letter? Why is it still radical now?

Read verses 15-24

Paul uses the body and its parts to teach us important truths. To explore this for ourselves, first a game.

Allocate each member of the group a body part (e.g. brain, eye, ear, neck, shoulder, elbow, stomach, thumb, knee, foot, hand, big toe). Try speaking to each other as that part, first as if you are the main or only thing, perhaps describing what you do and why it is important, (**verses 17, 21**) and then as if you are envious of another part, saying why you think you're not as good as them (**see verses 15-16**).

4. Each take time to think into the metaphor, and identify personally with one of the parts of the body. Explain your choice, listen to everyone else, then talk about how you fit together.
5. Looking at whole passage, how does the picture of the body help us to understand the functioning of:
  - This group?
  - Our church?
  - Missional communities?
  - Worldwide church?

Read verses 25-26.

6. Do all parts have equal concern for each other? If one part suffers or rejoices does every part suffer or rejoice?

Read verses 27-31

7. Whose body is it?
8. How would you answer someone who says the church is a random collection of people?
9. Why does Paul list the particular roles in verse 28?

10. What would happen if, for example ...

- All were teachers?
- Everyone was everything?

11. Considering your answers to these questions, how should they affect:

- The way you use your own gifts?
- The way you respond to the gifts of others?

## Apply

12. Think of someone very different from you - how can they help you?

13. What are three practical ways in which you could 'be part of the body' this week?

## Prayer suggestions

Pray for parts of the world wide body of Christ who are suffering.

Praise God for parts of his body that are rejoicing

Offer who you are in the body to each other and to God

# 9. Real Living: The most Excellent Way

1 Corinthians 12:31-13:3

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Sermon preached on 9th March

## Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. All share some words that come into your head of love songs...

## Discover

3. How should the way of love (**verse 1**) influence our attitude to spiritual gifts?
4. What are the four different ways of living described in these verses?
5. For each what would it look like living it without love? For each, why might we see it as an easier option (even the last very costly one)? Why is real love sometimes the hardest thing?
6. The Holland Road vision statement is FREE. What does this stand for? What would happen if the last E was missing?
7. Describe some of the experiences of love in your life, and what characterises them.

8. Either as an activity (with paper and crayons) or a discussion; how would you draw love? And if love was a colour what would it be and why?
9. What is the role of the Holy Spirit in love? How have you experienced this?
10. Who is this love for?
11. What are some examples from life of the transforming power of love?

## Apply

12. What things in your life are you doing without love?
13. How can you resolve to change this in the coming week?

## Prayer suggestions

Ask for forgiveness for times when you have done things without love.

Thank God for particular signs of love you see around you.

Praise God for his love.

# 10. Real Living: Becoming 'Grown-Up'

## 1 Corinthians 13: 4-13

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Sermon preached on 23rd March

### Connect

1. How has what you discussed last week influenced your life this week?
2. Share with each other times when you have heard this passage read out. Which sticks most in the memory?

### Discover

Read verses 4-7

3. Why is this passage so popular at weddings? Should it be?

### 15 marks of love

#### 4. Either:

- a) Share times we have been on the receiving end of one of these features of love, and the effect it had on us, or
- b) See if you can act out some of the 'marks of love', and others have to guess which they are

5. Which of the 15 do you find the hardest to do/be?

6. Is it impossible to live a life of love?

The first two in the list are patience and kindness. One is inward, one is outward.

7. In what ways are inward and outward qualities of love linked together? Can you have one without the other?

8. Are the rest of the definitions of love either inwardly or outwardly directed?

9. Think about the UP-IN-OUT triangle (relating to God, other believers, and those outside the church family). Which of these qualities of love have you needed most in your relationships UP, IN and OUT?

10. Do people look at the church and see love? If not, why not?

### Read John 13:35

11. What are examples in your current experience of church and community where people could see Christ through our love for one another? Where is there potential for developing this?

12. **Look at verses 4, 5, 6 and 7** and think of examples of where Jesus displayed the marks of love in each verse. You could do this in smaller groups.

### Read verses 8-13

13. There are three metaphors/pictures/ideas used here: the first in **verses 8-10** ('passing away'), then one in **verse 11** ('childhood') and another in **verse 12** ('mirror'). What are they each trying to say? How do they relate to each other?

14. Why does the passage begin and end with love?

### Apply

15. Pick one or two that you want to put into practice in the coming week. Not just generally but in specific situations. Share with your neighbour. Then sit in fours and tell the others what your partner said.

16. How can our church be more loving?

### Prayer suggestions

Praise God for Jesus' life of love

Pray for God's love to be seen in specific places and circumstances in your life and in your community

# 11. Real Living: Tongues and Prophecy

## 1 Corinthians 14

Sermons preached on 30th March & 6th April

### Connect

1. How do you know when it is God speaking? Can you share a time when someone has given a word of prophecy and you have found it helpful?

### Discover

Read 1 Corinthians 14

Michael Green uses this definition of prophecy: “A word from the Lord through a member of his body, inspired by His Spirit and given to build up the rest of the body.” The word used for tongues can also be translated as languages.

Read verses 1-5

2. What are the three things the gift of prophecy can bring in the life of a church? Why is prophecy able to edify the church in this way?
3. If a “word of prophecy” is none of these things, how should we react to it?

Read verses 6-25

4. What definition of the gift of tongues can we build from these verses (**verses 2 and 4** also add to the picture)?

5. What are the limitations of tongues? What are the wrong attitudes and assumptions about tongues that Paul is trying to correct?

From verses 6-28

6. What is the ideal scenario for the use of tongues for the edification of the church? What helpful practical advice is there for church now?

Read verses 26-33

7. From what you read, how do you imagine a typical service in a Corinth church? Have you ever been at services which had the same struggles?

David Prior writes:

*“A fundamental truth is implicit in Paul’s teaching. Speaking in tongues (and indeed prophecy, verse 30) is not an uncontrollable phenomenon... [God’s] Spirit does not override the wills and minds of human beings. On the contrary, in love he wins our willing cooperation and he never forces us to do anything. In all examination of spiritual gifts it is essential to assert this principle of self-control.”*

6. Using the advice in this passage, but also what you know of God’s word and Spirit, can you suggest criteria for testing, weighing and evaluating words of prophecy?

Read verses 34-40 then read the start of 1 Corinthians 11:5.

David Prior in his commentary writes:

*“whatever this section is teaching, it is not telling women to keep quiet in church.”*

Paul is talking about certain married women (**verse 35**) who had shown defiance to the point of acting as if ‘the word of God began with them’ (**verse 36**). The word for ‘speak’ can be translated as ‘chattering’....talking too much!

7. If a lack of self-control can be destructive in a church gathering, what positive effects can self-control have on it? Think from the perspective of different people within the gathering.
  
8. Skimming through the whole chapter again, which verse would you put forward as the main point Paul wants to make?

## Apply

9. What have you learned from this study that could help you in your perspective on the use of tongues and prophecy in church?

## Pray

Pray for each other in small groups, that we would be given the gift of prophecy for ourselves and for the church, so that we can know God better.

**Holland Road Baptist Church  
Small Group Studies  
Printed January 2014**