



Bible
BOOK CLUB

July 2021 - 1 Corinthians

OPENING PRAYER

God who calls us into community, bind us together in your love for the sake of building up the Body of Christ. Send your Spirit to stir our imagination. Strengthen our faith in the study of your holy Word so that we might continue to proclaim your Good News in and through your Son Jesus Christ. Amen.

BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1. Paul spent about a year and a half in the port city of Corinth, a city in which he intentionally chose to spend time as a missionary because of its pluralistic and diverse community make up. He spent his time teaching and sharing the Good News of Jesus, then moved on to another city after his ministry was complete. After he left, he began to hear reports of rumblings that were growing into conflict and was affecting the life of the community in many different ways. Paul, still feeling deep love for the community, took pen to paper to write to his friends in Christ to remind them that they were not living out what they proclaimed to believe in Jesus.

As you reflect on the community of faith you belong to, can you confidently say that as a community you are living out all the things you say you believe? Who would you trust to point out any harsh news that you were not practicing what you preached? What are some of the most important things you believe together as a community of faith?

2. One of the “rumblings” that Paul felt he needed to address in his letter to his friends was about idolatry. After Paul left town, there were other teachers like Apollos and Peter that came to teach and preach the Good News of Jesus among the Corinthians. As we know, church leaders bring different gifts and foibles to the communities they serve and as a result, some are favoured over others. We all have our favourites. However, as sometimes happens, “favouring” became “followings” in Corinth, creating unhealthy divisions. Paul reminds them that we worship Jesus and not those who proclaim his Good News.

We gather as church to worship Jesus. What are the ways you have noticed that we tend to worship other aspects of our church? Is that idolatry? How has your faith community grieved the leaving of a pastor? Has your faith community subconsciously or consciously favoured one pastor over another? How can favouritism affect the ministry of the church today?

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

3. Another issue that divided the Corinthians was about meat that was sacrificed in the local temple. There was a difference of opinion between Jewish Christians and Gentiles as to how to respond to this issue given that that first and foremost our loyalty is to God in Jesus. Do you eat the meat or don't you? Paul gives them an answer that focuses on Jesus while loving their neighbour. For example, if there are others who might see you eating the meat in the temple and interpret that we're all free in Christ and all Gods are ok, then don't eat the meat for the sake of being a loving example to your neighbour. If there isn't anyone around and you want to eat the meat, know that you can be confident that idols are not God and only God is God and so go ahead and eat the meat. Confused? Don't worry, it is confusing. What Paul is basically saying is that God is the only God, full stop. If what you do sets an example to confuse that issue in any way, then be clear in your actions and examples of proclaiming God in Jesus for the sake of loving your neighbour more than yourself and your stomach.

What are some untraditional ways you might describe a "Godly example" in your own context? Think of a person whom you feel exemplifies Godly integrity. What is it about that person that seems Godly? How is God's love at the center of this story about food?

4. Another gripe that Paul addresses in his letter is about worship. As the community gathered to worship God, there were a few who were praying out loud in dramatic ways and there were people who were talking over one another and basically creating chaos. Paul uses the metaphor of the 'body' and says that in the assembly, God's Spirit works through all its members in a unified and orderly way, motivated in God's love for the sake of building up the church. All members are to use their gifts and roles to serve the whole community and to seek the well-being of others. Anything else is just distraction and attention seeking.

What is the difference between disruption and distraction in worship? What are the most obvious gifts that are present in your worshipping community? What are the less obvious gifts that are present in your worshipping community? Do all members contribute their gifts to the "work of the people" – the liturgy? What would it take to enable people to share their gifts in worship? Is there equity reflected in your worshipping life together?

5. Paul hears that some in the church are having a hard time believing that Jesus' death and Resurrection was real, and they questioned if it held any meaning for Jesus' followers now and in the future. Paul asserts that the Resurrection is an indispensable part of the Gospel. It is the promise of life and future hope for the whole world.

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BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

1 Corinthians 13 is considered the “love” text and used at many a wedding. In light of Paul’s view of love in a community divided, do you now hear this text differently? Where are the divisions in our church today and how does Paul’s advice of loving our neighbour first, inform our life together today? If you had to sum up in a few sentences what Jesus’ death and Resurrection meant to your faith, what would you say?

CLOSING PRAYER

God of abundant love you are faithful in gathering your people, in gifting us, in equipping us, in encouraging us, in forgiving us and growing us in love for one another. Enliven this body to be your Living Word in the world for those who seek to know you. Increase our faith in you always, in and through the promise of the Resurrection, and unite our divisions through your holy and reconciling peace. Through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

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