



A Thoroughly Modern Congregation: 1st Corinthians

Answers from the 1st Century Church to 21st Century Christians, Lesson 6

Sunday Sunday

In the ancient world, Sunday was just another day. The Jews had a regular Sabbath, a day of rest every Saturday. The Greeks and Romans had irregular holidays instead of a regular day off. At least once every ten days there was a festival to one god or another. To make their calendar work, there was an entire week of holidays, the Saturnalia, wedged at the end of the tenth month, December! To honor Julius and Augustus Caesar they made two new months, July and August, and ditched month 11 and 12, moving the eighth month (October) into 10th place, the ninth month (November) into the 11th place and, well, you get the picture. Sunday was a work day.

But Sunday was the day the Lord rose from the dead. To mark the occasion, Christians at an early date met for weekly worship on Sunday evenings after work. The service consisted of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs as well as Scripture, both Old Testament and New Testament (as it was being written) and prayer. It seems in Corinth the service developed a new twist—the agape meal. After the service the congregants shared a common meal after which they celebrated the Lord’s Supper. It was also the case in Ephesus. It was a Sunday service with the Lord’s Supper that featured Paul’s farewell (which lasted until midnight). Eutychus fell asleep in the windowsill and fell down two stories to his death. Paul brought him back to life!

To this day the Lord’s Supper concludes the worship service whenever it is celebrated (without the potluck meal serving as an intermission).

Sunday became a day off by law under the Christian emperor Constantine the Great in 321 A.D as the worship became firmly rooted in a morning service.

Procedure

It would be good for the participants to read the verses in 1st Corinthians ahead of time. Selected verses will be read during the course of the class, but not the entire section.

Be prepared to answer the discussion questions. Give them some thought.

Answers so far!

Divisions based on Leaders?

- We follow Christ!

Access to God through Wisdom or Power?

- The Cross is God’s wisdom and power!

Role of the Holy Spirit?

- Reveals the Gospel.

Nature of Leadership in the Church?

- Leaders serve the believers.

The special role of the pastor.

- He brings us God's Word

The purpose of discipline

- Turn souls from sin.

I demand my rights.

- Better to be wronged

Can I Eat Meat Anywhere? 10

Chapter 10 is a difficult chapter to put together. It is, however, speaking about one problem—meat sacrificed to idols--taking a look at it from three different angles. Paul first attacks the idea that “since we are God’s people, we can do no wrong.” How does he bring out similarities between Israel in the desert and the Corinthians?

What sin does Paul particularly emphasize in Israel’s desert wanderings?

How do people turn God’s gospel, “God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear” into Law? How can we avoid that pitfall?

Now Paul turns to the problem—what is it? And how does it impact a new Christian? What surprising comment does Paul make about idols?

What is the guiding principle for all Christian living? Why might hanging out in a pagan temple not be the best idea?

The sexual revolution

- Your body belongs to Christ

Should I get married?

- If you need to

Can I eat meat?

- Yes, but be a good example

He’s just the pastor

- Hold him in esteem for his work

What if you notice the pastor had been hanging out at the slot machines at a neighborhood casino for the past ten hours?

Our Worship is Wild! 11

Paul addresses two problems in worship in chapter 11 and he uses two different lines of reasoning. The first is whether men should have long hair and women should have their heads covered. The second is outrageous abuses of the Lord's Supper. Compare the reasoning of verse 16 and 23. How will this affect the application of these verses for us?

In Greek culture men wore their hair short and uncovered, women, long and covered. To stand out, prostitutes (male and female) did the opposite. How does Paul deal with the sexual roles shown in apparel without sinking to sexism?

How much would it take for the District President to tell Green Valley that we should stop having services, "for your meetings do more harm than good"? What was the outrage going on in Corinth with regards to the Lord's Supper and how could this happen? Why couldn't some Corinthian communicants not recognize the body and blood of the Lord?

Lutherans have steadfastly used Paul's words to prove the Real Presence, that Christ's body and blood really are present in with the bread and wine. It does not represent Christ's body and blood (Reformed) nor is its substance changed into only Christ's body and blood (Roman Catholic). Explain his logic and also explain why I would encourage someone who doesn't believe in the Real Presence not to commune with us.

Did Jesus Talk About This?

It is obvious Jesus talked about the Lord's Supper. Paul quotes him.

When did Jesus talk about propriety in worship?