

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Discovery # 26 – Adult Bible Study – 2025 & 2026

Discovering the Bible

Notes – The Church

April 14 & 15

1 Corinthians 3:1-23, Conflict and Cooperation

1 Corinthians 11:17-34, The Lord's Supper

1 Corinthians 12:1-31, Gifts for the Body of Christ

1 Corinthians 13:1-13, The Greatest Gift

1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, The Collection for Jerusalem

Ephesians 2:11-22, United in Christ

Ephesians 4:1-16, One Lord, One Spirit

1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, Life in Community

1 Peter 2:1-10, A Spiritual Household

INTRODUCTION

“The church meets to imagine what our lives can be like if the gospel were true.”

Walter Brueggemann

1. The growth of the church was the result of the Holy Spirit's dynamic activity.
2. The Gospels focus on the life, miracles, and earthly ministry of Jesus.
3. Paul's letters focus on the meaning of Jesus' death and resurrection, the theology of salvation (justification by faith), and ethical instructions for church life.
4. The various churches at Antioch, Jerusalem, Ephesus, Corinth, and elsewhere were local manifestations of the corporate whole, the body.
5. The Acts of the Apostles gives the story of the emerging, expanding church.
6. Most of what we know about the life, organization, and ministry of the early church comes from the letters within the New Testament that were sent to churches and individuals by Paul and others.
7. Readings from five letters form the basis of this discussion of the life of the early church.
8. These letters emphasize the importance of living in community, celebrating the sacraments, embracing the call to a new life, and sharing a common hope in Jesus Christ.

SCRIPTURES

9. 1 Corinthians 3:1-23 The Apostle Paul addresses the deep-seated divisions and spiritual immaturity within the Corinthian church.

a. Paul shifts the focus from human leadership to God's sovereign role in building the church, using metaphors of farming and construction to emphasize unity and accountability.

10. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, Paul severely corrects the Corinthian church for abusing the Lord's Supper, the Corinthian church gatherings were doing more harm than good due to cliques, selfishness, and neglect of the poor.

a. Taking communion while neglecting, despising, or causing division among fellow believers is taking it in an "unworthy manner".

11. 1 Corinthians 12:1-31 teaches that the Holy Spirit imparts diverse spiritual gifts to believers for the common good, not for individual pride, and establishes that, despite different roles, the Church functions as one cohesive body of Christ.

a. Believers are encouraged to seek gifts that build up the church, leading into the topic of love as the foundational motivation (chapter 13).

12. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 defines true Christian love (*agape*) as the supreme, indispensable virtue, surpassing all spiritual gifts. Written by Paul to a divided church, it highlights that without love, accomplishments like prophecy, tongues, or generosity are meaningless.

a. Chapter 13 emphasizes that love is active, eternal, and patient, and that faith, hope, and love abide forever.

b. Chapter 13 emphasizes the Permanence of Love (13:8-13): Unlike spiritual gifts (prophecy, tongues, knowledge) which are temporary and will pass away, love is eternal and "never fails".

13. 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 9:1-15, outline Paul's instructions for a voluntary, organized collection to support needy believers in Jerusalem

a. Giving is described as a grace, a free gift flowing from love and God's grace. The ultimate purpose of giving is to glorify God and express love for others.

14. Ephesians 2:11-22 focuses on the theme of reconciliation, describing how Jesus Christ's sacrifice bridges the gap between God and humanity and breaks down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles, creating a unified "new humanity".

a. This new community is built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ Himself as the chief cornerstone.

15. Ephesians 4:1-16, One Lord calls believers to maintain the unity of the Spirit through humility and love, grounded in the "one Lord" (Jesus Christ), one faith, and one body.

a. Paul urges living a worthy life, emphasizing that diverse spiritual gifts are given to equip the church to mature into Christ's likeness

b. Christ is the head and the source of all gifts, holding the church together.

16. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-28, Paul concludes his letter with a series of rapid-fire exhortations focused on church order, personal spiritual habits, and the faithfulness of God.

a. Paul addresses how members should relate to their leaders and one another, prescribes essential inner attitudes (joy, prayer, and gratitude), and provides guidelines for spiritual discernment.

17. 1 Peter 2:1-10 calls believers to abandon sinful behaviors and, as reborn individuals, crave spiritual growth.

a. The central focus is on defining believers by their spiritual status rather than their earthly circumstances.

b. Emphasizes that every believer has direct access to God and a role in offering spiritual sacrifices.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1. Spiritual Maturity vs. Immaturity I Corinthians (1-4)** What are some signs that a believer is acting as an "infant" or "worldly" rather than spiritual?
- 2. The Role of Leaders and the Foundation I Corinthians (5-15)** How should we view church leaders like Paul, Apollos, or current pastors, based on vs. 5-9?
- 3. In what areas of your life** do you need to move from "milk" to "solid food" in your spiritual journey?
- 4. The Nature of Spiritual Gifts I Corinthians (12:1-11).** Why does Paul start this discussion by reminding the Corinthians of their past idolatry (vv. 2-3)? What does "Jesus is Lord" have to do with spiritual gifts?
- 5. According to 1 Corinthians 12:7**, what is the ultimate purpose of spiritual gifts?

6. **According to 1 Corinthians (12:27-31)**, how does verse 27 define our identity, and why is this so important for church unity?
7. **The Work of the Cross: Peace and Reconciliation Ephesians (2:13-18)** How did Christ abolish the law of commandments to create one new humanity (v. 15-16)?
8. **Ephesians 4:1-16 (vv. 1–3)**: What does it mean practically to "walk in a manner worthy of the calling" in daily life? Which of the virtues listed (humility, gentleness, patience) do you find hardest to maintain, and why?

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Primary Source: Discovering the Bible: A New Generation, published by The Kerygma Program, Pittsburgh, PA. Boyd Lien, author.