

How to go to Church

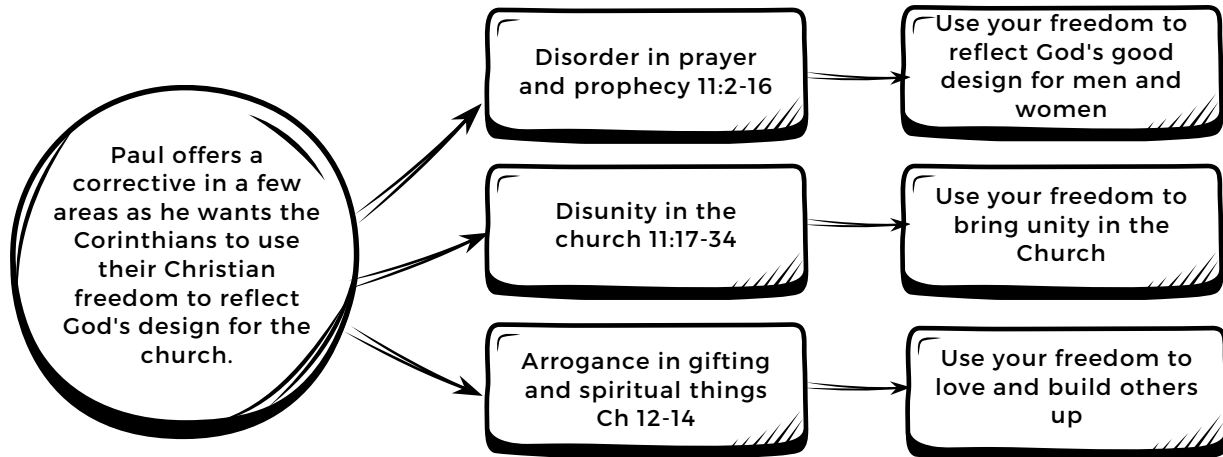
BIBLE STUDIES BOOK 2
EXPLORING 1 CORINTHIANS 11-14



Part 2: Use your freedom to build up the Church

1 Corinthians 11-14

In Chapters 8-10 Paul instructs the Corinthians to use the freedom they have in Christ for the benefit of weak believers, non-believers, and themselves. Now we see Paul turn his attention to how the misguided 'freedom' of the Corinthians is affecting their church gatherings.



Study 4a - 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Use your freedom to reflect God's good design for households



Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16



Abuse - in any form - is never acceptable. Sadly, many have distorted this passage and others like it to harm others - to distort the very nature of God and his beloved children. The relationship between God the Father and God the Son is marked by love and care for the other, not powerplays, intimidation, forcefulness, and manipulation.



Exploring the Passage

- Knowing that God the Father and God the Son are co-equal. What does 11:3 teach us about the equality of men and women?
- Knowing that God the Father and God the Son have different roles. What does 11:3 teach us about the different roles of husbands and wives?
- What does 11:11-12 teach about the mutual dependence of men and women?



Digging Deeper

- How does the true equality in the Godhead challenge our culture's view of equality?

Where do you go to for an example of the perfect relationship? The Bible encourages us to look to God himself. He is a relational God - Father, Son, and Spirit - who lives in perfect relationship. He made us to be relational - men and women - in his image.

- How does the relationship of the Trinity challenge what our culture tells us is important in modern relationships: *Independence, Interchangeable roles/no difference in roles*
- How does God the Father challenge our view of what headship is?
- How does God the Son challenge our view of what headship is?

In Corinth, not wearing a head scarf/hairstyle communicated a rejection of the Bible's teaching on the different roles of men and women. This cultural symbol may not translate into our society today, but Paul makes his argument from the nature of the Trinity - God's good way built into creation doesn't change.

Have you distorted the Bible to claim 'rights' that you use to wrong others?

Are you using your freedom to show your own wisdom or God's wisdom?



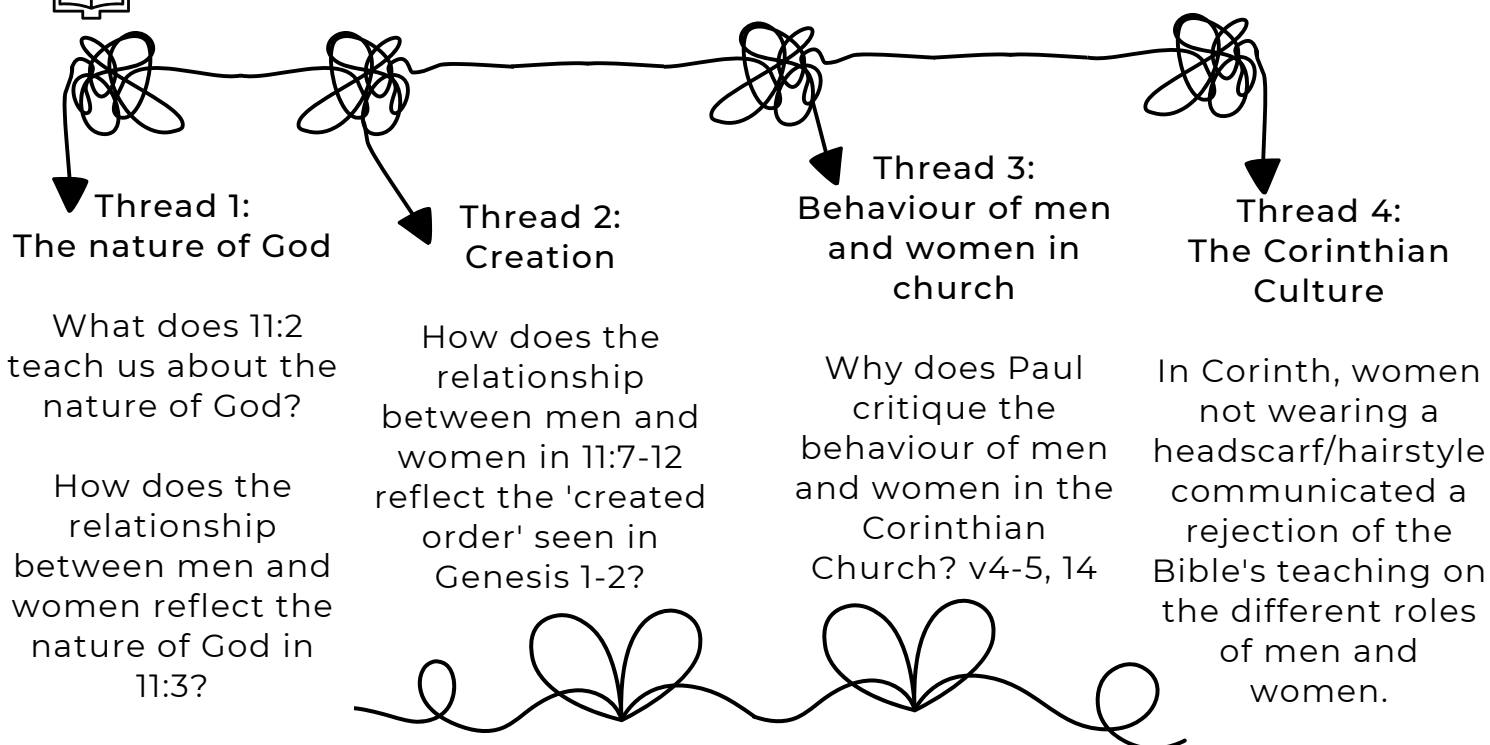
Study 4b - 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

Use your freedom to reflect God's good design for men and women

Paul often starts with the Corinthian's behaviour, and then applies the gospel to the situation. To try and untangle the knot that is 1 Corinthians 11, we can backward map it. We can start with the gospel truth, then the problems in Corinth, and finally consider how we apply it.



Read 1 Corinthians 11:2-16



Rather than being a tangled mess, the church should reflect the love of God. Paul wants the Corinthians to reflect the love of God in their relationships with each other and in their church gatherings. Church should be a reflection of who God is and his design for the world - it should be a taste of heaven - not a place of disorder, disunity, and disobedience. Having untangled a bit of 1 Corinthians 11, we can think about what it means to sew God's love into our gatherings.



Digging Deeper

- How can we reflect God's love in our church gatherings?
- How can we pray and prophesy in a way that builds up the church and reflects God's plan for the world?
- How does the relationship of the Trinity challenge what our culture tells us is important in modern relationships: *Independence, Interchangeable roles/no difference in roles*

Have you distorted the Bible to claim 'rights' that you use to wrong others?

Are you using your freedom to show your own wisdom or God's wisdom?



Study 5 - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Use your freedom to reflect God's plan for unity in the church

Paul continues to address issues that the Corinthian wrote to him about or that he has heard about. The passage has a similar structure that we have seen earlier:



Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-34



Exploring the Passage

- Why does Paul say the Corinthians church gatherings cause more harm than good?
- What should the Corinthians be prioritising when they come to church?
- What change is required from the Corinthians? 11:28-29 and 11:33-34



Digging Deeper

- Examine yourself - do you come to church for a Jesus-and-me experience or for the sake of God's people?
- Discern the body - how do your actions at church tell the world that we are one united body?

"I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you"

"To show which of you have God's approval"

We are not the Corinthian Church! Not all of their problems are our problems - our gatherings do a lot of good! But we can still ask the hard questions.

In the ancient world people struggled to eat and drink more than they do in modern Australia, but our culture is far lonelier. We must expand our definition of rich and poor to include rich and poor in relationship. How might we, through our actions - or lack of action - be treating relationally poor people the same way the Corinthians treated those who were financially poor?

If you don't intentionally talk to someone you don't know each Sunday - why not?

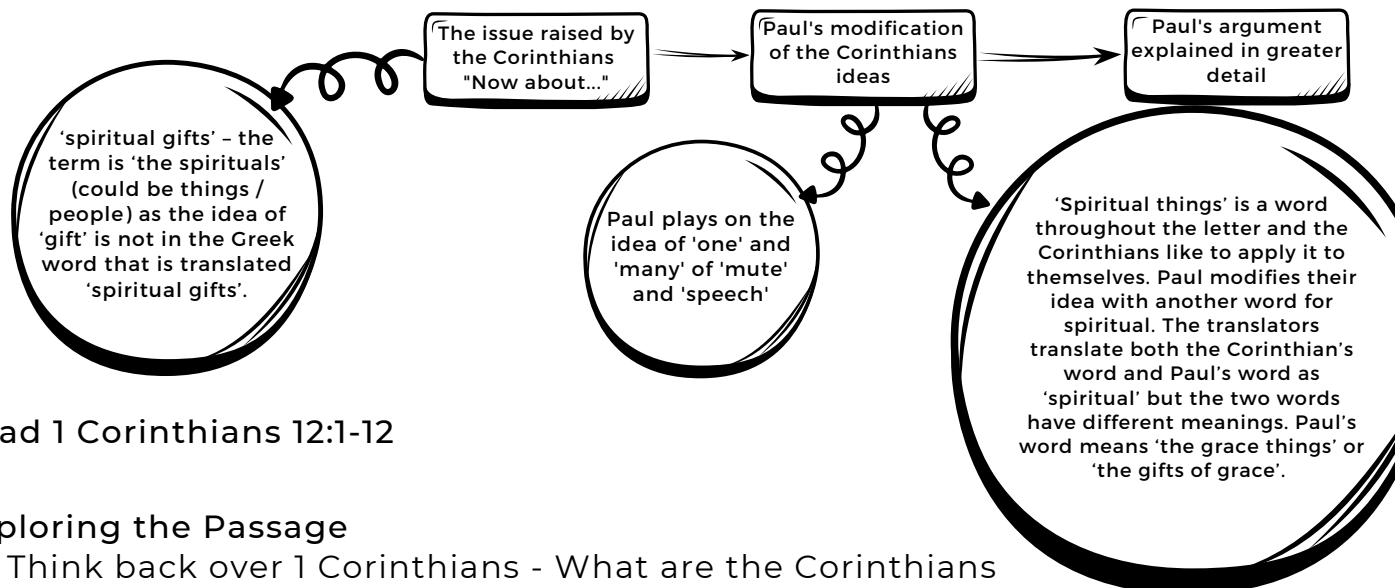
How are you showing hospitality to bring unity in the church? Food is important - that is why Paul stresses food in chapters 8-10 and again here! Where you eat is where you belong. Food can cause division - but also brings people together!



Study 6 - 1 Corinthians 12:1-12

Use your freedom to reflect God's plan gifts in the church

Paul continues to address issues that the Corinthian wrote to him about or that he has heard about. The passage has a similar structure that we have seen earlier:



Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-12



Exploring the Passage

- Think back over 1 Corinthians - What are the Corinthians concerned about? 4:10, 8:1-2,9. 10:22,33. 11:18-22

Paul modifies the Corinthians attitude as he takes their focus off one gift they consider a special spiritual marker and focuses on the many gifts.

- What does Paul want the Corinthians to focus on?
 - 12:3
 - 12:4
 - 12:5
 - 12:6
 - 12:7

- What do all the gifts have in common?
- Why does God give good gifts to his people?



Digging Deeper

- How are you using your God-given gifts for the good of Christ's body?
- When have your gifts caused you to look away from God and his church and focus on yourself instead?
- When have the gifts of others caused you to look away from God and his church and focus on them instead? *"I follow Apollos"*

Remember that Paul writes with sarcasm and irony - he doesn't actually think they are 'strong' or 'wise'

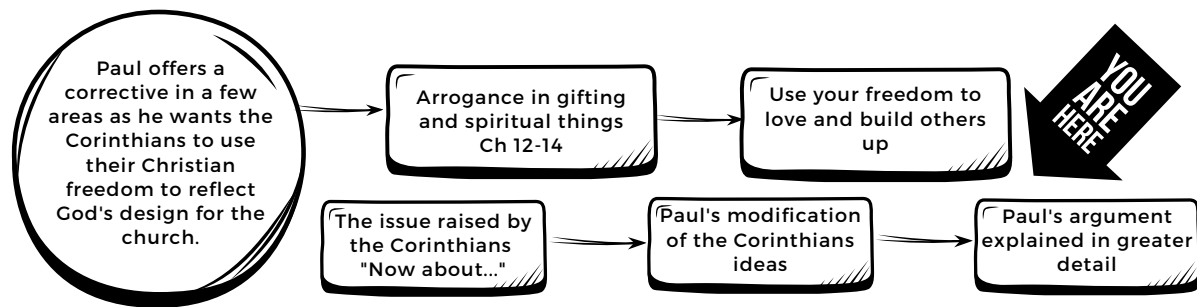
What are you focused on?
Yourself, your own strength, and own agenda - or God and his church?



Study 7 - 1 Corinthians 12:12-31

Use your freedom to build up the church

This passage continues the logical flow of the start of Chapter 12 and the whole book.



Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-31



Exploring the Passage

- What are the unhelpful patterns of thinking shown in this passage?
- What does God do in this passage?
- What does this passage teach us about Jesus?
- What commands are given to members of the body? 12:25-26, 31



Digging Deeper

- How does the design of God's church - the body of Christ - challenge our culture's view of equality?
- How does the design of God's church - the body of Christ - challenge our culture's view of honour, dignity, and value?
- The Corinthians divided the church into 'spiritual' and 'unspiritual'. Re-read 12:1-3 - what does Chapter 12 teach us about where the division between 'spiritual' and 'unspiritual' is? How does this change how we relate to each other as a church?

Where are you tempted to judge people's value and worth through a cultural lens?

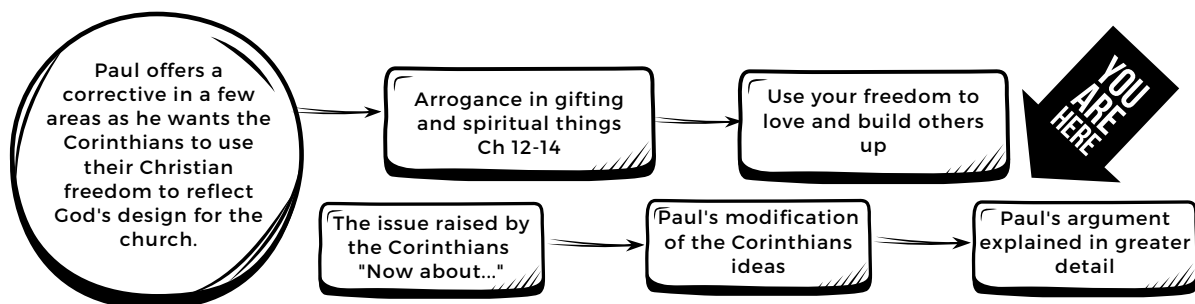
Is there someone in church who is overlooked? Maybe because their gifts are not as glamorous as others? How could you encourage them to serve in the church?



Study 8 - 1 Corinthians 12:31b - 13:13

Use your freedom to love

This passage continues the logical flow of the start of Chapter 12 and the whole book.



Read 1 Corinthians 12:31 - 13:13



Exploring the Passage

- Think back over 1 Corinthians - What are the Corinthians concerned about? 4:10, 8:1-2,9. 10:22,33. 11:18-22
- What does Paul say he will do in verse 12:31?
- Paul shows the Corinthians a more excellent way as he contrasts love, with their own behaviour

LOVE ...

= patient and kind
 ≠ envy, boast, proud
 ≠ dishonour, self-seeking,
 easily angered, record wrongs
 ≠ delight in evil

BUT THE CORINTHIANS ...

1 Cor 11:21
 1 Cor 4:6-7, 8:1
 1 Cor 8:10-12, 6:1
 1 Cor 6:15-16, 5:1-2

- What is the 'Corinthian Way' and what is the 'Excellent Way'?
- What lasts forever and what passes away? 13:8



Digging Deeper

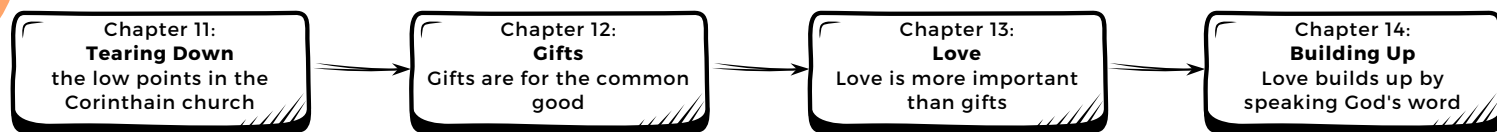
- Do your thoughts and actions show that you are living for eternity or for today?
- Where and how will you seek reconciliation with those you have failed to love?
- Where and how will you use gifts God has graced you with in love to build others up in Christ?



Study 9 - 1 Corinthians 14

Use your freedom to speak to build others up

Chapter 14 brings together a lot of the key ideas of Chapters 11-13.



Read 1 Corinthians 14



Exploring the Passage

- Read through the passage and discuss what it teaches about the difference between speaking in tongues and speaking words of prophecy.
- Which is more beneficial for the church? Why is it more beneficial?

Did you know? The only definition given for prophecy in the New Testament is in Revelation 19:10?

This passage is not a 'how-to' guide for church, but a rebuke to the specific practices of the Corinthian church. While the Corinthian church was marked by disunity, disorder, chaos, and trying to look good, our church doesn't struggle with all these issues in the same way.

- Using this passage and what we have seen in 1 Corinthians so far, what do you think a Corinthian church gathering would have looked like?
- How is this different to our Sunday gatherings?
- How does Paul encourage people to remain silent for the good of the church? v27, 28, 30, 33, 34, 40. Which of these are you comfortable with? Which makes you uncomfortable?



Digging Deeper

- What are the helpful aspects of our church gatherings and growth groups that should be encouraged?
- What attitudes might we need to change when we participate in church and growth group?
- How do you use words to build others up?

Paul assumes women will prophesy in church in 1 Cor 11:5 - so he can't mean being absolutely silent all the time! How can v35, when read with Ch. 11, help us to understand what kind of speech would be unhelpful and should be avoided?

Are you going to church and growth group for the sake of others? Or only speaking to build yourself up?

In discussions do you wait for your chance to get on your 'hobby horse'? Or meaningfully engage with others?

