**BEING THE CHURCH**

**“Do Everything in Love” - 1st Corinthians 16**

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“Being the Church”. We began this series about 4 months ago, and each week we studied a chapter of Corinthians to learn about “Being The Church” that God wants us to be. Paul, in his writings to the church in Corinth that he planted a few years prior, addressed several key issues, gave them clear instructions and taught them many things, including;

* The importance of Unity
* *God’s wisdom* over Human knowledge
* Dealing with immorality in the church
* Marriages and Relationships
* Idolatry – (meat sacrificed to idols)
* The Lord’s Supper
* Order in Worship
* Spiritual Gifts
* The Greatest is Love – what love is, and isn’t
* **The importance of the Resurrection of Jesus!**

**1st Corinthians 15:3“**For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, **4**that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures,”

**1st Corinthians 16 – The Final Chapter**

**1st Cor. 16:1-4 “Now about the collection for the Lord’s people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2*On the first day of every week*, each one of you should *set aside a sum of money* in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. 4If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.”**

**Two opening thoughts: Meeting on Sunday & Offerings**

Meeting on Sunday

 Did you ever wonder why churches meet on Sunday? This verse (1st Corinthians 16:2) is the very reason why most church throughout the ages decided to have their meetings, masses and services on Sunday. It’s interesting because Christianity is clearly based on Judaism at its roots based on the fact that Jesus, all of his apostles and every writer of the New Testament was Jewish (with the possible exception of Luke, who may have had a Jewish Mother, like Timothy, *like me*). The reason that’s interesting is that for Jews then and now, the gathering is on the Sabbath, and the Sabbath is the last day of the week (Saturday for us), not Sunday.

However, since Jesus rose from the dead on the first day of the week, and Paul tells the Corinthians to take a collection on the first day of the week, our church fathers decided about 1900 years ago to meet on Sunday morning instead of the Sabbath. In modern society, we have found that it’s the best time and day to meet, but we strongly urge you to have a day of rest in your week.

Offerings:

The early church received an offering (gifts) each week to cover the expenses of the Apostles (*although Paul chose to not accept his payment - 1st Cor. 9),* and the money would be sent to the church in Jerusalem. This was decided early on (Acts 11) when a prophet by the name a Agabus predicted that there would be famine and hardship, particularly for those in the area of Judea (Jerusalem), so the churches should send money to them.

**Acts 11:29-30“**The disciples, as each one was able, decided to provide help for the brothers and sisters living in Judea. **30**This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.”

This is why we receive offerings when we meet on Sunday, although many of us give online regularly or through the mail.

**1st Cor. 16:5-9“After I go through *Macedonia*, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. 6Perhaps I will stay with you for a while, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. 7For I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. 8But I will stay on at Ephesus *until Pentecost,* 9because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.”**

Macedonia:

Here Paul is laying out his travel plans. He is in Ephesus, but wants to come to them and spend some significant time with them. But first he feels the need to go to Macedonia (*Philippi, Thessalonica, and Berea*) first. This was not on the way, Ephesus and Corinth were pretty close (350 miles), Macedonia is 550 miles north of both cities.

(Note: This is not the “Macedonian Call” that we read about in Acts 16 when Paul was planning to go to Bithynia, and had his plans changed by a vision of a man saying “come to Macedonia”.) This is well after the Macedonian churches were planted and established.

What’s interesting is that the Macedonian churches, despite being very poor, gave a very generous offering to the collection for the church. Paul tells them about it in:

**2nd Corinthians 8:1-5 “**And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. 5And they exceeded our expectations: They gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.”

The Macedonian churches (*Philippians, Thessalonians, and Bereans, etc.*) were an excellent example of faithfulness to the young Corinthian church and also to us.

Pentecost:

It’s very telling here in his mention of Pentecost (Shavuot) and several other mentions of Hebrew Feasts in the New Testaments, that Paul and the other apostles did not stop being Jewish when they began following the Messiah. They became “completed” or “Messianic” Jews. In fact Christianity, in first few centuries was still considered a “sect” of Judaism called the *Nazarene sect of Judaism.*

**Acts 24:5** “For we have found this man a plague, a creator of dissension among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the *sect* of the Nazarenes.”

The best way to understand the Bible, particularly the New Testament, is to understand Judaism, specifically the 1st century Judaism of Jesus and all the apostles.

**1st Cor. 16:10-11 “When Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11No one, then, should treat him with contempt. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers.”**

Timothy: Paul met Timothy in Lystra in Acts 16 and immediately became his mentor. Timothy was trained under Paul as his protégé.

**1st Cor. 16:12** “**Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.**

Apollos: This is the same leader of that Paul raised up, and Aquila and Priscilla discipled who the Corinthians would compare to Paul and divide over, choosing one over the other in Chapter 3. Paul held no ill feelings toward Apollos, in fact he entrusted him to go to provide leadership to the church.

**1st Cor. 16:13-14 “Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be courageous; be strong. 14 “*Do everything in love.”***

Do everything in Love (more on that later)

Final Thanks and greetings. Paul makes it a point to thank and honor those who have served well among them. He also says things that create love and warm fellowship among the believers in other churches.

**1st Cor. 16:15-22 “You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the Lord’s people. I urge you, brothers and sisters, 16to submit to such people and to everyone who joins in the work and labors at it. 17I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. 18For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.**

**19The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscillagreet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. 20All the brothers and sisters here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.**

**21I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. 22If anyone does not love the Lord, let that person be cursed! Come, Lord!** *[Maranatha!]*

[Maranatha - transliterated Aramaic phrase that was used among early Christians meaning “the Lord is coming” or “come, O Lord.”]

**1st Cor. 16:23-24“The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. 24My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen**. <end>

He ends the letter with the words “*My love to all of you”.*

That’s the end of 1st Corinthians. A book that was filled with correction, rebuke and layer upon layer of teaching about how to *be a church* that glorifies God, honors His Word, moves in His spirit and demonstrates His love.

From the very beginning of the early church, when it first started in Acts, we see clear examples of what “Being The Church” is and how God moved in their midst if and when they remained focused on Him and not distracted on other things.

When Jesus left the believers and Ascended in Acts 1, he gave them clear instructions to “remain in Jerusalem, receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you, and be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the ends of the earth”.

That’s what they did, and God moved mightily.

So for them “*being the church*” looked like this;

 **Acts 2:42 “**They devoted themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.”

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**46“**Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, **47**praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

They devoted themselves to;

1. **The Apostle’s Teaching** – Commitment to learning and teaching the Word of God.
2. **Breaking of Bread** – Sharing meals together, both common meals and the Lord’s supper.
3. **Fellowship** – Doing life together, meeting together regularly, building strong relationships
4. **Prayer** – Praying together and for one another, Prayer is the primary work of God's people

These four things are a perfect example of “Being the Church”.

Notice, they did not get distracted by divisive issues. They did not do anything to change their message or try to be appealing to the world. They didn’t shift their focus from God and each other, in order to develop friendship with unbelievers.

They focused on Loving God, Honoring His Word, Fellowshipping together in Love and being devoted to Prayer.

This may not seem like the best “Get Big Quick” *Church growth strategy*, but that’s exactly what happened. “the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved”.

The Corinthian church was no different. Insomuch as they stayed the course and focused on these things, they grew quickly and the Lord moved mightily. But when they strayed from these things and acted selfishly or inappropriately, the opposite happened, the church began to come undone and the Holy Spirit was grieved among them.

This is why Paul wrote this pointed and often forceful letter. He knew of the problems they were encountering and the trouble that they brought upon themselves. Even with all the direct rebuke, strong correction and forthright accusations that he put forth in the letter, He wanted them to know he loved them and ended the letter with the words “*My love to all of you”.*

Paul had already taught them that “the greatest is love”, and the greatest thing they can do is hold to Jesus’ greatest commandment which is to “Love One Another”.

In fact, it could be said that Love is the *prevailing message* of 1st Corinthians, and also the *prevailing theme* of “Being the Church”.

He told us in Chapter 13 that no matter what spiritual gift you have, if you do it without love, it amounts to nothing. He then goes on to say the same thing about charity and suffering and even martyrdom, that if they are not done out of love, they amount to *nothing.*

*Here in the last chapter he gives a final command about love;*

**1st Corinthians 16:14“*Do everything in love.”***

But again based on Chapter 13 he does not leave the *definition* of love open to random interpretations. He already *clearly defined it* as to what it is, and what it is not.

**1st Cor. 13:4-7**

**“4**Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud.

**5**It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

**6**Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.

**7**It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.”

***So when he leaves us with the command of;* “*Do everything in love.” He is giving us clear direction to;***

* Do everything in *patience*.
* Do everything *with kindness*
* Do everything *without envy*
* Do everything *without boastfulness*
* Do everything *in humility, not pride*
* Do everything *to honor others*
* Do everything *without selfishness*
* Do everything *without being easily angered*
* Do everything *without keeping track of other’s failures*
* Do everything *delight in truth, not evil.*
* Do everything *to protect, trust, hope in and persevere for others.*

This is what it means to *Do everything in love.*

Paul told the Corinthians that it’s more important than spiritual gifts, ministry skills, more important than talents, more important than miracles, more important than social-justice & charities, even more important than martyrdom.

In fact Jesus tells us that the way people will know if we are *truly His disciples* is not by our *doctrine*, not by our *words*, not by our *church affiliation* or even by our *spiritual gifts.*

It is by our love, and not just random love for *anyone anywhere*, but first and foremost by our love for one another.

**John 13:34** “A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another.

*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another."*

This message is of utmost importance to the church and one that we will continue to talk about in coming weeks. It is the prevailing message of not just 1st Corinthians, but throughout the entire Bible.

***Close:***

**Memorize:**

**1st Corinthians 16:14**

**“*Do everything in love.”***

***Let’s not just memorize this verse from 1st Corinthians, Let’s ask God to help us live it out by His strength and His power, especially when we can’t do it on our own.***