

How to Have a Praiseworthy Church 1 Corinthians 11:17-22

Introduction:

1. As we enter into this section of the book, Paul is once again going to deal with some wrong conduct within the local assembly.
2. A local church is a gathering together of the saints in one place (vs. 20) for the **purpose** of worshipping together, learning God's Word together, and edifying one another.
3. The **result** of coming together should be that we leave stronger and better than before we assembled.
4. The opposite was happening at Corinth. (vs. 17) Paul says, "When you come together as a church family, you are leaving in worse shape than when you came in." This is so sad, yet it happens so often in our day. It reminds me of the Pharisees.
Matthew 23:15
5. Two times in this text Paul says, "*I praise you not.*" Paul made it clear that he was disappointed in them and that he could not praise them. vs. 17, 22
6. If Paul were to visit our church, how I long for our church to be a church that he could praise. As a member of the body of Christ, and as a member of this local assembly, you should be striving to make our church praiseworthy. How can we do this?

First, by guarding the unity of the Spirit - vs. 18-19

1. The Holy Spirit has made us one in Christ. **1 Corinthians 12:12-13;**
Galatians 3:26-28
2. We are to endeavor to **keep** the unity of the Spirit. **Ephesians 4:2-4**
3. The local assembly life of CrossRoads should be a living demonstration of the oneness that we share in Christ.
4. This wasn't happening at Corinth. The church at Corinth was fractured into groups. There were divisions all throughout the church. vs. 18
 - The word "divisions" means "a split, a gap."
 - They were gathering **together**, but then separating and dividing from one another. This doesn't make any sense. What a poor reflection of the body of Christ.
5. The word "heresies" in verse 19 means "a choice, a party." People were separating into camps and deciding which group they would align themselves with.
 - They were approving and accepting one another based on their party affiliation.
 - "If you're in my clique, I approve of you. If you aren't in my clique, I don't want anything to do with you."
6. There is nothing wrong with small groups enjoying fellowship within the church. The problem is when we begin to treat people differently on the basis of which group they are in or only fellowship with people in **our** group or think we are better because of the group we are in.
7. **Philippians 2:1-2** describes the godly attitude of a member of Christ's body. We are all different yet we are all to function with the same love, the same purpose, and the same mind. A divisive attitude is a sign of spiritual immaturity. 3:1-3

8. If there is anything that would threaten the unity of this local assembly, you have a responsibility to stand in that gap and seek to bring the grace of Christ to bear on that situation. We should be ministers of reconciliation, not division.

Second, by keeping Christ the focus - vs. 20

1. The Corinthians would gather together under the guise of observing the Lord's Supper, but Paul lets them know that they were, in fact, **not** gathering together to focus on Christ and His accomplishments. vs. 20
2. They were piously observing the Lord's Supper, but their focus was so far off of Christ. 1:11-13
3. They had gotten their focus off of Christ and on others within the assembly and ministers outside of the assembly.
4. They were going through the motions of the Lord's Supper, but their hearts were far from Christ. Their actions were in complete contradiction to what the Lord's Supper stood for and represented.
5. It is through the cross-work of Christ that we have been made one in Christ.
Ephesians 2:14, 16
6. Yet there were multiple factions, cliques, and divisions within this church. Paul could not praise this church. Their lives were bringing reproach to Christ.
7. Let this be a lesson: When you get your focus off of Christ you are in big trouble spiritually. Why do church members that have been made one in Christ fight, squabble, and get bitter at one another? It is very simple - they have failed to put on Christ, and they are full of themselves. **Romans 13:13-14**
8. It is very easy to come to church and go through the motions like the Corinthians and lose our focus of Christ. **Hebrews 12:2** declares, "*Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith...*"

Third, by looking to the needs of others - vs. 21-22

1. The Corinthians were gathering together and having a fellowship meal and then observing the Lord's Supper. There is nothing wrong with this, but it is what they were doing at the meal that created the problem.
2. Those with money were bringing in strip steak, mashed potatoes, corn on the cob, apple pie, etc., while those who were poor in the assembly had very little or nothing to eat.
3. The brother with a lot had no concern for the brother with little. They were disgracing the poor. Instead of looking out for each other, they were self-centered and showing off.
4. You had certain cliques that were faring sumptuously while others were hungering.
5. Some of these believers were being gluttonous with food and wine, getting drunk at the dinner on the grounds. Others could only watch with nothing to eat at all.
 - Then they would observe the Lord's Supper. What a contradiction!
 - Their conduct was exactly opposite of what the doctrines of grace would teach you to do in light of the cross. **2 Corinthians 8:9**
6. When we think of all the undeserved favor that has come to us because of the cross, it should lead us to extend that same grace to others. **Philippians 2:3-5**

7. **1 Peter 4:10** says that we are to minister grace one to another. **Galatians 6:10** tells us that as we have opportunity we are to do good unto all men, especially those who are of the household of faith. cf. **1 Corinthians 12:25-27**

**May the self-centered spirit of Corinth never be prevalent in CrossRoads.
May Christ in us, the hope of glory, shine forth in all that we do and say!**