

A&P Home Church | Weekly Study

1 Corinthians Chapters 9-10

BOOK SUMMARY:

First Corinthians is one of the more practical books of the New Testament. Paul writes to a church immersed in a city associated with trade, but also with corruption and immorality. These believers are struggling to properly apply spiritual gifts and to resist the ungodly practices of the surrounding culture. Paul's letter gives instructions for real-life concerns such as marriage and spirituality. He also deals with the importance of unity and gives one of the Bible's more well-known descriptions of love in chapter 13.

CHAPTER 9 SUMMARY:

First Corinthians 8 ended with Paul's declaration that he would give up his right to eat any meat rather than cause a brother in Christ to stumble. He shows in this chapter that he is already giving up his right as an apostle to be financially supported by those he serves. He doesn't want anything to get in the way of anyone believing the gospel. He limits his freedoms further by becoming all things to all people to win some for Christ. He disciplines himself like an athlete in training, to get a prize and to avoid being disqualified. The next passages will expand on this idea of distinguishing what is "allowed" from what is "best."

CHAPTER 10 SUMMARY:

The previous chapter concluded with Paul's commitment to continue to control himself. He exercises discipline so he does not become ineffective in his ministry. He begins chapter 10 by reminding the Corinthians of how the Israelites brought consequences on themselves in the wilderness. Among their many sins was worshiping idols, and God killed many of them for it. The Corinthians must flee idol worship and any appearance of supporting the demonic practice. They are free to eat meat if they don't know that it is idol food. However, they should be ready to set aside their own freedoms and rights whenever doing so will glorify God and win others to Christ.

Throughout the week continue to look through the scriptures, think through the questions, and apply the Word to your life. We will discuss and answer questions on the YouTube Live on Saturday at 12 EST. Email any questions during the week to aphomechurch@gmail.com.

MONDAY

After making a firm case that those who minister for Christ have a right to be financially supported by the people they serve, Paul will go into detail about why he refuses to receive that benefit from the Corinthians. This is all in service of Paul's larger point: those in Corinth who are strong in their Christian faith should be willing to give up their right to eat food offered to idols. This is for the sake of those who are weaker in their faith. It is true that those in Christ are free to eat any meat. Idols are false and hold no real power. Paul is calling the Corinthians to set aside a right that is truly theirs.

To show that he is doing the same thing, Paul begins to demonstrate that he has rights as an apostle, including the right to ask them to support him financially. This is especially true of the church in Corinth, which he founded. He describes the Corinthian Christians as the seal of his apostleship (1 Corinthians 9:1-2). (credit: BibleRef.com)

How do you view tithing or giving in general?

Many of us come from a place where we have seen the area of giving strongly abused and applied in a way that is not Biblical. Most have given tithes and offerings that either they don't know what happened to all the money, they see the money was spent on mega buildings & smoke machines, or you've just been put off by the whole idea and keep from giving.

We will explore ONLY what God's word states and the perfect way in which the early church had to structure these matters.

Let's look at this from GotQuestions.org:

Question: "What does the Bible say about Christian tithing? Should a Christian tithe?"

Answer: Many Christians struggle with the issue of tithing. In some churches giving is over-emphasized. At the same time, many Christians refuse to submit to the biblical exhortations about making offerings to the Lord. Tithing/giving is intended to be a joy and a blessing. Sadly,

that is sometimes not the case in the church today.

Tithing is an Old Testament concept. The tithe was a requirement of the Law in which the Israelites were to give 10 percent of the crops they grew and the livestock they raised to the

tabernacle/temple (Leviticus 27:30; Numbers 18:26; Deuteronomy 14:24; 2 Chronicles 31:5). In fact, the Old Testament Law required multiple tithes—one for the Levites, one for the use of the temple and the feasts, and one for the poor of the land—which would have pushed the total to around 23.3 percent. Some understand the Old Testament tithe as a method of taxation to provide for the needs of the priests and Levites in the sacrificial system.

After the death of Jesus Christ fulfilled the Law, the New Testament nowhere commands, or even recommends, that Christians submit to a legalistic tithe system. The New Testament nowhere designates a percentage of income a person should set aside, but only says gifts should be “in keeping with income” (1 Corinthians 16:2). Some in the Christian church have taken the 10 percent figure

from the Old Testament tithe and applied it as a “recommended minimum” for Christians in their giving.

The New Testament talks about the importance and benefits of giving. We are to give as we are able. Sometimes that means giving more than 10 percent; sometimes that may mean giving less. It all depends on the ability of the Christian and the needs of the body of Christ. Every Christian should diligently pray and seek God’s wisdom in the matter of participating in tithing and/or how much to give (James 1:5). Above all, all tithes and offerings should be given with pure motives and an attitude of worship to God and service to the body of Christ. “Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Today, look through these scriptures from Bible.org and discuss:

To Whom Do We Give?

When the Christian gives, he may give to individuals or to the church, but in the final analysis in doing so he is giving to God (see Proverbs 19:17; Matthew 6:2-4; 22:17-21; Acts 5:4; Romans 14:4-8; 2 Corinthians 8:5; Colossians 3:22-25).

Who Should Give?

Only those who have been united with Christ and His church by personal faith in Jesus Christ should give to the people of God and the work of God. In the Bible, every command or exhortation to give is addressed to believers. Taking funds from unbelievers is prohibited (3 John 7; see also 2 Corinthians 6:14-18).

TUESDAY

Paul lists some of the rights of an apostle, including food, drink, and taking a wife on the road with him, as other apostles do. Instead, he and Barnabas do secular work to support their ministry work. Why don't they deserve to be supported by the Corinthians, as other spiritual leaders were? Paul gives examples to prove his point: Soldiers don't pay for their own food. Farmers eat from their crops. Even the law of Moses instructed farmers not to prevent oxen used to plow field from eating grain as they worked. People who worked in Jewish and pagan temples also share in the food offered on the altar. The Lord's clear command is that those who sow spiritual seed among a people should reap from them some material support (1 Corinthians 9:3–14). (BibleRef.com)

Have you ever thought about how money and the church works? Have you seen it abused and mistreated? We see many instances in the world today where things are not being handled as scripture instructs us to do so. That's why it's so important to **READ** God's word, **KNOW** God's word so we can **APPLY** God's word.

We will explore ONLY what God's word states and the perfect way in which the early church had to structure these matters.

Let's look at this from GotQuestions.org:

Question: "Should pastors be paid a salary?"

Answer: A church should definitely provide for the financial needs of its pastor(s) and any other full-time ministers. First Corinthians 9:14 gives the church clear instruction: "The Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel." We pay people to prepare and serve our physical food; shouldn't we also be willing to pay those who see to our spiritual food? And, honestly, which is more important—physical food or spiritual food—based on Matthew 4:4?

First Timothy 5:17–18 says, "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially

those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and 'The worker deserves his wages.'" There are several points made in this passage. Church elders should be honored, and this honor includes wages. Those elders who serve the church well—especially teachers and preachers—should receive *double* honor. They have earned it. It would be cruel to work an ox while denying it grain, and we should take care not to treat our pastors cruelly. Let them share in the material blessings of the congregation they serve. Our pastors are worth more than many oxen.

There is nothing spiritual about making a pastor "suffer for the Lord." Yes, a pastor

has been divinely called to his ministry, but it does not follow that a congregation should say, “Let God take care of him.” God says the local church is responsible to take care of him and his family. Caring for the spiritual needs of a congregation is an important work—probably more important than other things we normally spend money on, such as meeting our physical needs, maintaining our vehicles, and entertaining ourselves. See 1 Corinthians 9:7.

It is true that the apostle Paul supported himself as he ministered in Corinth (1 Corinthians 9:12). He drew no salary from the Corinthians. But he made it clear that he did this as a voluntary sacrifice on their behalf, “that in preaching the gospel I may offer it free of charge, and so not make full use of my rights as a preacher of the gospel” (verse 18). Paul did take wages from other churches (2 Corinthians 11:8).

His arrangement in Corinth was the exception, not the rule.

Sometimes a church is just not able to provide sufficient finances for a pastor. The pastor in such cases is forced to be bi-vocational, having no choice but to work outside the church to support his family. This is regrettable but sometimes necessary. It is usually better for a pastor to be paid full-time so he can fully dedicate himself to the Lord’s work of ministering to and shepherding the congregation God has entrusted to him.

This is a sensitive topic to discuss because it’s often abused. How does this topic make you feel? What comes to mind when we bring up this topic in general? How have you been viewing this topic of church and money? Are those views based on scripture or worldly experiences?

Look through these additional points and scriptures as we see WHY God’s people should give from Bible.org:

1. GIVING IS AN OBLIGATION

In the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 14:22-29; Haggai 1:1-11; Malachi 3:7-12) and in the New (Romans 12:13; Galatians 2:10; Hebrews 13:16; 1 John 3:17), the people of God are commanded to give for certain needs. Failing to give for such causes when one is able is therefore an act of disobedience. Not all giving is required, however (see Leviticus 7:16; 2 Corinthians 8:1-15).

2. GIVING IS A PRIVILEGE

The churches of Macedonia were models of generosity in giving, even though they were poor. They gladly gave out of gratitude toward God and love for their brethren (2 Corinthians 8 and 9; see especially 8:4, 9). Paul reminds us of Jesus' teaching that "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

3. GIVING IS ONE DIMENSION OF OUR STEWARDSHIP

Very often Jesus spoke of the stewardship of His people in terms of money (see Luke 16:1-13). Our faithfulness as stewards in this "little thing" of money has a bearing on what other (and greater) responsibilities we will be given (see Luke 16:9-12).

WEDNESDAY

Paul makes clear, though, that he and Barnabas have refused this right. He is not asking the Corinthians for money. In part, he does not want anything, including financial support from them, to get in the way of people believing the gospel of Christ. In fact, he would rather die than to have anything remove his grounds for boasting that he preaches the gospel for free. He is not boasting about preaching the gospel in and of itself. Paul believes he has no choice about that. He is like a slave entrusted with important work. He must carry it out. He can boast—joyfully, not arrogantly—that he does not ask for money from those he serves, even though he has the right to do so (1 Corinthians 9:15–18).

In fact, Paul continues, he limits his freedoms in many other ways. He participates in Jewish religious life in the hopes of winning law-following Jews to faith in Christ. As one free in Christ, though, he also lives as one who is not under the law to win Gentiles who are not under the law. He even becomes "weak," in a sense, for the sake of those who are weak (1 Corinthians 9:19–23).

Paul compares himself to an athlete in training to compete in the games of the day. He competes not for his salvation, but for an eternal crown that involves recognition from Christ for all those he has led to salvation. That's why he sets aside his freedoms and practices self-control. He hopes to receive this prize and not to be disqualified by sinful selfishness before he gets to the end of his life (1 Corinthians 9:24–27). (BibleRef.com)

Let's look through the four remaining points from yesterday's study from Bible.org on WHY we should all give:

4. GIVING IS AN ACT OF WORSHIP

The Old Testament saints could only approach God in worship with a sacrifice, and this sacrifice was a contribution, whether whole or in part. In the New Testament, contributions were also described as sacrifices offered up in worship (see Hebrews 9:1–10; 10:1–25; 13:10–16).

No offering is taken during the teaching hour. This is so that unbelievers will not feel obligated to give, or think that their giving would contribute to their salvation. Unbelievers do not need to give to God, but to receive the gift of salvation which He offers to them in Jesus Christ. The offering is taken during the worship time, after the Lord's Supper, to encourage the saints to give as an act of worship.

5. GIVING IS AN INVESTMENT

Jesus encouraged believers to give in order to "lay up treasure in heaven" (Matthew 6:19–21). Investing earthly money in the advancement of the kingdom of God is one way in which we can lay up spiritual treasure in heaven (see Luke 16:1–13).

6. GIVING IS AN ACT OF SELF-SACRIFICE

All Christian service should be a sacrifice (Romans 12:1–2). In giving, we should not seek

man's praise, but God's (Matthew 6:2-4). We should not give with the hope of getting ahead in this life, but with the faith that God will reward us in heaven (Luke 14:12-14). We should not give under pressure, but willingly and cheerfully, with gratitude for God's grace to us, according to our ability (2 Corinthians 8 and 9).

7. GIVING IS AN EXPRESSION OF BROTHERLY LOVE

Giving is an expression of brotherly love and of Christian unity. The principle is set down in texts such as Matthew 25:31-46; Luke 3:11; Romans 12:13; James 2:15-17 and 1 John 3:15-18. The practice of this principle is seen in Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35; 11:27-30; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Philippians 4:14-19.

Would you consider yourself a giving person? _____

How often do you give to others? _____

Have your thoughts on giving, as we are the church body, changed in any way this week as you're searching the scriptures for God's instructions to us all on this topic?

THURSDAY

Did the Christians in Corinth believe that God would not respond if they dabbled in idol worship? Paul's warnings in this chapter suggest some of them might have believed that. These comments continue his teaching from the prior chapter, where he pointed out his own practice of setting aside his "rights" in favor of what was best for others. When it comes to associating with idols, there are no "safe" ways. While the specific topic is idolatry in ancient Corinth, the principles given here are important for all believers as we navigate our Christian liberty.

Paul begins by making a connection between the Corinthians and the generation of Israelites that escaped from Egypt in the Exodus. That same generation died in the wilderness over the next 40 years. The rescued Israelites received significant blessings from the Lord. He led them by a pillar of cloud, and through the parted waters of the Red Sea. In a sense, they were "baptized" into Moses as their head and given spiritual food—manna—and supernaturally-provided water, both symbolic of Christ. Despite all of that, they were unfaithful to God. Paul writes that God was not pleased with most of them and killed many of them (1 Corinthians 10:1–6).

What did they do to earn that level of condemnation? Primarily, they betrayed their relationship with God by worshiping false idols. They indulged in other sins as well. Paul summarizes these corporate sins and God's extensive judgment of His people in His wrath (1 Corinthians 10:7–10).

These examples should cause the Corinthians to pay attention. Failing to do so would risk them falling, as well, at the hand of God on account of idolatry. Like the Israelites who came out of Egypt, the Corinthians were also raised in a culture that normalized the worship of false gods. Idolatry was an everyday experience in their upbringing. As Christians, they knew to stop worshiping idols. And yet, they may not have recognized how closely their daily practices brought them to participating in it again. Thankfully, God never allows people to face temptation they cannot possibly overcome. There is always a means to avoid sin by some form of "escape" (1 Corinthians 10:11–13).

Question: "What are some modern forms of idolatry?"

Answer: All the various forms of modern idolatry have one thing at their core: **self**. We no longer bow down to idols and images. Instead we worship at the altar of the god of self. This brand of modern idolatry takes various forms.

First, we worship at the altar of materialism which feeds our need to build our egos through the acquisition of more "stuff." Our homes are filled with all manner of possessions. We build bigger and bigger houses with more closets and storage space in order to house all the things we buy, much of which we haven't

even paid for yet. Most of our stuff has “planned obsolescence” built into it, making it useless in no time, and so we consign it to the garage or other storage space. Then we rush out to buy the newest item, garment or gadget and the whole process starts over. This insatiable desire for more, better, and newer stuff is nothing more than covetousness. The tenth commandment tells us not to fall victim to coveting: “You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor” (Exodus 20:17). God doesn’t just want to rain on our buying sprees. He knows we will never be happy indulging our materialistic desires because it is Satan’s trap to keep our focus on ourselves and not on Him.

Second, we worship at the altar of our own pride and ego. This often takes the form of obsession with careers and jobs. Millions of men—and increasingly more women—spend 60-80 hours a week working. Even on the weekends and during vacations, our laptops are humming and our minds are whirling with thoughts of how to make our businesses more successful, how to get that promotion, how to get the next raise, how to close the next deal. In the meantime, our children are starving for attention and love. We fool ourselves into thinking we are doing it for them, to give them a better life. But the truth is we are doing it for ourselves, to increase our self-esteem by appearing more successful in the eyes of the world. This is folly. All our labors and accomplishments will be of no use to us after we die, nor will the admiration of

the world, because these things have no eternal value. As King Solomon put it, “For a man may do his work with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then he must leave all he owns to someone who has not worked for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune. What does a man get for all the toil and anxious striving with which he labors under the sun? All his days his work is pain and grief; even at night his mind does not rest. This too is meaningless” (Ecclesiastes 2:21-23).

Third, we idolize mankind through naturalism and the power of science. We cling to the illusion that we are lords of our world and build our self-esteem to godlike proportions. We reject God’s Word and His description of how He created the heavens and the earth, and we accept the nonsense of atheistic evolution and naturalism. We embrace the goddess of environmentalism and fool ourselves into thinking we can preserve the earth indefinitely when God has declared that this current age will have an end: “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness” (2 Peter 3:10-13). As this passage states, our focus should not be on worshipping the

environment but on living holy lives as we wait eagerly for the return of our Lord and Savior. He alone deserves worship.

Finally, and perhaps most destructively, we worship at the altar of self-aggrandizement or the fulfillment of the self to the exclusion of all others and their needs and desires. This manifests itself in self-indulgence through alcohol, drugs, and food. Those in affluent countries have unlimited access to alcohol, drugs (prescription drug use is at an all-time high, even among children), and food. Obesity rates in the U.S. have skyrocketed, and childhood diabetes brought on by overeating is epidemic. The self-control we so desperately need is spurned in our insatiable desire to eat, drink, and medicate more and more. We resist any effort to get us to curb our appetites, and we are determined to make ourselves the god of our lives. This has its origin in the Garden of Eden where Satan tempted Eve to eat of the tree with the words “you will be like God” (Genesis 3:5). This has been man’s desire ever since—to be god and, as we have seen, the worship of self is the basis of all modern idolatry.

All idolatry of self has at its core the three lusts found in 1 John 2:16: “For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.” If we are to escape modern idolatry, we have to admit that it is rampant and reject it in all its forms. It is not of God, but of Satan, and in it we will never find fulfillment. This is the great lie and the same one Satan has been telling since he first lied to Adam and Eve. Sadly, we are still falling for it. Even more sadly, many churches are propagating it in the preaching of the health, wealth, and prosperity gospel built on the idol of self-esteem. But we will never find happiness focusing on ourselves. Our hearts and minds must be centered on God and on others. This is why when asked what is the greatest commandment, Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind” (Matthew 22:37). When we love the Lord and others with everything that is in us, there will be no room in our hearts for idolatry.

What idols can you identify in your own life?

When we hear the word *idol*, we often think of statues and objects reminiscent of those worshipped by pagans in ancient cultures. However, the idols of the 21st century often bear no resemblance to the artifacts used thousands of years ago. Today, many have replaced the “golden calf” with an insatiable drive for money or prestige or “success” in the eyes of the world. Some pursue the high regard of others as their ultimate goal. Some seek after

comfort or a myriad of other passionate, yet empty, pursuits. Sadly, our societies often admire those serving such idols. In the end, however, it doesn't matter what empty pleasure we chase after or what idol or which false god we bow down to; the result is the same—separation from the one true God.

Understanding contemporary idols can help us to understand why they prove to be such a powerful temptation. An idol can be anything we place ahead of God in our lives, anything that takes God's place in our hearts, such as possessions, careers, relationships, hobbies, sports, entertainment, goals, greed, addictions to alcohol/drugs/gambling/pornography, etc. Some of the things we idolize are clearly sinful. But many of the things we idolize can be very good, such as relationships or careers. Yet Scripture tells us that, whatever we do, we are to "do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31) and that we are to serve God only (Deuteronomy 6:13; Luke 16:13). Unfortunately, God is often shoved out of the way as we zealously pursue our idols. Worse yet, the significant amount of time we often spend in these idolatrous pursuits leaves us with little or no time to spend with the Lord.

We sometimes also turn to idols seeking solace from the hardships of life and the turmoil present in our world. Addictive behaviors such as drug or alcohol use, or even something like excessive reading or television viewing, may be used as a means of temporarily "escaping" a difficult situation or the rigors of daily life. The psalmist, however, tells us that those who place their trust in this behavior will, essentially, become spiritually useless (Psalm 115:8). We need to place our trust in the Lord "who will keep [us] from all harm" (Psalm 121:7) and who has promised to supply all of our needs when we trust in Him. We also need to remember the words of Paul, who teaches us not to be anxious about anything, but rather to pray about everything so the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, can guard our hearts and our minds (Philippians 4:6–7).

Identify the areas of idolatry in your life, take them before the Lord in prayer of repentance. To truly repent is to turn away from the way of thinking that led you to the sin. Do you truly see the sin in your idolatry? Do you truly have a change of heart and mine in the way of thinking you were under as you pursued that idol(s) in a worldly sense?

FRIDAY

With that in mind, Paul tells them to run away from idolatry. In more literal terms, they ought to separate themselves completely from anything even close to idol worship. This echoes the reaction of Joseph who literally bolted from a woman attempting to seduce him (Genesis 39:7-12). It's not that the man-made idols themselves have any power, Paul continues, but demons lurking behind them do. Participating in communion by taking the bread and cup of Christ connects Christians to Him. In the same way, partaking in the altar of idols causes people to participate with demons. Why provoke the Lord to jealousy (1 Corinthians 10:14-22)?

Paul specifically addresses the issue of whether a Christian should eat food that has been offered to an idol. In the context of that era, this might have even included food served in an idol temple itself as part of a civic meeting or family gathering. To completely separate from such things would be difficult. The position of the Corinthians seems to be that, if idols are nothing, then what's the harm in being seen around them?

Paul's final words on the matter boil down to Christians avoiding any food they *know* to have been offered to an idol. This is for the sake of the consciences of those watching, both believers and the unsaved. Paul urges the Corinthian Christians to set aside their freedom to eat this food, even though it is not really "anything." The main purpose of this, established in chapter 8, is to avoid giving any appearance that they approve of the worship of idols. On the other hand, Paul says clearly that they are free to eat any meat if they do not know whether it has been offered to an idol or not. They don't need to be paranoid. The meat itself is just meat and, in fact, God's good creation and a gift from Him for which they can be thankful (1 Corinthians 10:23-30).

In the end, every choice a Christian makes should hinge on whether the activity will bring glory to God. And, it's necessary to consider whether it will build others up. Paul urges his readers to follow his practice of restricting his own rights and freedoms in order to avoid putting any stumbling block between unbelievers and faith in Christ (1 Corinthians 10:31-33).

What have you learned this week?

What are some questions you still have after this week's study? Join us on YouTube Live Saturday at 12 EST to ask- or always feel free to email them any time! aphomechurch@gmail.com

Give, and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you.

Luke 6:38