

The Bible 20/20 Week 45: “The Power of Community” (11-15-20)

Reading this week: 2 Corinthians 1-13

Review: Current Series - “Rediscovering the Power of the Church” (So Far: The Gospel, Love)

Today: “The Power of Community”

The Corinthian church - experiencing the power of the Holy Spirit, but compromising with the culture, and experiencing lots of selfishness & dis-unity in the church . . .

1) Two Key Problems - The Influence of the surrounding Culture, & their own lack of Maturity

b) Cultural Influence

1 Corinthians 15:33-34 (ESV)

(33) Do not be deceived: “Bad company ruins good morals.” (34) Wake up from your drunken stupor, as is right, and do not go on sinning. For some have no knowledge of God. I say this to your shame.

NT Wright - “Their puffed up posturing came from putting together their beliefs about themselves as Christians with ideas from pagan philosophy”

This highlights the second problem . . .

a) Immaturity

1 Corinthians 3:1-3 (ESV)

(1) But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ.
 (2) I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready,
 (3) for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way?

Note: Relational Brokenness points to immaturity. But, the problem isn’t just immaturity . . .

Jennifer McNeel - “The Corinthians’ problem is not just that they are immature in faith, but that they have misunderstood their own level of maturity”

Ultimately this plays out in their divisions & selfishness in the church . . .

2 Corinthians 12:20-21 (ESV)

For I fear that perhaps when I come I may find you not as I wish, and that you may find me not as you wish— that perhaps there may be quarreling, jealousy, anger, hostility, slander, gossip, conceit, and disorder.

- This problem was introduced in full detail in Paul’s first letter, and he clearly still has cause for concern!
- Time doesn’t change us - We do not automatically become “mature” Christians by accident
- An intentional Jesus-Centered Life, rooted in a new culture - Christian Community - is our path to growth!

2) The Solution - Healthy Christian Community

(Read 2 Corinthians chapters 5-7 in more detail on your own)

2 Corinthians 5:17-18 (ESV)

(17) **Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.** (18) All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and **gave us the ministry of reconciliation**

Note: Christian Community is rooted in **The Gospel** and **Love** (last 2 Sundays)

- **God is making us knew**
- **God is working to reconcile all who are dis-connected, & now we are called to this work too!**
- **This is both beautiful & difficult!**

Do you just like the idea of “Relational Church” or is your life actually rooted in Jesus-Centered Community?

2 Corinthians 6:1, 11-14 (ESV)

(1) Working together with him, then, **we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain . . .** (11) We have spoken freely to you, Corinthians; our heart is wide open. (12) You are not restricted by us, **but you are restricted in your own affections.** (13) **In return (I speak as to children) widen your hearts also.** (14) **Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers.** For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness?

Note: What culture is defining your life? Are you truly rooted in Christian Community or just doing what NT Wright says is so prevalent?

Reflections on the Corinthian letters . . .

NT Wright - “Christians often simply reflect the values and behaviors in their surrounding culture. . . more often than not, Christianity simply becomes an add-on to their existing worldview. . . . The western world is even worse, often assuming that its culture is in some sense ‘Christian’ and hence needing no critique, when many aspects of western culture are every bit as ‘pagan’ as that of Corinth”

The solution offered by Paul to the Corinthian Church and us too . . .

NT Wright - “Paul’s repeated theme of imitation. His theological and pastoral exhortations are aimed at creating a different culture, one characterized by the cross, grace, love, and reconciliation. That is our task too.”

2 Corinthians 6:16-7:1 (ESV)

(16) What agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; as God said, “I will make my dwelling among them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. (17) Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, (18) and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to me, says the Lord Almighty.” (7:1) Since we have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

Note: We are called to maturity, rooted in the Family of God

3) For Personal Reflection

- **Does your faith ever contradict or correct your behavior, views, politics, or priorities?**
- **One way to discover how much hold cultural idols are shaping you, consider: What keeps you from engaging your life in church community?** (For example do you consistently attend on Sundays, are you committed to involvement in a life group, and more specifically the lives of the people you know there, are you sacrificially serving & giving)
- **When you think of your Church community, and consider those relationships - are you focused more on what you are (or aren't) getting out of it, or what you are putting into it?**
- **What if the health of your church relied on your effort, involvement, and care for others?**

Conclusion: Paul left the church with these words. May we do more than think of them as a lovely closing to this letter, but instead as a way of being together . . .

2 Corinthians 13:11-14 (ESV)

(11) Finally, brothers, rejoice. Aim for restoration, comfort one another, agree with one another, live in peace; and the God of love and peace will be with you. (12) Greet one another with a holy kiss. (13) All the saints greet you. (14) The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

Let's Pray!