

# St. Andrew **Academy**

## *1 Corinthians: You think you've got problems!*

Week 6

*Community Worship*



Pompeii house atrium open to sky  
with mosaic floors

Greco-Roman homes of the affluent were built around open atriums that might provide space for 20-30 people to meet.

This is where community worship would happen!! Keeping this in mind will help us understand 1 Corinthians 12-14.



## *Hairstyles and gender distinctions (11:2-16)*

- ❖ Women are free to pray and prophesy (speak for God) in the assembly. The only question is about headdress.
  - Paul is talking about hair up v. hair down, not veils. Greco-Roman women didn't wear veils. The NRSV "veil" is misleading.
- ❖ V. 3 & 7-9 reflect the patriarchal order of Genesis, but v. 11-12 reflect the mutual interdependence that we've seen before.
- ❖ The passage is less about subordination than it is about the distinction between the genders.
- ❖ The over-arching concern is avoiding what might bring shame on the community.
  - We'll something similar when we get to "speaking in tongues."
  - Paul is a practical man. He'll become weak for the sake of the weak or shave his head to be more acceptable to Jews. The Corinthians are to avoid whatever puts off people in the community. Paul's is a "practical theology."



## *The Lord's Supper*

- ❖ Paul has nothing to commend them for here!
- ❖ They are abusing the Lord's supper.
  - There is gluttony and drunkenness at the communal meal. Some are feasting; others are going hungry. The rich are bringing their own "picnic baskets"!!
  - Perhaps the higher status members are eating in the dining room, while lower status members are munching in the atrium.
- ❖ So Paul reminds them of what he "handed on" to them.
  - The Supper calls the community to think of Jesus' death for others.
  - Jesus' death is understood to initiate a new covenant.
  - The meal mingles memory and hope – v. 26
- ❖ When they eat "unworthily," as in not sharing, they are courting disaster and bringing disaster on themselves. By abusing the meal, they are sinning against Jesus. They have even brought suffering upon the community.



## *Spiritual Gifts*

- ❖ Paul is tackling problems in worship, which seem to stem from an over-use and over-emphasis on the “spectacular” spiritual gifts, such as speaking in tongues. What is the proper function of spiritual gifts?
- ❖ Paul’s key points:
  - There is one Spirit, who empowers all Christians.
  - There are many varieties of gifts. The diverse members and gifts are all part of one body.
  - The gifts are given for the common good. The variety makes for strength.
  - It is a fool’s game to believe that some gifts are spiritually superior to others. What is greater than them all? LOVE. Hence, we get Paul’s great chapter on love here.
- ❖ True spirituality begins with the confession that Jesus is Lord.
- ❖ We are a Spirit-filled community. It is who we are!

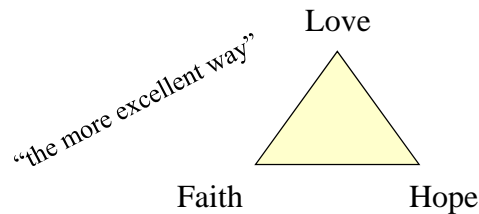
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## *1 Corinthians 13 – the preeminence of love*

*Faith as Trust -- Love as Sacrifice -- Hope as Confidence*



- Our hope will be realized, but love is eternal, transcending even faith, when the love of God is “all in all” (1 Cor 15:28). Love undergirds all else and gives it meaning (1 Cor 13:1-3).
- R. Hays calls love the “foretaste of our ultimate union with God.”
- Our challenge is to rescue this passage from sentimentality!

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## *Prophecy and tongues (ch. 14)*

- ❖ In all his work, Paul focuses on the building up of the church.
  - So he urges the Corinthians to pursue prophecy, not tongues. “To prophesy” is to proclaim God’s word, which can be understood by all and helps to strengthen the community. Prophecy is “plain truth-speaking” not predictions of the future.
- ❖ Paul’s instructions in worship:
  - No more than two or three should speak in tongues, and there MUST be interpretation, otherwise, what is the value?
  - Don’t let it become chaotic – outsiders will think you are nuts and how can that be a good witness!
- ❖ Do notice that Paul does speak in tongues, but only in private prayer. Perhaps this is the inarticulate groaning he writes about in Romans 8.
- ❖ NOTE – 14:34-35 (women not speaking) may have been added later. In several ancient manuscripts, these verses are appended at the end of the chapter. Contrast this to 11:2-16. What do we make of this?



## *Tongues and the UMC*

- ❖ Here is the question – are “tongues” today genuine? Christians simply disagree!
  - There are good arguments on both sides – some from scripture, some from church history, and some from experience. I can point you to good reading on both sides of this “intramural” debate.
  - There are Methodist congregations that speak in tongues and others that couldn’t conceive of it!
- ❖ The UMC asks that
  - Congregations that speak in tongues (charismatic) should be careful not to think that they are somehow spiritually superior. They should avoid “undisciplined, unenthusiastic enthusiasm.”
  - For those who do not: be respectful and accepting of those who do, remembering that there are many forms of Christian experience. Embrace the diversity of the UMC.



## *New Testament Timeline*

