

# Glorifying God Alone

1 Corinthians (CGS#20) – 10:14-11:1

**INTRODUCTION** – This week’s passage wraps up a long series of Paul’s very practical answers to very specific questions. Since chapter 7, Paul has been responding to specific issues brought up by the Corinthians in their letter to him. The first question was about marriage (chapter 7), and the second question was about eating food sacrificed to idols (chapters 8-10). Clearly, this is an incredibly important question since Paul spends so much time answering it.

The situation they’re struggling with is pretty complicated: Corinth had several temples to pagan gods, and those temples essentially became meat markets because of their constant animal sacrifices. Many of the Corinthian Christians had previously been pagans themselves, so they would have previously considered the eating of that meat to be an act of worship to those pagan gods. And now they believe in Jesus—the one true God—so they don’t want to be seen as worshipping those gods, but they still had to buy groceries. And more than that, they’re not sure what to do when they’re invited to eat with people who still view that meat as worship. Should they say no and risk damaging the relationship, or say yes and risk participating in idol worship? This is no small dilemma, and Paul spends three whole chapters addressing it.

His solution in verses 25-27 is extremely practical: Eat the meat sold in the market, go to dinner when invited, and don’t ask questions that will offend your host. That might sound too simple, even flippant, but as usual, Paul looks past the surface issue and addresses the deeper need. He points straight at their hearts and says, “But what’s your goal in eating the sacrificial meat? Are you just trying to seek your own good and satisfy your selfish cravings, or are you appropriately thanking God for his gifts and enjoying them in the least offensive way possible?” Paul is holding two good desires in tension here: On the one side, a desire to follow God and worship him rightly, and on the other side, a desire to love our neighbors and seek their good. To be clear, we should always seek to do both. But what do we do when they appear to be in conflict?

The main point of this week’s sermon addresses both desires: **Right living includes God and my neighbors.** Let’s look a little closer at both sides of the dilemma, starting with loving our neighbors.

In verse 24, Paul tells us to not just seek our own good, but also the good of our neighbors. That will look very different in different contexts. In Corinth, it meant not using your freedom in Christ as a bludgeon. Christians were free to eat the sacrificial meat, but they were not free to offend the consciences of other believers with that freedom. It may be “lawful” to eat the meat—that is, it was totally within their rights—but it might not be helpful in every situation. This requires discernment. Could exercising your rights and freedoms put up a relational barrier for someone? Then don’t do it! It’s not worth it! As Paul reminded us back in 9:23, “I do it all for the sake of the gospel, that I may share with them in its blessings.” He would rather give up his freedoms than put a stumbling block in front of anyone pursuing Christ, and we should do the same.

Secondly, we should not only be concerned with worshiping the right God, but also with worshiping him in the right way. Thankfully, God has told us how he wants to be worshiped. It’s not necessarily about the actions we take, but whether or not we glorify God alone with those actions. (“Whether you eat or drink, or *whatever you do*, do all to the glory of God.” v.31) How do we glorify God? There are lots of ways. We publicly thank God for all the ways he has provided for us. We participate in the community he has provided for us. We recognize that all things are from him and for him. We love and serve those around us. See, right living for God *includes* loving our neighbors. Let’s find ways this week to let our love for God overflow into love for those around us.

**GETTING STARTED** – As you begin your group time, take time to answer this question together: What’s the most loving thing someone has done for you?

**IN THE WORD** – Let’s dig back into the passage. It is important to strengthen our muscles in reading God’s Word. On Sunday, we walked through the passage in the sermon. Hopefully, that helped you to see the landmarks of the passage with fresh eyes. Now, with your group, go back through it and see what God is saying to you specifically.

First, before you read the passage, take a moment to ask God’s Spirit to quiet your mind and heart and to illuminate the text to you. Second, read the passage aloud to the group. Then, follow the simple method below. (O.P.A)

**Observe:** Make 8-10 observations from the passage. Pay close attention to observe and note repeated words and phrases, names, places, and themes.

**Principles:** From your list of observations, what patterns or big ideas do you see emerging? Can you distill it down into 2-4 big idea truths?

**Apply:** Moving from your list of principles, it is time to apply God’s Word. Remember, we believe that God’s Word is living and active and that it can change the way we live Monday-Saturday. What is one tangible way to apply a truth from your list above?

**Note:** Another way to approach your time together is to talk through the following questions about the passage we are studying that week.

1. What did you hear God’s Spirit say to you through the passage this week? How does it encourage you? How does it sharpen you?
2. How have you seen God at work in your life this week? Have you enjoyed him? Have you heard his voice and the leading of his Spirit? Big ways or small ways.
3. What does it look like to seek the good of your neighbor in your context? Consider both spiritual and practical needs.
4. What benefits do we get from participating in the body of Christ (v.16)? What do we miss out on when we don’t participate?
5. In 11:1, Paul tells us to imitate him as he imitates Christ. How are you doing at being “imitatable”? Do you have any habits or patterns of living that you *wouldn’t* want others to imitate?
  - a. What is one step you could take to cooperate with the Spirit in following Jesus in an imitable way?