

## **WHAT WE LEARN FROM THE CORINTHIAN WORSHIP**

**by Stafford North**

1. From what Paul wrote to the Corinthians in 1 Corinthians 11, 14, and 16, we can learn much about how to please God in our worship today. Let's read some from these chapters: 1 Corinthians 11:17, 20-29; 14:15-17, 23-28, 40; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2.

So what picture do we get of the Corinthians worship? The church at Corinth gathered on Sunday to worship God, but there was confusion. Some were speaking in tongues no one else could understand, and more than one spoke at a time. Some were praying in languages no one knew, and so others could not participate. They sang, but were not thinking about the meaning of the songs. At some point they collected their money. And a man who had received a message from God began to speak. But before he had said very much, another prophet began to speak, and then another. With all three speaking at the same time, no one could understand the meaning. When they started taking the Lord's Supper, they did not wait for each other. Each one had brought a meal, and the rich brought expensive foods while the poor had nothing. Some drank too much wine. They were distracted by the things they had added to the service so that they really didn't think about the body and blood of Jesus. Their worship occasions were not drawing them together but, rather, were dividing.

And what did Paul think of the worship occasions at Corinth? Did he commend them for being inventive? Did he say he was glad they were exercising their freedom in Christ? Did he say it doesn't matter what you do so long as it pleases you?

No. Paul had strong admonitions for the Corinthians. Paul said, "Your meetings do more harm than good." They were meeting on the right day. They were doing the right things in their worship—singing, praying, preaching, giving, taking the Lord's Supper. But they were not participating in these activities as Paul had taught them. He said he had delivered to them what the Lord had given him, and he called them back to it. Quit using the Lord's Supper as a meal. Just take the bread and fruit of the vine, and stop adding to it. Think of Christ as you partake, and proclaim his death till he comes again. These things you have added to taking the Lord's Supper are bringing the judgment of God on you. Sing, but do so with the spirit and the understanding. Speak so all can understand and only one at a time. Teach so the outsider who comes to your service will proclaim, "God is really among you." And as you honor God with your worship by doing as He has said, everything you do will strengthen each other. Do everything in a fitting and orderly way.

2. From 1 Corinthians 11, 14, and 16, what do we learn?
  - a. How we worship matters to God.
  - b. Not everything people do in worship pleases him.
  - c. There are right ways and wrong ways to worship God.
  - d. To be sure our worship pleases God, we must worship as apostles, with a message from the Lord, have told us how. We are not free to make up our

own way to worship. If it is God we worship, then we should worship as He has told us what pleases Him.

- e. Worship includes the Lord's Supper, giving, prayer, singing, and a message from God. These are the things they did.
  - f. Outsiders are to come to our worship occasions and, if we are worshipping properly, they will be encouraged to honor God.
  - g. There should be order at all times.
  - h. Everything we do should bring honor to God and should strengthen all of us.
  - i. Worship should be a proclamation of what Christ has done for us, offering prayers to Him, singing songs we understand, and mean deeply, listening to someone who can bring a message from God, and thanking God for what he has done for us.
3. What applications can we find from this message to our worship today?
- a. Let's learn what God revealed through the apostles about what He wants in worship and commit ourselves to worship in His way. To do that, we will follow what the early church was told to in worship and what they commended for doing.  
There is no better way to worship than to do what we are sure will please the Lord?
  - b. Let's include in our worship what they did: prayer, the Lord's Supper, singing, giving, and teaching from God.
  - c. Let's do each of these things in the way they were taught to do them.
    1. Prayer with the spirit and the understanding and so that those listening can speak their agreement with an "Amen."
    2. Singing without instruments, as they did, and with full understanding of the meaning of what we are singing.
    3. Taking the Lord's Supper by using the unleavened bread and the cup, thinking of Jesus' sacrifice and proclaiming the Lord's death until he comes again.
    4. Giving of our means each week so our offering will be regular and purposeful.
    5. Having those who know God's message to share it with us.
    6. Using our services as a way which demonstrates our faith and to instruct those from the outside.
    7. From our worship, we should be building unity and not sowing discord among the brethren.
4. When we come together, we are to please God and to offer Him a sacrifice. Let us offer to Him what He has told us to do and in the ways He has told us to do them. Let us not change any of them from the way in which the apostles instructed the early church to do them. That is the only way we can be sure our worship pleases the Lord. Let us make our worship to be all that God wants it to be: a statement of love, praise, encouragement, and submission to Him.