

MESSAGE.

Jesus constantly taught that the love His followers are to have for one another is different from what the world offers. Matt. 20:16 says, “So the last will be first, and the first last.” This kind of love stood in sharp contrast to the Roman culture that influenced the Corinthians. In Roman society, honor and privilege were typically given to those with the highest social status. 1 Cor. 11:17-22 reveals that the Corinthian church had begun modeling its gatherings after these cultural norms, allowing the wealthy to eat first and indulge themselves while leaving little or nothing for their poorer brothers and sisters in Christ. Paul's letter calls the church to a standard that reflects the selfless love that Jesus demonstrated time and time again. When love is absent from the church's gatherings, it causes unnecessary pain, division, and confusion. Not only did the Corinthians' behavior reveal hearts that were out of step with the mission of Jesus and harmful to the body of believers, but it also dishonored the practice of the Lord's Supper. Paul reminds the church that the purpose of the Lord's Supper is to remember Jesus' death on the cross and the new covenant established through His sacrifice.

PRAYER.

Heavenly Father, teach us to love one another as Christ has loved us. Remove any division among us and unite us in faith, humility, and grace. Help us to honor You in our relationships and whenever we gather together. May our words and actions reflect Your love and bring glory to Your name. *Amen.*

ENGAGE.

Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-19

- Why does Paul say that their gatherings are doing more harm than good?
- How do the divisions and factions among them reveal those who are genuine in their faith?
- In the context of this passage, what qualities would characterize a person who is “genuine”?
- What attitudes, desires, or habits might you need to surrender to God in order to grow in genuine love for your brothers and sisters in Christ?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:20-22

- Showing special honor to the wealthy and influential was common in Corinthian culture, but Jesus calls His followers to live differently. What values or practices are considered normal in our culture that may conflict with the way Christ calls us to live and love others?
- How can we better reflect Christ's example of humility, service, and impartiality in our relationships and gatherings?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:23-28

- According to these verses, what is the purpose of the Lord's Supper?
- What does it mean to remember Christ through Communion?
- How can we prepare our hearts and honor the Lord when participating in the Lord's Supper?

Read 1 Corinthians 11:29-34

- Why is it important to examine our hearts and motives when we gather as the church and partake in the Lord's Supper?
- What consequences can result from failing to discern our actions and attitudes toward God and others?

For these cities. For all people.