

## Bible Survey – NT 3.2 – 1st Corinthians

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### A) INTRODUCTION:

#### 1. Background:

##### a. TEXT:

- i. Paul wrote several letters to the Corinthians. Scholars suggest that the Scriptures we have are the longer letter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians and a merging of 2 shorter letters into 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians. There is also likelihood that there was another letter that was possibly the first written that has been lost.
- ii. Paul began his ministry to the Corinthians on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary tour with Silas and followed up later with Timothy. Acts 18 describes this initial ministry:
  1. Macedonia = Northern Greece
  2. Achaia = Southern Greece
- iii. These letters written while Paul was ministering in Ephesus at about 55 AD.

b. AUTHOR: Paul has always been accepted as the authentic author from internal and external sources. There is no credible competing theory of authorship.

c. DATE OF WRITING: Acts of the Apostles written by Luke records that Paul was in Corinth for some time before departing for Syria in 52 AD. Paul spent 18 months ministering in Corinth on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey, and 2 ½ years ministering in Ephesus on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey until 56 AD where it is understood he wrote 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians. He later wrote 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians probably a year later. Acts 18:1-18 refers to this ministry.

##### d. HISTORICAL SETTING:

- i. Corinth was an ancient city that had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 BC and later rebuilt by Julius Caesar in 29 BC. The city lay at the important crossroads of east and west and thus was a wealthy and multi-cultural melting pot. It was regarded as the leading city and capital of the senatorial province of Achaia, with a population approaching 250,000.
  - ii. Greek philosophy with its love of reason and wisdom along with Pagan “Mystery Cults” that promised ‘special revelation’ into the supernatural dominated. There were at least 12 Pagan temples in Corinth with the temple of Aphrodite being a primary destination. Temple cult-prostitution was a primary form of worship. The Greek writer Strabo recorded that there were 1,000 temple priestess/prostitutes at the temple of Aphrodite.
  - iii. Sex and promiscuity were rampant, which had to be very challenging for the Jewish and Christian concept of moral monogamy. The god of healing ‘Asclepius’ was another temple destination no doubt made more important by the venereal disease spread through cult prostitution. Corinth’s reputation for sex and debauchery was so bad that “Corinthian girl” meant “prostitute” and to “Corinthianize” meant “to practice sexual immorality.”
- e. THEMES – the whole letter of 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians basically centers on what constitutes reasonable expectations for mature Christian life and behavior.
- i. Unity of the Church
  - ii. Work of the Spirit
  - iii. Spirit & Spiritual
  - iv. Body and Flesh
  - v. Heavenly and worldly
  - vi. Revelation & Prophecy
  - vii. True and false wisdom and knowledge

- viii. Spiritual Gifts and Power
- ix. Love
- x. Community of the Church

### 2. OVERVIEW:

- a. Macro Exegesis – all Scripture is ‘Occasional’ meaning it was written to speak into some specific need of the time. It is important to understand these issues and then to prayerfully ascertain whether these issues are mandates from God for all people and all time, or something directed more to these particular people at a specific time and place.
  - i. The text is divided into two letters... although originally there may have been three, and some scholars argue for 4. 2 Corinthians 1-9 appears to be the gist of the 2<sup>nd</sup> letter, and 2 Corinthians 10-13 may well be the third as the internal cohesion seems disjunctive at this location in the text. Chapter 9 seems to end on a satisfied and resolved note for 2 Corinthians, and then chapter 10 seems to resume with the same problem unresolved. This suggests a seam that could be where the 2 letters were cobbled together, or perhaps some time had passed or new information received since Paul had completed chapter 9... though the latter would seem to be the least likely as no reference was made to the change.
  - ii. Any such thoughts are interesting to the scholar but are really only speculative. Though helpful perhaps in explaining the change in the tone of the text, it doesn’t really add anything theologically or doctrinally that matters. Such thoughts certainly engage scholars, but do little for most Christians. The main point is to acknowledge that God in His sovereign plan gave us what we needed to find Him, know and love Him, and follow Him... and Corinthians remains a significant gift for the Church.
  - iii. The problems that appear to be the occasion [purpose] for Paul’s writing are:
    - 1. Factionalism [divisions] within the church that divided its unity.
    - 2. Questions regarding leadership authority of Paul or other leaders introduced to the church that had become a distraction.
    - 3. The presence of “Judaizers” who taught the necessity of converting to Judaism before a Pagan would become fully Christian, and/or maintaining that the Law of Moses must be followed along with Jesus’ Gospel of Grace. To be a “Judaizer” was essentially to live like a Jew under the Law, rather than accept the Gentile equality as equal partakers of Grace.
    - 4. The problem of Pagan religious and Hellenistic/Roman cultural values which greatly complicated a Christian lifestyle. The misguided idea of the Judaizers may have been to separate the Pagan culture from the emerging Christian culture by focusing on their Jewish roots.
    - 5. Paul’s strenuous objection to the Judaizers would indicate their motives were at best detrimental and not helpful, and at worst contrary to the Gospel Paul was commissioned to serve. Paul’s stern words suggest the latter.

### **B) OUTLINE and SCHMATIC SURVEY of THEMES – MACRO EXEGESIS:**

- 1. 1:1-9 – Introduction
  - a. 1:1-3 – Salutation

- b. 1:4-9 – Thanksgiving
- 2. 1:10-4:21 – Divisions in the Church
  - a. 1:10-17 – The Problem
  - b. 1:18-4:21 – Solutions to the Problem
    - i. Living in Unity - maintaining unity in the Church has always been a priority but also one of the biggest challenges.
    - ii. The Gospel is all about unity and love.
    - iii. Though the Corinthians did express love, instead of a Godly “Hessed” [Jewish loyal love] or “Agape” [Greek transformational love], they loved from a humanly or worldly perspective. Their continued value of humanistic philosophy and wisdom, indicated their focus was ‘worldly and situational’ and not ‘heavenly and eternal.’
    - iv. The Corinthian’s and most of the Greeks in general tended to focus upon “Phileao-Sophia” meaning the “love of wisdom”... what we would now call the love of “philosophy” in terms of secular humanism. It was intellectual and proud, not spiritually transformational and humble.
- 3. 5:1-6:20 – Disorder in the Church
  - a. 5:1-13 – Incest Response... involving a step-mother and a step-son. While not directly blood-incest, it was certainly scandalous.
    - i. The Corinthian church didn’t know how to handle such problems. They were immature believers in an extremely secular-pagan society.
    - ii. Paul speaks of “fornication” = a broad term of sexual immorality, left deliberately vague.
    - iii. This section alludes to the practice we now call to “Shun” or have nothing to do with immorality. Think in terms of Amish social customs.
    - iv. Turning over to Satan refers to church excommunication. It is a public exclusion from intimacy and acceptance in the church.
      - 1. This does not mean you don’t engage culture; even Jesus had no problem associating and interacting with the lost and disenfranchised.
      - 2. It does mean that you reject believers who are acting contrary to the faith they profess – you challenge them to repent, but when they repeatedly refuse, you must take a stand.
      - 3. This is dealing with unrepentant believers – or the fallen faithful. Some have mistakenly taking this to mean we should physically kill the individual to preserve their soul... this was a practice in the medieval church... this is NOT what Paul is talking about.
      - 4. Paul is arguing for a counter-cultural stand between Kingdom of God values, and material worldly values.
      - 5. Unfortunately. the church has never done this very well, and it has caused much pain and confusion. We need to take a stand, but it needs to be done in love in the hope of restoration and reconciliation.
  - b. 6:1-11 – Law-suit response... between believers are an indication that the world has invaded the Church.
    - i. Believers are obliged to live under God’s Law, not the world’s laws.
    - ii. We are called to a higher standard – it is better to be wronged than publicly disgrace the body of Christ.

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- iii. This doesn't mean that you tolerate predators within the church; they need to be called out and deal with – harshly if need be.
- iv. It does mean that we should submit to Godly men who may judge certain matters between brothers, rather than relying on worldly courts.
- c. 6:12-20 – Promiscuity response... is another indication the world has entered the Church
  - i. The prevalence of immorality in the Pagan Corinthian social context caused these immature believers to have a wide variety of mistaken notions of what constituted acceptable behavior before God.
  - ii. The proper place of Godly sex in marriage was unknown to them, and when they were taught they often reverted back to their old ways and practices.
  - iii. This pagan group of believers was a work in progress – as we all are!
  - iv. They needed to focus on God's Holiness as a means of transformational life.
- 4. 7:1-15:58 – Clarifications for the Church
  - a. 7:1-40 – Sexual purity
  - b. 8:1-11:1 – Christian liberty
    - i. Paul continues the thought of counter-cultural separation and the distinctions of secular and Godly living.
    - ii. Paul continues to contrast worldly and Spiritual responses.
    - iii. Worldly responses are derived from their Pagan worship heritage.
    - iv. Godly Spiritual responses identify them with the new community of Christians.
    - v. At issue was the "liberal" position of mature believers for whom eating meat sacrificed to idols was properly understood as irrelevant. Juxtaposed would be the conservative notion to avoid eating meat altogether fearing it may have been sacrificed to idols.
    - vi. At issue is the conscience of the believer – if an immature believer is caused to stumble because of the exercise of freedom of faith, then one for whom Christ died is being harmed – a mature believer would rather be constrained by love for the weaker brother than cause them harm.
    - vii. Drinking wine or other forms of alcohol or smoking would be a modern day comparison.
  - c. 11:2-14:40 – Public Worship Concepts
    - i. 11:2-16 – Correction concerning women's role in the Christian community – this should be seen more as reasonable boundaries to establish healthy relationships between the sexes.
      - 1. In a society drenched with sexual activity and connotations, women should be seen as "sisters" not sexual objects – this is a key insight.
      - 2. Women should concentrate on their "inward beauty" (innerman) rather than their "outward beauty" (outerman).
      - 3. Women should concentrate on modesty – they are beautiful just because they are women, they don't need to accent their feminine beauty.
      - 4. Women exercising leadership in the church: Should cover their heads WHEN they pray or engage in prophecy. This is not a prohibition.
      - 5. Women were expected to have an active role in the church and in the church services – including teaching, preaching, praying, and prophesying.
    - ii. 11:17-34 – Correction on abuse of the Lord's supper
      - 1. Abuse of a symbol of the Messianic community had to be corrected.

2. Social classes were in conflict with how food was served and apportioned – the correction was unity in love and of serving others regardless of social distinctions.
- d. 12:1-14:40 – Christian Counter-Culture... Paul in moving beyond the multiple dysfunctions of behavior and thought in Corinth is now speaking about how Spiritual gifts, Love, and the fellowship of faith interact in a healthy Christian counter-cultural environment.
  - i. 12:1-31 – Is all about the unity and diversity of Spiritual Gifts and how they promote health in the Church.
    1. Paul lists but then only cursorily explains these gifts.
    2. All people didn't have and couldn't have every gift – gifts were the prerogative of God's Sovereign will for the Church. The problem the Corinthians had was that they were using gifts as a means of status in the church. These guys were baby Christians and were really confused.
    3. This teaching also shows that we should understand that some gifts are imminently counterfeitable. Thus we should be judicious and test all expressions of spiritual gifts for authenticity.
    4. Seek the greater gifts (12:31) – genuine spiritual gifts promote health and unity in love in the Christian community – anything that does otherwise is suspect.
  - ii. 13:1-13 – the 'Love Chapter' testifies to Love being the greatest of the gifts.
    1. Paul defines 'love' in both positive and negative connotations to provide a more complete understanding.
    2. The 'commitment' of love versus the 'feeling' of love is expounded.
  - iii. 14:1-36 – the Spiritual Life as it should be evidenced in the Church.
    1. "Call" to ministry should be tested – if you can say no, you probably ought to say no to the call. If you cannot resist the call, you probably have received the call (Samuel, Jeremiah, & Paul).
    2. "Normative Revelation" = Scripture.
    3. "Non-normative Revelation" = dreams, visions, prophecy.
    4. Be careful about employing non-normative revelation in an authoritative manner.
      - a. Prophecy as a verb – this describes the action of revelation.
      - b. Prophecy as a noun – this refers to an objective revelation.
- e. 15:1-58 – Is a correction of discernment concerning Christian and Pagan Eschatology... Paul needed to reprogram their thinking about eternity.
  - i. Hellenist-Greek culture applied Neo-Platonist duality of matter/spirit upon their worldview. In this worldview:
    1. Spirit was all-important and enduring.
    2. Matter was transitory and unimportant.
    3. Because the material world was unimportant in relation to the spiritual world, they mistakenly concluded that physical pleasure in the body would not be problematic for the spirit.
    4. Pagans believed their next world (after-life) was a non-material extension of their present life, just without a physical body.
      - a. Perfection achieved in this life would be enjoyed in the next.
      - b. Knowledge and wisdom were prized as a means of achieving perfection.

- c. These semi-reformed Pagan/Christians essentially just added Grace to the mix.
    - d. Resurrection of the dead was not only a foreign concept to their Pagan thinking, it was not something they could even fathom.
  - 5. The Judaic/Christian world view held to humanity as a spiritual being living in a material world.
    - a. The Jews believed there would be ‘life’ after death as spiritual beings in Sheol or Hades... the place where all the dead went.
    - b. Christians [and some Jews] believed that there would be a bodily resurrection of the dead at the end of time [the Eschaton], of which Jesus was the archetype or first fruit.
  - ii. Christians also had a conceptual basis of the ‘duality of Spirit and material’ – Paul refers to the material as ‘flesh’ being the physical body, and the ‘natural’ meaning the unregenerate nature of the material world.
    - 1. The reincarnation of Jesus is the seminal event for Christians – it validates the blood sacrifice of Jesus to regenerate the entirety of our being... physical and Spiritual. Jesus bodily resurrection is the first-fruit of the looked for-hoped for physical regeneration of the material world.
    - 2. Without the resurrection of the dead there is no Christianity.
    - 3. Christians enjoy the “new creation” of their Spiritual nature now as a consequence of Jesus 1<sup>st</sup> coming, looking forward to the new creation of the material world and our physical bodies at Jesus’ 2<sup>nd</sup> coming.
- f. 15:58-16:12 – Is a correction about what it means to give as a child of God. The object lesson was about the collection for the relief of the “suffering saints” who are the Christian Jews experiencing great oppression in Jerusalem.
  - i. New Covenant giving is voluntary – it is a joyful response in light of what we have already received [mercy and grace] and are yet awaiting to receive [eternal life in heaven]. What we have already experienced in faith and look forward to in hope when Jesus returns.
  - ii. Old Covenant giving was involuntary – you were obligated to pay tribute to the King.
- g. 16:13-24 – Closing Comments

### C) THEMATIC UTILIZATION:

#### 1. Theme Development:

- a. In the outline and schematic theme review immediately preceding, we see how Paul’s letter to the Corinthians is shaped by what was going on in the local faith community. These thematic issues have relevance for faith communities through the ages, which is a fundamental requirement of inspired Scripture... the Spirit uses these ancient examples of people and communities struggling with issues in their life that the Spirit brings alive and relevant for people and communities throughout redemptive history.
- b. “Synthetic Chart” development – a synthetic chart is comprised of several components... most prominent and useful is an approach to understanding the themes the author thought important that the Spirit wanted to address. Most Bible Software will allow the disciple to perform a

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localized analysis of term usage within a given text. This allows us to see not only what was important to the author, but how the book shapes thought development.

c. Examples:

- i. **Spirit** – is employed mostly in regard to the Spirit of God, but also to a lesser degree to the spirit of man... it is used 477 times in Scripture.
  1. 177 uses are in the Old Testament, 300 in the New Testament.
  2. Most of the “spirit of a man” utilizations are in the OT, most of the “Spirit of God” utilizations are in the NT... obviously something was initiated by Messiah Jesus that changed everything.
  3. In the letter to the Corinthians...
    - a. “spirit” not capitalized is used 15 times referring to the spirit of man... this is as a result of being created in the Image of God [Imago Dei].
    - b. “Spirit” capitalized is used 21 times referring to the Spirit of God [Third Person of the Trinity].
  4. The highest density of usage is in chapters 12-14... where the Spirit of God is used 11 times and spirit of man is used 5 times. This frequency shows that Paul is drawing particular attention to the role of the Spirit... this is a clue!
- ii. **Body** – is employed as a term describing a holistic living organism... both as a “physical organism” of mankind, and as a “Spiritual organism” of the Church. In contrast, “flesh” is the tissue that comprises a living physical organism... whether animal or human. “Body” is employed 226 times in Scripture.
  1. 82 uses are in the Old Testament, 144 in the New Testament.
  2. 34 uses in 1 Corinthians, 14 in chapter 12.
  3. Flesh is used 121 times in Scripture... 90 times in the Old Testament, and 31 in the New Testament. Flesh apart from the organism is a carcass and has no value.
- iii. **Love** – is employed 505 times in Scripture, 201 times in the New Testament, 15 times in 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians... and 9 times in chapter 13 alone [the Love chapter].
  1. The verb form of love - ἀγαπάω literally ‘to love’ is used in the NT 110 times... usually in expressing the active love of God for his Son and his people. It is also used to express the active love God’s people are to have for God, for each other, and even for their enemies.
  2. Love is employed in the Hebrew as ‘Hessed’ – referring to God’s abiding and loyal love for His people; and as ‘Agape’ in the Greek – referring to God’s personal transformational love through Jesus and the Spirit.
  3. According to Zondervan’s New International Bible Dictionary:  
**Love** “is presented in Scripture as being the very nature of God (1 John 4:8, 16), and as the greatest of the Christian virtues (1 Cor 13:13). Love receives its clearest definition in Scripture by the listing of its attributes (13:4-7). Love is central to God’s Nature and lies at the very heart of Christianity, being essential to humanities relationship with God and with others (Matt 22:37-40; Mark 12:28-31; John 13:34-35). Jesus taught that on love... hang all the law and the prophets (Matt 22:40). Love is the fulfillment of the law, for the Law’s sense of obligation and desire for the welfare of the one loved impels a person to carry out the demands of the law (Rom

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13:8-10). Love found its supreme expression in the self-sacrifice of our Lord Jesus on Calvary (1 John 4:10).”

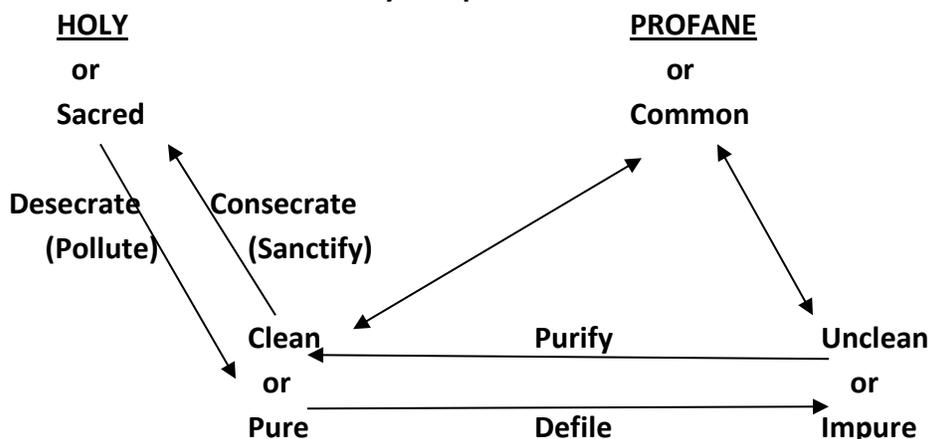
### iv. Additional Theme Development Text Sources:

1. Spiritual (adj) – 1 Cor-15, Rom-3, Eph-3, Col-2, 1Pet-2
2. Spirit (n) – Acts-61, 1Cor-28, Is-26, Ez-22, Gal-14, Eph-13, 1John-8
3. Flesh (sarx) – Gal-14, Eph-7, 1 Cor-6, 1 Pet-6, Acts-2
4. Body (soma) – 1Cor-43, Mat-15, Rom-13, 2Cor-9, Acts-1

### 2. Based upon these thematic utilizations, what does Paul believe about “spirit” (the supernatural realm of Spirit) and “flesh” (the natural realm of creation)?

- a. Paul believed in a duality of spirit [supernatural] and matter [material world]. This was not uncommon for the Ancient Near East. In addition, the Jewish world view held to a duality of the cosmos as “HOLY”... the place where God resides, and the “profane”... the material world.
  - i. Jews held that the “Profane or Material World” was another duality of clean and unclean. When material objects including people were clean, they could be presented to God. When they were unclean, there was a process they employed to cleanse them... see Leviticus.
  - ii. The Jewish world view into which the New Testament speaks has this view of the material world.

### b. Movement between the Holy and profane:



- c. Paul is writing to a mixed church of Messianic Jews and Gentile Christians. In Paul’s view, the “Innerman” is Holy because that is where the Spirit of God resides. The “outerman” is the common matter of flesh and physical organism that is profane.
  - i. In Paul’s view the profane material world is corrupted as the result of the Fall... and it awaits Messiah’s return where He will first purify creation during the Millennium, then recreate reality as the New Heaven/Earth the Apostle John speaks of in Revelation.
  - ii. Humanity is created as beings with a joint nature – a Spiritual being living in a material world. Our spiritual nature allows us to interact with God and the supernatural. Our physical nature grounds us to earth in time and space.
  - iii. Jesus as the 1<sup>st</sup> fruit of redeemed humanity is also Spiritual and physical... but His resurrected body operates under a different set of rules... there is a new physics at play testified by the fact that Jesus can appear and disappear, and translate through closed

doors, etc. Paul holds the view that as Jesus is now [post resurrection] we will become. We will have a similar resurrected body.

iv. The Greek & Roman culture believed the spirit was all important, and the material was of little value... Paul is not advocating this mind set and is looking toward a new order of reality in Heaven.

d. Paul's view of Salvation follows out of these perspectives:

- i. The Cross of Grace is an Innerman Covenant... as Jesus taught in the Beatitudes it is all Blessings [Matt 5:1-12]. This is Grace... we get what we don't deserve because of faith and love. Grace is transformational because it is based on love and the Spirit enabling us to live lives that please God.
- ii. The Law with its blessings and curses was an Outerman Covenant [Deut 26:16-28:68]. This is Law... you get what you deserve. Law is not transformational... though ideally love results out of need and dependence.

e. Paul believed that only Christians were truly "Spiritual".

i. In the Jewish world view:

1. They held to an integrated humanity of mind and heart... of intellect and emotions.
2. People who were blessed lived long lives of wealth and health. Those who died young or were afflicted were considered cursed.
3. Intellect and emotions were outerman and unredeemed.
4. Reason was a useful tool for understanding, but could not of itself redeem anyone. Emotions were freely expressed but were validated by reason and the Scriptures.

ii. In the Christian world view:

1. Spirit (true spirituality) in Jesus was blessed, clear-sighted, immaterial, otherworldly, and incorrupt.
2. Flesh (carnality) apart from Jesus was cursed, cloudy or blind, material, worldly, and corrupt.
3. Paul believed that flesh was the sin-cursed outerman that was destined for death, while the Spirit of God perfected and blessed the Spirit-innerman that was destined for eternal life.
4. Flesh as a term employed in Scripture could be used for the physical body either alive or dead (corpse), and also for the unregenerate state of humanity.
5. Spirit was used for the unseen Innerman that would live forever and had been already redeemed by Jesus.

3. How these elements of spirit/flesh play out in Pauline writings:

- a. 1 Cor 4:16-18 – Look at "set your mind upon" things above, not on the obvious things below.
- b. Rom 8:5 – "Think about" things of the Spirit – the unseen things should be contemplated upon and believers should encourage each other about them, rather than focusing of the obvious things of the world.
- c. 2 Cor 4:18 – "we see Him who is unseen" So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal. This is true spirituality.
- d. "Knowing Jesus" is to be captivated by Him... the analogy of a husband and a bride is a picture of this sort of captivation. It is far more than mere 'feelings' as it is a commitment made from the core of your being. This kind of love results in a transformed spiritual nature that calls us into a

different value system and a different manner of living, which is accomplished by God's Spirit indwelling us. This is an 'otherworldly' supernatural experience we are invited into now in our fallen state awaiting consummation in eternity.

- e. Christianity implies a transformation of life and values – not necessarily perfected living, but different expectations of life and of our ethical and moral interactions with others.
  - f. Walking by 'sight' is NOT walking by the Spirit – walking by the Spirit implies trust in God leading us on, not on our ability to understand and act. Paul is speaking about our dependence upon God to lead and guide us. It is the nature of the transformation of "natural man" [corrupt] into "Spiritual man" [Holy].
  - g. The Corinthians generally valued philosophy and rhetoric, and so did the Corinthian Christians. Paul's teachings were intended to recalibrate their thinking... from secular/profane to Eternal/Holy.
  - h. "Walking according to the flesh" is worldly and sinful, while walking in the Spirit is Godly and blessed.
  - i. We need to remind ourselves and each other that we are Heavenly citizens, not earthly citizens.
  - j. The Corinthians had thought they had attained the status of angels (1 Cor 4) – they did not grasp that the gifts of the Spirit were about fulfilling the call of being human and Godly in serving others. They incorrectly presumed the demonstration of spiritual gifts displayed their new personal status in the spiritual order of things. Thus "speaking the language of angels" was desirable to them.
4. Paul is a New Covenant Dualist – and this was a dualist of a new kind to the Corinthians:
- a. He enjoyed the present state of a redeemed Spirit nature, and yet he looked forward to a redeemed physical nature – a remade world without corruption where humanity and God lived together in peace and bliss.
  - b. Faith in Jesus denotes a transformed mind and heart, and necessarily results in transformed thinking and living.
  - c. When un-regenerated people act carnally, they act in accordance with their Fallen nature and their mistaken ignorant beliefs.
  - d. When regenerated people act carnally, they act in disaccord with their Redeemed nature and their Spirit imbued beliefs. Such people need to be confronted about their duplicity and challenged to correction. If they don't respond, they need to be subjected to church discipline.
    - i. The body must maintain Godly standards of living.
    - ii. When people fail, they need to be lifted up and corrected... restoration is always the hope of such correction.
    - iii. To allow people to continue to enjoy fellowship while maintaining a failed lifestyle is to cause confusion within the body, and confusion in the body destroys its witness to the public.
    - iv. Such mistaken individuals should be lovingly told to truly change or to leave the fellowship, and if they persist in their sinful ways they should be "shunned" or treated as an enemy to God. Such people should not be treated like non-believers who were merely ignorant of God.
    - v. This is not a call to protectionism or perfectionism by avoiding the sinful, because our Lord did not model that. Instead we are to be engaged in culture but not to be like them. We are called to be salt and light... in the world but not of the world.

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- e. 1<sup>st</sup> Corinthians is a letter in response to a spiritually confused people – they were baby Christians living a worldly life. 2<sup>nd</sup> Cor 4:1 sets the goal – we are being transformed as we look upon the Glory of the Lord... the message is to look steadily at Jesus and be conformed into His likeness [Imago Christi].

### D) EXEGESIS – Interpretation with regard to the Outline and Survey presented on pages 3-6:

- 1. Chapters 1-4 are all about overcoming the theological and social/cultural divisions and disunity within the Church.
  - a. 1:17-18 – this refers to the necessity of Spirit led conviction as opposed to reason led decision as the basis of Gospel transformation. Too much of our evangelism centers around a personal appeal to come to a faith decision... the problem being that if someone can talk you into believing, then another can talk you out of it. When faith results from Spirit led transformation there are typical components that accompany it:
    - i. Conviction – is the work of the Spirit and results in our response to His revelation of our need for Grace in agreement with God. This is about our personal need because of my failure... we are convicted that we are not the person God desires us to be.
    - ii. Remorse – in light of our need as an imperfect being before a perfect God, we feel sorry for our failings and realize our need for God’s help.
    - iii. Repentance – we realize that the things we have done and continue to do fall short of God’s standard to purity and holiness, and we genuinely desire to be/live differently.
    - iv. Restoration – we earnestly desire God’s restorative help in our lives, and also that we extend grace to others by desiring to remedy the wrongs we have caused against others. Restoration is not justification by the Law, but rather an outward proof of an inner change.
    - v. Reconciliation – is the work of the Spirit where we are given ‘right standing’ [righteousness] before God. The indwelling Spirit begins the life-long process of ‘sanctification’ whereby we are internally transformed into the likeness [reflection] of our Lord Jesus. The gift of reconciliation we call Grace... because we cannot earn it and we don’t deserve it. It is God’s gift to me.
    - vi. See Authentic Discipleship “Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Disciplines/SF 1.13 – Forgiveness Study and Practicum” for more information on this important topic.
  - b. 1:22-24 – Power and wisdom – in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Paul is saying that Jews demanded “signs and wonders” to validate the Truth of the Gospel; while the Greeks/Pagans demanded reason and wisdom. However, neither of these demands results in personal transformation. Instead the internal experience of those Spiritually born again is irrefutable and incontrovertible.
    - i. Jews demand signs... Greeks want wisdom... neither impress God. God calls out to us... He initiates the invitation and wants our genuine response to Him.
    - ii. Some would argue that contemporary cultural “moderns” may be roughly aligned with the Jews and “post-moderns” with Greeks. This comparison has some benefits as it highlights that ‘moderns’ who generally believe in God and absolute Truth are speaking a different language from the post-moderns who prefer a relative truth based on personal preference and situation.
    - iii. This comparison highlights some of the difficulty of evangelism in both eras... but it is

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- clear from Paul's teaching that true faith is initiated by God, responded to by humanity, and perfected by the Spirit.
- c. 1:26-31 – Paul speaks to the “calling” of the Corinthian brothers and sisters. He says this is not wisdom according to the “flesh” [verse 2] which relates to the common earthly life of the outerman, not the Spirit life of the innerman. That no “man” may boast [verse 29] is actually translated “flesh” ... Paul is again reinforcing the difference between the worldly life and the Spirit life.
  - d. 2:5-10 – Demonstration of Spirit and Power of God... following up on the foregoing section, Paul concludes that the Spiritual perception of reality is the true perception.
    - i. No eye has seen & no ear has heard – these comprise the two gates of perception that are critical for coming to terms with physical truth in the natural world. These senses are experiential.
    - ii. No mind conceived – no observation of reality and no limits of the imagination can reasonably lead someone to understand what God intends for those who love Him... this refers to the supernatural world and it is the really Good News!
  - e. 2:11-13 – We can experience illumination through the Spirit. The ‘spirit of the world’ is natural; the ‘Spirit of God’ is supernatural – these are 2 very different means of perception involved here – see Authentic Discipleship Spiritual Formation/Spiritual Maturity/SF 2.2 - Spiritual Journey Discovery.
    - i. New Covenant [New Testament] message engages the innerman.
    - ii. Old Covenant [Old Testament] message engages the outerman.
    - iii. The New Covenant is infinitely better than the Old Covenant, and is given away for free – you can't earn it or work for it, and you can't buy it – you can only accept it on God's terms.
    - iv. Those who accept God's offer on His terms move from being “Spiritually dead” to being “Spiritually Alive”... those who refuse remain dead.
  - f. 2:14-16 – This portion emphasizes the limits of reason because the “Natural Man” does not have the capacity to accept Spiritual things... because they are revealed Spiritually with receptors only the Spirit can enable.
    - i. This doesn't mean that natural man cannot have spiritual experiences... there is a form of perception that remains from being created in the image of God [Imago Dei]. However these perceptions are truncated and imprecise without the restorative action of the Spirit.
    - ii. Resurrection body (15:34) is likened to a seed planted in the soil – the seed is transformed into something far superior – a plant is far more vitally alive and wondrous than a seed.
    - iii. The message here is that the glory of the earthly is far different than the Glory of the Heavenly.
    - iv. Thus the new body of Christian resurrection is imperishable and incorruptible, unlike the old body that is perishable and corrupted.
    - v. The message of redemptive history as revealed in Scripture... is that the 1<sup>st</sup> Adam was merely a living soul; however Jesus as the 2<sup>nd</sup> Adam is a Life giving Spirit. The Old Covenant was a means of bringing the supernatural to living souls, but the New Covenant not only makes alive what was dead but also transforms everything into the perfected order that God had always intended.
  - g. 3:1-3 – Paul explains that he could not speak to the Corinthians as “Spiritual beings” because

- they lacked the ability to understand, so he spoke to them as “natural beings” (fleshly).
- i. This is intended to shame them into reflecting on the nature of “Truth” as well as encourage them that there is so much more to experience.
  - ii. The reality of life in the Spirit is wondrous, but revealed only through the Spirit.
- h. 3:4-8 – A Christian’s identity is defined by God, not by the preacher/teacher the person follows. Unfortunately, we make the same mistakes today... we hold that “my church and my pastor is better than yours.” This is a great sin against the unity of the Body of Christ. We also presume all we need do is show up at services and minimally participate... as if just being there is all God expects from us.
- i. Christians are to be engaged in the Church [the Organism] to serve God and fulfill the Great Commandment and Great Commission.
  - ii. The church [organization] exists to equip and engage Christians with the ongoing Kingdom of God mission [Missio Dei]. We have way too small an understanding of what it means to be a Christian today.
- i. 3:9-13 – Preacher/teachers as leaders of the Church are the builders, and the people are the building. Thus, judgment and accountability accrue to the builders. Leaders have a disproportionate responsibility as those who should know better, and they will be held accountable by God.
- i. In the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Church the Elders were the Pastor/teacher/shepherds and the Deacons were those service oriented to meet the needs of the organization and the corporate meeting of the Body.
  - ii. In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century we have confused the Church [Organism] and the church [organization] as to what is truly valuable to God. Biblical Eldership is Word and prayer ministry for the equipping of the Church Organism... this is not merely running the business of church organization.
  - iii. Buildings, money and outward behavior were what the Pharisees’ valued... and Jesus condemned them for it. We need a new Church Paradigm reflective of what Jesus called for... hearts that have been broken and softened by their love of God and others [Great Commandment]; and minds that are sharpened by Scripture and focused on evangelism and discipleship [Great Commission].
  - iv. All Christians are “Ambassadors for Christ” and “Ministers of the Gospel.” We must recover our calling and purpose, and especially our love and passion for God.
- j. 3:11-14 – Building on the foundation is not about differential rewards for services we offer to God, but rather an outward demonstration of what is really important to the disciple. If all you can afford is straw, than build with that. If you can afford gold but only use straw, there is likely something wrong with your priorities.
- k. 3:16 – Christians are the Temple of God because the Spirit dwells within us.
- i. In the Old Covenant the Presence of God resided over the Ark of the Covenant that only the High Priest could visit once a year.
  - ii. However in the New Covenant the Presence of God resides in every disciple sealed by the Spirit of God and we all have immediate access to Jesus and the Father... like a direct connection.
  - iii. We need a better and more vital understanding of the Grace we have received.
- l. 3:21-23 – All the ‘builders’ [pastors/teachers/evangelists/disciplers] you value belong to you...

they are here only to serve God by serving you... and you guys don't get it! You all belong to Messiah, and He belongs to God... this is the Church [Organism/Body of Christ].

- m. 4:1-4 – The priority about teaching/preaching is not what the disciples & congregation say about you when you teach, but rather what they say about Jesus. Pastors need to realign their priorities.
  - n. 4:5 – So stop judging... Jesus warned His disciples not to judge lest they be judged, and that we would be judged based on the criteria we use to judge others.
    - i. The point of this is not to decide what is good/better/best, but rather to realize that everything you do has been contaminated by our mixed and imperfect motives... then as now.
    - ii. We can't know for certain what another's motives really are, we can only guess at them by evaluating what they say and do... do the two line up? Are they walking as they talk?
    - iii. It is one thing to know what is right and true and another to live it out consistently... and we all fail here.
    - iv. So don't be a Christian groupie – don't just follow after one leader or another, or one methodology or another... instead follow Jesus. Focus on the important things that are unseen.
  - o. 4:7 - What do you have that hasn't been given to you? Everything that is really important has been a gift... thus we have nothing to brag about.
2. Chapters 5-6 are about identifying and correcting behavior disorder within the Church:
- a. 5:1-5 – Correction about a man who married his father's wife... most likely the man's step-mom.
    - i. This might make sense from a worldly perspective in that the inheritance would include both the man and his step-mom. Legally this might not be a bad idea... most likely there was an age differential between the step-mom and the father presumed dead. Consolidating their inheritance might make sense in a worldly fashion.
    - ii. However, from a Spiritual perspective this is the sin of profaning the father's bed. It demonstrates people trying to work out problems through their own knowledge and wisdom, rather than in dependence and obedience to God.
    - iii. Christians have a new order they live under where Spirit and Truth reign in the hearts and minds of humanity... new values require a new lifestyle. Christian's are to be Spirit filled and Spirit led... while the world is spiritless and reason/appetite led.
    - iv. Obviously the decree to cast the wrong-doers out is a righteous judgment... and it involves a different order of judgment than that immediately preceding in 4:5. Here they are not judging motives but actual behavior that is deemed contrary to authentic Christian living.
    - v. Hand the man [and woman] over to Satan does not mean to kill them, but rather to refuse their participation in the Church as brothers and sisters... otherwise confusion develops on what is proper action. This falls under the same heading as not allowing the "Lord's Supper" to be an excuse for drunkenness and gluttony... which evidently was not uncommon in the Pagan converts because that was appropriate in their old Pagan temple worship. Paul restates this 'old & new' thought process repeatedly to correct their faulty thinking.
  - b. 5:6-13 – Elaborates why it is crucial to eliminate obvious wrong doing as it confuses the standards by which Christians should live under. It is not that Christians don't make mistakes, but those mistakes should not be the norm... and when they are confronted with their wrong

- doing, they should demonstrate a willing heart and mind to consider the wrong and right it.
- i. The OT reminded people to “purge evil” from your midst, as it would ensnare them.
  - ii. This speaks also to “syncretism”... that means the blending over time of divergent faith elements. Christian faith is Christ alone... it is not Grace and Law, it is not faith and works.
  - iii. When someone professes Christian faith and yet acts as a Pagan, something is wrong... don’t embrace them as brothers. Doesn’t mean you can’t witness to them, doesn’t mean you can’t be friendly either. But being too friendly will only temp you into compromise or confusion... especially true for the weak faith of the young Corinthian church.
- c. 6:1-8 – Public lawsuits may be acceptable in the community between non-believers and even between non-believers and believers. However, believers live under a new standard that must not be confused by worldly standards.
- i. The Church is given the power to self-regulate some behaviors in love and mercy. When used as God intended this is a great blessing. Unfortunately however, way too often leaders wield such power wrongly... this is Spiritual abuse and is a great sin before God. The intent here is to use Spiritual insight and values to grow and discipline disciples into maturity.
  - ii. Spiritual leadership who abuse their congregations is a great evil, and God will surely judge them accordingly. Grace, mercy and forgiveness may ensue at any time in a heart that is seeking to serve and please God, but there will be consequences to those who deliberately wrong others mistakenly thinking God will forgive them... we will be judged not only by what we do but more importantly for our motives. While all of us sin and most of us realize our motives are often questionable if not confused, it is comforting to know that sin cannot overcome Grace and a repentant heart.
- d. 6:9-20 – speaks to a problem of sexual immorality that was most likely a carryover from the Corinthians Pagan past. Pagan worship included sex, drunkenness and gluttony. No doubt many Christians made the mistake of living like Pagans at least occasionally.
- i. Syncretism is the problem of combining different theological worship approaches which fundamentally change the faith. Such a combination means it no longer resembles either of the original faiths... it is confused and corrupted.
  - ii. When a Christian falls into lapses of living like a Pagan then renounces it as sin they are to be forgiven.
  - iii. When a Christian lives like a believer and as a Pagan that is syncretism.
  - iv. Christian faith is holistic – it involves everything in our life and our world view. Christians are to be a “counter-culture” within the greater culture we live. God will not allow a true believer to live very long both as a believer and a non-believer... and with seriously flawed theological notions derived from syncretism.
  - v. The Church should take a stand against such matters in an attempt to draw the offending parties and restore them to fellowship. If they persist in living like non-believers, they should be treated as such. If they persist in disrupting and confusing true worship within the Church, they should be asked not to participate. There are standards of decorum and respect to others that need to be maintained for the sake of the righteous for whom Christ sacrificed.
  - vi. Church leadership should be clear and transparent in dealing with such issues to preserve unity and harmony... this is more than mere preference, this is right versus wrong.

- vii. **“Bought at a price”** recalls the amazing involvement of God as Trinity invested in the redemption of humanity. We cannot yet imagine the price that Jesus paid... yet He accepted the need for sacrifice due to the inestimable value of humanity to God. We take this sacrifice far too lightly.
3. **Chapters 7-15 deal with relational difficulties within the Church... and establishing new standards based on Christian values:**
- a. **7:1-39 clarifies misconceptions about the nature of marriage and the marriage relationship:**
    - i. **Husband and wife are a “new creation”** – two becoming one not merely physically, but mentally, emotionally, and spiritually... and families are an organic unit integrated by the Spirit. Husbands and wives have an ongoing responsibility to one another as well as to their children. Personal desires are submitted to the greater needs of the whole.
    - ii. **“Time is short”** because the **“world in its present form”** is terminal... it cannot last long especially in light of eternity which is the calling of all Christians.
    - iii. **Thus we need to live in such a way that expresses our commitment toward the Kingdom of God... which doesn’t mean we cannot have pleasure and contentment now, but does mean that desires are restrained by the greater reality.**
  - b. **8:1-13 Meat sacrificed to idols exposed the problem of personal liberty and bondage within the Christian community. A ‘mature’ Christian [one who not only knows God intimately but whose life demonstrates their desire for holiness and purity before God] will not exercise their personal liberty at the expense of our drawing their weaker brothers and sisters into sin and corruption.**
    - i. **Verses 4-6 – There are many gods [Pagan Pantheism] and many lords [earthly rulers]; however for Christians there is only “One God – the Father” and “One Lord – Jesus” to whom we are ultimately responsible.**
    - ii. **Our responsibility is to accept others as they are, not to talk them into or out of something. As Bob Chappell would say – “if you can talk them into something, another can come along and talk them out of it.”**
    - iii. **The mature are responsible to protect the weak. They are responsible for loving and knowing, the weak will respond to the loving and in time will come to know themselves.**
    - iv. **The problem is not just causing offense; the problem is providing an example that may encourage a weaker brother or sister to do something against their conscience.**
  - c. **9:1-27 – Paul uses the analogy of Olympic competition that the Greek culture was familiar with to explain the requirements and the rigors of Christian leadership.**
    - i. **The call to leadership is an important matter and must not be accepted lightly. It is not about prestige or notoriety that comes as being a leader. It is all about focusing people upon Jesus.**
    - ii. **Many well intentioned people accept leadership they were not called to or adequately prepared for, and as a result they often do much harm and bring much confusion into the faith community.**
    - iii. **Many called Christian leaders spend more time caring for the organization and not enough time caring for the Organism, and their work in terms of eternity is minimal or truncated. Verse 16 demonstrates that Paul is compelled to preach... this is his calling by God, not merely church organization leaders.**
    - iv. **Still more attempt to do Spiritual work in the strength of the flesh and fail personally and**

- corporately as a result.
  - v. Leadership is not for everybody, and Spiritual leadership can only be maintained through Spirit imbued means.
  - d. 10:1-6 – Paul draws out an explanation of how Israel failed in their wilderness journey.
    - i. 1-2 – Their journey through the Red [or Reed] Sea and following under the pillar of cloud Paul uses as an analogy of baptism.
    - ii. 3-4 – The Spiritual food of manna and drink of Spiritual water from the Rock [Isaiah 48:51] Paul uses as an analogy for Communion. Moses’ manna and water met the people’s physical needs; whereas Jesus’ manna [His Body] and His water [the Spirit] meet our Spiritual needs.
    - iii. 5-6 – Paul emphasizes these sacraments were incapable of saving the Jews, because their faith and obedience were deficient.
  - e. 10:7-12 – Paul explains faith without loving obedience is defective.
  - f. 10:13 – Zondervan’s Expository Encyclopedia states that “Verse 13 is one of the most helpful verses in the NT and presents the great antidote to falling into sin through temptation. The word ‘Temptation’ as used here is not itself sinful. God allows temptation as ‘trials’ and a way of purifying us (Jas 1:12), but the devil uses it to entice us into sin (cf. Mt 4:1). The temptations that come to the Christian are those all human beings face--they are a part of life on Fallen earth and are unavoidable. But Paul says that God is right there with us to keep us from being overwhelmed by the temptation. He will provide a way out, not in order to avoid the temptation, but to meet it successfully and to stand firm under it.” This is transformational faith in action.
  - g. 10:14-22 – is where Paul brings these examples of ancient Israel home into the community of faith in Corinth. This is how you live together as the people of God.
  - h. 10:23-11:1 – Christians enjoy great freedom due to the indwelling Spirit, however there are practical limits of freedom we should exercise... our freedom should never cause another to stumble or fall. This is how you live in love.
  - i. 11:2-16 – are Paul’s suggestions for the propriety of worship that honors God and doesn’t confuse humanity.
    - i. The idea of veils for women and mantles for men is an ancient custom in the Ancient Near East. These customs were different from the Greek and Roman culture, where men and women had different ideals of propriety.
    - ii. This follows out of Paul’s notion of not causing another to stumble... decorum should prevail in a mixed Roman/Greek/Jewish/Christian assembly of men and women.
  - j. 11:17-34 builds upon the ideas Paul wrote in verses 10:1-11:1... communion had degraded into an excuse to drink and eat without restraint. This is not only is unseemly in the community of faith, but it also confuses new believers and offends God.
4. Chapters 12-14 are particularly relevant for a counter-cultural Christian community. Chapter 12 is about life in the Spirit, chapter 13 is about loving God and each other, and chapter 14 is about life in the community of faith... the Church.
- a. 12:1-3 involves the fleshly desire posing for spiritual utterance and prophecy. It was common for Pagan worshipers to work themselves into an ecstatic frenzy and utter gibberish and wild claims. This was more about self-aggrandizement than Spiritual worship. Paul is correcting the faulty thinking of baby Christians.

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- b. **12:4-6** is where Paul brings harmony and unity in his “different” and “same” comparisons of gifts & Spirit; service & Lord; works & God.
- c. **12:7-11** Paul lists the gifts given by God for the common good and equipping of the Church:
  - i. Message of wisdom – the outworking of Scripture in one’s life to express the Gospel... this is discipleship.
  - ii. Message of knowledge – preaching in such a manner as to bring conviction in the hearers... this is evangelism.
  - iii. Faith – this denotes deeper expressions of faith in endurance of trials and suffering... even to the point of martyrdom.
  - iv. Healing & Miraculous powers – were testimony to the faith and authority of the preacher as a man or woman of God... these were supernatural enablement of the Spirit.
  - v. Prophecy – is making known God’s unfolding redemptive plan in such a way that people are blessed and caught up in the wonder of God.
  - vi. Discerning of Spirits – especially in Corinth there was much confusion regarding the realm of the Spirit... this is the gift of making clear what was of God and what was a counterfeit.
  - vii. Speaking in tongues – distinguishing between the Pagan ecstatic utterances and Spirit breathed declarations of unknown languages.
  - viii. Interpreting tongues – the Spiritual enablement to make known what is hidden in the unknown language.
- d. **12:12-31** is all about the unity of the Body of Christ... the Church as a living organism integrated by the indwelling Spirit.
  - i. These baby Christians in Corinth were more concerned about their personal prestige and appearances, they wanted to appear important and spiritual rather than love God and serve each other in humility. Spiritual pride remains a problem for the Church throughout the ages.
  - ii. Paul’s clarification is that the matter of personal prestige and appearance were completely irrelevant. Whoever you are and whatever you do are equally gifts from God for the building up of the Church. Rather than wanting to do something different, do what God has given you in obedience as an act of worship... do not seek praise from other people but only from God.
- e. **13:1-3** – Paul builds upon the logic he’s developed to redirect the young Church to more appropriately reflect who God is... the personification of love.
  - i. Paul employs “hyperbole” – the literary medium of greatly exaggerated thought to prove his point.
  - ii. **13:1** – Tongues of Angels and men without love is a loud clashing noise... completely useless and undesirable. Only a fool would think clashing noise is music.
  - iii. **13:2** – Paul expands the hyperbole into total wisdom, knowledge, and powerful faith that can do anything as being useless without love. Most thoughtful people know intuitively that absolute power given to finite and imperfect fallen humanity corrupts absolutely... they had to look no farther than the Roman Emperor who were renowned for their excess and abuse.
  - iv. **13:3** – giving everything away and willingly surrendering my life is useless without love.
  - v. Compare this hyperbole with that of Micah 6:6-8 – With what shall I come to the LORD And bow myself before the God on high? Shall I come to Him with burnt offerings, With yearling

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- calves? Does the LORD take delight in thousands of rams, In ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I present my firstborn *for* my rebellious acts, The fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God? **You can almost hear the thundering voice of Micah rising as he’s making his pitch in the escalating nature of the hyperbole... the conclusion is that it ridiculous and we should know better.**
- vi. **These are great examples of the power of hyperbole.**
- f. **13:4-8a – Paul now lists 16 elements of what love is and what it is not to press his argument home. These elements apply to all relationships, especially to marriage, family, and the Church family. These should be looked at as being “Relationship 101” – this is how intimacy and love are developed.**
- i. **Love is patient – Patience involves the willing endurance through the stress and stains of relational life. In the closest relationships such as husband and wife & brothers and sisters – there will be times when you will become frustrated with each other. In these moments, you will have a choice to make. What will you say to each other? Will you control your emotions and respond in a loving manner? Being patient is demonstrated in restraint – that you consider the other’s well-being first, and deliberately and purposefully submit your own wants, needs, and expectations for the benefit of your relationship together. This is not a one way street... but rather mutual submission.**
  - ii. **Love is kind – Kindliness involves deliberately being tender and affectionate with each other, even when you may not feel particularly tender or affectionate. It means not saying or doing things in a manner that may hurt or inflict emotional pain on the other. It is deliberately thinking through what you want to say or do before you say or do it.**
  - iii. **Love is not envious – Envy is a malign feeling focused toward another who has something that you desire. Stated positively, not being envious means that you rejoice in the other’s pleasure and good fortune as if it were your own. It is finding pleasure in the vicarious experience of the joy your beloved has experienced.**
  - iv. **Love is not boastful – Boastfulness often sets up conflict between people, it implies that one is somehow better than another. In your relationships be extravagant in declaring your love and appreciation of each other, but refrain from expressing your individual efforts as being greater or more important than those of your beloved. Always appreciate and encourage each other’s efforts and success.**
  - v. **Love is not proud – Pride is incessantly selfish, and a selfish person will lose any balance that might grow out of recognizing the inherent value and worth of others. Pride works against intimacy, it produces a self-isolating and an independent attitude that cuts you off from necessary relationships, and perverts your true humanity. Pride and envy are relationship killers.**
  - vi. **Love is not rude – Rudeness is acting in a discourteous manner. Rude behavior comes from carelessness and from selfish desires. It is grabbing rather than caressing, and taking rather than accepting. Always be gentle with each other, and let your actions and your thoughts always display a loving and respectful heart for each other.**
  - vii. **Love is not self-seeking – Self-seeking is the desire to please yourself above another. Since love in marriage is about relational intimacy, you must first and foremost attend to the needs and feelings of the other. Love is not about you or your feelings alone, rather it**

- is all about the two of you together.
- viii. **Love is not easily angered** – Anger involves an emotional response, but the relational warning here is not to necessarily suppress what you feel, but rather to control what you say or do because of your feelings. There are many things that prompt anger, and some are valid – but angry responses almost always hurt others. The most dangerous are those things said that are intended to deliberately inflict pain or harm. Always remember that it is better to say nothing than say something that will hurt your beloved.
  - ix. **Love keeps no record of wrongs suffered** – We all know people who love to keep a scorecard of the things another has done wrong, and it seems they bring these things up at just the occasion to build themselves up and tear you down. In true love, there is no list keeping to remind the other of wrongs suffered or inflicted. Love forgives always, and deliberately remembers only the good. We should purposefully and prayerfully develop a selective memory that cultivates a loving heart. If you have to keep a list, remember the good things, and use them to encourage your love.
  - x. **Love takes no delight in evil** – A loving heart never delights in the ethical or moral failures of another. Usually when people enjoy these failures, it is because they provide an excuse to explain away or cover up their own bad behavior. Love always delights in ethical and moral purity – which in turn intensifies relational intimacy.
  - xi. **Love rejoices in the Truth** – Where the truth is spoken in love, relational intimacy flourishes. Your beloved needs to be able to believe in what you say, to be able to take you at face value. Lies will undermine that trust. Another and perhaps worst example is when we fail to speak the truth in love, and are brutal with the truth. Truth can be spoken in such a manner as to deliberately inflict pain; this is not speaking truth in love. Remember to always filter your words to each other. A love filter has three gradients – is it true? Is it kind? Will it promote a loving relationship? Always weigh your responses through this filter. Speak only in a manner that will develop greater intimacy and trust.
  - xii. **Love always protects** – The protection here envisioned is of a warrior holding a shield defending his beloved from harm. Always remember that it is your responsibility to protect two things – the other person and your relationship together. If someone wants to draw you into a controversial point at the expense of your beloved, whether it is true or not, resist the offer. Never side with another at the expense of your beloved.
  - xiii. **Love always trusts** – Love and trust are hard to establish, and they are all too easy to destroy. Once destroyed trust is extremely difficult to rebuild. A harsh word spoken in anger can crush tenderness. A careless action can ruin trust. A loving heart wants to trust, but a wounded heart finds it hard to trust. Always promote trust in your relationship... relationships cannot endure and certainly can't grow and develop without mutual love and respect.
  - xiv. **Love always hopes for the best** – Whether it involves feelings or outcomes, love always hopes for wonderful results for the other. And the anticipation of such blessings heightens your sensitivity, and increases your appreciation as you experience them together.
  - xv. **Love always perseveres** – An image of perseverance is of a runner running a marathon – life is not a sprint, but a prolonged effort with a goal in mind. Perseverance is the willful endurance to fight through the obstacles that confront you so you may persist in your

love.

- xvi. **Love never fails** – If you practice these elements of relational intimacy, your love will grow and flourish. While others may fail you, your beloved will never fail you or abandon you.
  - g. **13:8b-13** – Paul ties together his thoughts about Spiritual gifts and love – all gifts will fail... they only have sway during the Church era on Fallen earth. But when perfection comes... when Jesus institutes the new creation of a merged Heaven & Earth... only 3 things will really matter. The things we think important now will be shown as futile. Then only faith, hope and love endure... with love being the greatest of the 3.
  - h. **Chapter 14** concludes this section of the proper conduct of relationships in private, in public, and in the Church:
    - i. **14:1-25** – puts in context the relative value of the things the Corinthians presume to be important and what is really important to God. When the Church functions as God intended it to function, people will necessarily conclude that “God is really among you” [14:25].
    - ii. **14:26-40** – reaffirms the priorities of equipping the Church – all the gifts have little value to the Church if their use is not equipping and building up the Church in love. Selfish use of gifts to promote individual prestige is not what these gifts were intended to accomplish. The fruit of the results is whether people are becoming more like Jesus and reflections of His life and priorities.
  - i. **15:1-58** is all about the Gospel of Grace in Jesus and His resurrection and the coming reality of the resurrection of all believers.
    - i. **15:1-11** – clarifies the Gospel being preached as reliable and true.
    - ii. **15:12-34** – confirms the resurrection of all humanity – to live a life of blessing or of curses. Our life should exemplify our values – we should live consistent with our beliefs.
    - iii. **15:35-58** – clarifies the reality of the resurrection... a very great blessing indeed.
  - j. **16:1-4** – speaks to relieving the horrible persecution that was occurring in the Christian community in Jerusalem. This persecution would ultimately claim the lives of close to a million people according to the Jewish and Roman historians. These historians wrote in wonder how these people went to their deaths singing hymns and praising God... it made no sense to them. The Christians knew that they would be raised from the dead as certainly as Jesus had been raised from the dead – and many of them were first and second hand witnesses to Jesus resurrection. Their absolute conviction brought multitudes to examine their faith. Instead of crushing the Church, this led to its rapid expansion.
  - k. **16:5-18** – speaks to personal requests and an encouragement to enjoin all in the Gospel advancement. All believers are ministers of the Gospel and ambassadors of the Kingdom of God.
  - l. **16:19-24** – are Paul’s final greetings and farewell.
5. **Marriage in the Community of Faith:** it is not accidental that 1 Corinthians chapter 13 is read at so many weddings. It is unfortunate that we don’t consider the greater purpose of marriage that God intended humanity to enjoy... a transformational life in the unity of husband and wife as a reflection of the intimacy within the Trinity. Here are some reflections I preached at a wedding I officiated:
- a. **General thoughts on marriage:**
    - i. **God does some interesting things in the community of faith. Not the least of which is how God takes divergent people and knits us together as a community. Renown Christian**

author and mystic Henri Nouwen was quoted in an online devotional where he compared the Christian community to “A Mosaic That Shows Us the Face of God”:

1. He observed that “a mosaic consists of thousands of little stones. Some are blue, some are green, some are yellow, some are gold. When we bring our faces close to the mosaic, we can admire the beauty of each stone. But as we step back from it, we can see that all these little stones reveal to us a beautiful picture, telling a story none of these individual stones can tell by itself.”
  2. Nouwen says that this is what our life in community is about. Each of us is like one of these little stones, but together we reveal the face of God to the world. No one person can say: “I make God visible.” But others who see us together in a community of love can say: “They make God visible.” Nouwen concludes that “Community is where humility and glory touch.”
  3. Each of us is a piece of this composite mosaic picture... each of us has our part to play with no one being more or less important than another. We all have our place and our purpose.
- ii. These days, many rightly ask, “Why marriage?” What is marriage really all about, and why is it so important... especially in the Christian Community? Institutionally marriage is more than merely licensing physical pleasure or personal comfort, and there are other means to deal with the important legalities of property and children and inheritance apart from marriage.
  - iii. God has much to say about the importance of marriage as revealed in Scripture where it is clear that humanity is part of something that is way bigger and more important than the individual parts. Like Nouwen’s mosaic, marriage in the Christian community forms an image of the Kingdom of God. And this is rightly so because humanity has been created in the image of God and as such we are a reflection of God. Being in “His Image” describes a Spiritual paradigm that includes both personal and social relational aspects.
  - iv. Humanity was created with an internal and intrinsic need to live in relationship. It is not by accident that every culture supports relational intimacy within three contexts – 1)in the context of God; 2)in the context of a mate; and 3)in the context of a community. It is within these three contexts that an individual’s identity is defined... where we find meaning, purpose and fulfillment; where our ideals and values are interpreted and displayed... where individuals are complimented and completed.
  - v. We are now going to look at two passages of Scripture that I hope will shed some light on the mystery of marriage.
- b. Marriage in the Community of Faith:
- i. Our first passage is from the Book of Genesis – This reading is attributed to the historical Moses, who lived during the 15<sup>th</sup> century BCE – approximately 3,500 years ago. Gen 1:26-28, 2:7, 18, 22-24:  
Then God said, Let us create humanity in our image, and after our likeness. Thus, God created humanity in his own image, in the image of God he created them, male and female he created them.  
The Lord God formed the man from the soil of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life... and man became a “Living Being.”  
The Lord God said, It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion for

- him... one who's form and nature matches, reflects, complements and completes him. So the Lord God created a woman from the essence of the man, and he brought her to the man. Then the man said, This one out of all created beings is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she will be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man. That is why a man leaves his father and mother and unites with his wife, and the two become one.
- ii. Most of us have heard this story before, and although much consternation often develops from the order of creation with woman being last, but I would down play that. One could logically argue that woman having been created last means that she is the crowning achievement of God's creative expression. For our purposes today I think it's more important to focus on aspects of our identity where relationship and community is shaped by our having been created in the Image of God.
  - iii. The first aspect of this story has to do with a Personal Identity: It is intriguing that each of us is created different. Each person has our own distinct DNA, distinct fingerprints, and a distinct retina scan pattern... from which it seems intuitively obvious that God delights in individuality since He created each of us with a distinct individual identity. Many developmental anthropologists have turned to the intelligent design concept of creation as such distinct personal characteristics really don't make much sense apart from a creative being that made us that way. Our personal identity, our sense of who we are, is thus formed by God.
  - iv. The second aspect to consider has to do with a Shared Identity: The story reveals that a husband and wife are both made in the image of God – this means that two distinct beings have a common identity with a similar nature. In marriage our individual personalities become connected and related to one another.
    1. When a man and a wife have committed themselves to one another, their identity is being reformed both as individuals and as an extended family. In this extended family resulting from this marriage, we gain new parents and grandparents, new brothers and sisters, new cousins and friends... all of whom are united through the bond of love of a husband and wife. In this marriage a relational miracle is occurring around us at this very time... born out of the love of a husband and a wife.
    2. The Scripture says that in marriage man and wife we become "one flesh" or more correctly, "one integrated being." One flesh is a reflection of the relational life within the Trinity of Father-Son-Spirit who Scripture declares as being "One God." The text reveals the divine intention of a shared identity for husband and wife as compatible, equal, and inter-dependent partners reflecting the relational intimacy and unity observant in the Trinity.
    3. In order for this marriage partnership to endure the stresses of the world amid the strains of individual desires and expectations it is necessary that all actions and decisions from now on are to be made in the context of their relationship together.
    4. As such, the interests of the individual must be deliberately and purposefully submitted to the greater good of the marriage relationship. This is a key relational matter... especially in our fiercely independent culture. In marriage we need to

rethink everything in terms of what is best for both for our shared identity to form and flourish.

- v. A third aspect to consider is the recognition of a Transitioning Identity: God is never static relationally; we are constantly changing, maturing, and evolving. Nothing remains static in the world, or in our hearts and lives. There is a constant dynamic of “*changing, transitioning, and transforming.*” We have already observed that when a couple marries a fundamental relational change occurs, and the two individuals we have known and the relationship we have grown comfortable with also must change.
1. As “husband and wife,” you are hereby declaring that you have left your old life behind in favor of a new life you are building together and transitioning toward. Your old life as you have known it has ended, and a new one has begun. It is often difficult for newlyweds to embrace this changed state of life. However, it is crucial that we as parents, family, and friends must purposefully respect and encourage your process of transitioning into your new relational identity.
  2. Transition is the process that follows the initial change and precedes the ultimate transformation where your new identity together becomes the new normal. As family and friends, we must deliberately and consciously choose to relate to Wife and Husband differently – as a married couple. The old form of relationship in which we previously operated, has changed and is no longer appropriate.
  3. In this new relational identity the role of parent is understandably one of the hardest to change and transition with the declaration of marriage – parents must now become coaches, confidants, mentors, counselors and cheerleaders. Parents have done their part in bringing their children into maturity, and now Wife and Husband are purposefully taking responsibility for their own life, and the decisions they make they will make together... and we must encourage and respect that.
  4. The role of friend is another difficult relationship to change – we who have been their friends must be mindful that a husband must now think first and foremost of his wife, and likewise a wife must think first and foremost of her husband. While we can still enjoy their friendship, we must recognize their priorities and responsibilities have changed.
  5. When we recognize and allow them this consideration in transitioning, something wonderful happens – they can become the new creation that God intended them to be.
- vi. The final aspect of the story we will consider is a Transformed Identity: God is all about transformational life. He delights in making us into something we were not before... not merely better but wondrously better. As modern-day disciples of Jesus, we know that God is at work transforming Jesus’ nature into our lives, and He has adopted us as His own sons and daughters. It is true that in marriage, “one flesh” is a supernatural transformation.
1. While it is obvious that the bodies of a man and a woman are made for each another – we obviously fit together physically; but we also fit together emotionally, intellectually, and spiritually. While it is easy to focus on the physical side of marriage, it is especially important to understand that marriage is about the whole person including the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual aspects of our

life that are being nurtured and transformed together.

2. The marriage commitment a husband and wife enters into together allows for the deepening of their relationship on all these levels. Marriage involves the entirety of the individual in a transformational process where the two progressively become *'one'* through the sharing of a lifetime of events, circumstances, and experiences together in dependence and submission to God.
  3. Marriage as we've described it is a noble and joyous calling. It takes a lot of work and personal investment, but you'll find that life together will be so much richer and more wondrous than any life alone. There is only so much a person can do alone or for themselves, but it is nearly limitless what one can do when submitted to each other under God's Grace and care.
- c. **Transformational Love:** Our second passage is 1 Corinthians chapter 13. The Apostle Paul wrote this passage about 2,000 years ago, and it is a powerful testimony to the nature of love. While most of us are familiar with this chapter, it is crucial that we see it in its context in Scripture. It is preceded by Chap 12 which speaks about what Spiritual life is all about; and it is followed by Chap 14 which speaks about life in the community of faith. Because of this context, we see that Paul is telling us that love is the bridge between spiritual life and life in the community of faith.
- If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal.
- If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.
- If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing.
- Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
- Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.
- Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away.
- For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears.
- When I was a child, I talked like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me.
- Now we see but a poor reflection as in a darkened mirror; but then [when perfection comes] we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known.
- And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.
- d. In this passage are listed 16 elements that describe what love is, and also what it is not. In our self-help approach to life it is easy to argue that if you apply some of these elements most of the time, and most of the elements on a regular basis – that any relationship will be improved. However, our goal as Christians is not merely improvement but to have these elements incorporated in such a pervasive manner that it fundamentally transforms who we are and how we live.

- e. In the writings of the Old Testament, the Hebrew word used to express God’s love is *Hessed*. Hessed love refers to the enduring quality of God’s love for His people... it doesn’t change, it is never abandoned, God’s faithfulness is the one constant we can rely upon.
- f. In the writings of the New Testament, the Greek word used to express God’s love is *Agape*. Agape love refers to the transformational quality of God’s love for humanity. God was not content to leave humanity as broken imperfect creations when we emerged from the Fall in the Garden, and through the atonement of Jesus the way is made open for an entirely different way of living and loving. It is not accidental that Jesus’ relationship to the Church is often described in Scripture with marriage imagery, as this is the most powerful relational intimacy we can know this side of eternity. Agape is the kind of love God has for us, and it is the kind of love we should have first for God and then for one another.
- g. I’d like you to contemplate again for a moment, as I re-read the 16 elements of love from this passage... drink these descriptions in:
  - <sup>1Co 13:4-8a</sup> Love is patient, love is kind. Love does not envy, love does not boast, love is not proud.
  - Love is not rude, love is not self-seeking, love is not easily angered, love keeps no record of wrongs.
  - Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth.
  - Love always protects, love always trusts, love always hopes, love always perseveres.
  - Love never fails.
- h. I’d like for you to imagine the person you would be if your heart was constrained and motivated by this kind of love. Imagine how wonderful it would be to have a heart like this. Imagine how amazing it would be to live with a person like this. This is God’s purpose in marriage, that the two would be transformed into a completely different way of thinking and relating in love... by the Grace of God. This is God’s goal for marriage.
- i. These 16 elements of love are the components of relational intimacy, and they form the basis of a marriage life and love together. These elements frame the type of Love that Scripture declares God has for humanity, and it is also the model that we should have for each other. When it comes to demonstrating such love, Christians recount the example of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross as the highest expression of *Agape* love. Jesus’ sacrifice opened the opportunity for relational intimacy for each of us with God that we accept through faith. It forms the basis of our hope of eternity that we expect with God. Agape love here and now provides the means for enduring selfless love as evidenced in healthy relational intimacy in marriage.
- j. When a husband and wife stand together in their community of family and friends and profess their love for one other... transformational Agape love is at work. As much as husband and wife love each other, we also as your family and friends profess our love for you. As a community we are proud of you, we are proud of the people you have already become – and are yet becoming. We pray your love will sweeten and grow stronger as you walk together through life.
- k. We remind you that you must constantly care for your relationship. Always be on the lookout for anything that would harm it or weaken it... there are many things that would seek to separate you. Instead, do the things that will promote your relationship, deliberately refrain from anything that does not promote it.
- l. Be vigilant, and be strong – and when you are being tempted [for temptations will come] remember your promises here today to each other, and remember those here that stand with

## Bible Survey – NT 3.2 – 1st Corinthians

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**you and believe in you. And remember that God loves you, and has blessed you and the marriage relationship through which He has called you together.**