



Cultures in Conflict, Session 5 Ray Vander Laan

WHY LEARNING COMMUNITIES?

To become better and better disciples of Christ TOGETHER so we can face *anything* through...

1. Deeper learning of Biblical truth
2. Stronger “iron sharpening iron” relationships

Ephesians 4:12–16 (ESV) ¹³until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Remember... it’s all about putting God’s truth into action in everyday lives

OPENING CONVERSATION

SESSION 5, “Transforming the Chaos”

➔ To be a Corinthian

Ancient time reputation, to be a “Corinthian” had meaning of decadence, low morals, etc.

➔ To follow Jesus in the city of Aphrodite

✓ *Morality and faithfulness in marriage*

Paul speaks, writes like he expects them to continue to live in Corinth, putting serious effort into training Christians to be a Christ follower in the city of Aphrodite because it was a sex filled, sex-driven culture, particularly in banquets and festivals.

✓ *Meat sacrificed to idols*

➔ The Serapeion, temple to the Egyptian god serapis

✓ *Meat sacrificed to idols and sold in the agora*

In 1 Corinthians 8 Paul says: Whatever you buy in the market is okay to eat. It doesn’t matter if it is sacrificed to idol because an idol is nothing

1 Corinthians 8:4–6 (ESV) ⁴Therefore, as to the eating of food offered to idols, we know that “an idol has no real existence,” and that “there is no God but one.” ⁵For although there may be so-called gods in heaven or on earth—as indeed there are many “gods” and many “lords”—⁶yet for us there is one God, the Father, from whom are all things and for whom we exist, and one Lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things and through whom we exist.

versus

✓ *Meat sacrificed to idols and eaten in celebration of the god*

In 1 Corinthians 10 Paul says not to eat meat sacrificed to idols as part of a celebration to a pagan God. He is more concerned about **where** it is eaten and **the context** of eating it.

1 Corinthians 10:14–22 (ESV) ¹⁴Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. ¹⁵I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. ¹⁶The cup of blessing that we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread that we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? ¹⁷Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread. ¹⁸Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar? ¹⁹What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? ²⁰No, I imply that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons. ²¹You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons. You cannot partake of the table of the Lord and the table of demons. ²²Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?

➔ **Symposion – celebration of the god of the temple with gorging, drinking and entertainment**

In their world meat was rare, only upper class could afford, except during festivals – only time poor and middle class could eat meat/ not part of reg diet except festivals – at that time distributed in 2 ways: 1 some meat killed in front of altar was given to wealthy, then middle class, if anything left to the poor = by class. These feasts especially in temple halls started with gorging yourself and then came “symposion” when often women and children excused and the drinking began – enormous amounts of drinking connected to feasts to the god/ during drinking bouts would be entertainment: sometimes a philosopher or musician, but the norm was very sexual – trained entertainers called “hetaera” – high priced call girls trained to discuss philosophy or play the flute or debate politics all the while an orgy – some were wealthy people throwing such a meal for others to show their status; many were religious in nature with temple throwing the feasts; but most were “guild” feasts, sort of like union – everyone had a patron god and met regularly to have symposion – heterosexual, homosexual, common was pederasty (man and boys), wine servers picked as young attractive boys and that would become part of entertainment – THAT is what happened when you ate meat in front of an idol

➔ **Warnings about the immorality of temple feasts**

Here’s his argument: the meat in the market sacrificed to idol – eat it. But behind every idol are demons – refers to the Torah that meat sacrificed to idols is offered to demons. When you come to these feasts there is demonic presence, and you don’t want to have anything to do with demons or with idolatrous. We are to “flee” = run like crazy from idolatry (1 Cor. 10). Paul is not concerned about the meat but about the immorality that accompanied eating meat moments.

1 Peter 4:3–4 (ESV) ³For the time that is past suffices for doing what the Gentiles want to do, living in sensuality, passions, drunkenness, orgies, drinking parties, and lawless idolatry. ⁴With respect to this they are surprised when you do not join them in the same flood of debauchery, and they malign you;

Ask yourself – is it even possible to live out a Jesus’ walk in Corinth? If you came out of this world all your friends, business dealings, neighbors are in this world. Is it even possible?

➔ **Being the message – the synagogue on Delos**

They found a way to live in this dark world with all gods, symposion, idol meat and still serve Creator. They caught the mission way back at Sinai – **make my name known, be a Kingdom of Priests**. They had discovered the most compelling way to show: **not what you say but who you are**. They understood it is not first about bringing a message but **being the message** (even though they brought a message).

➔ **You live in Corinth, too**

So BE DIFFERENT! You live in Corinth – western culture. Those gods reign there too – much more sophisticated in appearance – but Aphrodite of unrestrained sexual practice of all kinds, the Mars of solutions being in power and violence, the mammon of the mad pursuit after money and stuff and the Dionysius still reigns.

YOU are the Aquilla and Priscilla. You live in Corinth as you watch the de-Christianizing of culture as values slowly evaporate – to our sorrow, but it's an opportunity.

➔ **You are the sermon; be the alternative!**

Others need the sermon where any of those gods hold sway, and YOU ARE THE SERMON

Your life is the sermon, and that is the mission to the Corinth we call home

And the PS to that: we in Jesus community have failed often and we shout at a world losing its way, but our own example does not create an alternative. Marriages, businesses, way treat neighbor. Sermon of our life betrays us. No that message could have spread if the people did not see in Aquilla ad Priscilla and their house church an alternative. But be filled with hope. If you will refuse to bow the knee to Aphrodite and her kind and submit to Jesus the King, the Gospel will spread – last word in Luke in Greek? “Unhindered”

APPLICATION:

➔ ***an idol is just an idol but behind every idol are demons***

✓ What are idols for us?

✓ Are we afraid of idols? How much power do we give them?

PRINCIPLE: Resist the devil, Flee from temptations and Pursue God.

James 4:7–10 (ESV)

1 Timothy 6:8–16 (ESV)

✓ How do we live out that resist-flee-pursue principle in practical ways?
What are the activities from which we should flee?

✓ Is it possible we are focused on external “purity” rather than internal that makes us salt, light and the aroma of Christ?

➔ ***People need us to be the sermon where ever “those gods” hold sway***

- ✓ Is it possible to be Jesus in Corinth?
- ✓ Are we following Christ for our own benefit or to be Jesus in a lost world?
- ✓ How do we as the sermon create an alternative in practical ways?

➔ ***The deeper the darkness, the greater the light can be***

- ✓ what does compromise look like?
- ✓ what does holiness (being set apart) look like? What does living godly in this world look like?

TAKEAWAYS...



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