

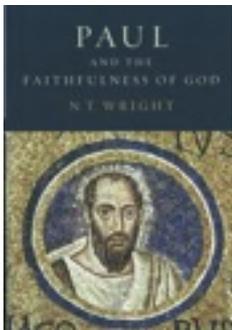
Discussion Questions:

1. What was the central purpose of the Lord's Supper in the Corinthian churches as shaped by Paul?
2. What did it mean for the Corinthian churches to participate in the Lord's supper in an unworthy manner?
3. Specifically, what did it mean to "eat and drink without recognizing the body"?
4. How did the Lord's Supper lay a bedrock of unity in the gathering of the churches of Corinth?

²⁷ It follows from this that anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone should test themselves; that's how you should eat the bread and drink the cup. ²⁹ You see, **if you eat and drink without recognizing the body**, you eat and drink judgment on yourself. ³⁰ That's why several of you are weak and sick, and some have died. ³¹ But if we learned how to judge ourselves, we would not incur judgment. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are punished, so that we won't be condemned along with the world. ³³ So, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, **treat one another as honored guests by waiting for each other**. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, they should eat at home, so that you don't come together and find yourselves facing judgment. I will put the other matters in order when I come.

Paul's theology of unity he built into his churches was central to why the churches multiplied and multiplied and eventually turned the world upside down.

Today, our Western churches know nothing of this unity, which is why Christianity is impotent in the West.

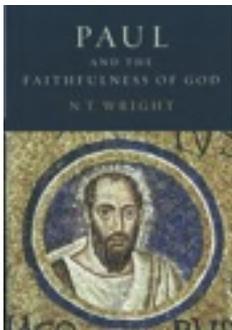


Paul's Early Epistles

Conflict in unestablished churches is inevitable. Converts are coming from every corner of society. Different ages. Different backgrounds. Different cultures. Different social classes.

There are bound to be different views on about everything. Yet Christ's churches are to be one-minded, to become one family.

We have this example in vivid color in the Corinthian churches.

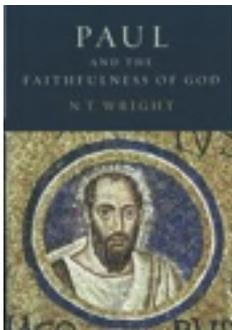


Paul's Early Epistles

In these two sections of 1 Corinthians, last week and this week, we learn an enormous amount about what it takes to build this kind of one mindedness—

what it means to think through the principles embedded in the apostolic teaching

to deal with the unique cultural conflicts that plague churches of every generation and every culture.

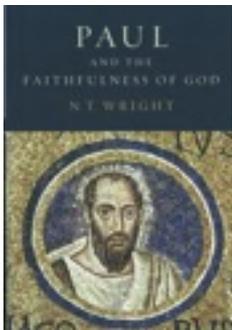


Paul's Early Epistles

Three weeks ago, we officially began our extensive series on the Corinthian correspondence.

This series is going to be very important in filling out our understanding of how Paul laid the foundation of the gospel for unity in his churches.

We will see its application to both unity in the Corinthian churches and unity in the network he was building, along with the tremendous cost he paid personally for laying that foundation.

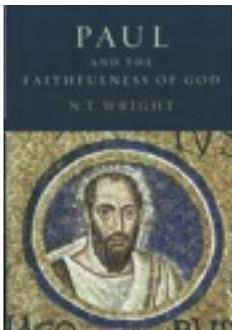


Paul's Early Epistles

Three weeks ago in Session 1, we attempted to discover Paul's intent in writing all the Corinthian letters.

Two weeks ago, we turned our focus to 1 Corinthians 1–6 to see how Paul laid the foundation for dealing with their disunity by returning to the gospel.

Last week and this week, we are looking at the specific divisions that occurred in the Corinthian churches.

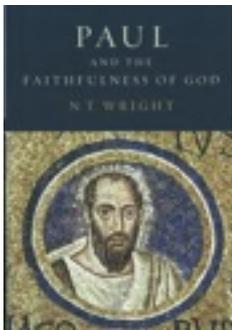


There were 3 types of divisions in their community:

1. Divisions in marriage, chapter 7
2. Divisions in social status/lifestyle, chapters 8–10
3. Divisions in men's and women's roles, chapter 11:1–16

There were 3 types of divisions in their community gatherings:

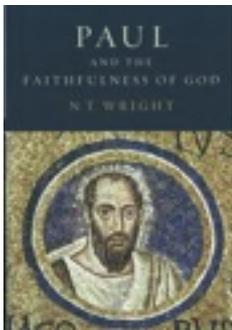
1. Divisions at the Lord's supper
2. Divisions in the order of gifts
3. Divisions in the meeting itself



Passages: 1 Corinthians 11:34–14:40

Questions:

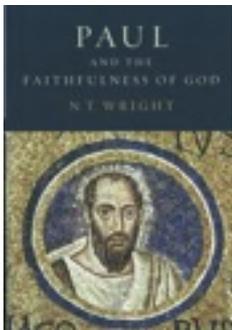
1. How did Paul lay the foundation for unity in the community-wide gathering (church of churches gathering)?
2. Why was the Lord's Supper so critical to that unity? In what way was it designed to set the tone for the unity Paul demanded of his churches?
3. After the Supper, what did the open meeting look like? What were the elements?
4. How did Paul establish order in the larger open meeting. What were the guidelines?



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 4: The Corinthian Letters: Fragmentation of the Gospel

- Session 1: The Fragmentation of the Gospel
- Session 2: Building on One Foundation: The Traditions
- Session 3: Divisions in Their Community Life
- Session 4: Divisions in Their Community Gatherings
- Session 5: Back to the Gospel Foundations
- Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Session 1: The Pressure of Leading Church Networks

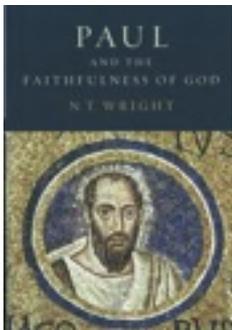
Session 2: The Ministry of the Gospel: Conflicts Without and Fears Within

Session 3: Sacrificing Network to Network for the Progress of the Gospel

Session 4: The Importance of Apostolic Teams

Session 5: The Appeal to the Corinthian Churches

Session 6: Use in Life and Ministry



Paul's Early Epistles

The Early Letters

Book 1: The Early Letters: Fully Establishing
the Churches in the Gospel

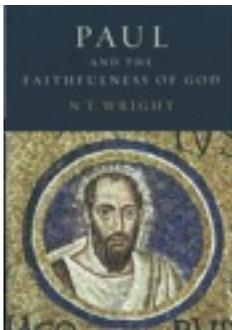
Book 2: Galatians: So Quickly Leaving the
Gospel

Book 3: The Thessalonian Correspondence:
Conversion to the Gospel

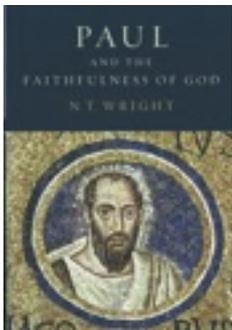
Book 4: The Corinthian Letters:
Fragmentation of the Gospel

Book 5: The Corinthian Letters: Progressing the
Gospel Through Multiplying Churches

Book 6: Romans: Complete Treatise
of Paul's Gospel

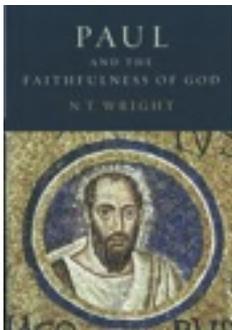


Quite a bit of background is needed to grasp the answers to the questions and basic problems Paul was having with the Corinthian churches and to begin reconstructing Paul's intent in writing to them.



All of this background is found in the letters and the book of Acts.

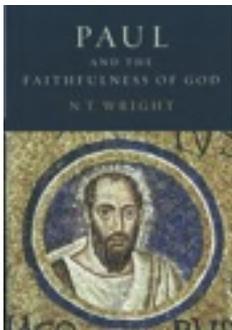
In addition, we will rely on a wealth of early Graeco–Roman research, as gathered by a set of scholars over the last 40 years, as we attempt to grasp the intention of these letters.



The key work and author carrying the conversation is

The Social Setting of Pauline Christianity: Essays on Corinth by Gerd Theissen, (Fortress, 1982)

Like Malherbe's *Paul and the Thessalonians: The Philosophical Tradition of Pastoral Care*, usually one author brings it down to the churches.

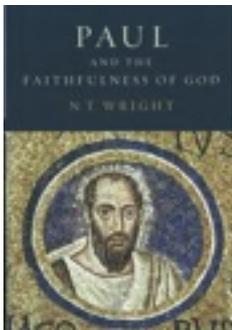


Paul's Early Epistles

Another book I mentioned contributes to getting on top of the conversation:

Beginning From Jerusalem: Volume 2 of Christianity in the Making by James D. G. Dunn (Eerdman, 2009)

This contains a summary of almost all the current research on the “quest for the historical church.” See these sections on the Corinthian churches: “The Founding of the Church at Corinth” pages 692–702 and the 4 Corinthian letters, pages 780–857.



I am again using Dunn heavily in this section.

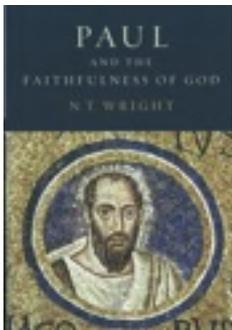
Paul's Early Epistles

In our background message and session 1 of this booklet, we worked on building a set of intention statements to guide us as we deal with each major section in the Corinthian correspondence.

One covers Paul's intention in writing all 4 letters

One for 1 Corinthians

One for 2 Corinthians

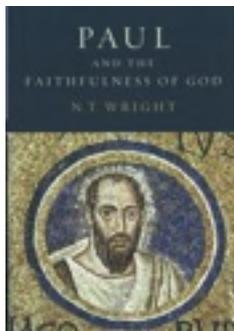


Intention Statement for the Corinthian Letters

To defend his unique role of proclaiming the gospel to the Gentiles in the context of all sorts of rivals, keeping the Corinthian churches in his sphere of authority, as he continued to build a network of churches committed to progressing the gospel among the Gentiles

by writing his second letter to deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches.

by writing his fourth letter to appeal to the Corinthians to remain under his leadership, despite attacks from rival leaders on his apostleship.



Paul's Early Epistles

Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

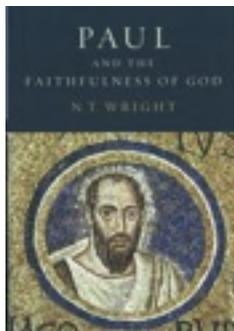
To deal with internal divisions, rooted in differing social statuses fragmenting the Corinthian churches, with the view of the Corinthian churches fully participating with him in the progress of the gospel

by applying the gospel to the core divisions that developed by factions within the churches

by specifically addressing factions in both

- their community and
- their community gatherings

by appealing to the future resurrection



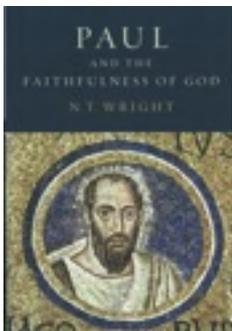
Intention Statement of 2 Corinthians

To defend his apostleship in the Corinthian churches so they might remain in his sphere of authority and therefore participate fully in the progress amongst the Gentiles, for which he was uniquely commissioned by describing his internal stress in carrying out his stewardship

by describing the heart of the ministry of the gospel as “conflicts without and fears within,” as a context for victorious progress

by defending his apostleship and seeking the Corinthians as partners in that progress

Paul's Early Epistles



Intention Statement of 1 Corinthians

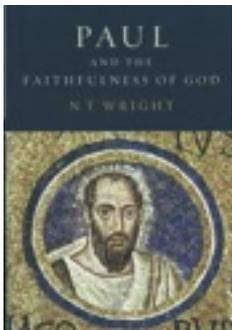
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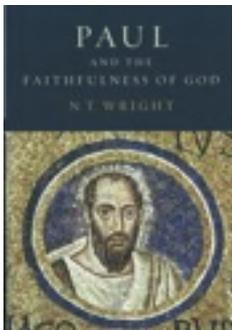


There were 3 types of divisions in their community:

1. Divisions in marriage, chapter 7
2. Divisions in social status or lifestyle, chapters 8–10
3. Divisions in men's and women's roles, chapter 11:1–16

There were 3 types of divisions in their community gatherings:

1. Divisions at the Lord's supper
2. Divisions in the order of gifts
3. Divisions in the meeting itself



¹⁰ Now I appeal to you, brothers and sisters, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you be in agreement and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and the same purpose. ¹¹ For it has been reported to me by Chloe's people that there are quarrels among you, my brothers and sisters.

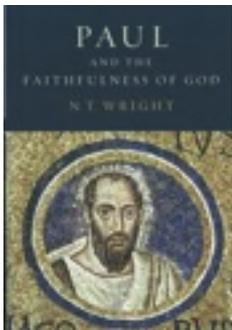
1 Corinthians 1:10–11

In the sections that follow, Paul uses a similar phrase several times: "Now concerning..."

1 Corinthians 7:1

1 Corinthians 8:1

1 Corinthians 12:1

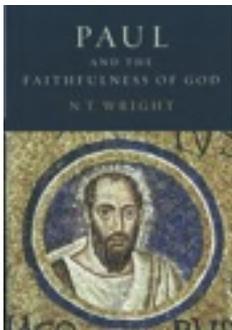


Paul's Early Epistles

Also remember, Paul is building on a bed of teaching he already delivered to them, which he calls *the traditions*.

We saw it in the first section, 1:1–6:20.

And we see it again here. He is applying that teaching as he addresses specific divisions in the Corinthian churches.



¹⁶ I appeal to you, then, be imitators of me. ¹⁷ For this reason I sent you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ Jesus, as I teach them everywhere in every church. ¹⁸ But some of you, thinking that I am not coming to you, have become arrogant.

1 Corinthians 4:16–18

He gives us clues to what he is doing in 1 Corinthians 7:

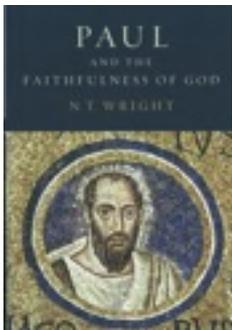
⁶ This I say by way of concession, not of command.

¹⁰ To the married I give this command—not I but the Lord

¹² To the rest I say—I and not the Lord

²⁵ Now concerning virgins, I have no command of the Lord, but I give my opinion as one who by the Lord's mercy is trustworthy. ²⁶ I think that, in view of the impending crisis....

⁴⁰ But in my judgment she is more blessed if she remains as she is. And I think that I too have the Spirit of God.



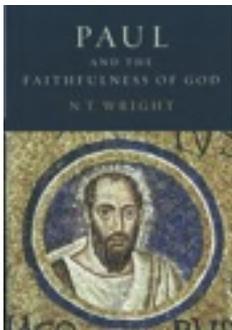
What exactly is going on here?

Paul assumes 2 things:

1. There is a set of teaching that he received from Christ which all the churches are to follow.
2. There is a set of principles, implicit in that teaching, that guides them in handling the difficult choices in their culture in a way that produces unity and an effective witness.

His guidance to them is in applying those principles to their cultural situation.

Paul's Early Epistles

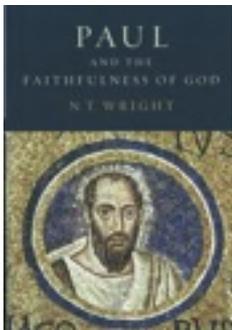


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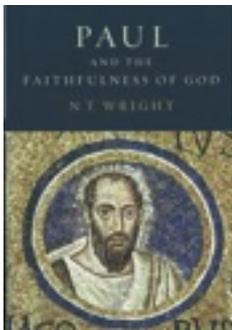
We need to understand why Paul shifted to just addressing issue after issue.

Remember the occasion of this letter was Chloe's household.



Those who are married:

- Because of the vast cultural immorality, fulfill sexual needs of each other, except for a time devoted to prayer.
- If married to a believer and he or she leaves, remain unmarried with the potential of reconciling.
- If married to an unbeliever, stay married for the sake of the children, but if he or she leaves, you are free.



Those who are single or engaged

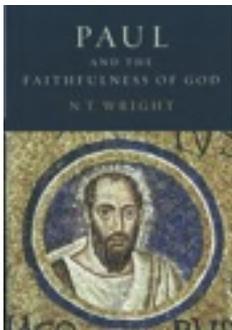
- Because of the impending distress, if you are single stay that way; in my opinion, you will better be able to serve the Lord.
- The same if you are engaged, but if you cannot handle it, go ahead and get married.

Widows

- Young widows are free to marry, but in light of the impending stress, it is ideal not to.

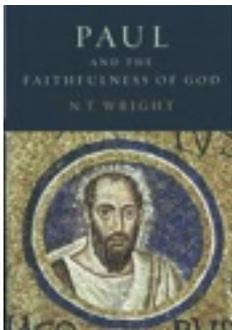
Slave

- Remain content in your situation, but if you have the opportunity to gain your freedom, it is better.



Several things should be noted here.

1. His advice is based upon an impending distress (a series of famines across the decade) and a belief that the return of Christ may be near.
2. The general principle: Serving God out of the life situation you are in is the best position, but as God gives opportunity, reconcile or legitimately change your situation.
3. We have an excellent picture here of Paul “doing theology in culture.”



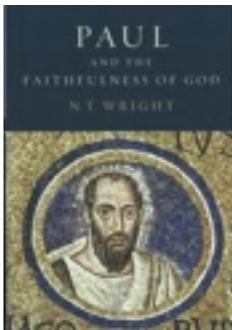
This passage sets the context for understanding the whole “strong–weak” issue of 1 Corinthians 8–10:

The strong are the educated, the wealthy, and those of high social position, who have significant rights in society.

The weak are the poor, the down trodden, the non-citizens and slaves, who have no rights in society.

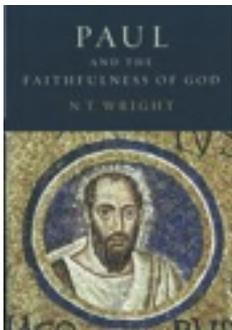
This explains why Paul inserts chapter 9 between chapters 8 and 10.

Chapter 9 is about Paul giving up his rights for financial support as a minister of the gospel.



So Paul is primarily addressing the strong (who also probably make up most of the leadership):

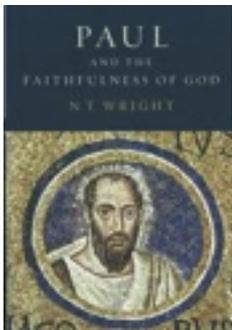
- They are free to exercise their rights in the culture, to fit into all sorts of social situations for the progress of the gospel.
- But they must be very sensitive to the weak and not put them in bad situations that they cannot handle.
- And, as we will see in 1 Corinthians 11:17ff, when they are in the assembly meetings, they must not separate themselves with separate meals, but assume social equality with the weak.



So the situation was this:

In the home, a woman did not need a covering on her head, but when out in public worship, she would wear it.

Some evidently thought that when they were in the church meeting, they were free and took off their veils. Most likely they would not have gone out in society without a veil at that time in their culture.

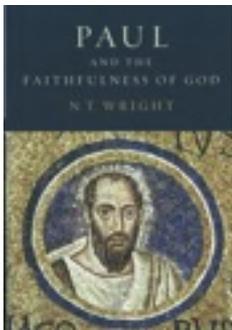


Again, we see Paul doing theology in culture.

He first gives the teaching, from which an embedded principle leads to the ability to do theology in culture.

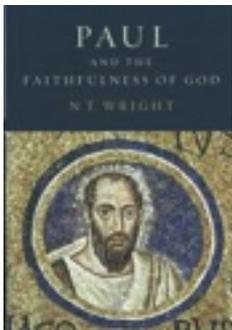
In cultures today that are traditional societies, where women wear veils, the same practice should be followed.

Where that is not the case, the teaching of men leading in the assembly should still be followed.



Paul's Early Epistles

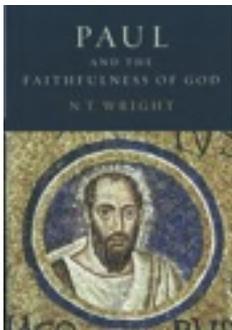
Now we turn our attention
to the divisions in their
community gatherings.



Paul's Early Epistles

There were 3 types of divisions in their community gatherings:

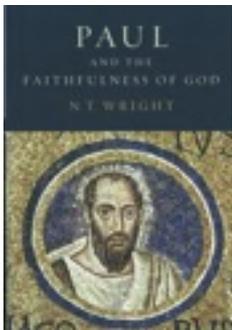
1. Divisions at the Lord's supper, 11:17–34
2. Divisions in the order of gifts, chapters 12–13
3. Divisions in the meeting itself, chapter 14



Divisions at the Lord's Supper, 11:17–34

Paul's basic argument:

- When you gather together in one larger meeting, as a church of churches, wait for one another before beginning, treating those who have nothing as equal members.
- At the heart of the meal is the Lord's supper, remembering Jesus' sacrifice as the basis of the New Covenant, making us all on equal footing in the gospel.
- Examine yourself as you gather, making sure you recognize the body, and treat everyone as an honored guest, especially those who have nothing.



¹⁷ What I have to talk about now isn't a matter for praise. When you meet together, you make things worse, not better! ¹⁸ What I mean is this: to begin with, I hear that when you come together in the assembly there are divisions among you. Well, I believe it— at least partly. ¹⁹ There are bound to be groupings among you; that's how the genuine ones among you will stand out, I suppose! ²⁰ So **when you gather together into one meeting**, it isn't the Lord's Supper that you eat. ²¹ Everyone brings their own food to eat, and one person goes hungry while another gets drunk. ²² Haven't you got houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise God's assembly, and **shame those who have nothing?** What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? No, in this matter I shan't!

1 Corinthians 11:17–22 N.T. Wright

Paul's Early Epistles

²³ This, you see, is **what I received from the Lord, and handed on to you**. On the night when the Lord Jesus was betrayed, he took bread, ²⁴ gave thanks, broke it, and said, “This is my body; it’s for you! Do this **as a memorial of me**.” ²⁵ He did the same with the cup after supper, and said, “**This cup is the new covenant** in my blood. Whenever you drink it, do this **as a memorial of me**.” ²⁶ For whenever you eat this bread and drink the cup, you are **announcing** the Lord’s death until he comes.

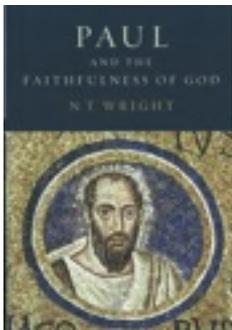
1 Corinthians 11:23–26 N.T. Wright

²⁷ It follows from this that anyone who eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. ²⁸ Everyone should test themselves; that's how you should eat the bread and drink the cup. ²⁹ You see, **if you eat and drink without recognizing the body**, you eat and drink judgment on yourself. ³⁰ That's why several of you are weak and sick, and some have died. ³¹ But if we learned how to judge ourselves, we would not incur judgment. ³² But when we are judged by the Lord, we are punished, so that we won't be condemned along with the world. ³³ So, my brothers and sisters, when you come together to eat, **treat one another as honored guests by waiting for each other**. ³⁴ If anyone is hungry, they should eat at home, so that you don't come together and find yourselves facing judgment. I will put the other matters in order when I come.

The Significance of Lord's Supper, 11:17–34

Implications:

- The Lord's Supper set the foundation and tone for the community-wide gathering. It was a great unity builder for the Corinthian churches.
- It was not intended to be an individualistic, mystical way of experiencing Jesus, but a community-wide culture set by churches of grasping the concrete plan of Jesus for His disciples—the New Covenant.
- The New Covenant is the basic call to love one another as He loved us.



The Significance of Lord's Supper, 11:17–34

Dunn again captures the essence of Paul's central teaching on the memorial:

“The other is the central position Paul obviously attributed to the sharing of the body and blood of Christ (10.16) as the key elements in the shared meal, spanning the whole meal, giving the meal its sacramental character. It was the bonding effect of that shared meal which Paul sought to maintain, the bonding to Christ and with other participants. That was the real identifying factor and boundary marker — not so much the meal itself, or even the bread and wine as such, but the experience of their sharing in the meal, in the bread and the wine, in shared devotion to the one Lord and in mutual concern one for the other.”

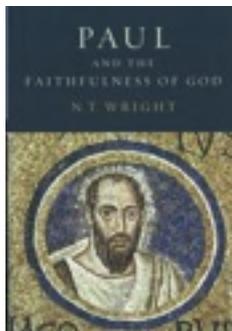
Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)*

Jesus' Inauguration of the Lord's Supper, John 13:34–37

³⁴ “I’m giving you a new commandment, and it’s this: love one another! Just as I have loved you, so you must love one another. ³⁵ This is how everybody will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for each other.”

John 13:34–37 N.T. Wright

Paul will build on this in 1 Corinthians 13.



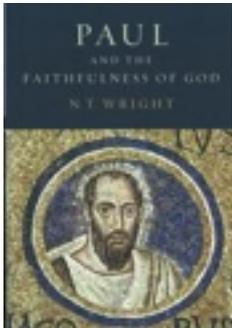
Paul's Early Epistles

Paul now will build on this unity in the 1 Corinthians 12.

Remember his main point in 11:29:

“if you eat and drink without recognizing the body”

He will build on that now.

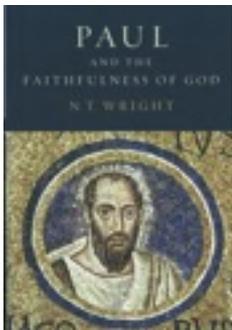


Paul's Early Epistles

Divisions around spiritual gifts, 12:1–13:13

Paul's basic argument:

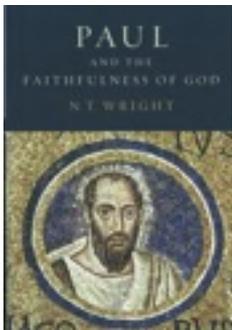
- There are a variety of gifts, services, and activities; together they make up a single, unified whole—one body.
- Everyone has been given gifts and is an important part of the whole.
- As we are assembled, we need to go out of our way to honor those who are weak and both value them and acknowledge their contributions.
- That does not mean there isn't proper recognition given to the priority of gifts that lead and shape the community gatherings.
- The most important element of the gathering is visible love for one another, not the recognition or visibility of the exercising of spiritual gifts.



The key to understanding his logic in this chapter, builds on the previous Lord's Supper argument:

²² No: the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, ²³ and we give much greater honor to the parts of the body we reckon more dishonorable In fact, God has made the body a single, organized whole; he has given greater honor to the lesser part

1 Corinthians 12:22–24 N.T. Wright



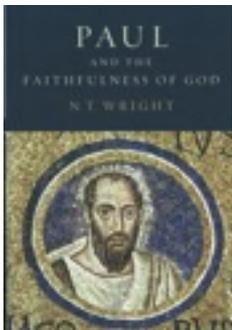
Paul's Early Epistles

The key to understanding his logic in this chapter, builds on the previous Lord's Supper argument:

¹³ For we all were baptized into one body, by one spirit— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free— and we were all given one spirit to drink.... ²² No: the parts of the body which seem to be weaker are all the more necessary, ²³ and we give much greater honor to the parts of the body we reckon more dishonorable ²⁴ In fact, God has made the body a single, organized whole; he has given greater honor to the lesser part

1 Corinthians 12:13, 22–24 N.T. Wright

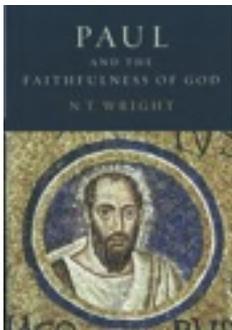
Paul's Early Epistles



12:1–3 forms the context for chapters 12–14, which is one argument, though we will handle it in 2 bites:

¹ Now: about things relating to the spirit's work, my brothers and sisters, I don't want you to remain ignorant. ² You know that when you were still pagans you were led off, carried away again and again, after speechless idols. ³ So I want to make it clear to you that nobody who is speaking by God's spirit ever says, "Jesus be cursed!"; and nobody can say "Jesus is Lord!" except by the holy spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:1–3



Paul's Early Epistles

Dunn again

“Having dealt with issues reported to him, Paul returns to the questions raised by the Corinthians—what they evidently referred to as pneumatika (‘spiritual things’),³³¹ but Paul preferred to speak of it as charismata (what has been freely and graciously given, so ‘gifts’).³³² The distinction is probably indicative, for the former evidently encouraged a focus on the experience of the gift, on the experience of inspiration, as an end in itself, whereas the latter rather focuses on the outcome of the inspiration, on the gracious effect of the gift on others.³³³ Whether or not that distinction can be pushed all the way, it certainly sums up the major thrust both of Paul’s critique of the Corinthians’ worship and of his evaluation of the gifts experienced in the Corinthian assembly.”

Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)*

Dunn

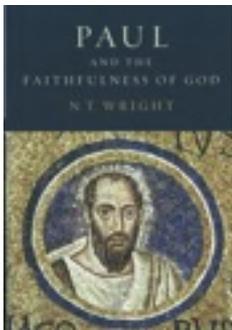
“The key problem is signalled at once: Paul reminds his audience that ‘when you were Gentiles you used to be carried away to idols that were incapable of speech’ (12.2).³³⁴ Despite the questionings of some,³³⁵ the likelihood is that Paul here recalls their (or at least some prominent Corinthians’) experiences of ecstatic rapture in their former religious practice. While the wording itself (‘carried away to dumb idols’) is open to different interpretations, Paul’s subsequent characterization of the Corinthians as ‘zealots for spirits’ (14.12), that is, in context, presumably eager for experiences of inspiration,³³⁶ and his warning of the danger of so surrendering to the experience of speaking in tongues as to give any outsider the impression that they were out of their mind and had lost control of themselves (mainesthe—14.23), almost certainly carries with it the implication that 12.2 refers disapprovingly to such experiences in the Corinthians’ past.”

Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)*

Basic understanding of gifts

⁴ There are different types of spiritual gifts, but the same spirit; ⁵ there are different types of service, but the same Lord; ⁶ and there are different types of activity, but it is the same God who operates all of them in everyone.

1 Corinthians 12:4–6

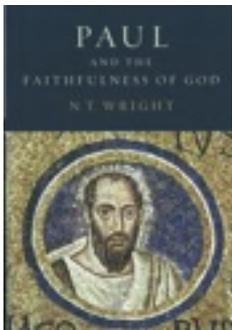


Paul's Early Epistles

Basic understanding of gifts:

¹² Let me explain. Just as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is the Messiah. ¹³ For we all were baptized into one body, by one spirit— whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free— and we were all given one spirit to drink.

1 Corinthians 12:12–13



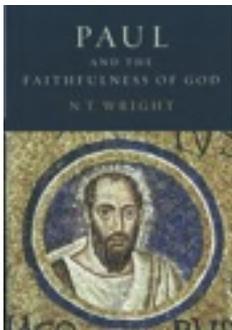
Paul's Early Epistles

Basic understanding of exercising gifts in the church:

²⁷ Now you together are the Messiah's body, and individually you are members of it. ²⁸ In the church, God has placed apostles first, then prophets, then teachers, then powerful deeds, then gifts of healing, helpful deeds, organizational gifts, different types of languages. ²⁹ Not everyone is an apostle, are they? Not everyone is a prophet! Not everyone is a teacher! Not everyone does powerful deeds! ³⁰ Not everyone has gifts of healing! Not everyone speaks with tongues! Not everyone interprets! ³¹ You should be eager for the better kinds of gifts.

1 Corinthians 12:27–31

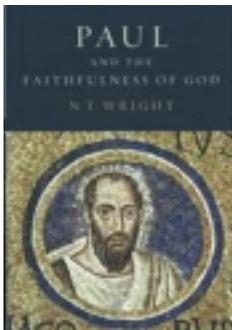
Paul's Early Epistles



After all the work laid of being one body, valuing everyone, and showing honor to the less visible gifts, implying those who were poor and had nothing, why does he go this direction at the end of the chapter?

He is setting up chapter 14 where he will bring order to the chaos and general disorder and divisions they were experiencing in their larger gathering.

But first, we have sort of an excursus that revisits the bedrock laid by the memorial of the Lord's Supper, which focused on the New Covenant and the community gathering being characterized by love for one another.

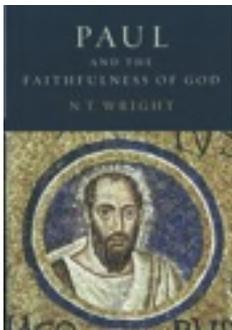


Paul's Early Epistles

Chapter 13 needs to be interpreted in light of the context of the community-wide gathering of the churches

and of the social strata tensions that permeated the Lord's Supper and the elevating of the visible "spiritual" spiritual gifts — especially speaking in tongues.

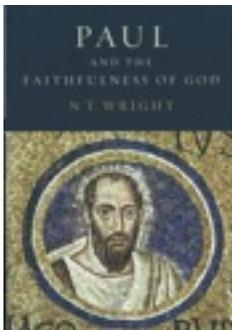
While there are obvious, more important, highly visible gifts that were most prominent, community-wide love for one another at the gathering should be the most visible thing.



Paul's Early Epistles

¹ If I speak in human languages, or even in those of angels, but do not have love, then I've become a clanging gong or else a clashing cymbal. ² And if I should have prophetic gifts, and know all mysteries, all knowledge, too; have faith, to move the mountains, but have no love—I'm nothing. ³ If I give all my possessions to the poor, and, for pride's sake, my very body, but do not have love, It's useless to me.

⁴ Love's great-hearted; love is kind, knows no jealousy, makes no fuss, is not puffed up, ⁵ no shameless ways, doesn't force its rightful claim, doesn't rage or bear a grudge, ⁶ doesn't cheer at others' harm, rejoices, rather, in the truth. ⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things; love hopes all things, endures all things.

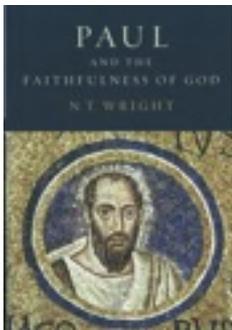


1 Corinthians 13:1–7

Paul's Early Epistles

The argument of 1 Corinthians 13:

- There is a way everyone should be treated in the community-wide gatherings.
- While the gifts are very important to the gatherings, love must be visible.
- Everyone needs to be treated with love: patience, respect, caring for them, and not inferior in any way.
- Evidently there were problems: things like elevating those with the “ecstatic” gifts; treating those of lesser gifting or those poor, less educated, and “lower class” with disdain; pride in their own gifts; and jealousy between cliques.

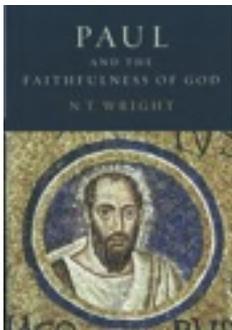


Now Paul returns to dealing directly with the divisions in their community-wide gatherings:

¹ Pursue love; and long for the spiritual gifts, especially that you may prophesy.

1 Corinthians 14:1

The divisions in the church of churches gathering, which at times even caused chaos, were from the use of “ecstatic” gifts, specifically speaking in tongues.



Paul's Early Epistles

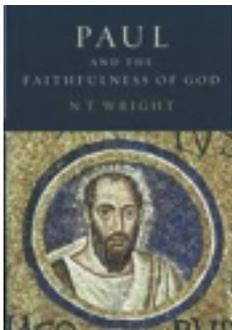
Understanding the meeting structure can be recreated from the text if you understand 11:17–14:40 as all addressing the divisions during the gathering of the churches,

but it also becomes clear when one understands the common meeting format of similar social gatherings in the Graeco-Roman world.

The meeting had two phases:

- a large, ceremonial meal
- followed by retiring to the meeting itself—characterized by entertainment and oratory speeches and dialogue around the business of the association—often something like 2 hours.

Paul's Early Epistles

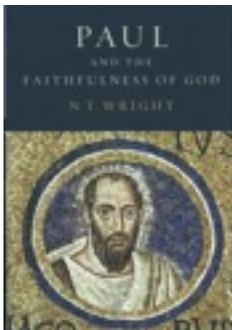


Divisions in the meeting itself, 14:1–40

Paul's basic argument:

1. He is addressing the larger gathering of the churches in Corinth, not individual churches in homes.
2. Prophecy is more important than tongues in the assembly meeting, because everyone can understand what is being said and the church will be built up.
3. Tongues—someone speaking a language they do not know—is a sign for unbelievers hearing that message and believing as a result.
4. Do not speak in tongues in the gathering, unless there is someone to interpret for everyone else, so the church can be built up, and then only two or three of these per meeting.

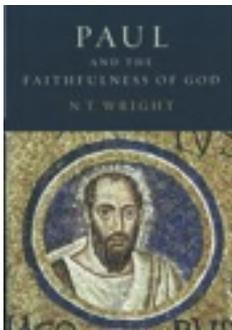
Paul's Early Epistles



Divisions in the meeting itself, 14:1–40

Paul's basic argument:

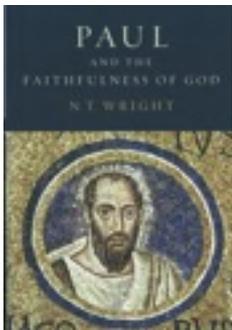
5. Evidently, this may happen if unbelievers are present, but if everyone speaks in tongues with no interpreter, the church meeting will not build up the church and unbelievers will think they are crazy.
6. When Paul says he speaks in tongues more than them all, he probably means that because of his role of taking the gospel to the Gentiles, God spoke in languages and dialects many times through him, but tongues were not meant for personal edification.
7. Paul would rather speak 5 prophetic words that build up the church than 1,000 words in an unknown tongue at the larger church meeting.



Divisions in the meeting itself, 14:1–40

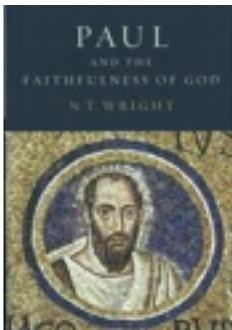
Paul's basic argument:

8. Evidently, ones who had this gift could pray for others in another language, and the experience would be of personal benefit to the one having the gift.
9. However, in the assembly meeting, it was on the bottom of the visible gifts list: first being gifts of apostles, then prophets, teachers, etc., and the last being tongues.
10. As the churches matured and the gospel spread, the gift would eventually fade.



As Dunn points out, the key criterion is building up the community:

“The key criterion is oikodomē, ‘edification, community benefit’; here it receives even more emphasis than in Paul’s dealing with the selfish attitudes expressed by some Corinthians in regard to eidōlothyta (chs. 8, 10).³⁶⁰ As Winter notes, ‘The concept of “building up” (oikodomei) is not found in pagan religious language. “Edification” was a unique term which Paul coined for the Christian faith which reflects the responsibility individuals should assume for the welfare of others as a matter of “religious” obligation’.”

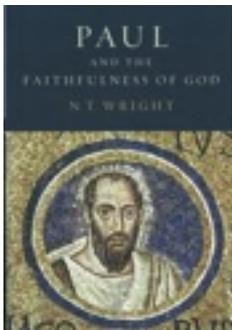


Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)*

Paul's Early Epistles

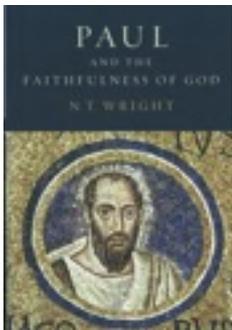
While the focus is on correcting the chaos around speaking in tongues, which characterized the immaturity of many in the Corinthian churches, Paul gives us a complete set of guidelines for these gatherings of all the churches.

These guidelines appear to be for the large gatherings of all of the churches of Corinth, not the small gatherings of individual churches meeting in homes, most being around 12 adults.



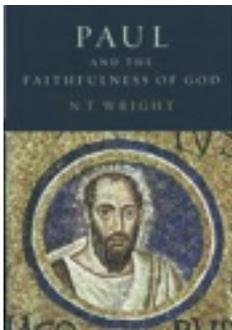
Paul's guidelines for the large gathering of the churches of Corinth (guidelines he gave to all his churches in his network):

1. The most important visible gift in the “church of churches” meeting was apostles, followed by prophets, because they would do the assessment of prophecy and teaching during the meeting and shape the meeting.
2. The assembly meeting should be participatory: “one person has a psalm, another some teaching, another a revelation, another a tongue, and another some interpretation. Let everything be done for the general upbuilding.”



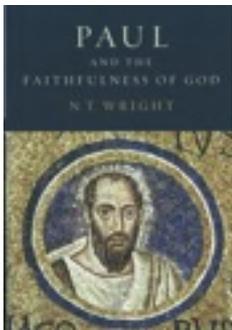
Paul's guidelines for the large gathering of the churches of Corinth (guidelines he gave to all his churches in his network):

3. The prophets should prophesy in an orderly manner, one at a time, and if something is fresh, one currently speaking should be quiet.
4. Women should not prophesy in this larger context, but the teaching and authority of assessing the teaching should be by men, as the social structure of the churches is that of a family of families.



²⁶ So where does this leave us, my brothers and sisters? When you come together, one person has a psalm, another some teaching, another a revelation, another a tongue, and another some interpretation. Let everything be done for the general upbuilding. ²⁷ If anyone speaks in a tongue, there should be two or at most three, each taking their turn, and one of them should put it into plain speech. ²⁸ But if none of them can do that, let them be silent in the assembly, and speak to themselves and to God.

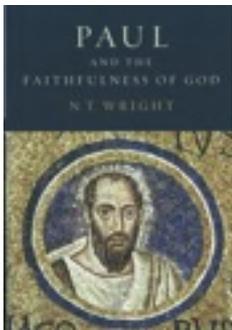
1 Corinthians 14: 26–28



What is going on here?

Revelation is not complete. It is unfolding. It came in many forms. The set range included:

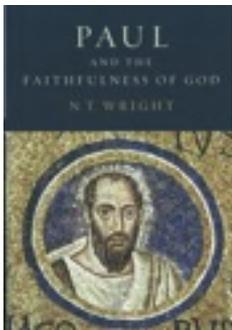
- a psalm—teaching in song
- a teaching—unpacking the apostolic teaching (didache)
- a revelation—a theology in culture major insight
- a tongue—kerygma in another language
- an interpretation—translation of a tongue



Paul's Early Epistles

²⁹ As for prophets, let two or three speak, and the others evaluate what is said. ³⁰ If fresh revelation comes to someone sitting there, the first person should be silent. ³¹ You can all prophesy one by one, so that everyone can learn, and everyone can be encouraged. ³² The spirits of prophets are under the control of prophets, ³³ since God is the God, not of chaos, but of peace.

1 Corinthians 14: 29–33



Paul's Early Epistles

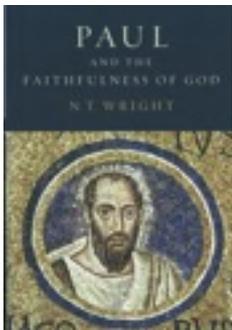
29 As for prophets...

Who is he talking about?

First apostles—apostolic teaching
Prophets—theology in culture on that
teaching

What Paul was doing in 1 Corinthians 7.

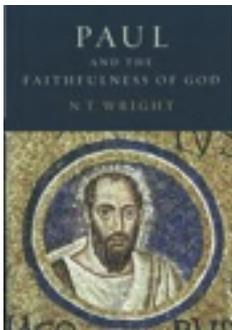
Collectively, they confirmed that for their
churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

As in all the assemblies of God's people, ³⁴ the women should keep silence in the assemblies. They are not permitted to speak; they should remain in submission, just as the law declares. ³⁵ If they want to understand something more, they should ask their own husbands when they get home. It's shameful, you see, for a woman to speak in the assembly. ³⁶ Do you suppose God's word began with you? Are you the only ones it has reached?

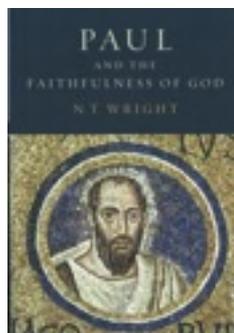
1 Corinthians 14: 33–36



Paul's Early Epistles

There are several options here:

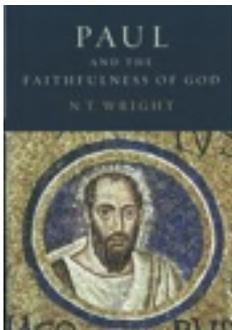
- This could be referring to women prophetesses, to leaders' wives, or to any women entering in the debate to validate new teaching in the meeting.
- It is unlikely that it refers to all public participation in the meeting, but to the debate of validating teaching that shapes the church of churches.



Paul's Early Epistles

³⁷ If anyone thinks they are a prophet, or spiritual, they should acknowledge that what I write to you is the Lord's command. ³⁸ If anyone disregards this, that person can be disregarded. ³⁹ So, my brothers and sisters, be eager to prophesy, and don't forbid speaking in tongues. ⁴⁰ But everything should be done in a seemly fashion, and in proper order.

1 Corinthians 14: 37–40

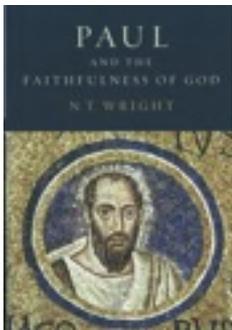


Paul's Early Epistles

Issue: Building unity through the community gathering

Questions:

1. Why is the gathering of the whole church (church of churches) so critical to our unity today?
2. Why is the Lord's Supper so critical to that unity? What should it look like?
3. How can we break the Western paradigm of the church service and reinstitute Paul's instructions to the churches?
4. How can we bring order to the community-wide gatherings of our churches while leaving it open for the Spirit to work?

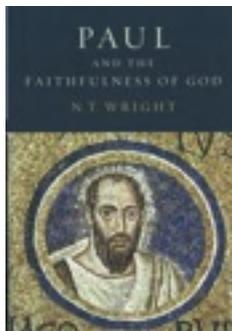


Tremendous insight:

The significance of our larger gathering of the churches.

Key to building the body

Key to our proclamation in the community.



Paul's Early Epistles

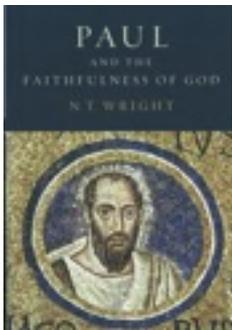
Examples

What have we done to the Lord's Supper:

Made it individualistic

Made it a mystical reflection

Lost the true meaning and affect on building unity



Examples

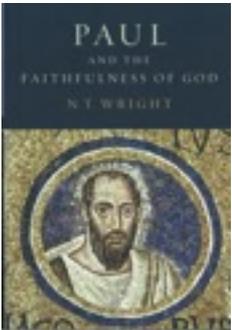
Our Easter Lord's Supper (Love Feast)

We are still falling short of its effect.

It is what will instill in all of us the significance of being a church of churches.

- It's not just an Easter breakfast.
- It's not just a picnic.

We have shortened it so it is token sharing.



Paul's Early Epistles

I would like to see this:

8:00–10:00 Lord's Supper (culturally around breakfast at Easter)

Break the bread

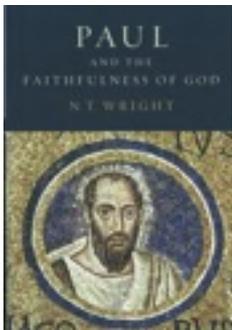
Enjoy a breakfast

Bring a song, hymn, or spiritual song or some form of praise

10:00–12:00

1 Corinthians 15 teaching

Open time for one hour



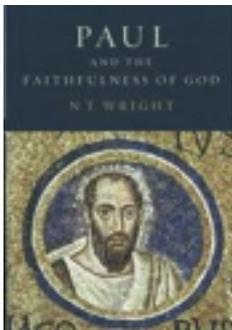
Paul's Early Epistles

Examples

Bigger picture

Western church service—professionalized church: worship service by a professional, oratory preaching by a professional, passive participant paradigm.

Global pentecostalism—often failing to mature and relying on ecstatic experiences, disorder, not truly building up the church.

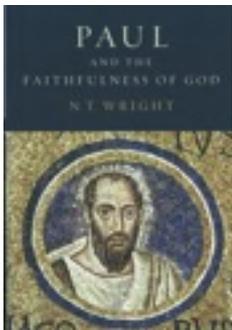


Examples

Men and women:

Based on the principle of order in creation.

Help believers think through the expression of that order in the cultural context in which they find themselves.

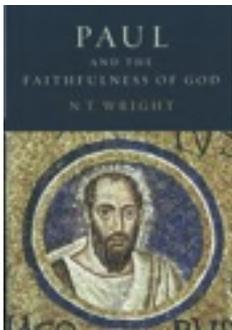


Examples

Men and women:

In Corinthians, there was no New Testament and the revelation was unfolding. Essentially, they were doing theology in culture, with incomplete revelation.

By 1 Timothy, it appears to have settled down, but the principle holds of teaching, exercising authority, and guarding that teaching being the responsibility of men, since the church was a family of families—a household of households.



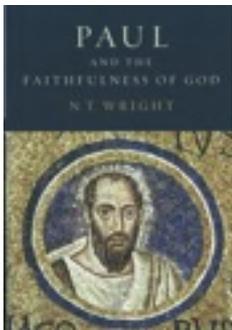
Paul's Early Epistles

Examples

Men and women:

In application today, it appears that women are not to lead the larger meeting of the churches, nor try to bring a teaching that shapes the community life, nor enter the debate to work out theology in culture issues at the large community meetings.

Anything beyond that is not clear. One can assume a significant amount of participation freedom in the individual house churches, maybe even leading in some situations in house churches, especially those which are initially forming (see my encyclical).



Paul's Early Epistles

Paul's theology of unity: transformational work of building unity in his churches

Dunn catches the empire changing concept of unity:

“Nevertheless, the theology of a unity which depended on the grace of God to establish it, on the gracious gifting of the Spirit for its flourishing and on the greater honour due to the inferior members (12.24) was a profound transformation of the older political model. 345 The body of Christ was not a threat to the body politic, but it was a differently bounded system³⁴⁶ — embracing on equal terms Jews and Greeks, slaves and free (12.13). To be part of that system, to find meaning, life and vocation in and through that system, to be thus bound up with others in a functioning unity enabled by God, in which members truly respected and cared for one another, that did become something radically different from a social system which was geared to maintaining status and to generating power, praise and honour for its most prominent citizens.”

Dunn, James D. G. (2008-10-29). *Beginning from Jerusalem (Christianity in the Making, vol. 2)* (Kindle Locations 13603-13608). Eerdmans. Kindle Edition.