

# SERMON GUIDE

## Ecclesia: Corporate Worship and Church Leadership

### 1 Corinthians 14:33



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The podcast is available on all streaming platforms!**

#### **SERMON NOTES**

God is a God of order. He is not a God of chaos, chance, or disorder. We see from the beginning of Scripture that God is a God of order. The days of creation had an order and design. The intricacies of the human body and the solar system have brilliant order and design. God's instructions to Noah on how to build the arc had an order and design. Moses's dealings with Pharaoh, Egypt, and the children of Israel had order and design. The law of God and how He wanted His people to live set apart from the other nations show order and design. God's instructions to Solomon for building the Temple had an order and design. The prophecies of God to send Christ into the world to secure the salvation of all who would believe has an order and design. And we see from Scripture, that when it comes to the church, the covenant people of God who live as ambassadors in the world to glorify God, tell the good news of Christ, and to live in community with one another, we see a distinct order and design. In fact, the Lord instructs how the ecclesia is to be ordered in its leadership and in its worship.

#### **Exposition**

**1 Corinthians 14:33 – *"For God is not a God of confusion but of peace."***

Paul's letter to Corinth is one in which he addresses particular sins this church was tolerating in their midst, but also things that were happening in their gatherings. The church was the definition of disorder. They allowed a man who was unrepentant and sleeping with his father's wife (step-mom) to persist. There was fighting about who followed Paul and who followed Apollos, and who was baptized by whom. It was a mess. In chapter 14, Paul gets into the chaos of Corinthian church worship. They had people trying to speak in tongues and nobody was interpreting. Multiple people were trying to give a Word. It leads him to speak to them about orderly worship.

Why? Because God is not a God of confusion but of peace. God is a God of order, not disarray. Notice that Paul anchors orderly worship to the order of God's nature. This is true for the church not only in the context of this passage, which is worship, but in church governance as well. It is why Paul wrote so much to the churches and other leaders about that subject.

## **I. Corporate Worship**

The first thing for us to recognize about corporate worship is that the focus of the worship is God. It's about lifting up our hearts, minds, and hands to God. We come to rehearse the truths of God to our hearts and minds. We worship Him and we edify and exhort one another. Which brings up a major point in worship: the worship service of the church is primarily a gathering of believers who worship the Lord. It is not supposed to be oriented around the unbeliever. Many churches err by making the focus of their gathering evangelistic (as if it were a Billy Graham crusade). It's built around the idea of the unbeliever who shows up. So many Christians sit in churches and are not challenged to grow or are not disciplined because the church's worship gathering is an evangelistic rally every week. This is not the biblical concept of the worship gathering.

Now, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul tells the church to be mindful of the unbelievers in their midst. But he is not telling them to make the service about them. In fact, his whole appeal about orderliness and structure in the worship gathering is so the unbeliever in your midst can understand what you are doing and saying and declare that God is really among you (vs 25).

So let's talk about this (our worship gathering). Why are churches around the world and around our city gathering today? While there is no explicit verse that says churches must gather and worship on Sunday (called the Lord's Day), it was the practice of the New Testament church and early church. Here's the argument with Scriptural backing:

### **1. Jesus rose on the first day of the week.**

The Lord's Day is called such because it was the day Jesus rose from the dead. Sunday became the most significant day for Christians, whereas historically it has been Sabbath (Saturday).

### **2. The early church gathered on the first day of the week.**

There are also examples of where Jesus appeared to His disciples after His resurrection to break bread with them (Luke 24; John 20). Appearing to His disciples to break bread with them on the first day of the week (Sunday) is one of the reasons for the church's gathering.

### **3. Paul expected believers to set aside offerings on the first day of the week.**

This is one of the passages that points to tithing/offerings. Believers give and Paul expected them to be together on the first day of the week where he could collect it.

### **4. John refers to the 'Lord's Day' as a distinct, recognized day.**

Every day is technically the "Lord's Day" if that means He owns it and rules over it. But this designation indicates there is a particular response or requirement from us since it is "the Lord's Day."

### **5. Scripture commands regular corporate gathering.**

When you put all this together, you begin to see the picture of why the church gathered to worship on Sunday, and even to see what they did when they gathered. Colossians 3:16 points us to this too.

- the word of Christ dwelled with them
- they taught and admonished one another (preaching, creeds and catechisms, etc.)
- they sang psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs with thanksgiving (needs to be theologically rich and singable)

Teaching, doctrine, fellowship, communion. The reading of the Word, the reverencing of the Word, and the preaching of the Word. The public reading of Scripture was a formal part of corporate worship. And reverence is a mark of biblical worship. This is why orderly worship is so important.

And we have a story in Leviticus 10:1-3 about Nadab and Abihu (the sons of Aaron) offering unauthorized fire before the Lord. The Lord struck them down for offering "strange fire." Unauthorized worship. A reminder that worship must be done according to God's command, not our whims or tastes. God takes worship seriously. Too many churches today are flippant in their worship gatherings. Some

approach worship gatherings like they are entertainment spectacles for man's enjoyment. The worship of God is a holy thing. And the Bible gives us much instruction to make sure we do it properly.

## **II. Church Governance**

Jesus loves His people. He laid down His life for the sheep. And He alone is the Chief Shepherd. But Christ has revealed through His Word how He wants His church organized and lead. Why? Because it is the means by which He provides care for His people. He gives His church shepherds, pastors, overseers to serve as under-shepherds to Him the Chief Shepherd. The term used for those words is: elder.

Many churches today think it's a free-for-all on how they organize themselves. You have some with a business model where a Senior Pastor acts like a CEO that calls all the shots and has all the authority. Other models (like most SBC churches) have deacons in charge acting like elders. Some just have members vote on everything (even down to the ply of toilet paper they purchase). Some have adopted a structureless environment, they call themselves Spirit-governed churches. But the Bible is not silent (which means God is not silent) about how the church is to be run and organized. Churches are called to have elders. The Scriptures are clear on elder leadership being the primary governing body of the local church.

Elders, also called pastors, shepherds, and overseers, are the offices of leadership that serve as the authority for decisions, ministries, governance, and protecting the flock from heretical teaching, ideas, or practices. I don't want you to take what I'm going to say to mean that churches not structured like this are heretics that we should burn at the stake. But God is a God of order, and He has ordered how He desires His covenant people be structured. What is the biblical evidence for this?

### **Biblical Evidence for Elder Governance**

This is significant because we know the book of James was written to many churches. This text indicates that James expected that there would be elders in every New Testament church to which his general epistle went.

This passage is talking about the financial relief that was sent by the church of Antioch to the church in Judea. The money was sent to the elders of the church in Judea. Why? To manage and distribute as they saw fit.

The apostles are the 11 original disciples of Jesus, plus Matthias who was chosen to replace Judas. And the elders of the church in Jerusalem. All were a part of this discussion about this doctrinal dispute on circumcision for Gentiles becoming believers.

**1. No passage suggests that any church, no matter how small, had only one elder.**

It always speaks about elders, plural. This protects the church from pastors who hurt the church with power trips or by some moral failure. The church must be protected from any one individual who could hurt it. Having more than one elder also allows for decisions to be made with more wisdom. I'm so thankful for a plurality of elders. It brings wisdom, experience, discernment, accountability, and more. I'm so thankful over the years that I have not had to bear the responsibility of important decisions alone.

**2. A plurality of elder governance was established in every church.**

There's no evidence from Scripture or early church history of any other form of church governance being commanded and instructed by the apostles. We know later in church history, bishops came into place, which were heads of the church along with elders, but this was a result of Roman cultural influence, not Scriptural decree. The precedent of the New Testament and church history is a plurality of elders in every local church. Not only does the New Testament show elders as the church's governance structure, but it also provides a layout for elder qualifications. Paul outlined the qualifications for those who would serve in the role. This too is important because we see he not only tells us what kind of governance and what they are to do, but he tells us what they should look like.

This is how God's Word instructs churches to be organized. Now, when you look around the landscape of the church today, why don't we see this? I would argue that it is downstream from a larger problem: we are not a very biblically or theologically literate church in America (Western world). We are not ruthlessly tethered to what the Scriptures teach. We affirm the Bible and then often do our own thing. And because churches often do this, it should not shock us that the professing Christians inside these churches do the same things in their personal lives. If we want God's blessings on our churches, the church needs a reformation and return to ordering ourselves the way God instructs in His Word.

**Close**

At the beginning of the series I shared with you the Latin motto of the Reformation: *ecclesia reformata, semper reformanda* (church reformed, always reforming). We at TJC haven't always gotten right. If you've been around here for a while, you've watched us as we've tried to keep aligning and realigning ourselves to God's Word: in how we do worship and how we lead. At the end of the day we recognize that we don't belong to ourselves. We belong to Christ. We are HIS church. We must do things HIS way.

He is a God of order. Submitting to, and aligning to that order, does not hinder or restrict us, it liberates us. Living outside of it enslaves us. Freedom and life are found within the order of God's design.



- How was your week? What is one thing you're grateful for and one thing that challenged you?
- How did you grow in obedience to Christ over the last week?
- Where did you go to share the gospel or have a spiritual conversation with someone?
- What is a sin you have been struggling with that you need to repent of?



- **REVIEW**

- Read 1 Corinthians 14:33 and then have someone else in the group read it again, preferably from a different translation.
- Additional Scripture
  - Leviticus 23:3
  - Deuteronomy 6:4-5
  - Ecclesiastes 5:1-2
  - Nehemiah 8:5-6
  - Matthew 28:1
  - Acts 2:42
  - Acts 11:30
  - Acts 14:23
  - Acts 15:2
  - Acts 20:7
  - Acts 20:17
  - 1 Corinthians 14:40
  - 1 Corinthians 16:2
  - Colossians 3:16
  - 1 Timothy 3:16
  - 1 Timothy 4:13-14
  - Titus 1:5
  - Hebrews 10:25
  - Hebrews 12:28-29
  - James 5:14
  - 1 Peter 5:1-2
  - Revelation 1:10
- What big takeaways did you have from the sermon?

- What did this teach you about God?
- What did this teach you about man?
- What did this teach you about salvation?

● **DISCUSS**

- Why did Paul emphasize orderly worship in 1 Corinthians 14:33?
- What is the primary purpose of corporate worship? How do many churches misunderstand this?
- Why do Christians gather for worship on Sunday instead of the Sabbath (Saturday)?
- Why is it important for worship to be done according to God's instructions rather than personal preferences?
- What is the biblical model for church governance?
- What are some common but unbiblical church governance models today?
- Why is a plurality of elders important in church leadership?
- How does the way a church is structured reflect its view of Scripture?
- What is a practical step you can take as a result of this sermon?

● **MEMORIZE**

- **Galatians 5:16** – *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*



- **BUILD UP:** How will you be built up this week? We have several discipleship opportunities for you to participate in.
  - **Life Groups** are a time and place to connect and learn to better follow Jesus together while abiding in Him. Life Groups are the primary means of disciple-making at TJC. Our groups focus on connecting, learning, following, and abiding. Groups meet weekly on various days/times across Wilson County. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **MDWK** is a time of education and growth in order to build up the Journey Church body. We offer a handful of intentionally chosen classes that cover a broad range of topics and are taught by quality teachers from within our congregation. Classes are at 6:30p every Wednesday. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Women** seeks to equip women to be rooted in the Word of God and bold in their faith. Our events and small groups focus on letting the gospel shape all spheres of our lives. Gather is the first Saturday of every month. Contact Laura DiLeonardi (laura@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Men** exists to equip men to show Jesus as incomparably glorious in every sphere of their lives. The men's ministry meets on the 2nd Saturday of every month at 8:00a in the student center. Contact Morgan Cates (morgan@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **TJC Students** is passionate to see every parent equipped, every leader developed, and every student disciplined into baptized, self-feeding, disciple making followers of Jesus



who are letting the gospel shape every sphere of their lives. Our student ministry meets on Wednesday nights from 6:00p-7:30p for MDWK worship and Sunday mornings at 8:30a and 10:00a for small group. Contact Larry Davis (larry@tjclive.com) for more information.

- **TJC Kids** believes that the Gospel saves, sanctifies, gathers and sends. It is our desire to see our kids understand that the Gospel truly does change everything and we will do this primarily by teaching our kids to love Jesus, showing them they can have fun in the process, and making sure they stay safe. Contact Nick Judd (nick@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **TJC Young Adults** exists to equip young adults ages 18 to 29 in becoming passionate followers of Jesus who enter their life in Christ. We do this through intentional relationships, fellowship, and worship centered around the gospel. The Fount meets Tuesdays at 7:00p. Contact Hunter Christian (hunter@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **SEND OUT:** How do you plan to be sent out to engage the world around you? We have several opportunities for local and international missions.
  - **For the City:** Acts 1:8 calls us to be engaged where we live and among the nations. The people of TJC seek to bring truth, grace, and hope to Lebanon and the surrounding area by mobilizing the church to be salt and light, not only for the city, but for your city. Take part in faithfully and obediently using your gifts to declare God's glory among those who are hopeless living among you today. Contact Jeff Long (jeff@tjclive.com) for more information.
  - **For the Nations:** At TJC we exist to show Jesus as incomparably glorious to Lebanon and beyond. We are ambitious and passionate about strategically taking an active role in finishing the Great Commission as we actively pursue the unreached peoples of the world by mobilizing the entire church to pray, send, go and welcome international friends among us. Contact Shawn Casto (shawn@tjclive.com) for more information.
- **PRAYER**
  - **Pray over any request from your group members.**
  - **Pray for our staff:** Laura DiLeonardi (Women's Discipleship Director)
  - **Pray for our replanters:** Christ's Fellowship
  - **Pray for our short-term teams:**
    - Southeast Asia Team departing on March 7, 2025
    - Europe Team departing on March 21, 2025
    - Southeast Asia Team departing on May 25, 2025
    - Kenya Summer Trip departing on May 25, 2025
  - **Pray for our long-term units on the mission field:**
    - The Wilsons
    - The Grays
    - The Starks
  - **Pray for the unreached.** Want to keep up with Unreached People Groups? Download the Unreached of the Day App <https://joshuaproject.net/pray/unreachedoftheday/app>