

Christians Gone Wild!
1st Corinthians, week 33
A Pastor's Love (1 Corinthians 16:1–24)
September 24, 2006
Pastor Mark Driscoll

My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.
1 Corinthians 16:24

This week we conclude our nine-month study of the book of 1st Corinthians. Throughout this series we have untied some of the knottiest issues in all of Scripture, including the cross, sexuality, lawsuits, alcohol, feminism, and tongues. In the closing chapter of his letter, Pastor Paul simply speaks about what is weighing on his heart and mind for their church. I will follow his example as we prepare for our ten-year anniversary next week on October 1st.

Finances

¹Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. ²On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. ³Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. ⁴If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.

We started our new fiscal year this summer and currently find ourselves about \$140,000 behind budget. Ideally, we will catch up quickly this fall. Next week we will be designating the entire day's offering to help cover some of our real estate expansion costs and are praying for \$1.2 million in conjunction with our tenth anniversary. That money, combined with what has already been given and borrowed from the bank, allows us to open a new office campus in Wedgwood, a new worship campus in West Seattle, and complete a few projects at both the Shoreline and Ballard campuses. The finances at Mars Hill used to stress me out and affect my sleep and joy considerably. Over the years, God has been so faithful and so many people have been so faithful that, thankfully, this is not the enormous burden that it once was, although the weight of responsibility to feed the families on staff and to stay current with all of our bills remains.

Demands

⁵After I go through Macedonia, I will come to you—for I will be going through Macedonia. ⁶Perhaps I will stay with you awhile, or even spend the winter, so that you can help me on my journey, wherever I go. ⁷I do not want to see you now and make only a passing visit; I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. ⁸But I will stay on at Ephesus until Pentecost, ⁹because a great door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many who oppose me.

My personal external ministry outside of Mars Hill is a humbling honor that, like Paul experienced, is taking a lot of time and energy. Recent honors include Mars Hill being named the fifteenth fastest-growing church in America and me being named the twenty-second most influential pastor in America (*Outreach*

magazine; *The Church Report*). Our iTunes podcast has been as high as #1 for Religion and Spirituality. As a result, our opportunities to serve the greater church are continually growing. This means that in addition to my work at Mars Hill and the constant demands from various media, I write for four magazines and one newspaper on a regular basis (and many more occasionally), blog a few times a week, lead the Acts 29 Church Planting Network, lead Resurgence (www.theresurgence.com), and do various consulting for churches and denominations.

I also speak perhaps a dozen times a year in Seattle at conferences, classes, and retreats we host, as well as multiple conferences around the nation that are already getting booked in 2009. This week I will speak at the national Desiring God conference in Minneapolis along with Dr. John Piper, Dr. D. A. Carson, Dr. David Wells, and Dr. Tim Keller. The 3,000 seats sold out a month in advance thanks in part to the cover story in this month's issue of *Christianity Today*. In 2007 I will do a mini-tour of the country with the other contributors to the book, *Listening to the Beliefs of Emerging Churches*. I will also be speaking in Dallas, Raleigh, Chicago, San Diego, Saint Louis, and Vancouver B.C. to crowds of upwards of 5,000. In addition, I am praying about speaking requests in Australia, New Zealand, India, Brazil, and other places. Impending travel dates tend to throw me into a mild depression because I know I will miss my family, will likely get sick while I am gone, and will return home to a mountain of work.

If you want to pray for me, pray for wisdom to help juggle all of this with a wife I love and five young children who mean the world to me. Like Paul says, there are many opportunities as well as many people "who oppose me." I am humbled and honored to be able to speak about Jesus. At times, though, the unrelenting shots from critics and cynics, along with the travel, do weary my soul.

In the past year, God has kindly provided some enormous gifts that have made my work most effective and endurable. First, the elders pay me enough so my wife does not work and my family is not financially distressed. Second, we bought a new home that is perfect for our family, including a large study that enables me to work from home more than half the time and see my family a lot. Third, my personal staff, A.J. Hamilton (who is an elder candidate) and research deacon Crystal Griffin, have taken maybe eighty to one hundred hours a week of work from me. This enables me to focus my energies and not feel overwhelmed; they are like Timothy to me. Fourth, kind friends have made life easier by humbly serving my family and me.

Leaders

¹⁰If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. ¹¹No one, then, should refuse to accept him. Send him on his way in peace so that he may return to me. I am expecting him along with the brothers. ¹²Now about our brother Apollos: I strongly urged him to go to you with the brothers. He was quite unwilling to go now, but he will go when he has the opportunity.

In the midst of all the growth and labor that is Mars Hill, I am continually grateful for our hundreds of leaders. A church of our size and spread is in many ways a small town in the big city of Seattle. This past week a pastor sent me an original copy of a handwritten letter from my hero Charles Haddon Spurgeon

written February 20, 1873, when he was thirty-nine (four years older than me). He wrote of his plans to grow his church to 10,000, as we are, and of “staggering under the cares of the little nation that demands my perpetual supervision.” Those words rang in my ears all week; our “little nation” is led by our elders and deacons.

Our deacons continue to take us to the next level by their wisdom and hard work. Pray also for the nearly fifty men and women presently being trained as deacons.

Our elders are a wonderful group of fellow pastors who are collectively without equal. Each man is a peer whom God has appointed to lead this church. Please pray for them as they lead biblical counseling (Bent, Paul, Phil), administration (Jamie, James), community groups (Mike, Dave, Brad), worship (Tim), children’s ministry (Dick), Resurgence (Gary Shavey), West Seattle (Bubba), Ballard (Lief), and Shoreline (Steve). For their sake, I would remind you of the words in Hebrews 13:17, “Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.” Also pray for the ten men being trained as pastors/elders and the many more who are being considered for assessment.

Men

¹³Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. ¹⁴Do everything in love. ¹⁵You know that the household of Stephanas were the first converts in Achaia, and they have devoted themselves to the service of the saints. I urge you, brothers, ¹⁶to submit to such as these and to everyone who joins in the work, and labors at it. ¹⁷I was glad when Stephanas, Fortunatus and Achaicus arrived, because they have supplied what was lacking from you. ¹⁸For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition.

In many ways, Mars Hill rises or falls with our men. We simply cannot continue to see lives transformed throughout our region if the men do not work hard, give generously, remain sexually pure, pursue noble women as wives in noble ways, love their wives, and cultivate their children. The godly men in this church deserve to be honored by us all; they are refreshing in a world of godless men who shun responsibility and act unlike the Lord Jesus.

Community

¹⁹The churches in the province of Asia send you greetings. Aquila and Priscilla greet you warmly in the Lord, and so does the church that meets at their house. ²⁰All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss.

Community group leaders are doing much of the care for our people that my wife Grace and I used to do in our living room when we were a small church. Please also pray for these groups as they double to over two hundred this fall. In some ways, Mars Hill is hundreds of small churches that meet throughout the region during the week and gather together as a large church on Sundays.

Jesus

²¹*I, Paul, write this greeting in my own hand. ²²If anyone does not love the Lord—a curse be on him. Come, O Lord! ²³The grace of the Lord Jesus be with you. ²⁴My love to all of you in Christ Jesus. Amen.*

Unlike Paul, God has called me to stay in one place for the entirety of my ministry life. I could not be happier than to give my life to one God, one woman, and one church. God has given me a beautiful bride and delightful children because He knew that I am not as strong as Paul and simply could not endure without them.

In closing, Paul loves the people in his church as I love you. My love for you, like his love for them, is demonstrated by my constant desire to encourage you to love the Lord Jesus and eagerly await the day you see the Lord Jesus, as you live by the empowering grace of the Lord Jesus. Amen.

Verses for next week: Jeremiah 29:4–9. Join us as we celebrate our tenth anniversary!