



1 Corinthians 10:14-22 "The Wisdom to Flee"  
Wk. 26 First Corinthians "Uncommon Sense: God's Wisdom over  
Man's Pride through a Flawed Church."  
By Pastor Onan Coca, October 19, 2025

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**1 Corinthians 10:14-22**

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

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**[READ THE TEXT]**

**"People of God, this is the Word of God!"**

**Congregation - "Thanks be to God!"**

**[PRAY FOR UNDERSTANDING]**

Good morning! If I haven't met you, my name is Onan Coca. I am one of the Pastors here at Highlands Community Church, along with our lead teaching Pastor, Jody May, and our executive Pastor, Bill Alderson.

It's wonderful to be here with you today as we gather to worship the One True God. Earlier this week, several things struck me and made me think of the passage we're covering today. First, our reading in Exodus – as we read, we were witnessing God destroy the idols of Egypt, proving that He and not the demon gods of Egypt, is the one and only true God.



The second thing that got me was watching the amazing videos of families being reunited in Israel. Many of the parents were crying at the return of their children and loudly repeating in praise the words of the Shema prayer from Deuteronomy chapter 6:

***Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.  
Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord is One.***

It is a stark and wonderful reminder of what our God has been telling us since the dawn of creation. He alone is God, there is none like Him, and He alone is worthy of our worship. The reformers said it like this, ***Soli Deo Gloria or "Glory to God alone."***

***Soli Deo Gloria*** will be our theme today, as well. If I had to wrap what we'll be discussing in one sentence, it would be this:

**Main Point:**

**You cannot share your worship—God demands exclusive devotion, and true communion with Christ leaves no room for idols.**

Imagine this: you are invited to a feast hosted by your closest friend, the person you love and trust most. You sit at the table, sharing food and drink, and with each bite and sip, you declare your loyalty and love to this friend. But now imagine that immediately after, you also attend a rival feast that honors



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someone else, someone who wants your loyalty as well but hates and is opposed to your friend. How would your friend feel? How would you feel? Is it even possible to be truly loyal to both?

This is the picture Paul paints in 1 Corinthians chapter 10. The Corinthian church was struggling with a dangerous compromise. Many of the believers were trying to have it both ways: professing faith in Christ but also participating in pagan feasts that involved sacrifices to idols. They were mixing worship of the true God with participation in false religions, which is why they asked Paul this question about eating meat that was sacrificed to idols.

Paul's response is clear, sharp, and urgent:

**"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry"** (1 Cor. 10:14). He doesn't say, "Be careful," or "Try to avoid it," but **"Flee!"**—run away from it completely.

Why? Because when we worship idols, we are not just engaging in harmless rituals or cultural traditions. We are choosing sides in a spiritual battle.

**Worship is never neutral.**

This passage addresses fundamental questions that every Christian must answer:



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**Can we claim Christ and yet still flirt with idols?  
Can we be part of Christ's body and also partake in the  
spiritual feasts of demons?**

Paul's answer is a resounding **No**.

In these verses, Paul unpacks what it means to truly worship God and why idolatry is the greatest affront we can give to Him. The stakes couldn't be higher: our worship declares who we belong to—either God or demons—and God will not share His glory with anyone else.

So, today, we will explore Paul's call to:

1. **Flee idolatry** decisively.
2. Understand the **fellowship** of worship—how communion unites us to Christ and His people, but participation in idolatry unites us to demons.
3. Live with a **holy fear of God**—a reverence that refuses to provoke His jealousy by sharing His worship with anything else.

As we walk through this passage, I pray the Lord will convict and encourage us. Idolatry takes many forms today—not just carved statues, but anything that competes for our hearts and worship. Whether it's comfort, money, pleasure, politics, or



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even ourselves, these idols seek to steal the glory that belongs only to God.

So, as we listen to God's Word, let us ask ourselves:

*Where am I tempted to flee from God's exclusive claim?*

*What idols am I entertaining, perhaps without realizing the full spiritual cost?*

*And finally, how will I respond to God's gracious call to flee from idolatry, fellowship with Christ's body, and fear the Lord alone?*

Last week, Pastor Jody taught us, all about self-worship. He told us not to view our blessings from God as a license to sin and that spiritual awakening does not mean we will automatically rise above sin and its consequences. Instead, we need to be ever vigilant about the dangers of temptation and the possibility of apostasy.

The first 13 verse of chapter 10 remind us that we are to accept God's Gracious Blessings joyfully, but we cannot ignore the Dangers of Sin.

Those exhortations from Paul lead right to verse 14, which says: ***Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.***

**1: Flee Idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:14)**

**"Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry."**



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Paul's command here is short but explosive: **Flee idolatry.** The Greek word for flee is *pheugate (fay-ga)*, which means to run away quickly and decisively from something dangerous. This isn't a casual suggestion; the grammatical context tells us that it's **a present imperative**, a pastoral command to be Running Away from idolatry CONTINUALLY.

Like Kenny Rogers in the Gambler, "You've got to know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, and know when to run." Or maybe like the Boss, Bruce Springsteen singing about New Jersey? "baby, this town rips the bones from your back. It's a death trap, it's a suicide rap. We gotta get out while we're young, 'Cause tramps like us, baby, we were born to run."

Whatever your musical preference is, the message is the same as the one the Apostle gives us - **RUN.**

Paul lovingly begs his people to **FLEE**, or to shun idolatry. This means get as far away from it as possible. Don't ever let the possibility of idolatry get anywhere near you.

**So why is Paul commanding us to Flee Idolatry? Why is he so deadly serious about it?** Because as Matthew Henry tells us, **"Idolatry is the most heinous injury and affront to the true God; it is transferring his worship and honour to a rival."**



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It is not merely a harmless mistake or a minor lapse. It is a deliberate transfer of worship, honor, and affection away from the one true God to a rival. And God's jealous love cannot tolerate it.

In Chapter 22 of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, our spiritual forefathers explain, from Scripture, more about rightly ordered worship and "the regulative principle," which tells us that **true worship was not invented by man but instituted by God Himself.**

They knew that it was important that Christians understand that worship belongs to God alone, and He demands that it be given to Him in spirit and truth, through Jesus Christ alone. No other creature, angel, or saint may receive the worship that belongs only to God.

**"The acceptable way of worshipping the true God is instituted by Himself... all religious worship is to be given to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and to Him alone."**

Idolatry is the very opposite of this truth. It treats false gods as worthy of worship and fellowship—essentially calling God a liar, robbing Him of His glory.

[Pastor John MacArthur](#) explained the seriousness with which we should consider the topic of idolatry, like this:



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***Idolatry is the most serious and contaminating sin there is. And the reason is because it strikes directly at the character of God. And once you have adulterated the character of God, you have lost the guidelines for any other moral judgment. And so Pandora's box is open, and everything is going to be chaos, unless there is the right perspective of God...***

***That's why out of the Ten Commandments, the first three of them are directly related to idolatry, because that's the beginning of everything. If you don't have the true perspective on God, then everything is lost.***

This is serious stuff folks.

For the Corinthian church, this message of warning against idolatry was very practical. Corinth was the religious Las Vegas of its day. There were temples and idols of countless religions, people came from all over the world to worship, and the Corinthian church was right in the middle of it. Some of these Christians it seems were giving of their time and money to these demonic practices instead of to the church. This forced the Apostle to explain that the Corinthians had gotten their priorities and their worship all out of whack. They needed to turn their backs on the pagan worship and turn their hearts fully, completely, 100% to God.

So, what Does Modern-Day Idolatry Look Like? Because it's not just ancient statues or pagan gods on temple altars.



In his *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, John Calvin wrote that "the human heart is a perpetual idol factory." This is deeply true, so true that we should all feel it in our bones. Today, idolatry takes many subtle and insidious forms, as I go through this list, consider your own heart and ask yourself if when the pagan worshippers go to worship in these ways... do you spend your time, talent, or treasure worshipping with them? Some of the forms of idolatry we see today include:

- **Materialism:** When money, possessions, or success become your security and joy, you've replaced God's providence with a false trust.
- **Sports, Entertainment, and Pleasure:** When leisure and comfort dictate your priorities, you crowd out your time and passion for God.
- **Political ideologies or leaders:** When political identity and tribalism become more important than your identity in Christ - loyalty to a person, group, party, or nation can become idolatrous.
- **Technology and Social Media:** When screens and digital platforms capture more of your attention and affection than God's Word and worship.
- **Self-worship:** Pastor Jody, preached all about this one last week. When your own desires, opinions, or feelings become the final authority, you have set yourself up as a rival god. This is rampant in our culture of individualism and relativism.



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To sum it up, Idolatry happens whenever the truth about God is replaced with a lie, as it involves **honoring something created instead of the Creator Himself.**

The Old Testament is full of warnings about idolatry. In Exodus 20:3, God commands:

**"You shall have no other gods before me."**

In Isaiah chapter 44, the prophet Isaiah warned that idols are "things made by human hands" and they cannot save you (Isaiah 44:9-20).

In Psalm 115:4-8, idols are exposed as powerless and blind, yet those who trust in them are led away from the true God. Listen to how the Psalmist says it,

**Their idols are silver and gold, the work of human hands. 5 They have mouths, but do not speak; eyes, but do not see. 6 They have ears, but do not hear; noses, but do not smell. 7 They have hands, but do not feel; feet, but do not walk; and they do not make a sound in their throat. 8 Those who make them become like them; so do all who trust in them.**

Paul's warning in Corinth builds on the truth of the Old Testament, reminding us that idolatry is not a trivial issue or a small thing – it's life and death.



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If fleeing idolatry feels overwhelming, that's good, it means you're beginning to recognize the seriousness of the issue. Remember Paul's pastoral heart—his answer to the idolatry issue for the church at Corinth is to flee.

And how do we flee? We repent, turn away from idolatry and toward God. **Then we run to Him in prayer.** Prayer aligns our hearts with God's. Prayer says, NOT my will, but yours O God. We flee TO HIM in prayer, asking Him to reveal hidden idols and give us the strength to keep on running away.

Remember the words of our Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane, in Matthew 26:4

"Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."

As we obey the command to flee from idolatry, we must run to fellowship.

**2: Fellowship — United at One Table (1 Corinthians 10:15–21)**

Look again at 1 Corinthians 10, verses 15-17



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**"I speak as to sensible people; judge for yourselves what I say. The 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? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread."**

(1 Corinthians 10:15–17)

Paul now turns from the command to flee idolatry to explain what true Christian worship is: a profound, spiritual **fellowship** or communion. The word *participation* (Greek *koinonia*) means sharing in, being united with, or having fellowship.

He begins by pointing out that the argument he is about to make is logical and that the "wise" Corinthians will surely agree with.

In the Lord's Supper—the bread and the cup—**we participate in the body and blood of Christ.**

This isn't symbolic only; through faith, it is a real spiritual union with Christ and His people.

When believers come to this one table, they are united with Christ Himself and with each other. The Lord's Supper is a sacred rite that is God's instrument of communion for us with Him.



This communion creates one body out of many members (v.17). Despite diversity in background, gifts, or experience, the church is one because it shares the same bread and cup. What a picture. Not only is the broken bread a reminder of Christ's body broken for us, but Paul says that in consuming this bread, we express our unity as one body, made one in Christ. This is an amazing truth!

Our spiritual forefathers had this to say about the Lord's Supper in the LBCF 1689 chapter 30 paragraph 7:

### **7. The Lord's Supper Is Spiritual Feeding**

People who receive the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner, who outwardly partake of the visible elements in this ordinance, do so inwardly by faith, really and truly, not physically and bodily. **They spiritually receive and feed upon Christ crucified and all the benefits of his death.** The body and blood of Christ are not present bodily or physically, but rather spiritually to the faith of believers in the Lord's Supper. This is how the elements are to their outward senses.

**11. 1 Corinthians 10:16, 11:23-26**

Paul then reminds the Corinthians about the Old Testament background of this issue. He points to the people of Israel and their worship practices:

**"Consider the people of Israel: are not those who eat the sacrifices participants in the altar?" (v.18)**



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In the Old Covenant, Israel's worshipers were united with God through participation—*this use of participation is the Greek word koinonoi, which is very closely related to the word koinonia, which we saw in verse 16*—in the sacrifices on the altar. The sacrifice was offered to God, and those who ate the sacrifice shared in the altar, symbolizing the unity with God's covenant people. (Leviticus 3 and 7.)

This shows that worship always signifies *belonging*. You either belong to God's covenant community or to a demonic spiritual authority. There is no "gray" area. For more on this, you can read John chapter 8, where the Pharisees tell Jesus they're of their father Abraham and their Father God. To which Jesus replies with the winsome words, "You are of your father the devil." Friends, who do you belong to? Do you sometimes get lost what you think is a "gray area?"

Paul warns clearly of the dangers of False Fellowship:

**"What do I imply then? That food offered to idols is anything, or that an idol is anything? No, but that what pagans sacrifice they offer to demons and not to God. I do not want you to be participants with demons." (vv.19-20)**

Paul says that the stronger Corinthians were right, the food and the idols themselves have no real existence or power.



However, where they were wrong was that the worship associated with them did have power because it united those worshippers in **demonic fellowship**.

When believers participate in pagan feasts or idolatrous rituals – which again isn't just what we see here in the ancient world, it's any of those idols of the heart - they share communion with demons, which is utterly incompatible with being in Christ.

Paul's language is stark and uncompromising:

**"You 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."** (v.21)

**There is no neutrality in worship!**

You are either united with Christ's body or with demonic powers. **Trying to straddle the fence is spiritual adultery.**

**You cannot worship God with all of your heart and worship money. You cannot worship God with all of your heart and worship your comfort. You cannot worship God and your kids, spouse, or family. You cannot worship God and your job. You cannot worship God AND anything else. It's all Him or it's all demons.**



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Verses 15-21 are an excellent reminder that the Confession our church teaches aligns well with Paul's teaching. Again, the LBCF 1689, chapter 22, paragraphs 1 and 2:

- **True worship is instituted by God alone** and must be offered only to Him.
- Worship must be **through Jesus Christ** as our mediator.
- To worship other "gods," or to mix worship, is **to profane God's honor and grace**.

Our communion with Christ and His people is real and sacred. The Lord's Supper is a visible sign of an invisible grace—a bond that unites believers to Christ and to each other as one body. This reality is the reason that Highlands Community Church is a "Baptist" church.

Think about it.

If fellowship at Christ's table unites us, then we must carefully guard our fellowship in the church. We do this in several ways: we stress believers' baptism, we remind our fellowship that communion is only for believers, and we call believers to regular fellowship.

For 3 primary reasons:

- First, as Hebrews 10 tells us, fellowship with believers strengthens faith and encourages holiness (Hebrews 10:24-25).



**24 And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, 25 not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.**

- Secondly, isolation or compromising with the world weakens our spiritual union.
- Third, partaking in idolatrous or worldly "feasts" destroys this unity and spiritual life.

Church, the antidote to idolatry is **fellowship with God's people**.

This means regularly gathering, worshiping, and partaking together in the means of grace—especially hearing the Preaching of the Word, and participating in baptism and communion.

The wonderful truth is that when we come to the Lord's Table, we declare three things:

- Our unity with Christ by faith.
- Our unity with all other believers, past, present, and future.
- Our rejection of all false gods and idols.

In this way, the Lord's Supper is a **public testimony** that we belong exclusively to Christ.



Finally, Paul's warnings lead us to the outcome for idolaters and something that should give us all pause.

### 3: Fear the Lord — A God Who Will Not Share His Glory (1 Corinthians 10:22)

1 Corinthians 10:22 says,

**"Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy? Are we stronger than he?"** (v. 22)

Paul ends this section with a solemn and piercing question:  
**"Shall we provoke the Lord to jealousy?"**

This divine jealousy is not like ours, petty and insecure, but it is the **holy jealousy of a covenant-keeping God** who demands exclusive loyalty and worship. God is rightly jealous because ***He has created us, redeemed us, and owns us.***

Again in chapter 22, the *Confession* reminds us that God "is to be worshipped, and no other," and He will not suffer His honor to be shared with another (LBCF 22.2).

So, what Does It Mean to Provoke God's Jealousy?

To provoke God's jealousy is to tempt Him anger, to treat His love and mercy as if they are cheap or expendable. It is to offer God half-hearted worship while giving the other half to idols.



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When the Corinthians participated in pagan feasts, they were essentially saying, **"Lord, we honor You—but we also honor demons."**

This was spiritual treason. Which begs Paul's next question...  
Are We Stronger Than God?

Paul's rhetorical question cuts to the heart: "Are We Stronger Than He?"

**No! Of course not!**

God's power and judgment are absolute. To think we can trifle with God's glory and walk away unscathed is foolish and dangerous. The Bible warns us:

*Hebrews 10:31* – "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God."

*Nahum 1:2* – "The Lord is jealous and avenging; the Lord is avenging and wrathful."

God's jealousy protects His glory and His covenant people. We cannot tolerate idols in our hearts or worship. Idolatry leads to our being disciplined, ruined, and ultimately to eternal separation from God.

We must develop, protect, and encourage A Holy Fear of God in our hearts, our homes, and our churches.



This fear is not just terror but reverence and awe—a **deep respect for God's holiness and sovereignty.**

Proverbs 9:10 tells us **that the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is insight.** Thus, the fear of the Lord is also the start of true faithfulness in worship.

Knowing all these things to be true, how should we respond?  
*(First, Secondly, and Thirdly)*

- **Recognize the seriousness of idolatry and repent.**
- **Embrace a holy fear that leads to worshipping God in truth.**
- **Remember that God's jealousy is also an expression of His covenant love and faithfulness.**

As we close, I've got three things for you to consider in our **Call to Obey — Flee, Fellowship, and Fear**

Paul's words in 1 Corinthians 10:14-22 leave us with a clear call. The Christian life is not a casual or cultural religion but a serious, covenantal relationship that demands exclusive worship and faithful obedience.

**Main Point:**

**You cannot share your worship—God demands exclusive devotion, and true communion with Christ leaves no room for idols.**



To live faithfully, we must embrace three vital responses:

## 1. Flee Idolatry — Pray Continually for Deliverance

Paul's first and most urgent command is to flee idolatry (v.14). Idolatry is not a harmless preference or cultural curiosity but **spiritual treason** against God.

- What idols are you clinging to today? Is it your money, your comfort, your social status, or something else?
- Idols demand your worship, your time, your trust—and they can never satisfy.

Remember, Flee here is a present imperative. It means to continually run, to turn away quickly and decisively. This is not a half-hearted attempt or occasional avoidance but a daily, prayerful pursuit of holiness.

You might pray something like this:

*"Lord, search my heart. Show me any rival to Your glory. Help me to hate what You hate, and to love what You love. Give me the strength to flee from anything that steals Your worship."*

Prayer is the lifeline of fleeing idolatry. The faithful Christian should be marked by continual, sincere prayers for mercy,



grace, and faith. The Lord knows our hearts are wicked idol factories, it's the very reason He sent His Son to live and die for us. Jesus, perfectly loved the Father and it is only by Christ's grace and power that we can break free from the invisible chains of false worship.

## 2. Fellowship with Believers — Unite at One Table

Paul reminds us that worship is **fellowship**, a participation in the body and blood of Christ. By regularly gathering with God's people and partaking in the Lord's Supper, we affirm our unity with Christ and each other.

- This means we must avoid isolation and worldly compromises.
- We must commit to fellowship regularly and often with God's people, who encourage, correct, and strengthen our faith.
- Let the Lord's Table be a reminder and a celebration that you belong to Christ alone.

Here's a Practical Step: Be intentional about meeting with the believers here and in each other's homes for worship, Bible study, and fellowship. Gathering together keeps us anchored in the truth and protects us from drifting into idolatrous patterns.



In God's Sovereign wisdom and mercy He built His church for this. He put us together so that we would call each other and the world to repentance and true worship of the Only God, our King.

### 3. Fear the Lord — Read and Treasure His Word

God's jealousy reminds us that He will not tolerate rivals for His glory. This calls us to live in holy fear—a reverent awe of God's holiness and power.

- Fear is not just terror but reverence that shapes how we worship and live.
- The foundation for fearing God is His Word, which reveals His holiness, commands, and grace.

**Which is why we must read our Bibles every day.**

Let God's Word expose hidden idols, renew your mind, and cultivate a holy fear that leads to obedience.

Set aside time every day to read Scripture, meditate on God's promises and warnings, and let His Word guide your worship and lifestyle.

Brothers and sisters, God calls His people to exclusive loyalty. We cannot be one foot in the body of Christ and one foot in the realm of idols and demons. Paul's command to flee idolatry is urgent and loving. His reminder of the fellowship we share in



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Christ's body encourages us to remain united with God's people. And his warning about God's jealousy calls us to live with reverence and holy fear.

May we heed this call with faithfulness:

- **Flee** idols with prayerful urgency.
- **Fellowship** faithfully with believers.
- **Fear** the Lord by daily delighting in His Word.

Let us pray that God would give us grace to obey and worship Him alone—our only true and living God.

[CLOSING PRAYER]

[COMMUNION]

[BENEDICTION]

[RESOURCES FOR FURTHER STUDY]

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible

The MacArthur Bible Commentary

Systematic Theology by Wayne Grudem

["A Modern Exposition of the 1689 Baptist Confession"](#) – Sam Waldron

["A New Exposition of the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689"](#) –

Rob Ventura

["Worship: The Regulative Principle and the Biblical Basis of Church Practice"](#) – Ernest Reisinger and D. Matthew Allen

John MacArthur: [The Truth about Idolatry](#)

John MacArthur: [The Outrage of Idolatry](#)