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Reta Halteman Finger and George D. McClain. *Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 2013.

*Creating a Scene in Corinth* provides an excellent simulation of an early Christian church. The book is intended for use in a study by a small to large group (10-25 people), in either an academic or church setting. The simulation is constructed around the Corinthian church as it is evidenced in 1 Corinthians, and functions as both an introduction to the Greco-Roman setting of Corinth (and by extension of other cities in the Mediterranean during the mid-first century) and a chapter-by-chapter survey of Paul's letter.

The book is divided into two principal parts plus appendices. The first seven chapters introduce Corinth, the background to Paul's relationship with the Corinthians, and key sociological constructs such as honor-shame, slavery, patronage, and the religious world of 1st-century Corinth. Two helpful resources are supplied that deepen the introduction given in these chapters: Appendix 1 ("Arrogant Aristocrats in Actions"), which provides a short drama about the implications of emperor worship for the group to enact, and a list of eight "Supplementary Web Resources" (10, 20).

These seven chapters plus resources provide the essential set-up for the simulation. Members of the group use this material to determine which house church (Paul, Apollos, Cephas, or Christ) they will be a member of, which character they will perform during the simulation, and what their social status, living conditions, and back-stories will be.

Chapters 8-18 provide material for the simulation proper. For the full simulation, 11 sessions cover the entire letter of 1 Corinthians, concluding with an *Agape* meal (recipes included) and worship. Each chapter begins with a brief introduction to the text to be read (by someone playing the role of Phoebe or of Stephanas) during the session. These introductions are short, but provide a good survey and excellent resources for further exploration. They are adequate for a first launch into research on the texts if students use the book in an academic course.

After this introduction, each chapter prints out a central section of the text under consideration for the session. Following the text, several questions are posed for the characters to discuss in their respective house churches. Finally, another set of questions leads the group back into the 21st

century for debriefing.

Appendix 2 provides a “Leader’s Guide,” an essential resource for a fruitful performance of the simulation. Not only does it supply assistance on such matters as publicity, it gives helpful session-by-session guidance. While a full simulation requires 14 or 15 sessions, the authors also provide adaptations for simulations consisting of 10, 8, 6, 5, 2 or even 1 session. Although the simulation is a deeper, more thorough experience if carried out in full, even a single session can make a big impact—and perhaps prepare a larger group to explore a longer experience.

The book includes a bibliography and index, as well as credits for the photographs used throughout. It is an excellent introduction to, and example of, how to carry out a biblical simulation. For teachers or leaders who have never conducted one before, it gives a strong base both for the set-up and the session-by-session performance. Adaptations may be made depending on whether the simulation is performed in a church, retreat, or academic setting.

Note that co-author Reta Halteman Finger has published a previous simulation—on Paul’s letter to the Romans (*Roman House Churches for Today: A Practical Guide for Small Groups*, 2nd ed. [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2007]). In that simulation, instructions are given for how to handle unusually small groups of participants, and the questions are more open-ended. In *Creating a Scene in Corinth*, the character studies provided for each of house-church group are more explicitly defined. Depending on the usage of the present book and the context of the simulation, instructors might want to allow for more open-endedness, both in the character formation and in the discussion questions.

*Creating a Scene in Corinth: A Simulation* is recommended for church groups and for academic courses, undergraduate or graduate. It will also be valuable for any independent and imaginative reader, whether a teacher or a student of the Pauline letters.

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