



1 Corinthians 11

INTRODUCTION:

- In this chapter Paul moves on to discuss items of propriety within their worship lives (specifically regarding men and women / their dress and conduct — and also their celebration of the Lord's Supper).

- What are some examples of things, that in your opinion, would be totally inappropriate to see in our Christian worship services:

- Some of this is cultural as well, and certain things may be appropriate in certain cultures and not in others. Can you think of some examples?

Head Coverings in Worship:

1 Corinthians 11:1-6

1 Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.

2 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the traditions just as I passed them on to you. 3 But I want you to realize that the head of every man is Christ, and the head of the woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. 4 Every man who prays or prophesies with his head covered dishonors his head. 5 But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is the same as having her head shaved. 6 For if a woman does not cover her head, she might as well have her hair cut off; but if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, then she should cover her head.

- Verse 1 clearly belongs to the previous chapter and all decent English versions make that clear in their formatting. The chapter divisions in Scripture came from the Archbishop of Canterbury in 1,227 AD, where the verse divisions became commonly used in the mid 1,500's AD. Does it bother you that, in a few places, the chapter divisions are oddly / unfortunately placed? Why doesn't anybody change them? (For example, 1 Co. 11:1 could become 1 Co. 10:34)
- Verse 2 makes it clear in this section: Paul is talking about _____.
 - When are traditions good, and when might they become bad?
- Before Paul gets into the application, he explains the principle he's dealing with in verse 3. What is the Scriptural principle at play here?
- How did that principle apply to worship practices at that time?

- What does verse 6 tell you about the statement a woman was making by not having her head covered back then?
(Note: Women who went out publicly without their heads covered were making a bold statement in Corinth and beyond!)
What would it mean for her to have her head shaved, and what would that mean for her husband?

- List some things people do in our culture to make a bold and striking statement; something that likewise we would find very inappropriate in our houses of worship:

- Is it surprising that the Corinthian congregation had some very radical people, even by the standards of that culture?

- Agree / Disagree: *Our churches today ought to have way more radical, fringe type people in them!*

Why do you think that we generally do not?

What's different now?

Respect God's Order:

1 Corinthians 11:7-16

7 A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. 8 For man did not come from woman, but woman from man; 9 neither was man created for woman, but woman for man. 10 It is for this reason that a woman ought to have authority over her own head, because of the angels.

11 Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman. 12 For as woman came from man, so also man is born of woman. But everything comes from God.

13 Judge for yourselves: Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? 14 Does not the very nature of things teach

you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him, 15 but that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory? For long hair is given to her as a covering. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice—nor do the churches of God.

- How important was respect for authority back then?
How important is it to be among us in the church, and why?
How important is it now in our culture at large?
- Verse 10 is, quite honestly, baffling. The “for this reason” clearly goes back to what he said in verse 9, but the “on account of the angels” is tacked on to the end of the verse. There are no textual variants / possible different readings here, what you see is exactly what Paul wrote. There are 2 common interpretations about what this *may* mean - what are they and what do you think?
- What additional point is Paul making about “male and female” in verses 11-12, and why is that important to consider?
- Explain how verse 13 and verse 16 help us clarify exactly what Paul was talking about here, and help make it perfectly clear to people who are confused by these verses today:
- Agree / Disagree: *Verse 14 says it's disgraceful for a man to have long hair.*
- Put in your own words what this half of the chapter is really all about, and how it applies to us / our worship / our churches today:

The Lord's Supper:

1 Corinthians 11:17-22

17 In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good. **18** In the first place, I hear that when you come together as a church, there are divisions among you, and to some extent I believe it. **19** No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God's approval. **20** So then, when you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, **21** for when you are eating, some of you go ahead with your own private suppers. As a result, one person remains hungry and another gets drunk. **22** Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God by humiliating those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? Certainly not in this matter!

- In the early church, the celebration of the Lord's Supper was in the context of a communal meal. Why would they have celebrated communion with a whole meal? (*hint: think of the history of when Jesus gave us this gift*)
- Paul had dealt early and often in this letter about the damage caused by divisions in the congregation. How was it also affecting their Lord's Supper celebrations?
- Agree / Disagree: *Verse 22 changed how the Lord's Supper is celebrated for the entire New Testament age.*
- Agree / Disagree: *If divisions are avoided then maybe we should celebrate the Lord's Supper within the context of a meal again.*

The Power of the Sacrament:

1 Corinthians 11:23-34

23 For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, **24** and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me." **25** In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." **26** For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

27 So then, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. **28** Everyone ought to examine themselves before they eat of the bread and drink from the cup. **29** For those who eat and drink without discerning the body of Christ eat and drink judgment on themselves. **30** That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. **31** But if we were more discerning with regard to ourselves, we would not come under such judgment. **32** Nevertheless, when we are judged in this way by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world.

33 So then, my brothers and sisters, when you gather to eat, you should all eat together. **34** Anyone who is hungry should eat something at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment.

And when I come I will give further directions.

- How does verse 23 make the authority with which Paul speaks here on this topic absolute?

- Why might one question Paul's teaching on Communion?

- Many who don't believe in Real Presence point to verse 26 as proof this is merely symbolism. How do you answer that? What *does* this verse really mean?
- Pretend you're an evangelical who believes in symbolism only for the Lord's Supper. What would you do with verse 27?
- What does "unworthy manner" mean, and what does it NOT mean?
- If a person is feeling *really* guilty, and had a horrible week where he made some very serious mistakes with very bad consequences - should this person come to the Lord's Table?
- A college student was in worship Sunday morning, but he didn't commune. You asked him why, and he said he was going out with friends later, he was underage, and he knew he would be drinking. How would you respond to him?

CONCLUSION:

- Explain what verse 29 means - most Christians don't receive the Lord's Supper in the right way, how come they aren't getting sick and dying like the people in Corinth were?
- Prove, from these verses, that Paul was warning believers here and not unbelievers.
 - Why does it matter?
- Agree / Disagree: *At least Catholics acknowledge the Body and Blood of Jesus. They are receiving the Lord's Supper in a worthy manner.*
- Think of a different event in the early New Testament church where we see God's strong and swift judgment / discipline among His people:
 - Other people in our circles think we ought to take Communion right out of the worship service so that it doesn't offend visitors. The members can sneak back in after any visitors have left. What do you think?
- Agree / Disagree: *Verse 34 means that our potluck lunches are sinful.*
 - Does it mean we *can't* have Communion as part of a meal?
- What issues do we have / or face - regarding propriety in worship and/or how we celebrate the Lord's Supper?
- Some people in our circles think that we ought to have a dress code for Sunday morning worship. What do you think?
- Some people in our circles think that we ought to celebrate the Lord's Supper every time we gather for worship. What do you think?
- What are some other key lessons for us in this chapter of Scripture?