

1 Corinthians Chapter 11

- It seems like this first verse really belongs in the previous chapter.

V: 1 Coming off of the teaching about Christian liberties and ministering to those around us, Paul had previously used himself as an example.

- Now he says in effect follow me or imitate me as I imitate and follow Christ, follow my example.
- He qualifies his exhortation with “as I follow or imitate Christ.” Jesus is our ultimate example - we want to be a good witness to those around us, a solid testimony for Christ.

Ephesians 5:1 “Therefore be imitators of God as dear children.”

V: 2 Paul commends the Corinthians that they’ve kept him in remembrance and have kept the traditions (ordinances, teachings, doctrines) that he delivered to them. He’d spent a couple of years there establishing the church in Corinth.

- Because of that relationship, they had written to him asking various questions, in other words they were seeking, they were teachable - and so Paul goes on to instruct.
- Paul is glad that they are keeping the “traditions” (ordinances, teachings, doctrines) that he taught them. Not all traditions are bad. At the same time he doesn’t identify which traditions he’s referring to - so we’re left to figure it out.

Mark 7:6-9 “⁶Well did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written: “This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. ⁷And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” ⁸For laying aside the commandment of God, you hold the tradition of men - the washing of pitchers and cups, and many other such things you do. ⁹He said to them, “all too well you reject the commandment of God that you may keep your tradition.”

- I suppose the difference might be “man made” traditions - religion vs: Spirit guided traditions.

Colossians 2:8 “Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Christ.”

1. Standing for the reading of God’s Word - based on Nehemiah Ch. 8
2. The benediction at the end of our services - based on Numbers Ch. 6

- Stuff like holy water, the sign of the cross, or holy undergarments - not so much.
- Later in this chapter Paul will discuss and describe the sacrament of “communion” which might be one of the traditions he’s talking about.
- Next he leads us into a teaching about prayer.

V: 3 Paul describes divinely ordained authority, a functional hierarchy, setting things in order.

- A functional hierarchy is different from a value hierarchy:
- In the Roman and Grecian culture of those days women were treated as being one level above a slave. Women were considered the property of their husbands, and were in fact 2nd class citizens. With that came abuses, some of which crept into the church.
- Paul teaches, the Bible teaches that men and women are of the same value and importance before God.

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

- Even though Paul has laid out this ordering in a consecutive way there is a big gap between number one and number two, between God and man.

Ephesians 1:22 “And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church.”

- Paul lays out the order of things preparing us as he now gets into instruction on public worship.

- The JW’s & Mormons have sought to use this verse to try to show that Jesus is not God.
- **Philippians 2:5-11** demonstrates that their position is false, and that Jesus submitted to the will and authority of the Father while He was in His body here on earth.
- Is Jesus, or was He at the time of His earthly ministry in any way inferior to God the Father? No, but He did submit to the will of the Father. Doing the will of the Father, playing the role God intended.

V: 4-6 So a man praying or prophesying who covers his head, he dishonors his head. And a woman who doesn’t cover her head, she dishonors her head.

- Jewish tradition: Kippah / Yarmulke / head covering - no biblical basis:

Exodus 34:33-34 “³³And when Moses had finished speaking to them, he put a veil on his face. ³⁴But whenever Moses went in before the LORD to speak with Him, he would take the veil off until he came out...”

- Later in **2 Corinthians 3** Paul explains that Moses did this not to protect the people from his shining countenance as much as to hide that fact that the glory of God reflected in his face was fading away.

- Paul is addressing some specific cultural issues here. Married women wore veils, the idea being that she was identified as a married woman, and practically it covered her glory / her hair - which beauty and the fullness of her glory being reserved for her husband. So in public she would wear a veil or a covering, as a symbol of her submission and purity.

- Paul didn't use the word veil as I just did, he used the word “covering” and does so several times. He's describing something akin to a head scarf or shawl as opposed to the muslim burka which leave a woman in an outfit with an eye slit or eye holes - that is not what we're talking about.

- In that culture it was accepted that women wore a covering when in public. The only women who didn't wear the coverings were prostitutes.

- In Corinth as in other places where prostitution was prevalent, most prostitutes wore their hair short or even shaved off all together (temple prostitutes), whereas ordinary women usually kept their hair long.

- So if you saw a woman without a veil or with a shaved head, it was generally accepted that she was a prostitute. So for a woman to pray or to prophesy with her head uncovered would dishonor her head or her husband because the husband is the head of the wife.

- Being uncovered would be tantamount to identifying her as a prostitute.

- **Connection:** The deal is that Christianity set the captives free, it liberated men, women, children, slaves, races, rich and poor - but as the last few chapters have described people were still learning how to exercise their liberties.

- Some of the women in the Corinthian church were exercising their liberty to not wear a covering and it had the effect of bringing disorder and confusion - so Paul addressed it.

- Sometimes we get so focused on head coverings that we neglect the fact that the Bible acknowledges that women are allowed to pray in public.

- There are many things that women can do in the church, there is only the one prohibition:

1 Timothy 2:12 “And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man...”

- No problem with women teaching other women - which Paul encourages:

Titus 2:4-5 “⁴That they admonish the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, ⁵to be discreet, chaste, home makers, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be blasphemed.”

- No problem with teaching Sunday school, with women exhorting, sharing their testimony, witnessing, or prophesying, like in a public prayer meeting.
- Prophesying in the sense of the Lord give someone an immediate word, a prophetic word - which is usually in a spontaneous sense as opposed to a Pastor who studies and prepares a message ahead of time.
- Remembering that Jesus told Mary to go tell the disciples that He was risen from the dead. A woman was the first one who was commissioned to share the good news of the resurrection. There is only one area where the woman is prohibited from teaching or usurping authority over the man, because it destroys the divine order set in place by God.

V: 7-9 Men shouldn't cover their heads, when praying, because they're made in the image of God, and the glory of God.

- Women are made from man (rib), and are the glory of men.
- Re-iterating the divine order: God, man, woman.
- Man was not created for the woman, but the woman for the man, again - there is that order or things.

Genesis 2:18 “And the Lord God said, it is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” Help meet, counter part, an opposite.”

- God subsequently allows Adam to see his own need as he names the animals, then He puts Adam in a deep sleep and removes one of his ribs, which he then fashions into a woman, who God then presents to Adam.

Adam's response:

Genesis 2:23-24 “²³And Adam said: “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of man.”

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”

- So the woman came from the man, then became again a part of man, being one flesh. Created to help, to be a companion, to experience love, and see and understand his relationship with God through the marriage relationship - so many things.
- Sometime after that, the woman was deceived by Satan and she ate of that forbidden fruit, which she offered to the man and he ate of it.

Part of Paul's justification about women not teaching men:

1 Timothy 2:14 “And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.”

- God began to describe the consequences of their sin, their disobedience to God's Word:

Genesis 3:16 “..... Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.”

- This is what God said - her desire would be for her husband, and he would rule over her.
- Paul is using all of this simply to describe the divine order that God has ordained.

V: 10 As it relates to the church in Corinth, a woman should wear a veil as a symbol of being under authority, the authority of her husband as a means of keeping order in the church.

- The mention of angels is a reference the angels being concerned with divine order and in keeping that divine order.

V: 11-12 “Nevertheless” - this is where we get some balance.

In the Lord, there is equality:

Galatians 3:28 “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

Instructing on marriage:

Ephesians 5:21 “Submitting to one another in the fear of God.”

- There is a balance to be struck, if we're not independent from each other as our text describes, that means we are dependent upon each other. We need each other!

- There is that equality in the Lord, there is that inter-dependence, and at the same time there is that order.
- Paul just says it plainly, bottom line - if it weren't for your mommy, you wouldn't be here!

V: 13 That question about women praying with a covering is still hanging there...

- “*You judge*” - “You determine...” “You decide...” it is more or less left up to us to determine, we're not being told what to do here, it's left up to us.
- Verse 16 affirms this: “*We have no such custom, or rule, or practice - nor do the churches, other churches of God*”
- The Corinthian church did it for a reason, but not all churches do it that way - they were allowed to determine what they would do.

V: 14-15 God's Word addresses all things pertaining to life... including hair styles.

- So we're talking about what is natural and what is not.
- Many have used this verse to try to enforce or impose their perspective on how a man or woman should keep their hair.
- The first question that comes to mind is how to define “long?”
- The Marine Corp definition is that if it's touching your ears it's long.
- Have you ever seen a picture of George Washington? He's got that hippie hair do!
- I suppose that hair down to the middle of your back or over the shoulders would qualify.
- The purpose in this is simply to identify who's who in the zoo, and not to have confusion.
- Women are to have long hair - and generally are created to have that, men are not to have long hair, it's a shame, or dishonor - but the purpose is simply easy identification.
- Have you ever walked up behind some girl with long hair and got around to the front only to see that she's sporting a full mustache and beard?

- I have - and my first thought it is “give that girl a razor! You need to shave that off!”

- According to v:14 that is a dishonor, other translations “**It is a shame unto him.**”

- That’s a shame. Long hair isn’t my particular cup of tea; but notice it’s a dishonor, it’s a shame, **but it’s not a sin.**

- You see a guy with long hair, that’s too bad, what a shame. Sometimes I look in the mirror at my lack of hair and I say the same thing - “that’s too bad, what a shame.”

- The woman is just the opposite; long hair for a woman is a glory to her, it’s given as a covering. If a local custom doesn’t mandate a covering, then her long hair is her covering.

V: 16 If anyone’s contentious, or argumentative about these things - it’s not really worth it - there isn’t a general law or rule as far as the covering is concerned, or about hair or lack of it

- The Corinthian church did it for a reason, but not all churches do it that way.

2 Corinthians 3:6 “**Who also made us able ministers of the New Testament, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.**”

- As such we need to be careful not to major in the minors...

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- Paul moves from propriety in prayer to propriety in celebrating communion.

V: 17-18 In verse 2 Paul was able to commend them, praise them for remembering the teachings, ordinances, and traditions in general - but when it comes to their observance of communion he couldn’t do that.

- Earlier in this letter Paul addressed the issue of divisions within the church, some were saying they were of Paul, some of Apollos, and that these divisions were an indication of their carnality, not of spiritual development.
- We need to be careful not to cause divisions within the body of Christ. We may disagree with people with aspects of their theology, but we need to be careful not to disparage them - because that would be an indication of carnality and immaturity in the Lord.

Proverbs 6:16-19 “**¹⁶These six things the LORD hates, yes, seven are an abomination to Him: ¹⁷A proud look, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent**

blood, ¹⁸a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that are swift in running to evil, ¹⁹a false witness who speaks lies, and one who sows discord among brethren.”

- The way they were conducting themselves in their agape feasts were causing divisions; some were being well fed, others being left hungry, some getting drunk and being irreverent, others seeking to worship and glorify God - and everything in between.

V: 19 Because of all of that there are these factions or different groups or cliques among you.

V: 20 The agape feast or love feast was one of the earlier church traditions that has carried through to the modern day - the church pot-luck.

- A large part of the early church was made up of slaves who for the most part couldn't contribute much to the meal because they had nothing of their own.
- Sometimes the focus was re-directed from the Lord, and the Lord's table - from communion, which was the real reason for gathering, to the meal itself which became the focus.

V: 21 “Pot-luck propriety” - Agape feast instructions, or basics - common curtesy.

- Paul is describing a scene where people are basically being inconsiderate of others:

1 Corinthians 10:24 “Let no one seek his own, but each one the other's well-being.”

- It hasn't happened in this church - (testimony to the love and generosity of our body) but I've been to pot-lucks at other churches where the first people in line load up, sometimes with multiple plates - then those of us at the end of the line are eating what's left of the lima bean casserole and hitting Burger King on the way home from the “agape feast.” Where in actuality it was a feast to some, but there wasn't any agape - no selfless love.

Philippians 2:3-4 “³Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.”

- So Paul is giving some basic instruction.

V: 22 The purpose of gathering together is to focus on the Lord, a meal is certainly a great way to do that - Jesus ministered to many over a meal.

- The point is, it's not just about food - if you're all that hungry, eat before you go - don't forget why we're gathered together.
- This is another form of liberty that needs to be exercised with understanding.
- Perhaps ministering to the needy or poor in their midst by allowing them to go through the line first, making sure they get fed. For many slaves or the poor in their midst that might have been their only decent meal that day or week.
- Out of consideration, we don't want anyone to feel awkward or embarrassed - the first person in line should be thinking about the last person in line.
- It's not just the agape feast or the pot lucks, but it's also the cleaning up and putting away - it's always a group effort - another way of serving both our God and His children.
- Just another extension of love and consideration.
- Don't you just love the practical aspects of his instruction to the church?

V: 23-30 Paul elaborates on the communion service.

- Celebrating communion was a regular part of their gatherings.

Acts 2:42 "And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers."

V: 23-24 The first thing that Paul communicates is that basically he is passing on that which he received from the Lord - which is consistent with the Gospel accounts of communion.

- I don't know if this is true of every Bible teacher, but I can say that it is true of our Bible studies together; I'm only giving to you that which I received from the Lord - and my prayer is that it would be nothing less, and nothing more - just straight from the Lord.
- The Passover feast to the Jews was a commemorative feast intended to help them memorialize what God had done for them in delivering them from their bondage in Egypt - to help them remember.
- Our celebration of communion which was instituted on the eve of the Passover is intended to be commemorative as well, to help us remember why Christ died on the cross for us.

- Jesus took the bread, giving thanks, and breaking it - distributing it with the explanation that this bread represents His body which would be broken for each of us, on our behalf.

Isaiah 53:4-5 “⁴Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. ⁵But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.”

- Jesus and Isaiah were both describing the redemptive work of the cross; that Jesus received the punishment that we deserved.

V: 25-26 Jesus took the cup, which He had filled with the fruit of the vine (un-fermented grape juice) and he offered it to His disciples explaining that this was a new testament, a new covenant in His blood.

- The cup symbolizing His life, because the blood is life...

Leviticus 17:11 “For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.”

- The whole point is to be brought to a vivid reminder of His sacrifice on our behalf.

1 Corinthians 15:3-4 “³For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, ⁴and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures.”

- As we “celebrate” communion, as we remember and commemorate His sacrifice on the cross, it’s not just that, but it’s also a celebration of His resurrection from the dead - yes it’s sober and reverent, but it’s also a joyful celebration appreciating every aspect of what He’s done for us.

V: 27 Getting back to an orderly observance of communion:

- Notice that Paul is not saying that they had to be worthy to partake; just not to partake in an unworthy manner.
- No one ought to come to the table who is not a true believer. Nor should a true believer come to the table if his heart is not right with God and with his fellow Christians. **Matthew 5:23**
- The celebration of communion is intended to be sober, worshipful, and focused.

- Apparently as Paul described before in V: 21 - some were being gluttonous or even drunk - not fully appreciating what they were supposed to be commemorating.
- An un-worthy manner could simply be being irreverent, or not having an appreciation as a non-believer would not have.

V: 28 Men should examine their hearts leading up to and in the communion service.

High priest / Yom Kippur / Holy of holies...

Psalm 139:23-24 “²³Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; ²⁴and see if there is any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.”

V: 29-30 There are consequences to lying to God, to presuming upon God:

- Ananias and Sapphira are good examples lying to the Holy Spirit.
- They brought judgment upon themselves - not discerning the Lord's body - the intent of communion.
- Many became weak or sick, some died. Paul is explaining to those in the Corinthian church what happened. Because they had been careless about their celebration of communion, approaching it with a wrong heart - many became weak, or sick, or even died.
- This was not just a philosophical discussion - people were dying because of this.

Galatians 6:7-8 “⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. ⁸For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life.”

V: 31 Back to examining our hearts, judging ourselves - taking spiritual stock - and repenting as need be.

1 John 1:9 “If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.”

- If we would judge ourselves, head things off at the pass - then there would be no need for others to judge us because it would already have been taken care of.

V: 32 If we do fall into that place of being chastened by the Lord, the intent is to correct us, and guide us - that we wouldn't be condemned along with the rest of the non-believing world.

- For a believer, chastening is part of the territory - and it's an indication of relationship with the Father.

Hebrews 12:5-7 “⁵And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; ⁶For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” ⁷If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?”

V: 33-34 When the church get's together - love each other, act like believers!

- Don't be the first to jump in line, meaning don't be greedy for yourself, be considerate.
- The reality is that someone is going to be first in line, just be kind one to another.
- If you're really all that hungry, eat before you come.

1 Corinthians 10:17 “For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.”

- We are one bread, united, one family - taking care of each other.
- The Lord's table / supper should be a demonstration of that unity as we come together to celebrate what our Lord has done for us.

1 John 4:11 “Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.”

- The rest he'll deal with in person when he comes to them.
- In the next few chapters Paul will set things in order regarding the gifts of the Spirit, I'm looking forward to that.