

**First Corinthians  
Chapter Eleven  
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**Proper Worship and Order**

**1Cor 11:1 “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ.**

**1Cor 11:2 Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.**

**1Cor 11:3 But I want you to understand that Christ is the head of every man, and the man is the head of a woman, and God is the head of Christ.”**

There were some “emancipated” women in the Corinth area. An inscription was found that told that a woman named Hedeia had competed in the Isthmian games and won a war-chariot race in AD 43 and the 200 meters at two other Games. The traditions Paul mentions are not all writings of his but teachings that he had also received and passed down to them. He was praising them for keeping them and for remembering him in all that they did. In verse three he seems to be teaching order as to creation in that Adam preceded Eve. He is also teaching that Christ is in authority over all creation and God is over Jesus in order of authority. The principle of subordination and authority pervades the universe and is not to be mocked. The order of creation also reflects authority and when we reverse that authority the family is severely threatened.

**1Cor 11:4 “Every man who has something on his head while praying or prophesying, disgraces his head.**

**1Cor 11:5 But every woman who has her head uncovered while praying or prophesying, disgraces her head; for she is one and the same with her whose head is shaved.**

**1Cor 11:6 For if a woman does not cover her head, let her also have her hair cut off; but if it is disgraceful for a woman to have her hair cut off or her head shaved, let her cover her head.”**

Some authorities think Paul is referring to a man with long hair, which was a sign of homosexuality. In verse 14 Paul clearly refers to a man with long hair. Most think that he is just talking about any covering of his head which indicates a reduction of the glory he has as the first human creation of God. The woman is supposed to be indicating that she is in submission to the man by having a head covering. The woman with a shaved head was for prostitutes. Whenever men or women pray openly they must show respect for God’s order of creation. Obviously not a popular position today!

**1Cor 11:7 “For a man ought not to have his head covered, since he is the image and glory of God; but the woman is the glory of man.**

**1Cor 11:8 For man does not originate from woman, but woman from man;**

**1Cor 11:9 for indeed man was not created for the woman's sake, but woman for the man's sake.”**

The woman was not created in the image of man. Seth was conceived in the image of Adam. God created woman for man because He saw that it was not good for man to be alone. Woman has an important place of her own but it is not to usurp the position of man. God created the different sexes to glorify Him by acting their part in creation. Man serves God directly and woman is created to help man in the glorification of God but she is not to try to take his place. Although God warned the world that this competition would indeed occur in the working out of original sin.

*Gen 3:16 "To the woman He said, "I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you shall bring forth children; Yet your desire shall be for your husband, And he shall rule over you.""*

**1Cor 11:10 "Therefore the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.**

**1Cor 11:11 However, in the Lord, neither is woman independent of man, nor is man independent of woman.**

**1Cor 11:12 For as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God."**

The reference to angels is because of the presence of angels in a service glorifying to God. Angels serve God's children.

*Heb 1:13 "But to which of the angels has He ever said, "Sit at My right hand, Until I make Thine enemies A footstool for Thy feet"?"*

*Heb 1:14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"*

Again Paul is clear that he is referring to the new order initiated by Jesus in that man and woman both serve God but in different ways. In the Jewish society women hardly had a place at all but under the authority of Jesus they now are equal with man spiritually but not functionally. They are meant to complement each other in the glorification of God. Paul is not refuting the order of creation. Note here he refers to man under the authority of man, not under subjection to man.

**1Cor 11:13 "Judge for yourselves: is it proper for a woman to pray to God with head uncovered?"**

**1Cor 11:14 Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him,**

**1Cor 11:15 but if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her? For her hair is given to her for a covering.**

**1Cor 11:16 But if one is inclined to be contentious, we have no other practice, nor have the churches of God."**

Paul is telling them that if they had just been observant with other of God's creatures they would have easily observed that the order of hair covering in nature reflects a similar authority. A woman's long hair is intended to show her covering of authority, but again

not subjection. Paul has no patience with contentious people so he ends the conversation by saying that what he has told them is the common practice of the churches and is the practice of the apostles, which is probably what he infers by the word “we”.

The main point of application to us at any time in history is that we are to do everything in a fitting and proper manner. We could get very legalistic about the practices mentioned here and that is never the point. Of course society is different today than in Paul’s time and the people in Corinth were some of the worst people in the area.

*1Cor 14:40 “But let all things be done properly and in an orderly manner.”*

**1Cor 11:17 “But in giving this instruction, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.**

**1Cor 11:18 For, in the first place, when you come together as a church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and in part, I believe it.**

**1Cor 11:19 For there must also be factions among you, in order that those who are approved may have become evident among you.”**

In case anyone thought that Paul was heaping praise on these people, he quickly clarifies the issue. The way in which these people were coming together is similar to divisions in churches today. We are to be one in Christ and especially when we come together to worship God as a group of His children. When God’s people come together not in unity they are doing more harm than good. He knows that human nature brings about differences of opinions but there is only one way to worship God and that is the way shown us by Him. When factions exist they are to be judged by the Word of God and the ones that are approved by God then are to be seen by all as the ones who chose the proper way. When the people are then in corporate worship the factions must have been worked out before hand so that the people come to God as one.

*John 17:20 “I do not ask in behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word;*

*John 17:21 that they may all be one; even as Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us; that the world may believe that Thou didst send Me.”*

**1Cor 11:20 “Therefore when you meet together, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper,**

**1Cor 11:21 for in your eating each one takes his own supper first; and one is hungry and another is drunk.**

**1Cor 11:22 What! Do you not have houses in which to eat and drink? Or do you despise the church of God, and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you? In this I will not praise you.”**

Now he is specifically talking about their coming together to commonly partake of the Lord’s Supper. The people were coming as if they were coming to some sort of pot luck supper! They were not showing reference to the bread and wine as to actually referring to the body and blood Jesus shed for our salvation but they were coming to fill their stomachs. He becomes a bit sarcastic asking if they have houses in which to eat and

drink! Of course he will not praise them for such gluttonous actions especially when such is done when they are to be solemnly glorifying Jesus Christ.

**1Cor 11:23 “For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;**

**1Cor 11:24 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."**

**1Cor 11:25 In the same way He took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."**

**1Cor 11:26 For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes.”**

These verses, and those following, are often read by the pastor before proceeding with the passing out of the bread and wine for the general congregation of believers. This is a very solemn time of introspection before anyone partakes of the Lord’s Supper. Note that Paul says that he received this instruction from the Lord and so he probably means in one of the times in which he was directly taught by Jesus. Of course this text is no proof of transubstantiation for Jesus was speaking symbolically. In verse 24 the word “this” is neuter and not masculine as it must be for the bread to literally be His body. The process is spiritual but no less of deep meaning. We do not present any of the parts of this service to the Father as some maintain. We are not acting as priests! We are proclaiming the work of Jesus that has been done for us individually.

**1Cor 11:27 “Therefore whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.**

**1Cor 11:28 But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.**

**1Cor 11:29 For he who eats and drinks, eats and drinks judgment to himself, if he does not judge the body rightly.**

**1Cor 11:30 For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and a number sleep.**

**1Cor 11:31 But if we judged ourselves rightly, we should not be judged.**

**1Cor 11:32 But when we are judged, we are disciplined by the Lord in order that we may not be condemned along with the world.”**

Of course none of us are really worthy but our attitude should be one of realizing the total worthiness of Jesus and recognizing that He has made the sacrifice for our sins so that we should come having examined ourselves to see if the Holy Spirit will convict us of some unconfessed sin.

*2Cor 13:5 “Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you-- unless indeed you fail the test?”*

When in verse 29 Paul says that someone may not judge the body rightly he is meaning anyone who does not recognize the serious and meaningful nature of this event. It is to be recognized as formal group recognition of the work of our Lord to remove our sin from before the Father. There are real physical consequences for people not properly observing this occasion. God may exert discipline upon us that might be in the form of an illness or a mental problem for our not judging ourselves properly. We remember some of the severe judgments of God on a couple in the early part of this book. The purpose of many discipline works of God on our lives are to bring us back into fellowship and we should quickly recognize the discipline of God so that we will be brought back into fellowship.

**1Cor 11:33 “So then, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another.**

**1Cor 11:34 If anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, so that you may not come together for judgment. And the remaining matters I shall arrange when I come.”**

Paul concludes this section by reminding them that if they are physically hungry they should eat at home. They are also to wait for everyone to be gathered and not to have some hurry to eat this meal. The reason of the meal is for spiritual hunger, not for physical hunger. Evidently there were other matters that he needed to discuss with them but they were not so urgent as to be written now. He would address the other matters when he came to see them and that might have caused some to have some anxious moments!

### References

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