

1 Corinthians: A Congregation in Crisis

Lesson 5A: A Crisis Over Worship (1 Corinthians 11:2-14:40)

Introduction: Share some things you enjoy about worship each week.

MEN & WOMEN or MEN vs. WOMEN?

In chapters 11–14, Paul discusses the proper attitude and conduct of God's people in the context of public worship. He begins this subject in 11:2-16 by addressing the appropriate decorum for Christian women and men during worship. He specifically emphasizes a local tradition at the Corinthian church: women covering their heads during worship. To support this custom, he establishes a comprehensive foundation. This practice reflects an acknowledgment of headship in the relationship between man and woman.

> **1 Corinthians 11:2-16** I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. [3] Now 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] And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head—it is just as though her head were shaved. [6] If a woman does not cover her head, she should have her hair cut off; and if it is a disgrace for a woman to have her hair cut or shaved off, she should cover her head. [7] A man ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but the 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] For this reason, and because of the angels, the woman ought to have a sign of authority on her head.
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> [11] In the Lord, however, 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.

1.) Let's focus on 11:3. What is the relationship among Christ, man, woman, and God (the Father)? What principle is Paul setting before us? How does this encourage women to willingly submit to male headship?

2.) In what ways does our congregation strive to maintain the headship principle while inviting and allowing women to serve with their gifts, energy, and ideas?

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THE LORD'S SUPPER

3.) In 11:17-34, Paul addresses another issue related to public worship: improper practices at the Lord's Supper. Compare how the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper (11:17-22) with how Jesus instituted it (11:23-26).

> **1 Corinthians 11:17-34** 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] When you come together, it is not the Lord's Supper you eat, [21] for as you eat, each of you goes ahead without waiting for anybody else. One remains hungry, another gets drunk. [22] Don't you have homes to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you for this? Certainly not!
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> [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.

4.) Why was the Corinthian's practice especially tragic in light of what God does for us in the Lord's Supper?

> **1 Corinthians 10:16-17** Is not the cup of thanksgiving for which we give thanks a participation in the blood of Christ? And is not the bread that we break a participation in the body of Christ? [17] Because there is one loaf, we, who are many, are one body, for we all partake of the one loaf.

5.) Evaluate: The way the Corinthians celebrated the Lord's Supper was dangerous and could have been deadly. (cf. v. 27-34)

> **1 Corinthians 11:27-34** Therefore, 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] A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. [29] For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. [30] That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. [31] But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. [32] When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. [33] So then, my brothers, when you come together to eat, wait for each other. [34] If anyone is hungry, he should eat at home, so that when you meet together it may not result in judgment. And when I come I will give further directions.

6.) How does our communion liturgy and practice communicate the forgiveness of sins, the unity God wants for us and bestows upon us, and the real power this sacrament has to save and judge?

CONCLUSION

> We are blessed to have the opportunity to publicly worship the Lord each week. What preparations might we make to ready ourselves for next week's service and make it all the more spiritually enriching?