

1st Corinthians Chapter 11 – John Karmelich

1. In Chapter 11, we begin a four-chapter section on how Christians are to conduct themselves when we get together, which are "church functions". Remember from Chapter 7 to the end of the letter, Paul is bringing up issues that were brought up to him via some previous letter that no longer exists. Paul's response to those issues is Chapter 7 to the end of 1st Corinthians.
 - a) There are two issues brought up in Chapter 11. The first has to do with submission. The second has to do with Christian conduct while taking communion. Both of these issues are apparently based on something written to Paul about the issues.
2. My title for this lesson is "why we submit". The point is all people have to submit to someone or something higher. It has nothing to do with how smart we are if we are superior to another person. If we work for a boss, we may think we know better than our boss, but we are still under our bosses' authority. Those who believe in God, submit to His authority.
 - a) The first half of this chapter is probably the most difficult one to preach on in this book. It deals with the issue of women having to submit their authority to men.
 - b) There is a joke among bible teachers that churches that that preach by topic never have to worry about Chapter 11, because they just avoid the chapter. Those of us who go through the bible verse by verse have to "tip toe carefully" through this section.
 - c) One of the important things to learn about Chapter 11 is some of the applications no longer apply to our culture, but the principals behind the application do apply.
 - d) If you get one thing out of this lesson, it is the idea that God wants us to learn and practice the concept of submission. It does not mean we are inferior to other people. Jesus had to submit His will to God the Father's will. It does not mean Jesus was inferior to God the Father, it just means that while Jesus was on earth, He taught the importance of submission by submitting His will to God the Father's will.
 - e) At the same time, this chapter teaches about men having to submit to Christ (both saved and unsaved) and women having to submit to men in the church and in their homes. The idea is not one of inferiority and superiority, but the recognizing the chain of command as set up by God and to teach us how to have submission and what that means practically.
3. The second half of this chapter deals with the issue of Christian communion.
 - a) We tend to forget that Paul had direct communication with God. We get clues to that in the book of Acts and several references in Paul's letter. My point here is Paul lays out some details to the ritual of communion. This letter to Corinth was written prior to when the Gospel's were written!
 - b) The problem with the Corinthian church is that some people were getting drunk at church gatherings prior to communion being offered. Further, some of the wealthier people would finish eating before the poorer showed up and they would not share their food.
 - c) One of the points Paul is making is despite our social status in life all Christians are equal in the eyes of God and we should all be to treat each other equally.
 - d) That is why both halves of the chapter deal with submission. In the first half, the issue is the "rank and order" established by God and in the second half, it has to do with problems that come from different social classes in society. Paul's point in this chapter is that all Christians need to be submissive to one another in that showing "love" is all about putting other's needs as a priority over our own. As far as women submitting to men and men (males) submitting to Christ, this has nothing to do with superiority of one person (or one sex) over the other, but with learning to be submissive just as Christ was submissive to God the Father!
 - e) Let me also say before I begin, that both the concepts of feminism and male chauvinism should not be part of the Christian lifestyle! Men are supposed to lead, but not dominate! We'll come back this point later in the lesson.

4. Chapter 11, Verse 1: Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.
 - a) As I state every now and then, the chapter breaks are not part of the original text. They were added many centuries later. With that said, Christian scholars debate whether this statement in Verse 1 fits best with the previous topic of Chapter 10, or did Paul use it to begin his submission discussion in Chapter 11.
 - b) In the previous chapter, the topic was "rights versus privileges" as Christians. The debate question is, "Did Paul end that discussion with a reminder to give up our rights as Christians and follow my (Paul's) example as I (Paul) follow the example of Christ? Or, was Paul using Verse 1 to start this discussion about submission?"
 - c) The truth is, one can read verse one either way, which is why I also included it in the last lesson about "rights and privileges" as discussed in Chapter 10.
 - d) The key point of Verse 1 is Paul is stating that he does his best to live his life based on how Jesus wants us to live our lives. Paul believes in leading by example as well as preaching the Gospel's truth. Paul is urging us to follow him, not because he is any better than you or I as a person, but because Paul is doing his best to live the Christian lifestyle and Paul wants us to do the same.
 - e) There are some things Paul taught that are culturally related. In the last chapter, the issue at hand was meat offered to idols. In this chapter, we are going to get into the issue of men and women wearing head coverings in church. For my American readers (most of this audience) this is not a significant issue in our local churches. The principal behind the issue does not change, but the specific example does not apply to our culture!
 - i) What we are going to discuss in this lesson is why this specific example no longer applies to our culture, but at the same time, the principals behind it does apply!
5. Verse 2: I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you.
 - a) Verse 2 is Paul commending the Corinthian church for "holding on" to his teachings. If you recall from the early chapters of this letter, there were divisions in this church, where some followed Paul, others Peter and others Apollos. Paul is saying that despite those problems, the church was still holding on to the teachings that Paul taught.
 - i) In other words, even though some Christians in Corinth did not respect Paul as much as other leaders, they still held on to his teaching principals.
 - b) What Paul is doing is giving them a subtle compliment before he gets into the problems associated with how the Corinthian Christians were practicing their faith.
 - c) It is like Paul saying, "I'm glad you are doing what you are doing, but let me tell you where you are wrong in how you practice what you are doing!"
 - d) The compliment has to do with the fact the Christians were coming together for regular church service. They were praying together and they were having communion together.
 - i) Paul compliments that fact before he lays into them for their bad practices!
 - ii) Remember that this letter to the Corinthians is mainly about correcting bad practices. The good news about the Christians in Corinth is they had the basics correct and understand the essential doctrines of Christianity. Their faults were bad practice of religion and bad treatment of fellow Christians.
 - iii) The main purpose of this letter is to correct bad habits in our Christian walk!
 - e) So, prior to Paul condemning their bad practices, Paul gives a compliment in Verse 2.
 - i) The positive news about the Corinth church is they met regularly, they honored Jesus as God, they didn't worship other Gods and they held communion together!
 - ii) Therefore, Paul first wanted to state what they were doing right!
 - iii) Now comes the bad news in Verse 3: ☺
6. Verse 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.
 - a) The word "head" can mean "source" or it can mean "authority".

- b) For example the source of a river is usually a lake. Therefore the "head" of that river is the lake. Along the same line of thinking, that word "head" can refer to the fact that God created man from the dust of the ground and God created woman from man. In other words, if you believe the bible is the word of God, it is just saying that women must acknowledge men as their source and men must acknowledge God as their source.
- i) While this is true, it misses the point of the verse. If this verse is solely about acknowledging one's source, it doesn't tie well to the rest of the chapter!
- c) The other idea of "head" which I believe ties better to this chapter is the idea of submission. It is acknowledging that since man (a male) was created directly by God, we (males) are to submit to Christ as our authority. At the same time, since women came from men, women are to recognize that chain of command.
- i) What does that mean practically? Does it mean every woman is to be married? No, and that would contradict some of Paul's earlier statements in Chapter 7 of how some women are called to be single and some are called to be married.
- ii) What it does mean, is that in the two structures set up by God (The family and the church), women are to respect the fact that men (males) are to be charge.
- iii) It does not mean that men are supposed to physically dominate women, but that men are to be the final authority in decision making. It means that women have to be submissive to men, not because men are superior, but that God designed it that way as a chain of command!
- a) Should the men of the household take out the trash? Yes. ☺ Again, the issue here is not responsibilities in the home, but that of final authority.
- iv) This verse reminds me of a movie line from "My Big Fat Greek Wedding". The mom is giving advice to her daughter who is about to get married. She says to her daughter, "The man is the head of the household, but the woman is like the neck. She (like the neck) can influence the head as to which way it turns!" I'm not sure that line is pure biblical, but it is pretty close in its thinking! ☺
- v) What about single moms? Obviously, the woman is the leader of that household. The issue in that case is to remember the chain of command in church and in life.
- a) The key point being taught here is that both men and women are to learn submission, not because the other person is better, but because God wants us to be submissive in live. It teaches us to be better people and more likely to accept God's commands for live when we are willing to be submissive to each other in all that we do!
- d) Let's talk about this line in terms of church structure: I believe it means that men are to be the leaders in the church. For most churches, it means that men are the pastors and men are the elders. Some churches take this principal "differently" and say that women can be leaders as long as their husbands and the church approves of it.
- i) Can women teach? Of course. There are biblical examples of women in the New Testament that prophecy! Remember that prophesying is simply about teaching God's word to people! Women can lead men to Christ. Women can be in charge of children's programs. Most churches would quite literally fall apart if it were not for the work that women do in the churches.
- ii) The debate issue in denominations has to do with women's role in leadership.
- e) With all of that out of my system, let's get back to the verse. Part of the verse says, "The head of every man is Christ". Understand it is not saying the head of every Christian man is Christ, but the head of every man is Christ!
- i) When God created Adam, Jesus was the one doing the creating under God the Father's instructions. The clue we get is when God says, "Let us make man in our image!" (Genesis 1:26). The question becomes, "Who is God talking to"? Jesus!

- ii) Understand that all people will bend the knee to Jesus one day. (Phil. 2:10-11). Christians will do it by free will. All others will do it by force! The point is everyone will acknowledge Jesus authority one day, by free will or force!
 - iii) The other point, going back to Genesis, is that men (males) were created directly by God through Jesus. Therefore, we as men must acknowledge Jesus "headship" as our source and ruler over our lives.
- f) This leads back to the next key point of Verse 2: "The head of every woman is man".
- i) The woman (Eve) was created out of man. Therefore women need to acknowledge men as their source of beginning. At the same time, there is a principal of submission. Again, not because men are superior beings, but because God wants men to lead!
 - ii) Often, women are leaders in churches due to a lack of men willing to lead!
 - iii) One of my favorite jokes on this topic comes from the television show "Seinfeld". The character "George" ran into an old girl friend who is now a lesbian. He asks her, "When you slow dance with another woman, who leads? Do you decide that ahead of time?" ☺ The point of that joke is "Someone has to lead!" God designed men to lead whether everyone likes it or not!
 - iv) Again, this has nothing to do with either men or women being superior. It has to do with the fact that God called men to lead and God called all of us to be submissive to someone or something at the least, just to learn submission!
 - v) Let me also add, "What if my husband is physically abusive"? The answer is to get away and not let him hit you! The principal of submission does not excuse abusive behavior. The idea behind the principal of submission is to be willing to give up one's right to lead in order to be submissive to God's order. Yes, there should be exceptions in cases of physical abuse and that is not to be ignored!
 - vi) Now, what if a husband struggles with some other problem? Should I as a wife submit? Yes. The issue is about learning to be submissive, but at the same time, gently talk to the husband about whatever is the issue at the moment. My point here is just as men are not to try to "bully God" into letting men do things our way, so women are not to bully men into letting them do things their way. The spirit of submission will usually get one's way better than trying to physically force an issue. Remember the "neck principal" from the "Big Fat Greek Wedding".
- g) The final point of this verse is "The head of Christ is God".
- i) The idea is Jesus submitted to God the Father's will. Remember that Jesus prayed about avoiding the cross "if there was any other way". (See Matthew 26:39). Jesus is equal to God the Father in stature and power, but God the Son submits to God the Father as the leader. The idea of "somebody has to lead" applies to the Trinity as well as us!
- h) OK, I'm in enough trouble from this one verse. Time to move on to Verse 4:
7. Verse 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.
- a) In Verses 4-6, we get into a cultural issue. In that culture, when a woman wore a head covering, it was a sign of their role in society. Before I begin a historical discussion, the reason this specific example does not apply today, is that an American Christian does not think of a head covering or lack of head covering having any affect upon one's position or role in society. This is not true for other cultures and other parts of the world today.
 - i) Paul addressed this issue because it was a cultural issue at that time and place!
 - ii) There are some churches today that take this principal literally. A friend and his wife visited a church in Central America that required women to wear a veil.

- iii) The wife of that couple agreed to wear a veil as not to be offensive to that congregation. That is a quick example of being submissive and willing to give up one's rights in order to not be offensive to others who think differently!
 - b) OK, onto the historical discussion: Jewish men at that time prayed with some sort of head covering. It is based on Exodus 34:35. The Jews thought that Moses put on a veil as he spoke to God. That verse in Exodus actually teaches that Moses spoke to the people using a veil but did not wear one when he spoke to God. The point is not what Moses did! The point is Paul says it is improper for men (males) to have some sort of head covering when he prays or prophesies.
 - i) The basic idea of prayer is men and women speaking to God to either praise Him or make petitions of things. The basic idea of prophecy is for men (and women) to speak to other people about what God wants of us in our life. Leading a bible study is a form of prophecy! Anytime anyone is teaching another human being about what God wants of us is prophesying!
 - ii) So why does a man (male) covering his head dishonor his head? The idea is that man (males) is a direct creation of God and a symbolic act to remember that fact is not to cover up the head when praying or prophesying! In both cases, men are communicating with God or are letting God communicate through us to others!
 - iii) If that's the case, does it mean men should preach naked or only wear certain clothes? No. It is just a symbolic act to keep their head uncovered to remember that we as men (males) are a direct creation of God!
 - c) The second point of this discussion is that women should keep their head covered. If a woman of that era had a shaved head, it was a sign she was a prostitute. A head covering in that culture was a sign that a woman was not a prostitute and she belonged to some man (either her parent's or her husband!). A head covering for a woman was a sign that she belonged to a man. The symbolic idea is a woman is to acknowledge men as their "head". The head covering was the symbol behind that concept.
 - i) We don't practice this in our society today because in the American culture, a head covering does not mean one belongs to someone else. The principal of submission still applies, but not the head-covering example!
8. Verse 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.
- a) Again, we have a cultural issue in focus here. For the Greek culture, at the time of this writing, for a woman to have an uncovered head was the sign of a prostitute.
 - b) In that culture, for a woman to show she belonged to a man, they had a head covering. If one was unmarried or widowed, they still had head coverings.
9. Verse 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.
- a) Paul is stating in that culture, when Christians get together for church, men out to have their heads uncovered and women should have their heads covered (probably a veil).
 - b) This would be a "sign" to all that is present to show the order of things as God ordained.
 - c) Christian churches don't push this today, because an uncovered or a covered head is not a sign of one's lifestyle. Still, the principal of God the Father is head over Jesus, who is head over the man, and who is then head over the woman. This does not mean every man is to rule over every female. It means in the church and in the home, we recognized this order.
 - d) In Verse 9 it says, "Woman was created for man" and not vice versa. Paul is not saying all women should be married. It does not mean all women have to answer to all men. It means we recognize our role in life and we submit our authority as God ordains.

- e) Verse 10 has this strange reference to angels. The idea is that angels are not all knowing. They watch mankind to understand God's plans for us and to see how it unfolds!
 - f) So what "sign of authority" should women have today? In some cultures, these verses are taken literally. If one comes across such churches when one travels, one should not "upset the apple cart" and one should do likewise. Remember last chapter's principal about freedom within Christ, but at the same time, we have to be willing to give up our freedoms if it could cause someone to sin? Well it applies in that situation.
 - i) Getting back to the typical "American" church, the basic answer is to accept the fact God calls men to run the church as is done in most denominations. In the home, it is to recognize the man as the leader.
 - ii) Again, this has nothing to do with "who is smarter". This is about a willing heart to show submission and recognition that God is in charge.
10. Verse 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.
- a) It is time to discuss something else Paul said in relevance to men and women: "There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus". (Galatians 3:28, NIV)
 - i) My point here is if Paul says in 1st Corinthians that men are the "heads" over women, yet in Galatians Paul says that in Christ, "There is neither male nor female, but we are all one in Christ Jesus". How do you reconcile that?
 - ii) The answer is, as far as God is concerned, all Christians are "one" and make up "one body". No Christian has any greater status than any other. At the same time, God wants order in society and further, God wants us to learn submission. Therefore, God lays out an order of submission for all people!
 - b) With that said, let's get back to Verses 11 and 12. These verses reminds us that although the first woman was created out of the first man, man is not independent of a woman and all men since then have been born of women! Even though the first man came directly from God, every man since then has come from women. We are all the "Sons of Eve".
 - c) So what's the significance of this? It is to remember that all of us come from God and even though we have different roles in society, we are to treat everyone with respect and remember that all Christians, male and female are "equal" in God's eyes.
 - i) This leads back to something I wrote in the introduction: Neither feminism nor male chauvinism is to be tolerated in the Christian church.
 - ii) When I say "feminism", I mean the idea that women "don't need men" and should not honor the male as having a higher stature in God's order. I believe a woman could do anything a man can do. I have met and heard of women that are tremendously gifted in every field. The issue is not talent or ability. The issue is to respect "God's design order" and to learn submission in life.
 - iii) When I say "male chauvinism", this is the idea of a man bossing around a woman because of this status issue. God wants the women in church to have a humble attitude. God wants the men to have a humble attitude as well. Men have to remember we are all "one" in Christ Jesus and we will be judged accordingly.
 - iv) What is the best way for a man to have a woman in submission to them? It is not by ordering them around or pointing out these bible verses. It is by showing a submissive attitude toward God in one's life. I can almost guarantee the attitude of the woman in one's life will follow that. It may not be immediate, but it will happen! If the women around you (men) see you having a submissive attitude to God's will and willing to love them as Christ loves the church, sooner or later that attitude of submissiveness becomes contagious!
 - d) Meanwhile, back to head coverings! ☺

11. Verse 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.
- a) Paul finally tells them to "judge for themselves" whether or not it is proper for a woman to pray with her head uncovered. One has to remember that in this culture at this time, the sign of "short hair" or an "uncovered head" on a woman was the sign of a prostitute.
 - b) The reason this principal is not practiced today, is that in our American culture, the length of a woman's hair is not associated with one's social status in society. In many societies today, this issue is still taken literally. If we were in such a church, we should respect that tradition and let men and women behave accordingly.
 - c) Paul then says if a man has long hair it is a "disgrace" to him!
 - i) One needs a good "Baptist" sermon here on the disgrace of male long hair, especially as it related to the hippie era! ☺
 - ii) In California, during the hippie movement in the 1960's, there were some non-denominational churches that took in "long haired hippies" and lead many of them to the Lord. The pastors didn't force the kids to cut their hair! Instead they just taught the hippies about Jesus dying for their sins.
 - iii) Over time, as styles changed, these hippies went to shorter hair and many of them are now bald, due to the nature of time.
 - iv) My point on this issue is the word "disgrace" is used. Sometimes it is best to let God convict people of disgraceful issues, as opposed to the church trying to fix people! We need to focus on the central Gospel message. God Himself is more than capable of changing people's habits and lifestyle for His glory. All God calls us to do is lead people to Him. At that point, we let Him work on people!
 - d) OK, let's move from men onto the women. Paul says that if a woman has long hair, it is her glory, and that long hair is given as a covering!
 - i) In Paul's world at that time, men wore their hair short, and women had long hair.
 - ii) Through most cultures, through most of history, women kept their hair longer than men keep theirs. I don't think somebody organized it that way. It was just a sign throughout history of how men and women keep their hair!
 - iii) Paul's point is not the specific length of one's hair. Paul's point is that the "natural" look of women with longer hair than men is for their (women's) glory and is a "sign" of their head covering.
 - iv) So, does this mean women in church should have long hair and never cut it? I would argue no. Paul's point is not about specific hair lengths, but about the fact that in general, women wear their hair at a longer length than men and that is way God intended it to be.
12. Verse 16: If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice--nor do the churches of God.
- a) Paul ends this discussion by saying that if anyone wants to argue about this subject, we (the Christians around Paul and other leaders) have no other way of dealing with this issue, nor has the other churches Paul has founded.
 - b) Many commentators speculate that the "violation" of the head covering principal was a local problem to the church in Corinth! Some argue that since "men and women" are one and the same in Christ as taught in Galatians 3:28, women in church would purposely uncover their head as to show their equality with men. It was an early form of "feminism" in the church.
 - c) The point is not "equality", but understanding the natural role that God has called both men and women to in society. Men and women are equal in Christ, but that is not the issue at hand. The issue is our willingness to submit in the order God has called us to!

13. Verse 17: In the following directives I have no praise for you, for your meetings do more harm than good.
- a) The good news is we are changing topics. There is no easy way for any bible preacher or teacher to get through those first 16 verses. ☺ They are part of the bible as much as any other passage, and they must be taught in principal and in practice!
 - b) In Verse 17, Paul is changing topics. He is about to start a discussion about how Christians act when they get together for church service and in particular, communion.
 - c) The point here in Verse 17 is that Paul is starting off by saying "I have nothing positive to report about what I have heard about what you do when you get together!" It's almost as if Paul was "fishing" for a compliment to give, prior to laying into them for their mistakes, but couldn't think of one good thing to say on this topic!
14. Verse 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.
- a) Paul is once again accusing the church in Corinth of having divisions! Paul brought up this issue in Chapter 1, Verses 10-13 and again in Chapter 3, Verse 3. Paul is now bringing up this issue again here in Verse 18. Paul's point here is different from Chapters 1 and 3.
 - i) In Chapters 1 and 3, the issue was the fact that some Christians followed Paul as their primary leader, others Peter and others Apollos.
 - ii) Here in Chapter 11, the point is when the Christians in Corinth met in their individual churches (usually meeting at someone's home), there were divisions among the believers, and as we'll discover, it was based on social status!
 - b) Do Christians come from all different social statuses? Of course. The point is when we come together, we are to forget those differences and treat each other as equals in Christ!
 - c) When Paul says "Which of you have God's approval?", Paul's point is that some Christians are acting properly in that they treat all Christians the same in church and some are sinning by putting some Christians on a higher status than others!
 - i) Again, one has to remember that Paul is speaking to saved Christians. One cannot lose one's salvation based on the amount of sin one commits. The only sin that is not forgivable is a lifetime denial of Jesus as God and Jesus payment for our sins.
 - ii) Sins will cause us to lose rewards in heaven. Sin can cause other problems in our lives as there are consequences for those sins, but it does not affect salvation!
 - iii) The point here is the Christian conduct in the Corinth church when they get together had some sin issues that need to be resolved.
15. Verse 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!
- a) The "style" of the Corinthian church is they would get together for a church service, and then they would have a big meal together or possibly make the meal the center of the service and then end their time together with communion.
 - b) The problem is that some people would show up much earlier than others. Those who were not slaves could arrive earlier as they had more free time in their day. Those who were better off (probably non-slaves) would eat and get drunk before everyone else showed up! Further, they would eat all of their food before some of the poor could show up later and share in those meals!
 - c) The principal being violated is about a lack of showing love to the fellow Christian. The poorer Christian who had to work longer hours couldn't even to share in the meals as most of the food would be gone even before they showed up.
 - d) The point for you and I is when we have our "church meals" is to leave enough food for those who come late and can't afford to bring anything.

- e) The underlying point is to care for other Christians, other than ourselves and those we consider our close friends. Jesus commanded us is to "love one another". (John 13:34, 15:12 and 15:17). The point is Christians are to go out of their way to show love to the fellow believers, not just the ones we like or consider close friends.
 - i) One way of doing that is about bringing enough food to the church meals for those who come late or didn't bring anything!
 - ii) Another way is when we get in line, we save enough for those coming later. Another way is to not get drunk at such meals and care about others.
 - f) This actually gets back to my opening theme for this lesson. That is "why we submit". The point is Christians are supposed to submit to one another out of love. The way non-Christians are supposed to recognize Christians is the fact we go out of our way to show love to one another. (See John 13:35.) One way of doing that is our conduct in church!
 - i) Remember that this letter is very practical in that it focuses on correcting bad behavior among believers. One cannot lose their salvation by acting this way in church, but it is a bad witness to others and we'll discuss the consequences of being a bad witness over the next set of verses!
16. Verse 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.
- a) Right in the middle of this criticism by Paul about Christian conduct in church, Paul lays out the principal of "communion" and why Christians should regularly observe it.
 - b) Remember that this letter to the Corinthians was written prior to any of the Gospels. How did Paul know this stuff? Two theories. One is that Paul had direct communication with God and at some point prior to this letter, Paul was directly instructed on it. The second theory (which I like) is the fact that Luke traveled with Paul on some of his missionary journeys. I don't know when Luke put together his gospel account, but he probably did so by interviewing a lot of first hand witnesses. It could have been Luke that taught Paul some of the details. The truth is we don't know how Paul knew the details of communion, but the fact is Paul "did".
 - c) The first fact mentioned, after the fact that the Lord (Jesus) taught Paul about communion, is the fact that Jesus taught the about communion on the same night Jesus was betrayed.
 - i) Why mention that fact? Part of it is to remind us that when evil is all around us, God still uses it for His own good. The Passover ritual was set up on the same night when God organized the destruction of the Egyptian "first born sons" and showed the way of salvation when there was destruction all around.
 - ii) Even while Judas was planning to betray the Son of God, Jesus used that time to teach His followers how to remember what Jesus was about to do for them!
 - d) In Verse 24, Jesus took a loaf of unleavened bread, broke it up into little pieces and gave it to His disciples. He then told the disciples to eat it in memory of Jesus.
 - i) In Roman Catholic churches as well as some other denominations, they believe that when one eats communion, the bread literally becomes part of the body of Christ. The emphasis is on the fact that Jesus said, "This is my body".
 - ii) Most Protestant denominations take the view that Jesus was not being that literal. Jesus did not rip off part of his skin and distribute it. Therefore the Protestant view is that the eating of the bread is a symbolic act.
 - iii) Do you have to use unleavened bread when serving communion? Some churches use crackers. I think we should do it "as accurately as we reasonably can", but emphasize the "why" as opposed to "how" we celebrate communion.

- e) The point for us to remember, as Paul will emphasize in a few more verses, is that when we eat the bread, we are to remember the fact that Jesus died once and for all for our sins!
 - f) The next fact emphasized is, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me."
 - i) Remember that Jesus instituted the ritual of communion during the Jewish ritual meal of Passover. In that Jewish ritual, there are four times everyone is to have a drink of wine together. The third drink is for Jews to remember their collective redemption by God and the fact they were saved from slavery. We know that this as the "third" cup is right after the Passover meal and Luke emphasized that fact in Luke 22:20. (The fourth cup is used to remember God will return to the world one day and the fact He will "wrap up life as we know it" one day.)
 - ii) The point is whenever we drink from the "third cup", we are to remember that Jesus blood was shed for the forgiveness of sins. When we get to Chapter 15 in 1st Corinthians, we'll talk more about why Jesus blood being shed was necessary!
 - g) This leads us to the final verse in this section. It says, "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes."
 - i) Paul is emphasizing that the ritual of communion is "sacred". Here were some church members in Corinth getting drunk and hoarding food prior to this ritual!
 - ii) The point is this ritual is sacred and one needs to take it seriously.
 - iii) How often should Christians do communion? There is no set answer in the bible. Some churches do it every service. Some only do it once in a while, like once per month or once per quarter. The main issue is not "how often", but the fact we do it regularly and remember what Jesus did for us! Paul's point coming up is about how seriously we should take the ritual of communion when we do perform it!
 - iv) The Greek word for "proclaim" is the same as "preaching". All Christians are preaching when we take communion. At that moment, we are proclaiming "The Lord's death until Jesus comes back." It is an acknowledgement not only that Jesus is Lord and died for our sins, but also that He will come back again!
 - v) How do we know when a believer is sincere in making that statement? All we can do is watch people's behavior. Only God can judge their hearts. Still, if we see someone drunk at a communion service or we know they have publicly proclaimed they don't believe in Jesus dying for their sins, those are signs that such a person should not receive communion at that time!
17. Verse 27: 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.
- a) The big question is "what does an unworthy manner" mean? Does that mean if we have sinned, we are not worthy to participate? No! If it was, nobody could have communion.
 - i) An unworthy manner would tie to Paul's earlier point about getting drunk or hoarding food prior to the communion service. The point is when Christians get together we conduct ourselves in a manner that is respectful to other Christians.
 - ii) Some churches take this a step further, which I think is a good idea: Prior to the actual communion process, one takes a few moments to recall any sins that our on our minds and just confess them as sins. Remember the confession process is about acknowledging we are "wrong" and God is "right" on an issue and it is our desire to turn away from that sin!
18. Verse 29: For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself.
- a) Paul adds a negative comment here in Verse 29. Paul is saying if anyone eats and drinks communion without recognizing it as the body of our Lord, brings "judgment" on him or her self. Remember one can't lose their salvation, so this is about our "status" before God.

- b) This gets into the question of who should and should not take communion. Many denominations make a big deal about the first time one takes communion. When a child is about seven is usually when the ritual first takes place in most denominations. Other churches are less strict on the process and leave it up to the individual.
 - i) I heard a lecture on this that shocked me a little: When Jesus instituted this ritual, he did it while Judas was still in the room prior to Judas' leaving. Jesus could have said, "In a few minutes, Judas will leave, and then I'll tell you about the "Lord's Supper". Instead, the ritual is set up while Judas is still in the room!
 - ii) My point here is that some churches open up the communion ritual to anyone willing to declare Jesus as their Lord and Savior, prior to formal membership!
 - iii) Other denominations are strict and limit communion to those who state they are members in good standing of that denomination!
 - c) Jesus told his disciples that it was up to them to decide who could fellowship with them and who could not. (See Matthew 16:19, and 18:18 with the principal of "binding on earth".) The point is Jesus left it up to the churches to decide who can be a part of that church. Therefore, I won't "solve" this communion debate, but say it is up to the individual churches to decide on who fellowships among them.
 - d) What is biblical is to have our hearts in the right place when we perform this ritual. We are to examine ourselves and take the body and blood for the purpose of remembering what Jesus did for us. We should recall Jesus' "Lordship" over our lives as well!
 - i) The idea is not just to eat a piece of bread and take a drink and think, "Jesus did this for me". The idea is to take a moment to recall the entire original event and all the pain Jesus went through for our benefit.
 - e) This leads us back to the verse. Whoever fails to take communion in a worthy manner "brings judgment on themselves". It is not a salvation issue unless one truly does not believe Jesus is Lord and died for our sins and has that belief the rest of their life!
 - i) Remember that Paul is writing to believers. I believe Paul's point is one can suffer consequences in this lifetime or in the next lifetime for not taking communion in a "worthy" manner. This means to think about the original event when taking it.
19. Verse 30: That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep.
- a) Here is the scariest verse in the chapter. (Much scarier than the submission verses! ☺)
 - b) The verse is saying that a (not the) reason many Christians are weak or sick or some have died is because of our failure to take communion in a proper way.
 - i) Does that mean that every time we are weak or sick it is due to our failure to take communion in a proper way? No. ☺ Sometimes we get weak or sick due to other factors. The point is God may allow us to get weak or sick or suddenly die if we fail to take communion in a proper way. If this verse scares you, it should!
 - c) This gets back to the command for Christians to show love to one another. If we are getting drunk in church, hoarding food, or even taking communion in an unworthy manner, we are showing disrespect to God and to other Christians. The punishment is not a loss of salvation, as our salvation is solely dependant upon our belief that Jesus is Lord and He died for our sins. At the same time, God can and apparently does punish people who fail to take communion in an appropriate manner. God allows sickness and weakness and sometimes even death to occur when we are a bad witness for Him!
20. Verse 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.
- a) Paul's point in these last two verses is that the Lord judges our behavior. Let's face it, we can't read people's minds and hearts. All we can do is watch people's actions. If a person looks sincere, but they are faking it, they will be judged by God in this manner.
 - b) The point is only God can judge us, as only God can judge people's hearts.

- c) We as Christians don't have to go around judging if people are eating communion in a worthy manner! That is God's job. If a person is drunk in church or if we somehow know someone is not sincere, we can refuse to give them communion. I believe when in doubt, we let someone take communion and then let God judge them!
 - d) The other point of Verse 31 is if we "judge ourselves", we will not come under God's judgment. What that means is if we discipline ourselves to take communion in a worthy manner, which is to do it soberly and to remember the original event itself, we will not be disciplined by God if we follow the right steps.
 - i) So how far do we take this? Are we in trouble if we smile while we take communion? ☺ If our mind drifts to other thoughts prior to taking it, are we in trouble? The answer to both questions is "no". The point is we should take a few moments prior to taking communion to reflect on the event. Then we can enjoy the fact that we are one with our fellow Christians and participate in communion!
 - e) Even if God does discipline us, it is to our benefit. Remember the reason God disciplines us is to make us better disciples. The point is if we don't discipline ourselves, God will discipline us. It may be as subtle as God reminding us to take communion in a worthy manner. A more extreme form of discipline is weakness or sickness. When such things occur, it is a reminder to us to check and see how we are performing communion.
 - i) Again, if we are weak or sick, it is not a guarantee the reason is due to bad communion. It is just a possibility to consider!
 - f) Finally, Paul says we are disciplined "so that we will not be condemned with the world." How are we condemned by the world? If we take communion without sincerity, it is usually coupled with other sins we are committing in our lives. It may be a sign that we have not committed our lives to serving Jesus if we take communion lightly!
21. Verse 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.
- a) We're back to improper eating and drinking at Christian meals. Paul ends this section by saying that if anyone is hungry, they are to eat at home prior to this meal! The purpose of this communion meal is to spend time with other Christians and to have enough for everyone! The "fellowship meal" is about caring for other Christians, not to horde out on food! ☺ We should wait for everyone to show up before we all dig in on the food!
 - b) Finally Paul ends this section with one final word about "judgment". Paul says a failure to act this way will result in some sort of judgment. That could mean anything from sickness to death or possibly the end of that church. God has lots of ways to judge us without taking away our salvation! God's desire is that we all become strong Christians and follow His commands! Sometimes discipline is necessary when we are not behaving properly as a Christian.
22. Verse 34b: And when I come I will give further directions.
- a) Paul ends this section with a promise that when he returns to Corinth, he will give further directions. We are not positive what Paul meant, but the implication is that whatever other problems Christians were having when they got together, Paul would handle on his next personal visit, as opposed to addressing it in this letter.
 - b) Remember that Paul had nothing positive to say about how and when Christians got together to celebrate communion in Corinth. In this half of a verse, Paul is saying in effect, "I've given you enough to think about on this topic, I won't go any further!"
23. Time for a quick summary of the chapter: The first half was a difficult subject, and dealt with the issue of submission within the church. The point is not that men are superior to women or that men should dominate women. The point is God set up a standard of "who should lead and who should follow" and we should act accordingly. It is about respecting God's chain of command!
- a) The second half had to do with proper conduct when Christians get together for meals and for communion. The point is if we follow God's rules, we care for other Christians!

- b) Both halves are teaching about submission! The first half is about submitting to God's order of things. The second half is about submitting our time and food to fellow Christians and not putting ourselves before others!
24. With that said, let's pray: Father, forgive us for putting the needs of ourselves or our close Christian friends before others. Help us to remember that the way you "desire" for us to live is the best way for our lives. Help us to submit and support one another as You desire and not as we desire! Forgive us for acting in ways that are unworthy of You! Help us to regularly remember what You have done for us and to respond in love according to the love You have first shown for us! For we ask this in Jesus name, Amen.