

## 1 Corinthians 11

11:1 This verse really belongs with the previous chapter. **Read 10:32-11:1.** It provides a good introduction to Chapter 11.

- I. A Christian woman's appearance should be characterized by modesty. 11:2-16
- II. When the church celebrates the Lord's Supper it should be orderly. 11:17-34

I. A Christian woman's appearance should be characterized by modesty. 11:2-16

- A. 11:2 The **traditions**, in this case, would have been the things Paul passed down. Remember they didn't yet have a NT. That was still being written at this time. They would have had oral teaching passed down by Paul and the other apostles.
- B. 11:3 Here is the order: A wife should submitted to her husband, who should be submitted to Christ. Christ is submitted to God the Father.

*He who cannot be a good follower cannot be a good leader. (Aristotle)*

- i. Christ is not inferior to God the Father. He is fully God, but He is fully submitted to the Father's will, so much so that we can rightly say that the Father's will and Christ's will are the same. It should be no problem then, for a man to submit to Christ and his wife to then submit to him under such circumstances.
- C. 11:4-7 This is not, and never was, about wearing a hat to church. That's more of a legalism that grew out of the passage. There was a custom at this time of married women covering their heads much as Muslim women still do today. This was true in both Jewish culture (3 Maccabees 4:6; Mishnah, Ketuboth 7. 6; Babylonian Talmud, Ketuboth 72a-b) and, at least somewhat, in Greco-Roman culture (Plutarch Moralia 3. 232c; 4. 267b; Apuleius The Golden Ass 11. 10). (See *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: New Testament*)

i. In some cases they took it very seriously, like the following rabbi:

*"Rabbi Hezekiah said: 'A curse falls upon the man who allows his wife to reveal her hair. This is part of family modesty.' The woman who displays her hair as a mark of adornment leads her household into poverty, deprives her children of respect, and brings an alien element into the home. ... And if this is true within the house, how much more outside in the street or with any other kind of immodesty. ... Therefore a woman must make sure that **even the walls of her house do not see one hair of her head**, let alone outside the home." See the original [here](#).*

- ii. The Greco-Roman world was more varied. Greeks, men and women, bared their heads for worship and Romans covered them. Some upper class women were eager to show off elaborate hairstyles, while among the lower classes that was considered immodest. (See *IVP Bible Background Commentary*.) Paul, therefore, advises Timothy to instruct that Christian women should avoid the extremes.

**First Timothy 2:9-10 NKJV**<sup>9</sup> *in like manner also, that the women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with propriety and moderation, not with braided hair or gold or pearls or costly clothing,*<sup>10</sup> *but, which is proper for women professing godliness, with good works.*

- iii. So modesty was the most important point. I think we can consider the head covering business an expression of modesty in that place and time.
  - D. 11:8-12 Paul now gives an argument here from creation. His point is modesty in dress, especially women covering their heads while praying or prophesying. Two side points:
    - i. Paul shows that he takes the Genesis account seriously.
    - ii. We should also notice that these women were apparently praying and prophesying. He assumes that women will be taking an active role in these ministries.
    - iii. 11:10 **because of the angels** Honestly, I don't know what this means.
  - E. 11:13-15 The Corinthian women were not doing what was obvious to Paul and should have been obvious to them. While we can easily agree that hair is usually a bigger deal for a woman than a man – if only because a lot of us guys tend to lose ours – the whole veil thing doesn't automatically follow for us. If it weren't for this awkward passage we'd most likely never think it mattered. In these times we might easily be confused with Muslim extremists if we approached it as that one rabbi did earlier.
  - F. 11:16 The Corinthian women, not covering themselves, were deviating from normal practice in all the other churches. They probably saw themselves as very progressive; Paul saw them as contentious. Knowing what we know about Corinth, I'll go with Paul.
- II. When the church celebrates the Lord's Supper it should be orderly. 11:17-34
- A. 11:17 The NIV says, "Your meetings do more harm than good." How would like an apostle to say that about our church services?
  - B. 11:18-19 So here's that problem of divisions or factions within the church again. The point is that not all divisions are bad, because some people are authentically wrong. That's the point of v.19.
  - C. 11:20-22 In those days the church often had a meal together just about every week, even as we do once a month. Two things were going wrong here:
    - i. Some people, apparently those who could afford to bring more to the meals, were eating the food all up very quickly and getting drunk in the process. This left nothing for those in the body of lesser means. The poorer people now all just felt bad, as this was somewhat demeaning. The rich didn't care.

- ii. The second problem was that in the midst of this unruly scene is when they shared the Lord's Supper. It's when they took communion. So the Lord's Supper was not seen as the sacred memorial that it should have been.
- D. 11:23-26 Jesus evidently explained to Paul the meaning of the bread and the cup. He wants to make sure the Corinthians are not forgetting this in their carnality.
- E. 11:26 As we take communion, it has a past, present and future value to it.
  - i. With respect to the past, we are remembering Christ's death.
  - ii. With respect to the present, we can actually see it two ways.
    1. We think of what that death means for us – that our sins are forgiven and we now stand clean before God.
    2. We think of how our individual relationships with Christ unite us into one body, the Body of Christ, the Church. We are all connected to one another because of Him.
  - iii. With respect to the future, **we proclaim the Lord's death till He comes**. Each time we take communion, we should consider that we are looking forward to the return of Jesus Christ.
- F. 11:27-34 The point here is that the Corinthians are taking communion "irreverently". That's the sense of **in an unworthy manner**.
  - i. What they should do is take their time, examine themselves, and even judge themselves, so that they get their hearts right before God. That couldn't happen if they were gorging themselves, getting drunk and making the poor feel inferior.
  - ii. Don't get trapped into thinking that you shouldn't take communion if you *feel unworthy*. That reveals a very serious misunderstanding of this passage and your relationship with Christ. You and I are all unworthy and we need to know it for a fact. If we begin to feel worthy, then at that point we have ceased to understand the grace of God.

**Conclusion:**

Now, before we take communion let's examine ourselves, think about Jesus and get our hearts right before God.