

The Beauty of Christian CommUNITY

Studies in the First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians

1 Corinthians 11:1-34

“Contextual Decorum in Public Worship”

I. Divine Order in the House of God (1 Corinthians 11:1-3)

- a. Christian leaders must model imitating Christ (1 Corinthians 10:33). Incarnational ministry is entering into the world of the lost for the purpose of disciple making. Paul is exercising his apostolic authority to reinforce the universal body of doctrine and tradition binding on all believers, demonstrating the wisdom of “contextual” theology, and mutual respect among brothers and sisters in Christ.
- b. Why would every other human organization have clearly defined hierarchy, but marriage/family be excluded? This teaching does not support oppressive male patriarchy that devalues or discriminates against women (Genesis 3:20). Male headship in marriage is foundational apostolic doctrine. Christ is the head of every husband (1 Corinthians 11:3), head of the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), head of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:15), head of all principality and power (Colossians 2:10).

II. Honor, Shame, and Gender Distinctions (1 Corinthians 11:4-16)

- a. In Greco-Roman culture pagan men covered their heads during prayer to idols. If Christian husbands engage in this behavior, they dishonor Christ. How a husband behaves during public worship either honors or dishonors Christ.
- b. Single women are focused on pleasing the Lord with no mention of needing to honor a man (1 Corinthians 7:34). In Greco-Roman culture pagan women uncovered their head as a sign of autonomy and promiscuity. Christian wives who engaged in this behavior dishonored their husbands. The prophesying that women participated in is a fulfillment of Joel 2:28 (Acts 21:9). The exhortation for wives to wear head coverings is most likely a cultural concession.
- c. Head coverings represented male/female distinctives and symbols of marital submission. Male and female are created in the image of God – equal in humanity. But in marriage the husband exercises biblical headship as illustrated by Christ and the church. Eve was created for Adam because it was not good for the man to be alone. The Bible does not promote a low view of women or demote women to second class citizens. The sinfulness of man and the strategy of the kingdom of darkness is fueling the brokenness in our society and the ungodly discrimination against women (Genesis 3:15; John 10:10).

- d. Angels are non-human intelligent life forms. Some serve God and some are in rebellion against God. Our living out the Gospel demonstrates the wisdom of God to principalities and powers (Ephesians 3:10; 6:12). Angels that serve God are sent to serve believers (Hebrews 1:14). We must uphold God ordained authority structures regardless of the popular culture. (Isaiah 40:8; Psalm 119:89). Just as the first woman came from the first man, now God uses women to birth men. A woman would ultimately be used by God to birth the Savior (Genesis 3).

III. Remember the Sacrifice of Christ with Godly Fear (1 Corinthians 11:17-34)

- a. Not everyone in the church community is approved of. Our attitudes and behavior will determine our recognition by the Lord (Matthew 25). The Christian community was to reflect diversity and unity including economic classes. Rich and poor demonstrate fellowship and equity.
- b. The information recorded in the Gospels was part of oral tradition taught to the church. Christ wants us to remember that His body was broken for us and His blood was shed for the forgiveness of our sins so that we can enter the New Covenant with God. This is a continual ordinance that will last until the return of Christ.
- c. We must enter participation in the Lord's Supper reverently acknowledging the sacred nature of this ordinance. Paul is warning us not to treat the elements as common. Physical discipline was a result of unworthy participation. Self-examination is the way to avoid judgement. Be honest about the condition of your heart and recognize the holiness involved. The Corinthians were disorderly and irreverent in their practice. God's discipline is corrective not condemning – examine yourself to ensure you are in the faith (Acts 16:30-31; Romans 10:9-10; 1 John 5:13; John 20:31; John 11:27). The Lord's Supper is a communal observance that should be practiced as a group with patience and reverence.

Are you living and worshipping in a way that honors Christ the head of the church?

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.” (2 Corinthians 13:5)

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