

11:1: *Be ye imitators of me, even as I also am of Christ.*

God's word (the text of the Bible) is inspired, but the verse and chapter divisions in the Bible are not. These divisions were added by men to make the Bible easier to use. While most of the verse and chapter divisions are excellent and very helpful, there are exceptions such as the one here. This verse should probably be the conclusion to chapter 10 instead of the first verse in a new chapter. For another example of a bad division, see Lk. 9:43 (the second half of this passage should be a new verse).

The word "*imitators*" (*mimetes*) is translated "*followers*" in the KJV and it has "ethical overtones" (CBL, GED, 4:200). Because of the grammatical construction in the original text (the present tense and the imperative mood), this is an on-going command (i.e. Christians are commanded to regularly act like Paul acted). This apostle wanted the Corinthians to learn about Christian living from what he wrote plus the lives of faithful brethren (compare 1 Cor. 4:16-17; 16:1). Personal and congregational examples are worthy of imitation when they involve people who are truly following "*Christ*." As Brown (1:491) noted, "Paul never intends to bind the demand for imitation to his own person (we do not become a "Paulite," BP). It is always ultimately to the One whom he himself follows" because Paul was not perfect. Lenski (First Corinthians p. 428) noted how those "who imitate Christ have a right to call upon others to imitate them" and this is certainly what Paul did with the Corinthians. Part of our *following Paul* means *doing all for God's glory* (10:31). If these Christians were willing to learn from Paul's example as well as what he said in this letter, they would have realized it was wrong to create stumbling blocks for fellow Christians (10:32). Aside from here *imitators* is found only in 1 Cor. 4:16; Eph. 5:1; 1 Thess. 1:6; 2:14; Heb. 6:12; 1 Pet. 3:13.

Knowing and following the pattern found in the New Testament:

Although Paul said first century Christians and congregations serve as a pattern for us to follow, some have ridiculed this idea. Some have asked, "Who are we to imitate? Should we follow the idolaters at Corinth? Since the Corinthians were involved with sexual sin, should this be the pattern we follow? Should we be like the drunks Paul described?" This verse clearly tells us who to follow—we follow men like Paul because he and others followed the Lord. If this apostle had not been obedient to Jesus, he would have been a "blind guide" (Mt. 15:14) and it would be wrong to follow his example.

God uses three different ways to tell us right from wrong and how to live the Christian life. One of these ways is found in Bible examples. Paul

spoke of his personal example in this verse, but there are also congregational examples. Some Bible examples are positive (we need to emulate what is recorded) and other examples consist of things we are to avoid. A second way God teaches us what to do and what to avoid is found in “commands” or “direct statements.” Like examples, commands (direct statements) can also be positive or negative (compare Rom. 12:9-21).

A third way God helps us know His will is “inference.” One or more verses may “imply” something and we use this information to “infer” (draw) a conclusion. We frequently use inference in life. For instance, if someone said, “All dogs are animals and Spot is a dog,” we would infer that Spot is an animal. God’s word calls on people to use inference and one example of this is found in Mt. 22:32 (God is said to be the “God of the living” instead of the “God of the dead”). If God is still ruling over the dead, we infer that “dead people” have not ceased to exist (they experience a separation from their earthly body, Jas. 2:26, but this separation does not mean a cessation of life—Lk. 16:22-26). Another example of inference is Heb. 7:14. Since the Old Testament said priests had to come from the tribe of Levi, people correctly inferred that it was wrong for priests to come from other tribes. For more information on God’s commands, examples and inferences and the need to follow them, see this author’s commentary on Col. 3:17 and Heb. 8:5.

An overview of the “head covering” (veil) issue:

Since Paul has discussed questions related to eating meat sacrificed to idols in the previous chapter, he is now ready for new material, some of which is difficult and controversial. The next four chapters may be divided into three sections: **(1) 11:2-16**—the wearing of the head covering (veil); **(2) 11:17-34**—problems pertaining to the Lord’s Supper; **(3) 12:1-14:40**—problems pertaining to spiritual gifts. We may not understand everything that took place at Corinth, but we can have a general understanding of this congregation’s problems and the corrective instructions given in these chapters.

Many commentators, including this one, believe some of the Corinthian women had taken the truth of Gal. 3:28 to an extreme (they had started or were interested in what might be called a woman’s liberation movement). Christian women at Corinth were not complying with their God given role or they were tempted to not follow it. One indication of their actual or possible rebellion against God’s plan for their lives involved a veil (head covering), so this subject (as well as God’s role for women) is discussed in this chapter.

In the Corinthians’ society veils were one means of differentiating between men and women. Veils also, just as long hair (verses 15-16),

symbolized womanhood. If the Corinthian women refused to wear veils or had what was considered short hair, they rejected things their culture associated with femininity and implied they were not willing to follow God's plan for womanhood (they were essentially making a declaration of insubordination).

Warren Wiersbe (First Corinthians, p. 603) aptly described part of the problem: "Eastern society at that time was very jealous over its women. Except for the temple prostitutes, the women wore long hair and, in public, wore a covering over their heads... For the Christian women in the church to appear in public without the covering, let alone to pray and share the Word, was both daring and blasphemous." The Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible (p. 326) offers similar information: "Required head coverings for women are an Eastern custom. A Middle Assyrian law required that all women except prostitutes and slaves be veiled. Jewish communities of the New Testament period were strict about this. The Mishnah (A.D. 250) held that failure to comply was grounds for divorce (Ketubin 7:6). A moral, unmarried woman even wore a veil in front of her parents. Removal of the veil was a sign of disgrace (3 Macc. 4:6). Philo of Alexandria indicated that this regularly worn covering was a symbol of modesty (Special Laws 3.56; Josephus *Ant.* 3.270). Women charged with adultery had this veil removed."

Even now every culture has specific customs, one of which may involve males removing their hats. In the United States it used to be normal for men to remove their hats when the Pledge of Allegiance was said or the National Anthem was sung. Males have also traditionally removed their hats when attending worship. Men who refused to respect these cultural traditions were seen as disrespectful, just as the Corinthian women would have been regarded if they rejected the veils (verse 5) and men would have been disrespectful if they had worn a covering (verse 4).

Women have also been expected to observe some cultural practices, some of which are found in marriage. In many wedding ceremonies it has been customary for a bride to say she will "obey" her husband and the bride traditionally accepts her husband's last name to show her recognition and acceptance of his authority (headship). Paul dramatically emphasized the need to observe customs such as the head coverings at Corinth by appealing to both the Godhead (11:3) and angels (11:10).

Today it is still very important to respect the customs in the culture where we live or work. This means we respect the way people talk, dress, think, etc. It is also necessary to live in such a way where males and females carry out their God given roles (i.e. men behave like men and women behave like women). This latter point is so important that it is even found in the Old Testament. In Deut. 22:5 God said: "*A woman shall not wear that which pertaineth unto a man, neither shall a man put on a*

woman's garment; for whosoever doeth these things is an abomination unto Jehovah thy God.” “The adoption of **clothing** of the opposite sex was forbidden because it obscured the distinction of the sexes and thus violated an essential part of the created order of life (Gen. 1:27)” (Bible Knowledge Commentary, p. 301). Our culture may not always use the same symbols used by the Corinthians to distinguish males from females (i.e. head coverings and the length of hair), but there will always be established ways to distinguish males from females and these distinctions need to be observed.

The custom of wearing veils is also related to what Paul said at the end of the previous chapter (in 10:25-26 he spoke of buying food that may have been offered to idols). Paul said Christians could purchase this food if they “asked no questions.” If Christians asked shop owners about the origin of food, they would have been regarded as odd and probably gained a bad reputation among the unsaved—things the Corinthians church did not need. Paul knew Christianity was a new religion and it was important for saints to leave a good impression with the unsaved (compare Tit. 2:5, “*that the word of God be not blasphemed*”). This is partly why he spoke of being “all things to all men” in 9:20, 22; 10:33. If the Corinthian women chose to stop wearing veils or opted for short hair (compare verse 15), they would not have been “all things to all people.” They would have violated local customs, offended outsiders, and very possibly offended fellow Christians (compare 10:29). Refusing to wear head coverings or follow other customs would have been “an occasion of stumbling” to others (10:32) so this chapter tells women to obey this cultural practice.

In the following verses Paul offered six arguments related to Christian women fulfilling and demonstrating their divine role, especially their role in the church. These arguments are: (1) Man has been made the head of the woman; (2) Being uncovered was equal to having the head shaven; (3) The order of creation proves that women are subject to men; (4) Women should be subject to men because of the angels; (5) Nature proved that women should be covered; (6) The general practice of the church demanded a covering.

Is it necessary for women to wear a “head covering” (veil) today?

While commentators and very sincere Bible students greatly differ on this question, there is some general agreement on two things. First, if God wants women to wear head coverings today, this is the only action in the New Testament that God does not fully explain. Second, no other book or passage in the New Testament deals with this issue and we have a limited amount of information in this chapter about women wearing a head covering (veil).

Some believe all Christian women in first century times were bound to wear a head covering and this obligation is *still in force* (i.e. today all women must wear a covering in church assemblies). Those who take this view often differ on the specifics of what must be done. Some think a woman’s *covering* is her natural hair (this is a difficult explanation to defend, especially in view of verse 7. If a woman’s covering is her natural hair, and men are prohibited from wearing a covering—their natural hair—*only bald men can approach God*). Others think a literal covering must be worn (i.e. the natural hair is not enough so an additional covering must be added).

Those who believe in an artificial covering often disagree on what constitutes a covering. Some think almost anything on a woman’s head qualifies and others believe a woman’s head must be fully covered (for a discussion of what constitutes a covering, see the *What was the head covering* discussion located in the commentary on verse 4). A related view associates the head coverings with supernatural gifts. According to this explanation, the coverings were needed during the era of the spiritual gifts. Since the supernatural gifts ceased towards the end of the first century (see the commentary on 13:8-10), head coverings are no longer required.

The second major view about head coverings (and this is the one advocated by this author) is that veils were *a well-established custom* and this custom was to be respected and followed because it was an important part of the Corinthians’ culture. Stated another way, wearing a veil was like foot washing and “holy kisses” (1 Tim. 5:10; Rom. 16:16). McGarvey (First Corinthians, p. 110) well said: “For Christians to introduce needless innovations (in this case abandoning the customary veil, BP) would be to add to the misconceptions which already subjected them to persecution. One who follows Christ will find himself conspicuously different from the world, without practicing any tricks of singularity.” Even now this principle is true (people who do not follow the customs of their society are regarded as bizarre and frequently become an object of derision). When cultural customs do not conflict with the Bible, they should be followed.

Reasons to believe head coverings (veils) were cultural:

Every explanation about the Corinthian head coverings has some difficulties associated with it. The view that head coverings were a well-established custom, however, seems to have fewest problems/objections. Also, there are indications in this chapter that Paul was speaking about a cultural belief instead of a divine command. For instance, he spoke of the *shame* borne by those who are *shaven* (verse 6). Since there is no Bible passage that forbids the shaving of a woman's head, what was the basis for this *disgrace*? If it was not from God, it must have been society (culture). Furthermore, since Paul joins *shame* with the word *veil* (6b), both the disgrace and the veil seem to have been part of the Corinthians' culture (way of life).

Paul said *nature* (*phusis*) offered some instructions about a woman's covering (verses 14-15). Why appeal to *nature* if head coverings are a divine command and a perpetual obligation for Christian women? Appealing to nature is a possible Biblical argument to prove something (compare Jas. 3:11 where James used nature to argue against improper speech), but this does not seem to be Paul's purpose in 1 Cor. 11 because he said women "*ought*" to have a head covering (verse 10).

The Greek language has a word for *must* (*dei*) and Paul used this term many times in his writings including this letter (11:19; 15:25, 53). When discussing the veil issue, however, inspiration led him to use a less forceful word meaning "ought." When combined with the previous information, the bulk of the evidence, in this author's judgment, favors the explanation that head coverings were part of the Corinthians' culture. Finally, Paul speaks of "in the church" several times in this letter, including this chapter (11:18; 12:28; 14:19, 23, 28, 33, 34, 35). With the exception of verse 16, where he said, "*we have no such custom*," the word *church* is never associated with the head covering. Thus, this author understands verse 16 to mean there was *no church custom to wear the veil* (i.e. head coverings were a part of society instead of a divine command).

A good summary of the opening information in this chapter as well as the head covering issue is given by MacKnight (p. 178): "From the things written in this chapter, and in chap. xiv. ver. 34, 35, 36. it appears that some of the Corinthian women on pretence of being inspired, had prayed and prophesied in the Christian assemblies as teachers; and while performing these offices, had cast off their veils, after the manner of the heathen priestesses in their ecstasies. These disorderly practices, the false teacher, it seems, had encouraged, ver. 16. from a desire to ingratiate himself with the female part of the Corinthian church. But the apostle's adherents, sensible that it did not become the women to be teachers of the men, had restrained them. And this having occasioned disputes between

the church and the faction, the church, in their letter, applied to the apostle for his decision. In answer, he first of all commended them for having held fast his *traditions* or ordinances concerning the public worship of God.”

11:2a: *Now I praise you that ye remember me in all things,*

“Now” indicates a transition in thought. Paul knew this congregation had many problems, some of which were related to worship, so he now begins to discuss the subject of worship. This discussion lasts until 14:40 and it takes up about 25% of this book. For a brief study on worship, see the commentary just prior to 12:1.

We do not know how Paul learned about the Corinthians’ worship problems. He may have received this information from others (compare 1:11; 11:18—“I hear” and see 16:17). Whatever the source of this information, Paul knew these Christians had questions and problems involving the role of women (verses 3-16), problems with the Lord’s Supper (verses 17-34), problems with spiritual gifts (chapter 12), a lack of love (chapter 13) and chaotic worship (chapter 14).

Before discussing the needed corrections, Paul offered some words of commendation. He “*praised*” (*epaineo*) these Christians. *Praise* is a present tense verb that is also found in verses 17 and 22 of this chapter. Brown (3:817) noted how “a man may receive praise from those who have authority from God, from the church (2 Cor. 8:18), the apostle (1 Cor. 11:2, 17, 22) and from the authorities appointed by God (Rom. 13:3 f.; 1 Pet. 2:14).” Here Paul was able to commend these Christians for a few things, including their *remembering* (*mnaomai*—a perfect tense verb) him in “*all things*.” Paul was no longer in their midst, but these Christians had not forgotten him or the work he had done among them.

Remembering Paul was good, but these Christians also had some obligations. For instance, they were to “*hold fast*” the “*traditions*” he had “*delivered*” to them (the KJV says, “*keep the ordinances*”). *Hold fast* (*katecho*) is a present tense verb that is also found in 1 Cor. 15:2. Both here and there *hold fast* means “‘adhere to,’ in the sense of following obediently” (CBL, GED, 3:306). “The faithful persevere and ‘hold fast’ to the Word” (ibid). “It is not enough to receive the divine message by faith; one must hold to it, keep it intact, retain it unshakably” (Spicq, 2:288).

Since *hold fast* is joined with the word *praise*, the Corinthians were following at least some of the things Paul had taught them. This was good, but Paul knew the Corinthians needed to fully follow the things we find in the New Testament. Since a “little leaven can leaven a whole lump” (a little moral and/or doctrinal corruption can taint the entirety of something—1 Cor. 5:6), we find several corrective actions in this and the following chapters.

Today, if we continually hold fast to God's word, we will be like Joshua in that we avoid going to "the right or left" (Josh. 1:7). Following just the Bible will cause us to bind (obligate people to do) what God has bound and loose (permit) what God has permitted through His word. If we live in this manner we may be *praised*. If we live in some other way, we will be condemned. True Christians do their utmost to know and follow the *whole counsel of God* (Acts 20:27). For more information related to our being able to know and obey the truth, see Eph. 5:17 plus the twelve point study in the commentary on Rom. 15:5-6 and the commentary on Rom. 16:14-16.

11:2b: *and hold fast the traditions, even as I delivered them to you.*

At Corinth (and by implication elsewhere) Christians were to keep the "*traditions*" (*paradosis*) "*delivered*" to them by inspired men. *Traditions* is applied to different things in the New Testament, including Jewish traditions (Mt. 15:2, 3). Paul used this term in Col. 2:8 to say there are *traditions* of men. Here *traditions* means *inspired information from God* (this same meaning is applied to this same word in 2 Thess. 2:15; 3:6). *Traditions* consist of information that "is handed down from generation to generation with an authoritative demand for compliance and is received accordingly" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:21). These *traditions* are the "Christian regulations pertaining to life and conduct" (ibid). Here as well as in the Thessalonian references, *traditions* (ordinances) means keeping the regulations taught by Paul and by implication the other New Testament writers. This single word tells us that Christianity has some rules, has commands and involves law. James described these *traditions* (what we now refer to as the New Testament) as the "perfect law of liberty" in Jas. 1:25.

Another key term is the word *delivered* (*paradidomi*), a term meaning "*pass on teaching and modes of conduct (for faithful observance)*" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:20). When the word *delivered* is combined with *traditions*, we have a reference to God's plan for the "church, to which every believer must submit" (Spicq, 3:18). Rather than let humanity decide and legislate what the church should be like, Jesus is the head of His church (Mt. 16:18) and we must follow the rules He has left us in the 27 books of the New Testament. We must follow His expressed will if we wish to be His "friends" (Jn. 14:15; 15:14). Virtually every aspect of Christian living, information about the church, heaven, hell, etc. is somehow addressed in the New Testament and this information is binding on all people.

What about Catholic traditions?

Catholicism has appealed to the latter part verse 2 as well as 2 Thess. 2:15 to say their religious *traditions*, which have been passed down from generation to generation, are just as binding on people as the books of the New Testament. This author has studied with Catholics who actually elevated their traditions above the Scriptures.

Catholicism does indeed have many traditions, but as shown in the preceding material, this was not what Paul had in mind. In Jn. 16:13 Jesus said the Holy Spirit would reveal “all the truth” to the apostles. Since the apostles all lived and died in the first century, Jesus’ promise about giving all the truth was fulfilled by the end of the first century. Jude also affirmed this fact when he said “the faith was delivered once for all” (Jude 3). The Bible says we are “complete” with the information given more than 2,000 years ago (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Catholic tradition came much later and it is literally too late—it came after God fulfilled the promise in Jn. 16:13.

Because Catholic traditions came after the time of inspired men, all Catholic traditions are an addition to the Scriptures and stand condemned (Gal. 1:6-9; Rev. 22:18-19). The *traditions* given by Paul and the other apostles were inspired and the *traditions* from the Catholic church are uninspired (compare Mk. 7:13; Col. 2:8). If a person accepts even a single Catholic tradition, he rejects the New Testament claim of God’s word making him complete by the gospel (2 Pet. 1:3).

An introduction to the “headship principle” in 11:3:

In the midst of the head covering discussion we now come to an important word used twice in verse 3: *Head*. “The head is the topmost part of the body, where symbols of power, authority, and honor were displayed. Kings and priests were anointed on their heads, and this is where their crowns were placed (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Sam. 1:10; 2 Kings 9:3; Ps. 21:3)” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 326).

There is some disagreement on what “*head*” (*kephale*) means in this verse. Some authors understand *head* to mean “source.” As the head of a river refers to the source of the water, Jesus is viewed as the head (source) of all males and Adam was the head of Eve. Adam was formed of dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7) and the female race was begun from one of his ribs. A second view, which is preferred by this author, is that “head” implies a distinction in roles.

By saying “*the head of the woman is the man*,” Paul meant God intended for males to be the leaders, protectors, and heads in the world. It is not sinful for women to start a business, become a CEO, serve as a national leader, politician, etc. Neither is it wrong for a father to be a “stay

at home dad.” God permits these kinds of things, but they do not reflect His ideal will for males and females. God’s model plan is for women to be guardians in the home (compare Tit. 2:3-4; 1 Pet. 3:1-5) and for males to be the leaders and protectors in society (compare In 1 Tim. 5:14). This point is even found in the Old Testament. Although God allowed Deborah to serve as a prophetess and judge (Judg. 4:1-5), this was an exception instead of the rule. Men and women are equal in many ways (see the commentary on 11:3), but there is a God-given distinction in their roles and these roles are a definite part of “the doctrine of Christ” that we must “abide by” (2 Jn. 9).

Paul’s appeal to the Father and the Son in First Corinthians 11:3:

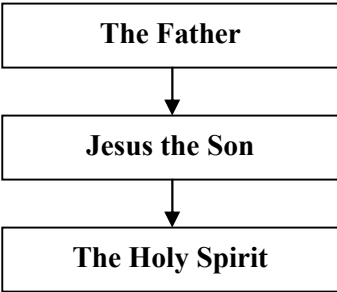
Paul illustrated the “headship” described in the previous section by appealing to Jesus and His relationship to the Father, so it is important to have at least a basic understanding of the Godhead. The Bible refers to “God as the Father” and says He is the source of all things (Jas. 1:17). We also find references to the “Son” and “Holy Spirit.” The Bible also says these three persons are perfectly united and although they are three, they are also *one God* (Deut. 6:4).

Jesus affirmed this divine oneness in places like Jn. 10:30 (“*I and the Father are one*”). In this passage the “word for ‘one’ is the neuter *hen*, not the masculine *heis*: Jesus and His Father are not one person, as the masculine would suggest, for then the *distinction* between Jesus and God already introduced in (John, BP) 1:1b would be obliterated, and John could not refer to Jesus praying to his Father, being commissioned by and obedient to his Father, and so on. Rather, Jesus and his Father are perfectly one in action, in what they do: what Jesus does, the Father does, and vice versa” (Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 394).

The Godhead is a lot like light (compare 1 Jn. 1:5). Light is composed of three primary colors (red, green and blue). If separated, these three colors are distinct. When combined, we perceive light to be a single color, just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a single deity.

The unity of the Godhead is illustrated in much of its work. For instance, Paul said *salvation is from God* (Phil. 1:28), we have *fellowship with the Holy Spirit* (Phil. 2:1), and we obtain *righteousness through Christ* (Phil. 3:9). The Father, Son and Holy Spirit all work together in perfect harmony to help mankind. They are like three men who co-author a book, only all three equally contribute to the process and all three are in perfect harmony throughout the entire project. One man may spearhead the task, but all three are intricately involved in every part of the work (compare 1 Pet. 1:2). God’s “book” primarily involves man and his redemption.

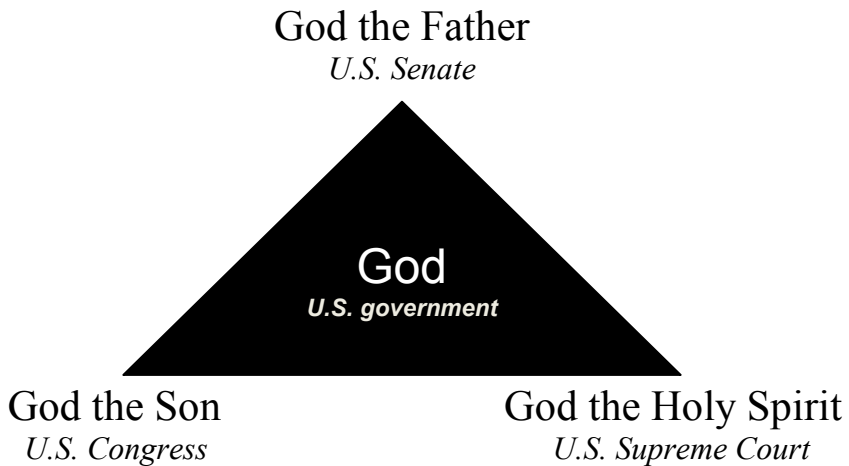
Many may think or speak of the Godhead as reflected in the following chart because we pray to the **Father** (Mt. 6:9), intercession is made to the Father, (1 Tim. 2:5), and the Father is spoken of as the source of all that exists (1 Cor. 8:6). Since the **Son** (who is also deity) died for the sins of mankind, some may think of Him as pictured in the second box—He is sometimes regarded as being “underneath” the Father (compare Jn. 6:38). We may think of or refer to the **Holy Spirit** last and perhaps somewhat isolated from the Father and Son because He revealed the plan of redemption (Jn. 16:13-14).



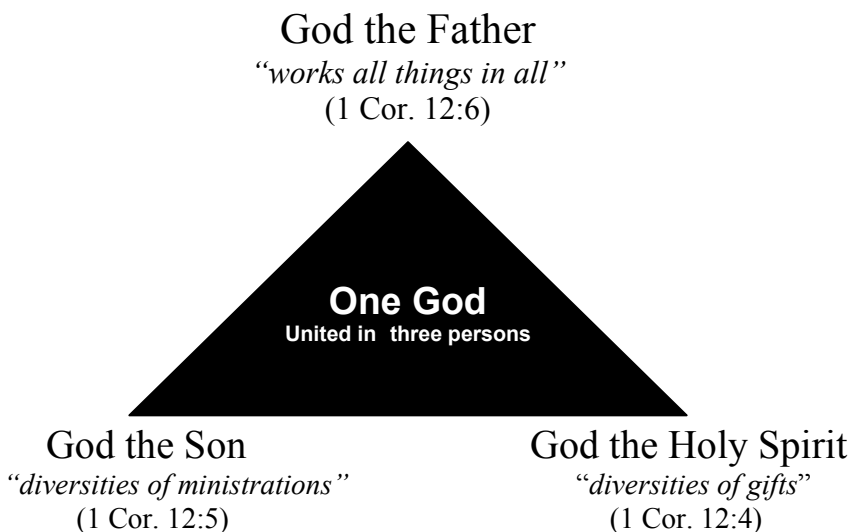
Those who think of the Godhead as the Father first, Jesus second and the Holy Spirit third might be shocked to learn that the Father is usually **not** listed first in passages that mention all three members of the Godhead. Perhaps this point can be best demonstrated in chart form.

Text	Listed first	Listed second	Listed last
Mt. 28:19	Father	Son	Holy Spirit
Rom. 15:30	Jesus	Holy Spirit	God (Father)
1 Cor. 12:4-6	Holy Spirit	Jesus (Lord)	God (Father)
2 Cor. 13:14	Jesus	God (Father)	Holy Spirit
Eph. 4:4-6	Holy Spirit	Lord (Jesus)	God
Heb. 2:3-4	Lord (Jesus)	God (Father)	Holy Spirit
Heb. 9:14	Christ (Jesus)	Holy Spirit	God (Father)
1 Pet. 1:2	God (Father)	Holy Spirit	Jesus
1 Pet. 3:18	Christ (Jesus)	God (Father)	Holy Spirit
Jude 20-21	Holy Spirit	God (Father)	Jesus

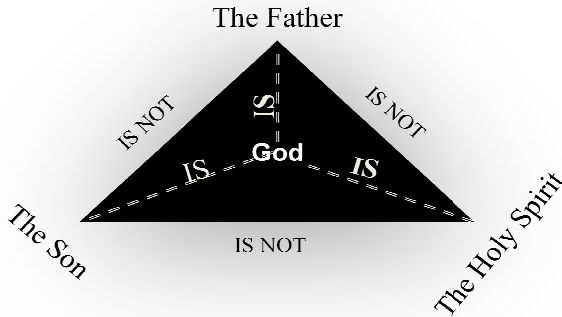
There are three members of the Godhead and each member is equal to the other two, though the roles for each member differ. We do not have a perfect illustration for the Godhead, but perhaps the following triangle will help illustrate the Godhead.



Other writers have offered a similar chart, but they use the judicial, legislative and executive branches of government. A second triangle illustration based on 1 Cor. 12 may also help illustrate the Godhead:



Based on what Paul said in 1 Cor. 12 and what is expressed in the preceding graphic, we may offer this final illustration of the Godhead.



Whether we try to illustrate the Godhead with the government, 1 Cor. 12:4-6 or something else, the key points are that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all deity (Mt. 22:37; Jn. 20:28; Acts 5:3-4), they do not work independently of each other, and they have taken on specific “roles” or various “tasks” to help mankind. If the Corinthians would have considered this point, they would have been able to understand that a similar thing was true for them: The males and females at this congregation were “both human beings,” but there were different roles for men and women and these roles had to be respected. For women, this meant head coverings were necessary because veils were a symbol (sign) of their role and their acceptance of that role. For more information on head coverings, see the information at the end of the commentary on 11:1.

11:3: *But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.*

God made mankind (Gen. 1:26-27) and He intended for males and females to have and fulfill specific roles, just as Jesus and the Father have and fulfill specific roles (see the preceding commentary on 2b). When men and women come together for worship (i.e. the assembly is mixed), males are to lead the worship (1 Tim. 2:11-15). Male leadership is also to be in the home (Eph. 5:22-24). These two points are not just New Testament teachings; male leadership is based on the creation (1 Tim. 2:13). While males and females are virtually identical (equal) in most other ways, some of which including the following, God has given males the role of leadership in the home and in the church.

Some of the many ways males and females are equal (identical):

- Gen. 1:27 (Both are equal in status since both are in God's image).
- Prov. 31 (Women are equal to men as far as their intelligence and a wise development or use of resources).
- Matt. 15:28 (Both are equal in their ability to excel in faith).
- Matt. 19:4-5 (Both are equal in the range of human experiences).
- Acts 2:17-18 (Both have an equal amount of usefulness in God's kingdom).
- Acts 5:14 (Both are equal in their ability to access salvation).
- Acts 16:14; 18:1-3 (Both are to be equal in the opportunity to have a career).
- Rom. 3:23 (Both are equal in their need for salvation).
- Rom. 16:3-4 (Both are equal in their potential for bravery and or sacrifice).
- 1 Cor. 7:4 (Both are equal in their rights for a sexual relationship in marriage).
- 1 Cor. 7:16 (Both are equal in their power to convert an unbelieving mate).
- 1 Cor. 11:11, 12 (Both are equal in their innate self worth).
- Gal. 3:28 (Both are equally entitled to all spiritual blessings in Christ).
- Eph. 6:1-2 (Both are equally deserving of receiving respect from their children).
- Phil. 4:3 (Both are equal in the "labor of love").
- 1 Tim. 5:16 (Both are equal in their responsibility to honor parents).
- 2 Tim. 1:5; Eph. 6:4 (Both are equal in their responsibility to teach young people).
- 1 Pet. 3:7 (Both are equal partners in the eternal inheritance).

Instead of making Eve from a bone in Adam's foot (an action suggestive of slavery and inferiority), or using part of Adam's head to make Eve (an indication of female superiority), God used one of Adam's ribs (this implies basic equality between the sexes **plus** male headship). Distinction between roles is not only found with males and females, it is found within the male and female genders. For instance, single men are not qualified to be elders (1 Tim. 3:1-2). New converts are not entitled to be elders (1 Tim. 3:6). Deacons are to be "proven" before they serve (1 Tim. 3:10), and deacons are to be married men with children (1 Tim. 3:12). The principles of headship and specific people having explicit roles are a regular part of our world. These things are also found in the church (males have a head—Jesus—and females have a head—males).

Women who want to act like men:

Since the time of Eve, there have been men who wanted to act like women and women who wanted to act like men. One intriguing example of this is found in some early American history. Before women were allowed to vote in the United States, Belva A. Lockwood (October 24, 1830 – May 19, 1917) ran for the U.S. Presidency. Although Lockwood was not part of a major political party, she (and other early female contenders for this position) sought an office that, at this time in history, was specifically associated with males.

A copy of the handbill used in her Presidential bid is on the next page. Permission was given to use this flyer in this book by the gracious curator (Louise D. Pittaway) at the Old Lighthouse Museum in Stonington, CT, but since this author's copy of the handbill was not suitable for reproduction, the following image contains the exact wording from the poster and attempts to match the font type and size as closely as possible to approximate the original document.

“The lords of creation men we call,
And they think they rule the whole;
But they’re much mistaken, after all,
For they’re under woman’s control!”

Women of Stonington, Arouse!

**THROW OFF THE YOKE
OF THE OPPRESSOR MAN.**

ON MONDAY EVENING, NOVEMBER 5, 1888,
AT 8 P. M.,

MISS HANNAH LEE,
THE LONG TONGUED ORATOR
Will emit Impassioned Yawps at

BOROUGH HALL!

In advocacy of the election of

BELVA A. LOCKWOOD

TO THE PRESIDENTESSCY OF THE U.S.

BELVA A. LOCKWOOD WILL BE PRESENT.

THE BELVA A. LOCKWOOD QUARTETTE WILL FURNISH DISCORD

At 7 o’clock, preceding the address, the Belva A. Lockwood Club will make a Triumphal Parade that will Be Just Too Lovely For Anything. The Route will include the principal streets of the Borough.

After the Address a Grand Banquet will be tendered to the Club at MUSIC HALL.

Come One, Come All, and Bring Your Chewing Gum.

What about women and indirect authority?

There have been many cases (and preachers can usually attest to at least one instance) where women did not openly take a leadership role, but they did work indirectly or secretly to lead or direct things. In these cases we must recognize that indirect leadership is still leadership and it is certainly possible for Christian women to violate the information in verses 34-35 in this chapter by “working/leading behind the scenes.”

When men are mere figureheads for male leadership (i.e. women are setting the policies and making decisions), both males and females are guilty of sin. Males surrender their God-given leadership role and women accept or take what God has not entrusted to them. While we should not be surprised to find this type of activity among the unsaved, it should never be found within Christ’s church. Women can and should be an influence for good in their local congregation, just like all other faithful members, but they have no authority to directly or indirectly do things that have been assigned to males. A Christian woman who takes (appropriates) authority from males engages in the same type of sin the Corinthian women committed—a sin Paul strongly rebuked.

Christian women and “perceived leadership”:

If a woman is not directly or indirectly leading, may she assume duties that merely make her look like a leader? Is it wrong for a Christian woman to make announcements, read Scripture, or be one of the people that helps distribute the Communion? Some congregations have concluded that a woman cannot preach and pray in a worship assembly where men and women have come together (1 Tim. 2:8, 12), but she can do everything else. Some have concluded that “Christian sisters pass Communion trays to those sitting next to them in worship, so they can also help distribute the Communion items to the entire congregation.”

As noted in the previous comments, leadership may be direct or indirect. Leadership also falls into the categories of “real or perceived” and we may demonstrate the point in this way. If a person makes a comment while sitting in a Bible class, there is no perception of leadership. If this same person makes the same comments while standing in a pulpit, there could or would be the perception of leadership. Such is also true for other activities in Christian assemblies—activities such as making announcements, publicly reading the Scriptures or standing up with others to pass the Communion (the actions fall into the category of perceived leadership). Stated another way, whoever helps in these kinds of ways leaves the impression that he has some type of leadership role in that worship service. For this reason Christian women should not engage in activities in mixed assemblies that would cause them to directly or indirectly be perceived as leaders. It may be going too far to say that a woman who helps pass the Communion items or make announcements is committing a definite sin, but these kinds of activities are extremely unwise, they set a bad precedent, and they are certainly not “expedient” (1 Cor. 6:12; 10:23).

Consequences of rejecting male headship:

When men and women will not fulfill their respective roles, there will be problems. One illustration of this point is found in the opening pages of the Bible. A careful reading of Gen. 3 shows that Adam was “with” Eve when she sinned (Gen. 3:6), and Adam failed to fulfill his role as the leader of his family. In Gen 3:17 we read: *“And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree...”* Eve assumed a role she was not entitled to, Adam relinquished authority he should have exercised, and the end result was the loss of perfection.

Today, when God’s rules about headship, subjection, and the roles for men and women are not followed, families, congregations and nations will face numerous and serious problems. It is, therefore, imperative for Christians to observe the headship role for males in the home and in the church, even if the society they live in does not (compare Acts 5:29; 2 Tim. 4:2). Paul illustrated this need several times in

the next chapter by appealing to the human body. Just as there must be “several parts” in a human body, and each part must carry out its respective task (1 Cor. 12:14-20), so things will not go well in the world if people do not know and fulfill their respective roles.

Resistance to male leadership:

The world and even some religious groups have often opposed what the Bible says regarding the specific roles of men and women. In this author’s lifetime there was the ERA (Equal Rights Amendment) of the 1970’s as well as various social experiments to diminish or erase gender differences. The world has tried numerous schemes to undermine or undo God’s plan for male leadership in the home and church (including the promotion of “gender neutral toys” for children), but all the world’s plans in this regard are earthly, sensual and devilish wisdom (Jas. 3:15 and compare the commentary on 1 Cor. 3:18-19). God says the rejection of His plan leads to confusion and evil (Jas. 3:16) as well as eventual failure (compare Ps. 2:1-4).

When Christians hear nonbelievers say things like: “A woman can do anything a man does and often do it better,” “God’s plan for women makes them second class citizens,” or “Not having female preachers is discriminatory,” they should recall verses like Rom. 1:22 (“*Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools*”). Mixing the role of men and women is a way that may seem “right to man but the end thereof is destruction” (Prov. 16:25). Even if a woman could be a better preacher than a man, Christians know that God has assigned this function to males and they must abide by God’s will (Jn. 14:15). Christians also know and teach that women are not second class citizens. An old adage has been proven many, many times: “The hand that rocks the cradle is the hand that rules the world” (compare 2 Tim. 1:5).

The abuse of male headship:

Some have attempted to dismiss or “re-think” God’s plan for male leadership because some women have been verbally or physically abused by men. What needs to be “re-thought” is how men are to treat women. A husband is to “cherish and nurture his wife as his own body (Eph. 5:28). He may not deprive her of what she needs for her happiness and well-being (1 Cor. 7:3). He must be understanding, considerate, and respectful of her as a joint heir of life (1 Peter 3:7). His love for her is more than physical. It must be the same kind of sacrificial love Christ has for the church” (Baker’s Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 327). When husbands treat their wives as the Bible describes (Eph. 5:28), their wives will recognize and submit to the loving leadership given by their spouse (compare Eph. 5:22; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

Can a man rightfully renounce his divine role?

There are those who acknowledge that men have been given leadership in the home and the church, but believe men can renounce these roles (i.e. they can ask women to serve as church leaders or take responsibility for being the head of a home). A simple and complete response to this error is that we cannot give something we do not have. Men have not been invested with the right or authority to turn their leadership roles in the church and home over to women, so it is impossible for them to give these roles to women. Men may ask women to take these roles and women may accept these jobs, but the men who abdicate their leadership roles and the women who try to assume these functions are both guilty of sin. The Bible warns that people can “believe a lie” (2 Thess. 2:11), and this is precisely what happens when people think God allows men to pass off their leadership roles to women.

Ten Commandments for Husbands:

Hugo McCord, a wonderful preacher this author was privileged to hear several times before his death, once penned the following “Ten commandments for husbands.” When husbands behave in this manner, wives will have a strong desire to fulfill their divine role.

1. Thou shalt remember that thy wife is thy partner and not thy property.
2. Thou shalt hold thy wife’s love by the same means that thou won it.
3. Thou shalt enter thy house with cheerfulness.
4. Thou shalt not let anyone criticize thy wife and get away with it, neither thy father, nor thy mother, nor thy brothers, nor thy sisters, nor any other relative.
5. Thou shalt not take thy wife for granted.
6. Thou shalt not think thyself are “IT.”
7. Thou shalt not praise thy neighbor’s wife; praise thine own.
8. Thou shalt not keep any secrets from thy wife; secrets breed suspicion and wreck confidence.
9. Thou shalt not fail to kiss thy wife good-bye every morning.
10. Thou shalt not forget through all the years of thy life that thy wife whom God hath given thee is the queen in your home and in honor takes precedence over thee.

11:4a: *Every man praying or prophesying,*

In verses 4-5 we find two distinct actions: “*praying*” and “*prophesying*” (both words are present tense verbs). The word *praying* (*proseuchomai*) was a general word for prayer; it included things like thanksgiving, intercession, and petitions. *Prophecy* was a spiritual gift. Although *prophesying* is described in several parts of the New Testament, it is found only in chapters 11-14 of this letter.

According to 1 Cor. 12:7, 10, prophecy was a “*manifestation of the Spirit*” that enabled someone to be an inspired spokesman *for God*. Prayer involved someone *speaking to God*. Prophets were similar to preachers in that they edified the church (14:4) and publicly declared information from God. They were unlike preachers in that they needed no advance preparation before speaking.

Some have attempted to redefine the gift of prophecy so it means nothing more than *teaching*, *exhorting*, or *admonishing* (people try to remove the miraculous element of the gift so they can claim they are a modern “prophet”). While prophecy was certainly associated with teaching, exhortation, and admonishing (14:3), there was also the aspect of divine inspiration (i.e. a supernatural element), so prophecy cannot be redefined to something like a “teacher.” For more information on why the meaning of *prophecy* cannot be limited to teaching, exhortation, and admonishing, see 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Cor. 13:2; Acts 2:17.

In verse 3 the word *head* describes authority; here in the first part of verse 4, *head* refers to a man’s literal head (the body part joined to the neck). If a man’s physical head was covered when he prayed or prophesied, his *spiritual head* (Jesus, verse 3), would be “*dishonored*.” These are the main thoughts in this verse. Although Paul mentioned just two activities related to worship (praying and prophesying), the other activities associated with worship should be included in the thought. Paul’s instruction for males to avoid covering their physical heads when praying and prophesying is the exact opposite of the instruction he gave to Christian women (compare verse 5).

As shown prior to the commentary on 11:2a—*An overview of the “head covering” (veil) issue*—Paul’s instructions were related to the *significance* of wearing a head covering. Instead of binding a law about head covering on all Christians, Paul told Christians (males and females) to follow the customs in their culture. Paul spoke about males and the Corinthian culture in verse 4 and women and the Corinthian culture in verse 5. Christians were to respect the practices related to males and females, and this meant women wore head coverings and men did not. This principle has applied at other times in history, including the following two examples.

During World War 2, silk and nylon were needed for things like parachutes, flak vests and airplane tires and the government commandeered silk and nylon. Almost overnight women’s stockings in the

United States became almost impossible to obtain. Overseas, however, stockings were still available to soldiers through their BX/PX and many young, unmarried soldiers bought stockings to pay the prostitutes they visited. Missionary women who lived in these overseas locations could have also obtained stockings from Christian soldiers, but since these ladies knew stockings would associate them with prostitutes, they refrained from buying and wearing this article of clothing. Stockings in World War 2 are parallel to the veil issue discussed in this chapter (there was a time when stockings, just like veils, had cultural significance, but this significance has passed). Another “cultural sin” was found in playing cards or using dice (in the 18th and 19th centuries these items used to be associated with gambling). Now our culture has changed and no one sees anything wrong with playing cards and using dice.

11:4b: *having his head covered, dishonoreth his head.*

If a man wore a covering when *praying or prophesying* (4a), his “*head*” (Jesus) would be “*dishonored*.” That is, a man who wore a head covering would be symbolically saying, “Jesus is not my only head. I have another head besides the Lord.” A man who prayed with his head covered symbolically dishonored “the source of his existence by obscuring that which was created in the image of God and designed to reflect that image to God’s glory (v. 7; Gen. 1:26)” (Baker Commentary on the Bible, p. 976). A similar thing was true for a woman (verse 5). If she refused to cover her physical head, she refused “to honor the source of her existence” (ibid). A man’s ultimate allegiance is to Jesus, so he “may pray to God in public but not dressed so that he shows allegiance to another, namely, with head covered. A woman may pray and prophesy in public if her dress shows submission to her husband’s authority (1 Cor. 11:5-6)” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 327). The cultural expectations for males and females did not violate any New Testament teaching, so Paul said the cultural expectations were to be followed. Tertullian wrote, “We Christians pray with outspread *hands*, as harmless; with *uncovered heads*, as unashamed, *without a prompter*, as from the heart.”

Dishonoreth (*kataischuno*) is a present tense verb that is also found in verses 5 and 22 of this chapter. Here Thayer (p. 331) defined it as “*to dishonor, disgrace*.” Gingrich and Danker (p. 410) defined it as “*dishonor, disgrace, disfigure*.” In verse 22 it describes disgracing fellow Christians (“*shaming* the poor at the Lord’s Supper,” Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:258).

This verse has caused some to ask about males and hats. For instance, is a man forbidden from wearing a hat when he prays? May a man wear a stocking cap during the winter months and pray while working outside? What about a construction worker who must wear a hard hat for his job? Must he remove his safety helmet before he prays?

While there are conscientious believers who think a male cannot ever wear a hat when he prays, this author contends, based on the preceding information, that Paul was dealing with a first century custom (head coverings symbolized subjection). This custom is not prevalent in Western culture and thus has no bearing on males and headgear. If the removal of a hat is a demonstration of respect in the culture where we live, then the principle in verse 4 tells us to observe that custom when praying. The removal of a hat at other customary times such as saying the Pledge of Allegiance is also taught by this passage.

What was the head covering (veil)?

Having his head covered meant “having something down from his head” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 438), but we are not told what this “something” is. Some believe Paul was referring to long hair (verse 14). If this view is correct, men were not allowed to have hair of the length normally worn by women. This author believes Paul described something that actually covered the head (i.e. it was an actual covering that was much more than a simple hat or cap), but we have too little information to draw any firm conclusions with just the information in verse 4.

We may have a better insight about ancient head coverings by comparing some of the words Paul used elsewhere in this chapter. For instance, in verses 6 and 7 of this chapter Paul used a word (*katakalypto*) that is translated “*veiled*.” Thayer (p. 331) said that from the time of the Greek poet Homer (about 900 B.C.) down *veiled* meant “*to cover up*.” In fact, *veiled* in verses 6 and 7 is a compound word. The first part of the term (*kata*) meant “down” and the remainder of the word (*kalypto*) meant “cover.” When combined, the two parts of this word form the idea of “cover down, over, completely, adequately.”

In the LXX *veiled* (*katakalypto*) is used in Num. 4:5 to describe the *covering* of the ark with a curtain. It is also used in Isa. 6:2 to describe the seraphim *covering* their faces and feet with their wings. A related form of this word (*kalypto*) is used in Mt. 8:24 to describe a ship *covered* with waves. This related term (*kalypto*) is also used to describe the *covering* of sins in Jas. 5:20. Peter said love *covers* (same word—*kalypto*) a “multitude of sins” (1 Pet. 4:8). For the other places where *kalypto* (cover) occurs, see Mt. 10:26; Lk. 8:16; 23:30; 2 Cor. 4:3.

Since this chapter describes a “covering,” a doily on the head or some type of hat is not consistent with the veils described in this chapter. If people believe a woman needs to be *veiled*, the head must truly and fully be covered. A woman would need to be *veiled* in such a way where people cannot see her head (the top of her body would be like a bride whose head is fully covered with a veil). Furthermore, as noted in the CBL (3:259), “For women to cover their head could not possibly have meant ‘to put up their hair,’ since its opposite would not have made good sense either, namely, that the men were not to put up their hair.”

The Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible (p. 327) noted how “Rich Greek women would appear uncovered with elaborate hairstyles. Poorer Jewish women might feel such customs were done to attract men. This would eventually become a source of disunity. It is not surprising Paul introduces this passage by an exhortation not to offend Jew or Greek (10:32, BP). He offers himself as an example of one who tried to please everybody for the sake of their salvation (1 Cor. 10:31-11:1). He closes the passage by stating the churches of God repudiate practices that might cause contention (11:16).” This author contends one of these practices was the custom of women wearing a veil.

Head coverings (veils) and modern society:

In addition to condemning a “covering for men” (verse 4), Paul spoke about the need for women to have a covering (verses 5-16). Today, when the subject of head coverings is addressed, most of the emphasis is on women. In fact, women and head coverings have been a “hot topic” for many years. When this material was written, the author resided in an area heavily populated by members of the Amish and Mennonite religions and it was not uncommon to see women wearing bonnets/snoods/doilies (these items were also called “prayer veils”).

While some modern religious groups have said some type of covering is necessary, there is usually confusion on some specific points. For instance, *when* should females start wearing a head covering? The New Testament never tells us if the coverings mentioned in this chapter were a requirement for young girls, women who had reached a marriageable age, married women, women who had been baptized, etc. If the Corinthians wore these coverings because of their culture (the view maintained in this commentary), they knew when to start wearing the veils because this knowledge was part of their society.

Another question involves the *duration* of head coverings. Should the coverings be worn all the time, even to bed? Some women put the head covering on first thing in the morning and wear it until the end of

the day. Others only wear it to worship. What does God require? If women refuse to wear the coverings, should they be disfellowshipped (2 Thess. 3:6)?

The preceding questions compel us to accept one of two choices. Option one is that God requires women to wear head coverings, but the specifics of when they must be worn, which women must wear them, and what to do if they are not worn are left up to individual or congregational judgment. This is a possibility, but this option seems unlikely. The Bible was constructed in such a way so we are “complete” (2 Tim. 3:16-17) and we have “all things that pertain to life and godliness” (2 Pet. 1:3). If head coverings are a required part of New Testament Christianity, this is the only requirement that is mentioned just one time and the only requirement about which we have almost no specific details. Requiring head coverings but not giving any specific information, or requiring head coverings and saying “we are allowed to work out the details,” leads to confusion and the Bible says this is not the way God works (1 Cor. 14:33).

The second alternative is the one already expressed. Head coverings were a prevailing custom for women, so Paul discussed this subject but did not go into specific details because this information was a common part of this culture. For more information on *reasons to believe head coverings were cultural*, see the commentary at the end of the discussion on verse 1. For additional information on what these veils or head coverings were, see the commentary on verse 6.

11:5a: *But every woman praying or prophesying*

Since Paul spoke about males and head coverings in the previous verse, he was ready to speak about women and head coverings in this passage. While the discussion turns to women, the sentence construction of verses 4 and 5 is essentially the same. Just as males were “praying and prophesying” (verse 4), such was being done by women. The fact that women and men were both praying and prophesying has created many questions for commentators because other passages (1 Cor. 14:34 and 1 Tim. 2:12) restrict a woman’s role when men and women are worshipping together.

The best harmony, though this does not answer all the questions, goes something like this. In verse 4 Paul described a time when men should have been taking the lead in worship (these times could have been all-male assemblies or joint assemblies with women). In verse 5, he referred to *private gatherings* attended only by women. There was nothing wrong with these all female gatherings, but it was important to wear the head coverings in these all woman assemblies because of what veils symbolized to the Corinthians. This explanation makes verses 4-5 fit together nicely, it makes sense of 14:34, it allows Acts 21:8-9 to be easily interpreted, and it is the explanation accepted by this author. When we come to verse 18 (“*when ye come together in the church*”), Paul again described the corporate assembly for a Sunday service. Verses 4-5 have similar language because similar activities were taking place, even though there seems to have been more than one type of gathering. It is not strange to find multiple gatherings because the Bible recognizes instances of private worship (Jas. 5:13); corporate worship in private settings (Mt. 2:11; 28:9); and corporate worship in public settings (Heb. 2:12).

Other commentators believe the similar wording in verses 4-5 means Paul had in mind only one assembly— worship gatherings where men and women were both present and both genders prayed and prophesied together. If this second explanation is correct—women prayed and prophesied when men were present—Paul may have stated what was taking place but not ruled on whether this activity was right or wrong until 14:34-35. In other words, he may have temporarily avoided discussing God’s acceptance or disapproval of this practice until 14:34 so he could first address questions about head coverings.

Allen (pp. 131-132) noted that women prophesied (11:5) and prophets edified the church (14:4), so he drew the conclusion that women were allowed to use the spiritual gift of prophecy in mixed assemblies. He further suggested that this practice was an “exception” to God’s instructions about women and their leadership role in the church. In other words, when the spiritual gifts ceased at the end of the first century, this exception ceased (women were no longer able to have a leading role in mixed assemblies).

This view is interesting and even somewhat appealing, but what about the *prayers* described in verse 5? Unless the information about women praying in the presence of men can be successfully explained, Allen’s explanation must be rejected (compare 1 Tim. 2:8). A basic principle of Bible interpretation is

that we use plain passages to interpret what is obscure. In this instance, 1 Tim. 2:8 is the clear verse.

The problem with women and veils may be related to the “all things are lawful” belief introduced in 6:12. It is not difficult to imagine that some of Corinthian women believed Christian liberty allowed them act however they wanted. Since these Christians did not think much was wrong with fellowshiping idols (10:18-23), refusing to wear what their society considered to be proper must also have been “no big deal” to some of the Corinthian women. Just as Paul corrected the false ideas about fellowship with idols, so he corrected the problems associated with head coverings. Failing to offer corrections in these areas could have made things far worse (the Corinthians might have reasoned their “liberty” extended to other things as well). In this verse and especially in verse 6 (“shorn” and “shaven”) we find strong and almost shocking language to tell the Corinthian women they had to make some changes.

11:5b: *with her head unveiled dishonoreth her head; for it is one and the same thing as if she were shaven.*

In this part of the verse Paul again referred to a “head” (compare verses 3-4) and said this head could be “dishonored” (*kataischuno*). *Dishonored* is a present tense verb that is also used in verses 4 and 22 of this chapter. Thayer (p. 331) defined *dishonored* as “to dishonor, disgrace.” Gingrich and Danker (p. 410) said it means “dishonor, disgrace, disfigure.” In verse 22 it describes disgracing fellow Christians (“shaming the poor at the Lord’s Supper,” Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:258).

There is some difficulty in determining exactly what Paul meant. For instance, exactly who was dishonored? Is Jesus the dishonored head? Is a woman’s husband the dishonored head? Did Paul mean that males in general are dishonored? If the dishonored head is a human male, what about unmarried women? Did single women dishonor men in general if they did not wear a veil? Also, if the Corinthians had multiple assemblies (see the comments on 5a), might they have dishonored more than one head—perhaps Jesus and their husbands/men in general? We have no clear answers to these questions, but one thing is apparent. Women were to wear a head covering because this item of clothing symbolized their acceptance of their divine role. Refusing to wear a covering was a disgrace—a shame that could have easily extended to Jesus, a woman’s husband, a woman’s physical family, and the entire church.

Failing to comply with the veil custom was so serious Paul used the word “shaven” (*xurao*) at the end of this verse. This is a perfect tense verb and it is only found here, verse 6, and Acts 21:24. Prior to the New Testament *shaven* described the cutting of hair or the shaving of a person’s beard or body. Other forms of this word mean “barber” (*xuretes*) and “razor” (*xuron*). Here *shaven* describes a shaved head.

Since we cannot find a passage anywhere in the Bible that condemns the shaving of a woman’s head, and Jesus said religious practices come from “heaven or men” (Mt. 21:25), the shame from a woman’s shaven head must have been “from men” (the Corinthian culture). In fact, rather than condemn the shaving of a woman’s head, the Scriptures actually approve of this practice (see Deut. 21:11b-13). According to these Old Testament verses, soldiers could marry a foreign captive a month after shaving her head. Men were told to shave the heads of a “beautiful woman” (Deut. 21:11a), apparently, to decrease the attractiveness of their future bride (lessening a woman’s attractiveness would have allowed men to truly focus on whether or not they really wanted to marry a foreign captive).

Some think (and this author agrees) that a woman’s head was shaved in first century times to indicate she had committed adultery or was a prostitute. Certainly in more modern times shaved heads have symbolized female disgrace and punishment. After World War Two thousands of European women had their heads shaved in front of cheering crowds and were paraded through the streets as punishment for their association with Nazis during the war. Today western culture sees almost nothing wrong with women having short (“shaven”) hair. In fact, it is very ironic that some religious groups insist on women having a head covering, but they do not insist on a woman having “long hair” (verse 15).

The Corinthian society, just like our society, had cultural expectations for men and women. Since veils symbolized respect, order and decency, Paul said women were to wear them. Since women with shaved heads (short hair) were associated with a lack of decency, no Christian woman would have wanted a shaved head. Other times and cultures have had different beliefs. In fact, prior to the first century era there

was a time when veils (head coverings) were associated with prostitutes (Gen. 38:14-15)—a custom that was the exact opposite of the Corinthian culture. Today Christians need to know and follow their culture's laws and customs as fully as possible unless those customs and laws violate God's will (compare 1 Cor. 9:20-22). Failing to live in this way will usually bring "dishonor" to God, the church, our physical family, and ourselves. We do not want to do anything that limits or destroys our Christian influence.

11:6: *For if a woman is not veiled, let her also be shorn: but if it is a shame to a woman to be shorn or shaven, let her be veiled.*

This verse contains an argument and it is an argument based on consistency. Verse 5 says women who refused to be veiled (covered) were like women with shaved heads (i.e. immoral women). Here Paul added to that thought: If women refused to wear veils (this is expressed with the present tense tense—if they would not continually wear veils), they should be "*shorn*" (*keiro*).

Shorn meant more than a haircut. It described taking off as much hair as possible (in Acts 8:32 this word describes the shearing of sheep). Thayer (p. 343) defined *shorn* as "shearing or cutting short the hair of the head." At the end of this verse Paul also used the word "*shaven*" (*xurao*), the same term found in verse 5. This second word also described the removal of hair. It can be defined as "shave, shear, be shaved." Cutting off most or all of one's hair is one thing; *shaving* a person's head is even more noticeable.

As noted in the commentary on 5b, the Corinthian culture associated a woman's shaved head with a lack of respect, order, decency, and perhaps adultery and prostitution. Since women who refused to wear a veil symbolized their rejection of what society and God expected from them, Paul said these women should get their heads shaved. Just as a military officer would be dishonored if he were stripped of his rank and military decorations, so women are dishonored if they turn from their divine role.

The rejection of a head covering was so outlandish this act almost seems to be an expression of "mannishness," a quality some women still want to reflect. Here Paul seems to have been saying, "If you want to act like a man, go all the way. Cut your hair so you also look like a man. If you want to show your disdain for womanhood and God's plan for your life, cut off all your hair." This point is expressed with the word "*also*." Chrysostom expressed the thought this way: "If she flings away the covering provided by Divine ordinance, let her also fling away the covering provided by nature." Paul's statement, of course, was "tongue in cheek" (the point is somewhat sarcastic and certainly figurative). The end of this verse says it is a "*shame*" (*aischros*) for a woman to make this choice, just as it would be wrong for a male to wear a head covering (7a).

Shame is only found here; 14:35; Eph. 5:12; Tit. 1:1 ("*filthy*"). It meant "*ugly, shameful, base*" (Gingrich and Danker, p. 25). Thayer (p. 17) defined it as "*base, dishonorable*." Brown (3:564) defined it as "a disgrace." Thoughtful Christian women would have immediately realized the significance of Paul's words and been motivated to wear the coverings expected by their culture.

The need for men to act like males and Christian women to act like females is similar to Deut. 22:5, a passage where God said it was an "abomination" for men to wear a woman's clothes or a woman to wear a man's clothes. This activity confused the roles of males and females and the Corinthians (at least the women) were doing a similar thing. Today we will have to face a similar battle at times. There are still people, some of whom are transvestites ("cross-dressers"), who are not satisfied with their gender. All need to know that God has distinctive roles for males and females. The world may often try to blur the distinctions associated with gender (manhood may be classified as oppressive and unenlightened and the distinctions between males and females are seen as merely physiological), but Christians are to know and teach the truth on this subject. Some males and females sometimes do things that are associated with their opposite gender, but in general there should be a clear distinction between men and women.

The word *veiled* (*katakalupto*) is found only three times in the New Testament (twice in this verse and once in verse 7). While the exact nature of this veil is difficult to describe, as noted in the commentary on verse 4b, a woman's face and perhaps some of her body were covered. In his entry on "cover" W.E. Vine said *veiled* meant "to cover up." MacKnight (pp. 179-180) wrote: "The veil used by the eastern women

was so large as to cover a great part of their body. This appears from Ruth's veil, which held six measures of barley, Ruth iii. 15. A veil of this sort, called a plaid, was worn not long ago by women in Scotland." Today women who wear a hat or something similar and believe they have a "veil" or "covering" may feel like they are abiding by the instructions in this chapter, but they are incorrect. A hat—or a doily—is not the type of headgear described in this chapter.

11:7: *For a man indeed ought not to have his head veiled, forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God: but the woman is the glory of the man.*

Men were to refrain from wearing a head covering for the reason in verse 4 (*"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonoreth his head"*) as well as the reason here: Males are in the *"image and glory of God."* If a man covered himself, he would "hide the 'image and glory of God.'" Man is the pinnacle of creation and should reveal God's glory. Therefore, there should be no outward sign of subordination when a man worships" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 397). For information on the word *ought*, which is less forceful than *must*, see the commentary on 10a. For information about men and "hats," see the commentary on 4b.

This verse contains a contrast. Paul said a *"man"* (*aner*—a specific word for males) is in the image and glory of God, but *"the woman"* is *"the glory of the man"* (i.e. women are not specifically said to be made in God's image). This statement must be interpreted in view of Gen. 1:27, a passage that says males and females were both made "in the image of God." The key to harmonizing Gen. 1 and 1 Cor. 11 is the *method* in which males and females were made. Adam was formed from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), but Eve was created from Adam's rib (Gen. 2:21-23). A little later in this chapter Paul said women were created *"of"* (from) man (verse 8) and *"for"* man (verse 9).

The "creation difference" described in Genesis tells us there are differences between males and females (1 Pet. 3:7), God recognizes these differences, He expects humanity to recognize these differences, and the greatest thing to ever come from the male species is the female gender. Women are "the glory of the man." "Woman, in her right, stands in a position, singular in nature, to the man and therefore is 'the glory of the man.' This affords her a high position and at the same time protects man's place. Faith, purity, and beauty show most excellently and proportionately in her. The man who degrades a woman degrades his manhood" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 397).

What is said here in verse 7 corresponds to verse 3. In this previous verse Paul said males have Jesus as their head and females have males as their head. When men accept and submit to God's authority and plan for their lives, they fulfill their divine roles. Women who accept and submit to their divine role (and at Corinth this included wearing head coverings) are the *glory of men*. What is said in this verse reminds readers of the word *"helpmeets"* in Gen. 2:18, 20. Women are true *helpmeets*. One commentator (Leupold, Exposition of Genesis, 1:130) said the male race "needs the help of his mate in every way, from the propagating of his kind down through the scale of his varied activities" if he hopes "to achieve his objectives in life."

Helpmeet in Gen. 2 denotes agreeing to or corresponding to man; women are the counterpart to males. A woman "is the kind of help man needs, agreeing with him mentally, physically, spiritually" (Leupold, 1:130). Rather than being unequal, inferior or merely his "significant other" and "companion," the Bible teaches that females compliment and complete the human species. We might compare men and women to kings and queens. Men have a lofty place in God's plan, so they are like kings. Women also have a lofty role, so they are like queens. Both are very important to God, but there are some areas wherein they differ.

Women have been given certain functions that relate only to them (childbirth and the ability to nurse are two examples). Most women also typically excel at "multi-tasking" and nurturing (compare Gen. 3:16). Some have even described women as "domestically superior." In many cases women do better with deep and meaningful communication. Males also have their respective roles (leaders in the church and home—11:3 and 1 Tim. 2:8, 12) and society functions best when men and women know and fulfill their divine roles. Since wearing a head covering at Corinth indicated that women had males as their head and

they were willing to accept and fulfill their role, Paul told the Christian women to wear veils. He did not want these Christian women (or men) to unnecessarily reject an important custom and thus leave a bad impression about the Christian faith (compare Phil. 2:15-16).

The word *image* (*eikon*) is applied to different things in the New Testament. Mark (12:16) used this term to describe the *image* of an emperor on a Roman coin. Paul associated this same word with idols in Rom. 1:23 and Adam's descendents in 1 Cor. 15:49. Spicq (1:416-417) said *image* in 1 Cor. 11:7 means man "has a nature akin to God's (Gen. 9:6), like a son begotten by his father. This is clearly a term of honor: man is crowned with glory...He is sharply distinguished from the animals created before him; he rules the earth, probably because of his faculties of intelligence and volition." "In distinction from woman, man, created directly by God, reflects the supreme authority of his Creator and does not have to veil his face when he addresses him" (ibid, p. 416).

11:8-9: *For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man: 9 for neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man:*

Contrary to the various claims made by evolutionists, these verses affirm that humanity was "*created*." Also, the male species did not originate from the female race (women exist because of a male—Adam). God created a single male (Adam) from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:7), but there was not a suitable helper for him (Gen. 2:20). Man needed a counterpart (see the comments on "helpmeet" in verse 7), so God created a perfect companion for him (a female named Eve). Instead of being formed from the dust of the earth (Gen. 2:21-22), Eve was literally formed from Adam and then "*brought to him*" (Gen. 2:22b). These creation details further explain why women are the *glory* of men (7b). "To ignore or discredit this arrangement of God is to invite problems" (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 399).

In the 9th verse Paul said males were not *created* to benefit females. As noted in the comments on verse 7, Adam needed a helper; without a mate he was incomplete. Since animals could not fully meet his need for love and companionship, and Adam could not populate the earth without a human female (Gen. 1:28), God made a woman "*of*" Adam (verse 8) and "*for*" him (verse 9). The first couple was "Adam and Eve" instead of "Adam and Steve." By doing things in this way God permanently established the equality of men and women, but He gave each gender different roles (men have the role of leadership). Men and women may not always follow God's divine pattern due to things such as divorce (see Mt. 19:9), polygamy, homosexuality, and "living together" outside the bonds of marriage, but God's plan is clear (Mt. 19:4-6) and it was given early. This pattern was established before the first children were born, before the first culture existed, before the first nation was formed, and before the first worship service. God gave man the best plan and it will work if it is followed.

God also, though this point is not explicitly made here, ensured that males are dependent upon women and women are dependent upon men. Stated another way, God did not design either gender to live independently of each other. While we do find instances of people remaining single in life, and this is acceptable to God (1 Cor. 7:34), heaven's general plan for mankind is a man and woman coming together in marriage and being "one flesh" (Mt. 19:5).

The word *created* (*ktizo*) in verse 9 is applied exclusively to God's creative work. This term is applied to "*meats*" (animals) in 1 Tim. 4:3 and the new life in Christ (Eph. 2:10). Since this word is used to describe males and females in this verse, it is one more indication that God was directly and personally involved with the creation process (Gen. 1:1, 27). Man did not come into existence by time, chance, or evolution.

11:10a: *for this cause ought the woman to have (a sign of) authority on her head,*

In the earlier part of this chapter Paul spoke of how women who "prayed and prophesied with an unveiled head dishonored their head" (verse 5). He also reminded the Corinthians of how women in their culture who refused to wear a head covering demonstrated defiance, rebellion and mannishness (see the

commentary on verse 6). In fact, if a Christian woman refused to be veiled, she might as well have all her hair cut off or her head shaved (verse 6). If all these previous points were not enough to convince the Corinthian women to wear veils, Paul was ready with another argument based on *the angels*. He said angelic beings “*ought*” (*opheilo*) to be a reason for women to wear head coverings.

Thayer (p. 469) defined *ought* as “*to be under obligation, bound by duty or necessity, to do something; it behooves one; one ought*; used thus of a necessity imposed either by law and duty, or by reason, or by the times or by the nature of the matter under consideration.” Paul could have used a different and stronger word (*dei*) that often has the sense of “must” or “absolutely necessary” (this second term is used in passages such as 1 Cor. 11:19; 15:25, 53), but inspiration caused him to use a less forceful word (“ought”) and this is significant. Some activities “ought” to be done because of the “times” (culture) in which people live. *Ought* plus Thayer’s definition for this term further proves that veils were a human custom instead of a divine commandment. Stated another way, Christian women had a duty to wear a head covering because of their culture (this was the “proper thing to do”), but head coverings were not a *must* (i.e. God has not commanded all women in all places to wear them). In verse 7 Paul also applied the word *ought* to males because Corinthian culture dictated that men *ought* not wear a head covering.

In the middle of this verse we find some additional information about head coverings: “*Authority on her head*” (the KJV says “*power*”). *Authority* (*exousia*) is found more than 100 times in the New Testament. In Classical Greek *authority* denoted “the right to act according to legal or moral standards” (CBL, GED, 2:483). In the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament Scriptures) *authority* often meant “authority” or “to rule.” The New Testament also uses *authority* in these same ways, and a basic New Testament definition for this term is “authority.” In 1 Cor. 10:10, however, there is disagreement over what *authority* means. Some think the proper definition is “*power*.” Others think *authority* means “*liberty*.” Still others, including this author, believe the correct idea is “*authority*.”

William Ramsey believed a woman’s head covering was *power* (i.e. a veil authorized her to go anywhere she wanted in public and she would be respected and protected). Women who did not wear head coverings were subject to contempt and abuse. Ramsey’s belief is surely true, but there is no compelling reason to believe this is what Paul had in mind when this verse was written. A second view says the Corinthian women technically had the *liberty* to not wear veils, but since this would have created problems in their culture, they were to not use this freedom. This explanation is similar to *strong and weak Christians eating meat*. God technically allows us to eat any food (1 Tim. 4:4), but we might not eat certain foods if this would cause some fellow Christians to *stumble* (1 Cor. 14:21). This viewpoint is also true, but there is also no compelling reason to believe this was what Paul meant.

A third explanation is that Paul had in mind *authority*. If this view is correct, Paul meant one of two things. He may have meant head coverings symbolized that women are under the authority of someone else (i.e. a male). Stated another way, women who wore head coverings were symbolizing their acceptance of their special role, a point discussed in the preceding verses. *Authority* could also mean Christian women had the power, right and authority to do certain things. Both points are true, so applying either or both of them to this passage is consistent with the preceding verses. This explanation is also consistent with an earlier observation on 4b: a Christian woman could “pray and prophesy in public if her dress shows submission to her husband’s authority (1 Cor. 11:5-6)” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 327).

Based on the context, it seems Paul was thinking of the same women described in verse 5 (i.e. some Christian women were praying and prophesying). If the information in verses 5-10 is studied as a complete unit of thought, the point seems to be something like this: Women could pray and prophesy *if* they had *power on their heads* (i.e. if they wore a head covering). Since this culture associated veils with a woman’s subjection and acceptance of their special role, Christian women had the right and authority to use their miraculous gifts and/or acceptably worship when they wore a head covering. Christian women who refused to wear the veils were setting a bad example for “the angels” (10b) and this had to stop.

This verse tells us *what* women were authorized to do and *what* gave them the power to worship correctly, but we are not told *when and where* they were praying and prophesying. Some commentators believe these women were praying and prophesying in mixed assemblies (a regular “Sunday service”),

even though this would be contrary to what Paul said in 1 Tim. 2:12. Others such as Allen (see the commentary on verse 5) believe women did not need to follow the instructions about male leadership in the church until the cessation of miraculous gifts at the close of the first century (i.e. once the gifts ceased Christian women were no longer entitled to a leadership role in worship). Both of these explanations conflict with what is said in 14:34 and are therefore rejected by this author.

A better view has already been expressed in the commentary on verse 5a (Christian women were attending some all-female gatherings) and in this present verse Paul was still speaking about all female assemblies. In these gatherings, even though no males were present, women were to still wear their head coverings because this item of clothing, in this culture, demonstrated their understanding and acceptance of God's divine plan. Assuming this is the correct explanation of the passage, Paul did not have in mind situations where women were by themselves and prayed. The joining of "prayer and prophesy" (verse 5) indicates he had in mind occasions when women were assembled with others instead of being completely alone.

11:10b: *because of the angels.*

There are many explanations for the “angels.” Some believe Paul was thinking of evil angels that rebelled against God and were punished (Jude 6; 2 Pet. 2:4). According to this view, evil angels served as a reminder to the Corinthians. Just as we have a warning based on “Lot’s wife” (Lk. 17:32), so these Christians were to learn a lesson from the rebellious angels. If Christians refused to follow the information in verses 4 and 6, they would be punished just as disobedient angels had been punished.

A second interpretation is based upon the idea that angels watch some things that happen on the earth. It seems some earthly activities serve as a type of “school” for angels (compare Lk. 15:7, 10; 1 Cor. 4:9; Eph. 3:10; 1 Pet. 1:10-12). If the women at Corinth did not wear veils, even if no men were present, angels would see them acting in non-feminine ways (i.e. not wearing a head covering), but still expecting God to accept their worship, let them have and use spiritual gifts, and answer their prayers. Christian women who refused to wear head coverings were in essence “teaching angels” by their actions and their instruction was very bad (compare Jas. 3:1). Because the rejection of veils signified things such as rebellion, Paul strenuously urged the Corinthian women to abide by their cultural expectations (wear veils). This explanation is the interpretation accepted by this author, and if it is correct, it suggests angels are troubled by examples of irreverence and a failure to follow any of God’s commandments. It also suggests that angels are able to witness some of our worship (compare Lk. 15:10 and 1 Cor. 4:9).

Other explanations about the angels are far-fetched and very unlikely. One view that hardly bears mentioning is that women who failed to wear head coverings would cause angels to lust after them. This idea is based on the incorrect interpretation of the “sons of God” in Gen. 6:1-2. Some think evil angels previously desired and married human females and they may still have an attraction to or a lust for human females. If an uncovered female head incites angels to lust, what about women daily dressing and undressing (total nudity)?

Another poor explanation says women have “guardian angels” and their personal guardians were offended if they did not have a head covering. As noted in the commentary on Mt. 18:10 (section 23 of the Gospels commentary), the idea of a personal guardian angel is not based on the Bible. If there are guardian angels, from what do they protect us? Is it death? Illness? Persecution? Serious injury? Financial or job loss?

As shown in the preceding comments for this part of the verse, it seems best to regard angels as watching what takes place on the earth and especially in the church. In fact, the word “watchers” is actually applied to angels (Dan. 4:13, 17, 23). Angels seem to have some ability to watch men and women obey or disobey God’s will and they must have witnessed many interesting things at the Corinthian congregation. Today, if angels watch us or the place where we worship, what are they seeing?

11:11-12: *Nevertheless, neither is the woman without the man, nor the man without the woman, in the Lord. 12 For as the woman is of the man, so is the man also by the woman; but all things are of God.*

Since Paul spoke about the distinctive roles of males and females in the preceding verses, some may have been thinking males are superior to females. Here Paul specifically said men (males) are not any better than women (females). In fact, men and women are actually dependent upon one another. Men cannot survive without women and women cannot survive without men. Male leadership and headship is certainly part of God’s plan (verse 3), but this is not a basis for arrogance, dictatorship, or abuse of women. Male leadership is something to be recognized and carried out in a loving and mature way (Eph. 5:25-33; 1 Pet. 3:7).

Paul said this information is “*in the Lord*” (11b). That is, men and women are dependent on each other because this is how God arranged things. God did not intend for males to dominate females or men to treat women as second-class citizens. There is equality between the sexes and each gender has some specific responsibilities (see again the commentary on verse 3). When people fail to follow God’s blueprint for humanity, the end results are confusion and sin.

The information in verse 12 repeats and emphasizes the point made in verse 11. Women exist because of a male (Adam). However, males exist because of women (it is through them that the male species continues to be born). Even Jesus had to be “born of woman” (Gal. 4:4). “God could, indeed, have created both man and woman, Adam and Eve, in one undivided act. Today many think and act as though God had really done so. But the fact is otherwise. Nor should we think and say that at this late date God’s creative act, which lies far back in time, makes no difference. The facts of creation abide forever. They can be ignored without resultant loss or harm as little as can other facts of nature” (Lenski, First Corinthians, pp. 443-444). God has tied the sexes together in such a way that they cannot survive without each other.

Even though there are various attempts to thwart God’s plan (convents, advancements in reproductive technology, and various feminist movements), Scripture says men and women need each other and the prepositions in the Greek text are especially illustrative of this fact. Women are “*of*” (from, out of, by means of) the man (the Living Bible, a paraphrase, says “came out of man”). This preposition (*ek*) denotes “the material from which something is made” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:403). Paul also said men come “*by*” (*dia*) or “*through*” women (the Living Bible says, “all men have been born from women ever since”). Based on this information the CBL (First Corinthians, p. 399) rightly concluded, “The woman is subordinate but not inferior. In the higher things, ‘in the Lord’ and in faith, man and woman exist in partnership and equality.” Robertson (4:161) said *in the Lord* was where “Paul finds the solution of all problems.” This is true and we should find our solutions to problems *in the Lord* as well.

The remaining thought in verse 12 is found at the end of the verse: “*all things are of God.*” This statement gives males another reason to avoid pride and arrogance. Men did not create women. Since God created both sexes, males have absolutely no right to look down upon women, treat them as inferior, or demean them. Jesus was subject to the Father but not inferior (verse 3) and a wife’s subjection to her husband (Eph. 5:22) does not mean she is inferior.

11:13: *Judge ye in yourselves: is it seemly that a woman pray unto God unveiled?*

The Corinthians knew what veils symbolized in their society. They understood that females have come from males instead of males coming from females (verses 7-9, 11-12) and that women were to respect and demonstrate this fact by wearing the type of head covering expected by their society. In view of what the Corinthians knew, Paul said they could “*judge*” the head covering issue. All they had to do was ask if it was “*seemly* for “*a woman to pray unto God unveiled.*” “By these words Paul did not encourage the Corinthians to ignore his instructions. Rather, he meant that they should not blindly obey his directives. They were to think through the issue” (Holman, 7:187). It was time for the members of this congregation to use some common sense. Women were approaching God through prayer as well as prophesy (verse 5), and Paul wanted them to ask themselves to consider what was proper. Was it right to show as much respect and obedience to God as possible, or was it right to show as little respect and obedience as possible? Too, if these Christian women went without veils, other people in their culture would see them. What type of example would this set for others (compare Phil. 2:15-16)? Paul expected the Corinthians to answer, “No, going without a head covering is not proper” and this problem would be resolved.

Seemly (*prepo*) is translated “*comely*” in the KJV. This term meant *that which corresponds with propriety or decorum*. Although the Greek language has words to “express necessity and obligation” (Brown, 2:668), here Paul used a word that meant what was “proper and appropriate” (ibid). By using this less forceful word Paul asked the Corinthians what was the proper way to act in their circumstances. Was it right for the Corinthian women to cast off their veils? The NKJV translates this: “Is it proper?”

If these Christians were willing to consider what type of behavior was dictated by their culture, they would know what was and was not appropriate when it came to head coverings. Today we may use this same standard for this same question. If our culture does not regard a head covering as a “proper” item for women, Christian women have no obligation to wear one. If women are in a culture where a head covering is expected, they should wear one and abide by that local custom. Paul followed this same basic principle in his evangelistic work (1 Cor. 9:20-22).

Unveiled (*akatakaluptos*) is only used here and verse 5. Several translations (KJV, NKJV, NIV, NASB, RSV) render it *uncovered*. Brown (2:212) defined it as “unveiled.” If a woman was unveiled in a public meeting when her voice was uttering “the deepest impressions and the holiest emotions of adoration and love...a feeling of holy modesty ought to constrain her to secure herself from every indiscreet and profane look” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:416).

An introduction to verses 14-15:

The key point in these two verses has already been discussed in the commentary on verse 1 [see *An overview of the “head covering” (veil) issue*]. It has already been shown that our world often wants a gender-neutral society, but God, from the initial creation, intended for males and females to be distinct from one another. One divine distinction is hair length. Both men and women typically have hair on their heads and hair length should help distinguish males from females.

The need for men and women to be distinct from one another is also found in the Old Testament (Deut. 22:5 prohibited Hebrew men from dressing like women and women from dressing like men). This important point, however, has been in a state of decline for several years, at least in Western society. For many years some men have wanted long hair and some women have wanted short hair. Males and females both wear necklaces and earrings. Pink clothing is now offered for both males and females. Both sexes also wear custom tailored suits—something that used to be exclusively worn by males. When Christians live in a unisex society, and this may be the way things are for several saints until the end of time, they should seek to maintain some clear distinctions between the two sexes. At Corinth one distinguishing mark of women was a head covering. Since this item separated males from females, women were to wear it (verse 6) and men were to go without it (verse 4).

In addition to things such as clothing, men and women can also often be distinguished by hair length. Some males are capable of growing full, thick, and long hair (compare 2 Sam. 14:25-26), but most men style and wear their hair in a way shorter than women and this is an indication of their gender. In fact, men who leave their hair long have often been associated with rebellion and a separation from rules and structure. Even ancient statues and busts often depict males as having short hair. Men having hair that is shorter than women is a fact that has either been known to man since creation and been naturally passed from generation to generation or it is intuitive knowledge, just like we naturally know how to breathe. In one way or another people know that men are prone to having less or shorter hair than women and this fact was established by God.

11:14-15: *Doth not even nature itself teach you, that, if a man have long hair, it is a dishonor to him? 15 But if a woman have long hair, it is a glory to her: for her hair is given her for a covering.*

Paul used the preceding verses to say Christian women at Corinth should wear a head covering. His reasons for this included the fact that head coverings were an expected part of this society (verse 13), they offered appropriate instruction to angels (verse 10), they demonstrated that ladies respected and were abiding by their proper role (verses 7-12), and they prevented women from *dishonoring their head* (verse 5). Now we come to a final reason for the Corinthian women to wear a covering. “Nature” (*phusis*) should have indicated the need for women to wear a head covering.

Nature means “native conviction or knowledge, as opposed to what is learned by instruction and accomplished or prescribed by law” (Thayer, p. 660). Unless there are special circumstances (combine the end of this verse with Num. 6:5), *nature* teaches us some things about men and women. For instance, *nature* teaches women to have “long hair” (verse 15) and men to have short hair (verse 14). As *nature* teaches human beings about hair length, it should have also taught the Corinthian women about head coverings (i.e. a woman’s head should be covered). Women should have a covering and here Paul affirmed that ladies do have a covering. God has “given” (*didomi*) females a *natural* covering (long hair). Since *given* is a perfect tense and passive voice verb, it seems Paul was thinking about the creation. Eve likely had long hair and this female quality has continued throughout time because it is part of the divine

design. As discussed in the commentary prior to verse 16, the Corinthians also used an artificial covering.

“*Long*” (*kōmaō*) occurs only two times in the New Testament—once in verse 14 and then again in verse 15. Outside the New Testament this term described long hair on people, animals, plants and trees. Rienecker and Rogers (p. 424) said *long* described “the hairdo which was neatly held in place by means of ribbon or lace. What is required by these verses is an orderly hairdress which distinguishes a woman from a man.”

Paul was not necessarily speaking about hair length and certainly not the *exact length* of a person’s hair. We have no authority to legislate what is *long* hair and what is *short* hair for men or women. We can make a general judgment on what is proper for men and women in this regard, just as some businesses have often made this type of determination for health and safety reasons, but these judgments are always somewhat subjective and often influenced by culture.

If someone lives in a society where males shave their heads and most women have chin-cut hairstyles, *long hair* in that culture begins at the chin. In other cultures, a chin-length hairstyle for women would be seen as short. Too, hair is typically cut to different lengths on various areas of the head. If someone were to try and legislate what is *long and short*, would we check the *longest part of a person’s hair*, the *shortest part of their hair*, or an *average of all the various lengths*?

Paul did not say men with long hair are guilty of “*sin*.” There is a specific word for sin, but Paul did not use this term. He said men with long hair are guilty of “*dishonor*” (“*shame*,” KJV). This term (*atimia*) has a wide range of meanings; here it means “social ‘embarrassment’” (CBL, GED, 1:483) or “a disgrace” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 120). Instead of violating a New Testament commandment, Paul spoke of disgrace and embarrassment. Long hair for women and short hair for men, just like the veils, helped distinguish men from women so this practice should have been followed. Based on this information it is doubtful that the paintings of Jesus (which often portray Him as having long hair) are accurate.

During the 1960’s there was strong disagreement among Bible believing people concerning the *proper length* of human hair. In some cases congregations divided or nearly split because of questions involving hair length and head coverings. Most of the controversy concerned the length of a male’s hair (little was said concerning women having “short” hair). Since all discussions about the length of hair are subjective (it is nearly impossible to quantify long and short), this was an unnecessary and sinful controversy. What happened during this time period is a good illustration of 2 Tim. 2:23: “*But foolish and ignorant questioning refuse, knowing that they gender strifes.*”

In verse 15 Paul turned his attention to women. He said a woman’s hair is a “*covering*” (*peribolaion*) that brings her “*glory*.” Women should be proud of their natural covering (hair) because it is God given and it is one means of demonstrating their special place in God’s plan. Because the hair is such a visible part of the body, many women spend a lot of time on it. Others spend a lot of money on their hair (1 Tim. 2:9) because they know that hair often increases or decreases their attractiveness to others, especially men, who are visually oriented creatures.

While some women delight in having *long hair*, others, due to their age, health, having small children (shorter hair is beneficial to some mothers), choose a shorter hairstyle. Hairstyle choice can also be influenced by a woman’s activities as well as her genetic makeup (some are unable to grow long, healthy hair). Some women actually lose their hair for various reasons; in these cases a woman is not “less of a woman” or less feminine. Just as women can be saved if they never bear a child (1 Tim. 2:15), so a bald woman can still demonstrate her special place in God’s kingdom. If no men are present, a woman is still the “glory of the man” (verse 7). If a woman lacks this natural covering, hair is still the glory of her gender. If a woman does not have her natural hair, there are other ways she can demonstrate her womanly beauty (compare 1 Pet. 3:3).

Spicq (1:368) defined *glory* (*doxa*) as “beauty and splendor.” The Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament (1:345) defined it as “*Esteem, honor.*” While the New Testament emphasizes a woman’s inward beauty (1 Pet. 3:3-4), God has also given women some wonderful physical attributes, one of which is hair. It seems a woman’s hair is a glory to others as well as herself. The significance of a woman’s hair is indicated in many ways. A man may not notice many things that his wife or another

woman does, but he will often notice a change in woman's hair color or style. Women also know the value and power of their hair and frequently express this by wanting something they cannot have. According to a beautician I once spoke with, women with straight hair often want curly hair. A woman with thick hair would like thin hair, etc. The beautician's exact comment to me was, "Women always want what they cannot have" when it comes to hair. If a woman must have all her hair removed because of a mishap or for health reasons, most agree it would be a very traumatic experience. The *glory* of a woman's hair is also demonstrated by two events in Jesus' life (Lk. 7:38, 44; Jn. 12:3). Women took their "glory" (hair) and used it to wipe Jesus' feet—an expression of love, service and humility.

If ladies live in a society where women are not expected to wear a covering, their natural hair serves as a covering and an artificial covering is unnecessary. Some cultures expect women to also wear an artificial covering and this practice should be followed in these places. Also, when a woman is in a society that expects a covering, ladies should be grateful for this additional item of clothing because it further demonstrates their special place in God's kingdom. Whether natural or artificial, both coverings in this chapter should have been a great source of satisfaction and joy to the Corinthian women.

Two coverings are described in this chapter (long hair and veils), but some writers have concluded there is only one (i.e. natural hair). One problem with this view is that Paul used two different words to describe a covering. In verses 6-7 he used the word *katakalypto*. Here in verse 15 he used a different term (*peribolaion*). This latter word is found only here and Heb. 1:12 where it is translated "mantle" or "vesture" (KJV). Using two different words for *covering* in this one chapter suggests Paul had in mind two different coverings.

In addition to using a different word for *covering*, there is also the information in verse 6. There Paul said if a woman was not "veiled" (covered), she should be "shorn." If a woman's hair is her covering, and she is "not wearing her covering" (i.e. her hair is gone), how can she also be "shorn?" Stated another way, if the covering is the hair, and the hair (covering) is removed, what is left to be cut (shorn)? Paul's argument in verse 6 was that a woman should wear both coverings (her natural hair and an artificial covering) or neglect both and suffer the disgrace associated with this choice. Finally, if the hair is the covering, and a man was to be uncovered lest he avoid "dishonoring his head" (verse 4), would not this mean that only bald men were able to pray and prophesy at Corinth?

11:16: *But if any man seemeth to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*

The previous verses show why the veils were to be worn by the Corinthian women (they indicated women were fulfilling their divine role). Paul must have realized that in spite of his best arguments (including the one based on angels—verse 10), some members of this congregation would be tempted to be "*contentious*" about this matter. *Contentious* (*philoneikos*) is found only here in the New Testament. Thayer (p. 654) defined it as "*fond of strife*." Brown (2:550) defined it as "quarrelsome." After introducing the idea of strife Paul added, "*we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.*" The word translated "*custom*" (*sunetheia*) occurs only three times in the New Testament (here, 1 Cor. 8:7; Jn. 18:39). It meant: "An established custom, usage, or habit."

Commentators do not agree on how to relate the word *custom* to the discussion about head coverings. One wrong explanation is that there was no "custom" to "engage in strife." Stated another way, these Christians had no authority or right to create friction about veils. This point is undoubtedly true, but this is not what Paul meant because the word *contentious* is a *masculine* adjective in the *nominative* case and the word *custom* is a *feminine* noun in the *accusative* case. If these words belonged together, there would be grammatical agreement in both gender (masculine/ feminine) and case (*nominative/accusative*). Since there is no agreement, *custom* and *contention* do not belong together.

A second explanation says the Corinthian culture had a "custom" about wearing head coverings, but this practice was not associated with any New Testament commandment (i.e. neither we nor the churches of God have a divine command for all women about head coverings). This explanation is consistent with this author's preceding explanation of the head covering issue and it may be what is meant in this verse (see again the comments on verse 13). There was no need to be *contentious* over a cultural practice that

helped Christian women be a good influence in their society and reflect their God-given role.

If this second view is correct, we might illustrate it with the color red, a color often associated with prostitution (compare Josh. 2:1, 18). During the 1940's and 1950's red porch lights were used to indicate places of prostitution. There is *no custom* in the *churches of God* when it comes to having porch lights or using red light bulbs. If, however, the color red would symbolize some type of immorality in the culture where we live (just like going without a veil had a negative connotation in the Corinthians' culture), Christians should avoid the color red.

Other commentators take a different view which is succinctly given in the CBL (First Corinthians, p. 401): "Paul seems to be saying, 'We have no such custom as women praying or prophesying with head uncovered.' Paul appealed to universal custom and to the fact that this was the habit in the Christian churches. To adopt another view would suggest that Paul was doing away with what he had just spend 15 verses asserting." If the CBL view is correct, it does not mean all women are still obligated to wear a head covering. This is well demonstrated by the following points which have been drawn from Allen (First Corinthians, p. 137).

- When a command is directed to a cultural situation that no longer exists, the command is no longer binding. The cultural situation that an unveiled woman was equal to a lady with a shorn head (11:5) no longer exists. Thus, the teaching concerning veils can no longer be bound.
- The veil was once a sign of authority (11:10), but this is no longer true.
- The veil is no longer an expression of propriety and decency (11:5-6).
- The failure to wear a veil no longer dishonors a woman's head (11:5).
- Paul specifically joined the wearing of veils with supernatural activity (verse 5). Since the supernatural gifts are gone (see the commentary on 1 Cor. 13:10), this regulation no longer applies (i.e. women are no longer obligated to be covered).

At the very end of this verse Paul referred to the "churches of God." *Church (ekklesia)* meant "the called out ones." Christians have been called out of darkness, ignorance, superstition, religious error, etc. (compare 1 Pet. 2:9). In Classical Greek, *church* was used almost exclusively for political gatherings. In the New Testament the word *church* is "employed in the following ways: (a) It is used of the people of God *universally*, equivalent to the 'one body' (Mt. 16:18; Eph. 4:4; Col. 1:18). (b) *Ekklesia* could signify the Lord's people in a *certain region* (Acts 9:31). (c) The term can embody a congregation of saints in a particular *city* (1 Cor. 1:2; Rev. 1:4). (d) It may refer to *gathering* of Christians in an assembled meeting (1 Cor. 14:34; 3 Jn. 10)" (Jackson, Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy, p. 31). "There is no sanction in the Scriptures for the modern scheme of varying denominational churches. This very system militates against the work of Christ (see Jn. 17:20-21)" (ibid).

Fred Amick (Hearing For Eternity, 1:76) well noted how the church "is that body of believers who have been immersed into Christ (Gal. 3:27); who wear only the name of Christ; who believe and teach only his doctrine; and who obey only his commandments. 'And he (Christ) is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church' (Col. 1:18). In Eph. 5:23-24, we learn that Christ is the head of the church, the savior of the body, and the church is to be subject to him in every thing. The saved people are all in his body (Acts 2:47). The church of the Lord is that called out body of believers who are completely subject to Jesus Christ in everything they do and teach (Col. 3:17). They belong to the Lord Jesus Christ, body, soul and spirit." For more information on the *churches of Christ* or the *churches of God*, see the commentary on Rom. 16:14-16 and "An overview of New Testament Christianity" at the end of this commentary.

Introduction to 11:17:

As noted in the commentary on verse 5a, there seems to have been more than one assembly (gathering) of Christians at Corinth. Verse 18 also strongly implies this point (*when ye come together in the church*—the corporate assembly). Women were not wearing head coverings at some or all the assemblies of the church and this created problems. Here we are introduced to another issue and it was as bad or worse than the head covering question. “The problem of feminine modesty in relation to public worship was a small matter in comparison with some problems which had developed in the observance of the Lord’s Supper. The rejection of a head covering for women may have arisen from lack of knowledge or from a misunderstanding about the nature of Christian liberty. But the deliberate perversion of the sacred Communion service betrayed a disregard for basic Christian teachings. Thus Paul’s tone is severe and he denounces the gluttony and bickering associated with this symbol of fellowship” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:417).

A key word in verse 17 is *come together* (*sunerchomai*), a verb that occurs several times in this book (7:5; 11:18, 20, 33, 34; 14:23, 26). Every time this verb is used in this letter, with the exception of 7:5, it describes “the corporate church service/meeting” (CBL, GED, 6:195) or “the gathering/assembling of the congregation” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:304). Here this term is in the present tense (on-going action) and it tells us the Corinthians were in the habit of assembling for worship (compare Acts 2:42). Later in this book (16:2) we are told the Corinthians met on the “first day of every week” (NASB). On the first day of the week (i.e. every week) the Corinthians should have been observing the Lord’s Supper.

The Lord’s Supper is designed to be a memorial of Jesus’ death (verse 24) and we carry out this memorial with “bread” (Mt. 26:26) and the “fruit of the vine” (Mt. 26:29). Unlike most meals, the Communion is not something like restaurant food or a “tasty snack.” The fruit of the vine may be warm and the bread may be bland or somewhat tasteless. The items used in this memorial are simple, readily available, and they help us remember what Jesus did (verse 24). They also remind Christians how they are bound together by a common sacrifice—the precious blood of Jesus (1 Pet. 1:19; Acts 20:28). The Lord’s Supper should have helped unite this congregation, but Paul said there was “division” in the church (verse 18). The solution to this problem was not “quit the church” or “find another congregation across town.” Paul said the bad behavior had to be identified and corrected (compare verses 33-34). This is the proper example for us to follow today.

An examination of the remaining verses in this chapter reveals two problems. First, the Lord’s Supper had been turned into a common meal and was also seemingly joined with potluck food (verses 23-26, 29b). Second, the local assembly (congregation) was so divided Christians would not share their food with fellow saints. Paul showed the seriousness of these issues with the words “*I praise you not*” (i.e. “I censure you severely”) at the beginning of verse 17. There is a definite contrast between this section and the information in verse 2 where the word *praise* (*epaineo*) is also used. The abuses associated with the Lord’s Supper were so outrageous we find another condemnation for the Corinthians’ actions in verse 22.

11:17: *But in giving you this charge, I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better but for the worse.*

The KJV uses the word “*declare*” in 17a while the ASV uses “*charge*.” The original term (*parangello*) is a present tense verb and a very forceful word (it usually has the sense of an authoritative command. In secular Greek *charge* was used of orders military commanders passed down to their subordinates. See how this same term is used in Acts 16:18; 1 Thess. 4:11; 2 Thess. 3:4; 1 Tim. 6:17). As Brown (1:341) noted, “Apostolic authority lay behind the directions for the behavior of women in worship, the exhortations to Christians to behave respectably in the eyes of the pagan world, to work in peace and to eat their own bread.” “Regardless of whether it is in the form of written or oral instruction, the apostle

expected that the church would comply with them” (ibid). “The problem Paul now turned to was a glaring fault that had to be corrected. He did so with authority” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 401).

It is interesting to contrast the strong language used here and the lack of strong language in the previous discussion of women and head coverings. The change in tone is one more indication that the “churches of God having no such custom” (verse 16) means veils were a part of cultural practice that was to be respected and followed instead of a divine command for all women and all time.

At the end of verse 17 Paul spoke of another matter that frustrated him. Instead of these Christians coming together for the “*better*” (*kreitton*), Paul said their gatherings (assemblies for worship) were for the “*worse*.” The word *better* meant “more advantageous” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:316). “An assembly of believers ought always to be progressing for the better” (Bengel, 2:227), but the Corinthians were not doing this. “Their meetings and the Lord’s Supper were a desecration” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 403). The word *worse* (*hetton*) can be linked with verse 34. The problems with the Lord’s Supper were so bad they justified “judgment.” Several other church problems are listed in between this verse and 14:40, so the Lord’s Supper was not the only issue. When we consider all the problems the Corinthians had, we find this church was not a place that excelled in peace, love and harmony.

The end of verse 17 reminds us that, in our assemblies, Christians should come together for the *better*, but sometimes our assemblies may be for the *worse*. There can be cases when Christians are hurt and discouraged by things at the place where they worship. At Corinth some were even being sued by fellow saints (1 Cor. 6:1-8). This congregation was in a state of crisis, but Paul hoped things could be corrected. Such is still possible if Christians today will identify the problems that exist in the place where they worship and all appropriate parties will repent.

11:18: *For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it.*

When someone says “first of all” we normally expect him to have a second point. There is no clear second point in this chapter and this has caused some to wonder if something is missing. It is possible that Paul just wanted to discuss one subject. Or, the additional material may be the information in verse 34. A third and perhaps better possibility is that the “second thing” was the problem of spiritual gifts introduced in 12:1. We regard chapter 12 as a separate chapter, but the Bible was originally written without chapter and verse distinctions (uninspired men added chapter and verse divisions to make passages easier to find).

In this verse Paul was more specific about the Corinthian assemblies. He said, “*when you come together in the church.*” *Come together* (*sunerchomai*) is a present tense verb that is defined in the commentary on verse 17. *Among you* often describes Christians coming together for worship (1 Cor. 1:10, 11; 2:2; 3:3, 16, 18; 5:1; 6:5; 11:18, 19, 30; 14:25; 15:12; Col. 4:16) and this is the proper sense in this verse. Also, “‘When ye come together’ indicted repeated occurrence. The trouble was chronic. A contentious spirit was consistently present” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 403).

The word *church* (*ekklesia*) describes the saved (Christians), not a physical building (see how this word is used in Mt. 16:18; 18:17). This term has already been discussed in the commentary on verse 16, but here we may add that the church is also described as the “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10) and God’s “family” (Gal. 3:26). The church is a place where Christians can find encouragement, instruction and fellowship (Gal. 6:1-2). Jesus purchased the church with His blood (Acts 20:28) and will one day return for its members (1 Thess. 4:17) as well as the unsaved (Jn. 5:28-29). Paul called the church the “body” (Eph. 1:22-23) and then said there is only “one body” (Eph. 4:4). People do not enter into this one body (church) by joining it. Rather, Jesus personally adds people to it when they obey the gospel (Acts 2:38, 41, 47 KJV).

When these Christians came together for worship there were “*divisions*” (*schisma*). This term, which is also found in 1:10 and 12:25, was sometimes used to describe a tear in a piece of material. Jesus used this word in Mk. 2:21 (“*rent*”) to describe the tearing of wineskins. In secular Greek *divisions* sometimes described “‘ploughing’ (rending the ground)” (Brown, 3:543). Here as well as 1:10 the word refers to cliques (Brown, 3:544). Paul had been able to “*hear*” (present tense) about the divisions.

The end of verse 18 provides us with an important example. Paul had received reports about the division at Corinth, but he did not believe things were as bad as some had reported. Paul wanted to give these Christians the benefit of the doubt and be completely fair (compare 13:7). He was willing to make a judgment, but he wanted it to be “righteous” (Jn. 7:24). He certainly knew there were some problems (“*I partly believe it*”), but he wanted to believe the best about these Christians and he spoke to these Christians in a way that combined grace, truth, justice and love. He would not condone what was wrong, but neither would he overreact. His attitude typifies the word “gentle” (*epieikes*) in 1 Tim. 3:2. Such a person is not “trigger happy” (Barclay, First Timothy, p. 947). “A man of God must be characterized by Christian love and restraint” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 9:581).

11:19: *For there must be also factions among you, that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.*

The word translated “*must*” (*dei*) described logical necessity. It is like saying a triangle *must* have three sides. *Must* indicates the factions at Corinth were part of master plan designed by God. *Must* means this congregation (and presumably all other congregations) *must* have problems.

We might like to think that a congregation would always be a place of peace and harmony, but the sad truth is that every place where we worship will have issues. In fact, in virtually any environment where people are together (including marriage) there will be some degree of conflict. Here Paul described the conflict as “*factions*” (the KJV says “*heresies*”). Thayer (p. 16) defined *factions* (*haireisis*) as “*dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims.*” Turner (p. 212) defined this word as “*obstinate persistence in self-opinionated views contrary to revealed truth.*” *Factions* is described as a “work of the flesh” in Gal. 5:20 and Peter spoke of “destructive *heresies*” (same word) in 2 Pet. 2:1.

Most do not enjoy conflict and problems (especially in the church), but here Paul said these things can serve a useful purpose. Difficult times allow faithful children of God to be “*approved*” (*dokimos*); this word described metals that were tested for authenticity and then “approved” as pure, genuine, etc. The NIV seems to capture the thought pretty well with this rendering: “*No doubt there have to be differences among you to show which of you have God’s approval.*” In other words, difficult times prove (demonstrate) a Christian’s faith. “Just as fire burns away the dross to reveal the pure, Paul reasoned that the Corinthian problem did produce one favorable result. It was now easier to distinguish the false from the true (cf. 1 John 2:19)” (Gromacki, p. 140). Those who refused to take part in the sinful division showed their true commitment to Jesus as well as a proper understanding of congregational unity.

James also dealt with this same basic subject in his letter. In the first chapter (see Jas. 1:12) James not only uses the same word translated *approved*, he said those who are approved “will receive the crown of life.” Trials are a wonderful tool to prove that Christians really are faithful to the God they claim to serve. In Jas. 5:11 we are told that Job was “patient” (i.e. he endured very difficult circumstances) and his endurance was rewarded. A similar thing was also true for the Old Testament prophets (Jas. 5:10); many of these men were killed, but their faith was proven to be genuine.

Here in 1 Cor. 11:19 we are challenged to stay faithful in the face of strong adversity. Problems will come just as persecution will (2 Tim. 3:12) and our enduring these times establishes that our faith is truly real. Those who do not endure (compare Mk. 4:15-19) prove they are not worthy of eternity with God. Sometimes we show our *approval* by simply accepting and following God’s word. A time eventually comes when a faithful Christian’s faith and faithfulness are “*manifest*” (*phaneros*) to others. *Manifest* may be defined as “to come to light,” “to become known” (Kittel, 9:3).

Paul did not specifically tell us what *factions* he had in mind, but the following verses indicate they involved the Lord’s Supper. Christians were having something like church potlucks and not everyone was being included in this activity (verses 21-22, 33). It is also possible that some were also not being allowed to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Perhaps wealthy members brought what was necessary for the Communion and consumed the bread and fruit of the vine before poorer members arrived (poorer Christians may have been slaves and thus lacked the freedom to control when they arrived at the worship service). Social status (the rich pitted against the

poor) could have interfered with sharing. Members had different spiritual gifts and this may have been a significant part of the division (12:14-25). While it “is better to be divided by truth than to be united in error” (Allen, First Corinthians, p. 139), the Corinthians were divided and divided by error and strife.

Introduction to 11:20:

Shortly after Christianity was established (Acts 2) God’s people began to eat together on a regular basis (Acts 2:46). Although the Corinthian letter was written more than 20 years after the time in Acts 2, the Corinthians were doing a similar thing, but their fellowship meals were for the “worse” instead of the “better” (verse 17). Christians were somehow joining their potlucks with worship, refusing to share their food with fellow Christians, and this congregation was so divided it could not properly partake of the Lord’s Supper. Things were so out of control Paul told these saints to “wait for one another” (verse 33) or “eat at home” (verse 34).

Peter also spoke of Christians eating together and he called this a “*feast*” (2 Pet. 2:13). Jude spoke of “love-feasts” (Jude 12). We do not have much specific information about these gatherings, but perhaps Christians came together for Sunday worship and brought food for a fellowship meal just like we have church potlucks and picnics. First century saints would not only have enjoyed this additional opportunity for fellowship; group meals would have helped feed poor Christians.

Verse 20 indicates the potluck meals were somehow being combined with the Lord’s Supper (i.e. Christians were not distinguishing between the two) and this was a serious problem. History records other examples of abuse as well. About “A.D. 150 the custom of eating a meal in connection with the Communion was discontinued” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:422) because the practice was abused. About 250 years after this time (397 A.D.) the Council of Carthage took a stand against the meals. While the Carthage council was of human origin and had no authority to legislate what was right and wrong, this history does remind us fellowship meals were sometimes abused, just like people have tried to abuse virtually everything else associated with Christianity. Whenever Satan sees something good in the church, he wants to ruin it. At Corinth the Corinthians had a “feast,” but it was not a *love feast*.

Some have asked how *love feasts* came to be associated with Christianity and especially connected with the Lord’s Supper. One doubtful answer is that Christians created this practice because of the Old Testament Passover. Since Jews ate a meal together and Jesus is “our Passover” (1 Cor. 5:7), Christians ate together just as the Jews were accustomed to eating together. A weakness of this view is found in the fact that the Passover was observed once a year and Christians meet every Sunday (1 Cor. 16:2, NASB). Others have said the Greeks had feasts during their worship and this pagan practice was brought into the church. This explanation is possible, but there is no evidence to support it.

A third explanation says Christians ate together (Acts 2:46), just as Jesus ate the Passover dinner with His disciples before He instituted the Lord’s Supper. This practice was encouraged by inspired teachers and was likely practiced in many first century congregations. Based on 1 Cor. 4:17, 2 Pet. 2:13 and Jude 12, this author accepts this third explanation. Paul may have actually been involved with fellowship meals while among the Corinthians (he was there for eighteen months—Acts 18:11).

We may think the *Lord’s Supper* as first discussed in the Gospels, but this is not true (First Corinthians was written before Matthew, Mark, Luke and John). If we accept the dates normally associated with the books of the New Testament, 1 Cor. 10:16-21 is the first time the New Testament refers to the Lord’s Supper. The second New Testament reference to this act is 1 Cor. 11:20. Also, while we commonly refer to the Communion as the “Lord’s Supper,” these exact words are only found in 1 Cor. 11:20. This description reminds us of the hour (time) it was *instituted*, not the hour (time) at which Christians are to observe it.

About the time this material was being finalized (2009), the United States and other parts of the world were in the midst of a severe recession. This author received a request for money so “poor Jewish people would not need to cancel Passover” (the Passover food was expensive and some did not have the money to pay for it). Christianity avoids this type of problem; the Lord’s Supper requires only two elements (bread and fruit of the fruit of the vine, Mt. 26:26, 29) and these two items are very inexpensive to

procure. The bread and the fruit of the vine are also almost always readily available anywhere in the world. We can take the gospel to the entire world (Mt. 28:19) and we have all that is necessary to worship anywhere in the world.

11:20a: *When therefore ye assemble yourselves together*

In the first part of this verse the KJV says, “*When ye come together therefore into one place.*” The ASV says, “*When therefore ye assemble yourselves together.*” The word for “come” (assemble) is a present tense verb (*sunerchomai*) and it is primarily found in this letter and the book of Acts. Paul used this same term in 7:5 to describe a married couple “coming together” before Satan tempted them. As noted in the introductory commentary on verse 17, every time this verb is used in this letter, with the exception of 7:5, it describes “the corporate church service/meeting” (CBL, GED, 6:195) or “the gathering/assembling of the congregation” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:304). Here Paul had in mind the regular Sunday worship service (compare 1 Cor. 16:2). Sunday was the appointed day for Christians to meet for worship and worship included having the Lord’s Supper (compare the introductory commentary on 10:16 and the commentary on 11:20b below).

In the previous chapter (10:16), Paul used present tense verbs (*bless* and *break*) to describe the ongoing observance of the Supper (just as Christians regularly assembled, so they regularly partook of the Lord’s Supper). In 11:24 (“*do in remembrance*”) the verb *do* is also a present tense verb. In view of these facts it is not surprising to find Acts 20:7 saying Christians partook of the Lord’s Supper *when they met* on the “first day of the week.” In fact, Luke says Christians came together “to break bread” (this is a purpose statement). Coming together to observe the Lord’s Supper was not the only reason for assembling (see Acts 20:9), but it was certainly an essential part of Sunday worship. The Lord’s Supper regularly reminds of Jesus and His sacrifice. If there is no sacrifice, there is no reason to meet. If we have been redeemed by Jesus’ blood, then assembling on the “Lord’s Day” (Rev. 1:10) and having the “Lord’s Supper” on this day makes perfect sense.

Amick (120) wisely said, “If the First Day of the Week is not the time to do this, then we would be completely without guidance in our efforts to obey this injunction. Surely, once in seven days is not too often to hold before an unbelieving world our faith in Christ. His resurrection is the very heart and soul of our faith; it is the rock of our eternal hope (1 Corinthians 15:1-8). Just as Jesus, after his public ministry began, was never more than three and one-half years away from his death, even so the Christian is never more than three and one-half days away from the Lord’s Supper. Feeding our bodies three times a day does not become monotonous. Surely, the re-living of Jesus’ sacrifice once in every seven days would not become commonplace to those who truly love the Lord. Friends, what are you doing about showing the Lord’s death till He comes?”

11:20b: *it is not possible to eat the Lord’s supper:*

While the Lord’s Supper is a mandated part of the weekly Sunday service (this point is discussed below), Paul said it was “*not possible*” for the Corinthians to partake of this memorial (the KJV says, “*this is not to eat the Lord’s Supper*”). The problem was not a lack of supplies, a lack of participation or even a lack of knowledge. Rather, these Christians had a “supper” but it was not the *Lord’s* Supper. It was impossible to observe the Lord’s Supper (i.e. have God’s approval for this part of the service) because of various sins, one of which is found in verse 19 (“factions”).

Although these Christians assembled together every Sunday and brought the supplies for the Lord’s Supper, they failed to separate the Communion from the potluck food. They may have also refused to share the Lord’s Supper (and perhaps the potluck food) with all the worshippers (read verses 20-21 in the ASV and ignore the verse division). Verse 20 says these Christians were selfish in attitude and verse 21 says they were selfish in action (their rudeness is also implied by Paul’s discussion about love in chapter 13). Modern congregations may not suffer from these same exact problems, but Christians can still be

selfish, rude and childish. Christians have fought over what color of carpet should be in the church building, who should be in charge of what activities, and what time services should start and stop. Paul's rebuke to the Corinthians also rebukes modern selfishness, immaturity and unloving behavior.

Today it is also possible for people to eat the Lord's Supper but not eat it with God's approval. We fail to acceptably partake of the Lord's Supper if we use the *wrong day* for worship (a day other than Sunday), if we use the *wrong items* (the bread and the fruit of the vine are replaced with something else), if we partake of the Communion on an *occasion other than Sunday worship*, and if we have the *wrong attitude* (compare verse 27). The force of this point is brought out quite well in the ASV: "*it is not possible to eat the Lord's supper.*" This rendering is much stronger than the KJV and Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 458) described the KJV rendering as "incorrect." He said the proper sense of the thought is "it is impossible" (ibid).

This author once worked with a man who regarded Christmas as the time of Jesus' birth and his family wanted to honor the Lord on this day. This homage involved making a birthday cake for the Lord and singing "Happy Birthday" to the Son of God. Although this family surely had good intentions, Jesus said those who truly love Him will obey His word (Jn. 14:15; 15:14). This loving obedience includes obeying God's rules for the Lord's Supper. We may think God is pleased with our ideas, but the Bible warns us that our ideas and ways are not always consistent with God's will and ways. When our ideas about worship are not consistent with the Bible, and we proceed with them anyway, God says we engage in "will-worship" and our worship is rejected (Col. 2:23).

When Paul spoke of the Communion he spoke of the "*Lord's*" (*kuriakos*) Supper. *Lord* is a special term that is found only here and Rev. 1:10, and it meant "belonging to the Lord" (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:382). While the New Testament only uses this word twice, this term is found in secular Greek. Outside the New Testament *Lord* meant "belonging to the emperor" (Spicq, 2:338); it was used to describe the day on which the Emperor's birthday was celebrated (ibid). In the 7th century A.D. this unique term was used on a tomb inscription which read: "God's servant fell asleep at the tenth hour, at the dawning of the Lord's Day, the day of the resurrection of Christ" (Spicq, 2:340). There is a special day to honor Jesus (Sunday), this day comes once a week, and on this special day there is special feast to "*remember*" the Son of God—the *Lord's Supper* (Lk. 22:19).

If the book of Revelation was written about 40 years after this letter as many believe, John's use of the word *Lord* in Rev. 1:10 shows that this special word was still a commonly accepted term nearly six decades after the church was established in Acts 2.

It is a sad but true fact that millions know the right day on which to worship, but they have never been taught the truth about the Lord's Supper. The Corinthians should have been properly honoring Jesus week after week with the Communion, but they were failing in this regard and Paul strongly reproved them. We must learn from and not repeat the mistakes of the Corinthians if we want to please God. To help people achieve this goal the following questions and answers are offered on the subjects of Sunday (the proper day for worship) and the Lord's Supper.

Is Sunday the specified meeting time for Christians? During the Old Testament era one of the Ten Commandments obligated people to "*remember the Sabbath day*" (Ex. 20:8). This commandment was limited to the Jews (Ex. 31:12-17; Deut. 5:15) and it involved a small geographical area. When Jesus instituted the New Testament, the Sabbath commandment and all the other parts of the Old Testament law were removed (2 Cor. 3:14). Under the New Testament system people honor God on the "first day of the week" (1 Cor. 16:2).

Sunday is the "*Lord's day*," this day comes once a week, and God expects us to worship on this weekly day. We may demonstrate this point with Acts 20:7: "*And upon the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul discoursed with them, intending to depart on the morrow; and prolonged his speech until midnight.*" If this verse read, "at evening Christians came together," this would imply a daily meeting. If the text said, "on the 20th day of the month," that would imply a monthly meeting. If Luke had said, "during the quarter," that would imply a quarterly meeting. If Luke had written, "On the 7th day of the 8th month," that would imply a yearly meeting. The *first day of the week*

implies a weekly meeting.

Our evidence for a required weekly Sunday assembly perfectly harmonizes with Mk. 16:9 (Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday) and Jn. 20:19 (Jesus appeared to the assembled disciples on a Sunday after His resurrection). Sunday worship also agrees with various historical sources. In his book on church history Mattox (p. 51) said, “The New Testament Church met on the first day of the week for public worship. The assemblies were in general held in private houses. The service was informal, but characterized by great sincerity and devotion. It consisted of songs, prayer, reading of the Scripture and partaking of the Lord’s Supper. There was no set formality or ritual and the order of the service varied from one congregation to another, but in the essentials there was general agreement. Simplicity and fervency characterized all that was done.” Paul had taught the Corinthians to meet each Sunday (1 Cor. 16:2, NASB), to bring the supplies for the Lord’s Supper on this day (1 Cor. 11:20), and we are to learn from and follow this example (1 Cor. 4:17).

Having a special day to worship is important for a man’s spiritual needs as well as his physical needs. The Jews were specifically told the Sabbath (Saturday, the seventh day of the week) was a “day of rest” (Ex. 20:8-10). This type of instruction, however, is never associated with the Lord’s Day (Sunday, the *first day of the week*). Sunday is a day for worship and this single fact should shift our emphasis from economic pursuits to God and spiritual matters. We may “work” on Sunday by mowing the lawn or cleaning house, but the first priority on Sunday is worship. Worship is to be put above work. Having one day where society turns its attention from the typical things of life is important. This fact was “dramatically illustrated by the drop in production which occurred as a result of Sunday work during the early years of the first World War” (Dictionary of Christian Ethics, John Macquarrie, p. 336). If Christians cannot meet with their brethren on Sunday morning, they are often afforded another opportunity in the evening and this opportunity should be used. For additional information on Sunday being the proper day to worship see the introductory commentary on 10:16 and the commentary on 16:1.

Where did the first Christians assemble for worship? The church started in Jerusalem (Lk. 24:47) and the temple (at least for a while) provided the necessary meeting space for Christians. The Jerusalem temple had several “courts,” one of which was the Court of the Gentiles. This outer court is said to have encompassed about 35 acres. Due to the temple’s numerous precincts, porches, porticos, courtyards, compartments, cloisters, rooms, shops, terraces and chambers, it was a natural and perfect place for Christians to meet (compare Mt. 24:1). McClintock and Strong (10:252) refer to “the thousands who were frequently assembled within the precincts of the courts; which also were sometimes used for popular meetings.” More than 200,000 people could gather in this area.

Since the temple was still being restored in Jesus’ day, workmen could often be found at this place. Pharisees, Sadducees, Priests, Levites and Temple officials were often there, as were people from Judea and Galilee. Some came to the temple for religious reasons: Worship, paying vows, seeking religious purification, meeting friends, and discussing religious matters. Others went here to settle civil disputes. Money changers would have been in the outer area as well as “beggars” (Acts 3:1-3). Since a broad spectrum of people gathered at the temple—it was a very popular place—it did not take long to “fill Jerusalem” with the information about the gospel (Acts 5:28). Christians made full use of this ready-made meeting place (see Acts 2:46; 3:1-2, 8; 5:12, 20, 21, 25, 42), just as Jesus had done during some of His ministry (Mk. 14:49, “daily”). Because of the Jerusalem temple there was no immediate need to build church buildings.

The Corinthians were certainly not meeting at the temple and apparently not meeting in private homes (compare 20a with verse 22). They may have owned, rented, or used some kind of public meeting place for congregational worship. Perhaps a businessman offered his shop for a meeting place. The first known “church buildings” were not built until some time after 125 A.D (these were built at Edessa and Arbella, towns east of Damascus). These structures even had baptisteries to immerse the unsaved into Christ (CBL, Acts, p. 205). The lack of church buildings, as we think of them, may also be indicated in Jas. 2:2.

The word *synagogue* (*sunagoge*) in Jas. 2:2 is usually found in the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts and it normally meant “synagogue.” In fact, aside from the Gospels and Acts, this term is

found only in Jas. 2:2 and Rev. 2:9; 3:9. In Jas. 2 some scholars think *synagogue* refers to the *place* where Christians met. Others believe it refers to the *actual meetings* (assemblies) Christians had. Gingrich and Danker's comment on Jas. 2:2 was: "a Christian assembly-place can also be meant in Js. 2:2" (p. 783). Thayer (p. 600) said, "the name is transferred to an assembly of Christians formally gathered for religious purposes." Because James refers to the "seating" in the *synagogue* (Jas. 2:3), it seems "'meeting' and 'place of meeting' merge into one another here" (Kittel, 7:837-838). Adamson (James, p. 105) suggested that Christian and non-Christian Jews used, till the final rift between Jews and Christians, the word *synagogue* to describe their meeting place. He also suggested that in Jas. 2, as well as other first century situations, Christians and Jews clinging to the Law of Moses "both met in the same place for worship, as, for example, the Christians James and Paul used the Temple (Acts 21:26; 22:19)" (ibid).

Unlike today, there was more emphasis on evangelism than constructing church buildings (saving souls was the paramount concern). Also, since persecution was a common part of Christianity (Acts 8:1-4), erecting buildings would have been somewhat senseless (Christians may have had to flee an area before construction had been completed). Today many use church buildings as an expedient (they help us carry out the command to assemble, verse 18). When Christianity first began, this type of arrangement was not used. Buildings are not wrong, but we should remember they are just a tool to help carry out the work of the church.

A unified congregation: "*Into one place*" (the KJV rendering of verse 20) is based on three separate words from the Greek text (*epi, to, auto*). Thayer (p. 87) said this trio of words meant "*to the same place, in the same place*." Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 457) agreed, saying this expression meant "all assemble 'in the same place.'" These same three words are joined together in other places such as Mt. 22:34; Acts 1:15; 2:1, 44; 1 Cor. 14:23. Gingrich and Danker (p. 123) defined this expression as: "of place *at the same place, together*." These few words suggest the members of a local congregation all met together for worship. "The 'togetherness' of the early Christians was expressed principally in their meeting for public worship 'in church fellowship' or 'in the assembly'" (Brown, 3:1194). Unlike some congregations today, there were no "divided worship assemblies."

Into one place implies that separate worship services such as "children's church" are inconsistent with God's plan for corporate worship. A congregation may have separate Bible classes for all, but in worship, God intends for everyone to assemble together. Some groups seem to delight in having assemblies that separate family members from each other, but this is not God's plan. In fact, in a time when families may come to services in separate vehicles, leave in separate vehicles, and not come together for a family meal but once or twice a week (if that), every congregation should insist that every family member be part of the corporate worship service. If children are unruly, parents train them about the need to be part of God's spiritual family.

In addition to teaching against a divided assembly, *into one place* teaches Christians to physically assemble for worship (i.e. regular attendance at worship is part of living the Christian life). This author once studied with a mother and her teenage son and the young man expressed his delight at having a home Bible study. In his mind, a preacher coming to his house and discussing the Bible every week eliminated his obligation to attend services. Others have reasoned in a similar way (they want to "get their religion at home" instead of gathering with fellow Christians). God intends for Christians to physically assemble and then worship with fellow saints. Unless Christians cannot meet due to health reasons or something like bad weather, Christians assemble on the day God has prescribed and worship as He has directed.

Common questions about the Lord's Supper:

What about non-Christians partaking of the Lord's Supper? At the heart of this question is who is amenable or accountable to God's word. Are non-Christians accountable to God's laws? The answer to this question is *yes*. If the unsaved are not accountable to God's laws, there is no reason to evangelize. If we are to evangelize (Mk. 16:15), it is only because all people have violated God's laws (compare Rom.

3:23).

It is true that God's laws do not always apply to people in exactly the same way (laws about motherhood do not apply to men and there are laws about marriage that do not apply to single people or infants). All are accountable to God's New Testament and Peter demonstrated this in his preaching. He said people had "ignorantly" opposed Jesus (Acts 3:17), but this lack of knowledge did not excuse their murderous actions (Acts 3:13-15). Even though these people were ignorant of God's will concerning Jesus, they were still guilty of sin and were obligated to obey the gospel (Acts 3:19).

God's laws apply to non-Christians, but there are sometimes some special circumstances. In the case of the Lord's Supper, a non-Christian is obligated to observe the Lord's Supper (this is God's will), but some things must be done before he is qualified to observe it. Stated another way, a non-Christian is obligated but not "qualified" to observe the Communion. Such a person becomes qualified by becoming a Christian. If a non-Christian seeks to take the Lord's Supper, we should not attempt to stop him. Our job is to teach him so he can be part of the one body (10:17). After all, the Supper belongs to Jesus, not us. Paul said we are to examine ourselves during this part of the service, not others (verse 28).

What about offering the Lord's Supper on Sunday night to those who were not present Sunday morning? Some Christians may wake up ill on a Sunday morning but feel better later in the day and worship that evening. Others may have to work on a Sunday morning, sit with someone who was sick, or they may be involved in a situation like Jesus described in Mt. 5:24. Since many congregations meet twice for worship on Sunday (once in the morning and once in the evening), is it right or wrong to offer the Lord's Supper on Sunday evenings for those who missed the morning service?

Jesus hinted at the correct answer in Mt. 5:24: "*leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way, first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*" Although this information involved the Old Testament system of worship, we can learn from it (Rom. 15:4). Jesus' words suggest that Christians who cannot worship at the intended time should use a later opportunity. If this opportunity exists later in the day, then this later time is an acceptable time to partake of the Communion. Another reason to accept this conclusion is found in the Old Testament Passover, a feast that has some similarities to the Communion. If Jews could not partake of the Passover at the appointed time, there was a "make up" opportunity for them (Num. 9:10-11). Sunday evening can be a "make up" time to observe the Communion. Some may try to willfully skip Sunday mornings and rely on Sunday night for worship, but the Old Testament offered a strong warnings against misusing any make up opportunity (Num. 9:13). Wise Christians take this information seriously (Rom. 15:4).

What about children? Should they partake of the Lord's Supper? No. The Lord's Supper is for those who have committed sin and need a savior; children are in a state of sinlessness (Mt. 18:1-4). Although children have no need for the Lord's Supper, they are often curious about this event, especially when they see adults partaking of it week after week. Many thoughtful Christian parents and Bible school teachers have taken time outside of worship to let children taste the elements of the Lord's Supper, explain the significance of it, and remind children that a time will come when they will be old enough to participate in this weekly memorial.

Should the Lord's Supper be taken to people who cannot attend services? This is an important question, but it is also a poorly worded question because it indicates the Lord's Supper is the only thing that matters. A more accurate question would be: "Should we provide an opportunity for people to worship if they cannot attend the regular Sunday services in a local congregation?" The answer to this question is *yes*. Christians confined to nursing homes or in a hospital may want to worship on Sunday. Since worship includes but is not limited to the Lord's Supper, offering an abbreviated service to those who cannot assemble with the main meeting of the congregation is a demonstration of the golden rule (Mt. 7:12).

What if someone wants to make Communion bread? This is done in many places and the process is

very easy. One recipe that makes 200 one-inch squares of bread requires mixing together one and three fourths cups of bread flour, a half cup of olive oil, a quarter teaspoon of salt and a third of a cup of water. Roll out two ten inch by ten inch squares on baking sheets and then score the squares with a seamstress tracing wheel. Bake the mixture for ten minutes at 400 degrees or until lightly browned.

What if grape juice cannot be found? Grapes are available in most places, or it is possible to find sundried raisins. Since sundried raisins are dehydrated grapes dried by sunshine, they may be reconstituted to create the fruit of the vine (add water to these raisins and boil them). Strain and press the raisins to create the fruit of the vine. While this process does not produce fresh juice (there is no Biblical requirement for “fresh fruit of the vine”), it is unfermented juice and a way some missionaries have used to provide the supplies for the Lord’s Supper.

Is it permissible to partake of the fruit of the vine before the bread? Everything in the New Testament points to having the bread before the fruit of the vine. Even in Lk. 22:15-20 where we read about two “cups,” the cup associated with the Lord’s Supper is listed after the bread (Lk. 22:20).

If a congregation wants to reverse the process, we should ask why and there should be a very good answer before we consider changing a pattern that we find multiple times in the New Testament. Also, even if having the fruit of the vine before the bread is a “lawful” act, it is not expedient (1 Cor. 6:12). Reversing the two activities might wound the conscience of a fellow worshipper (1 Cor. 8:12). Also, reversing the process would seem to misrepresent what took place on the cross. Jesus gave His body for the sins of mankind, said the process was “finished” (Jn. 19:30), and *then* His side was pierced and out came blood and water (Jn. 19:34). Having the bread first reminds people about the true sequence of events at Calvary.

What about congregations that use just one cup? This is permissible because it has no noticeable impact on observing the Lord’s Supper. God has not legislated the number of containers to use, so we can choose how many cups to use, what type of cup to use, and even how to distribute the cup (it might be passed from person to person or people could file by a table and individually partake). Since the book of Acts shows that several thousand people were Christians (Acts 2:41, 47; 4:4; 5:14), it seems highly doubtful that a single cup was used in every instance. A similar thing is true for the bread; we might use a “loaf” or have something as small as a wafer. Also, we could pass the bread by hand or use a container. We are commanded to have the Lord’s Supper each Sunday using the bread and the fruit of the vine, but the specifics of this activity are left up to us.

Is it true that Mormons use bread and water for the Lord’s Supper? Yes. When the Mormon faith was first started, wine was used. Since Joseph Smith allegedly received a revelation saying he was “not to purchase wine or strong drink from his enemies” and “wine was not necessary for the Supper” (see their Doctrine and Covenants, 27:2-4), this religious group uses water. Water was first used in 1837, but this practice did not gain complete and world-wide acceptance until the 20th century (1912).

Can we really be sure that the Lord’s Supper is to be observed every Sunday? Yes. Christians are commanded to eat the Lord’s Supper (Mt. 26:26-28; 1 Cor. 11:17-29, 33-34), they are commanded to assemble (Heb. 10:25), and we find Christians eating the Lord’s Supper when they assembled (1 Cor. 11:20, 33). Since Sunday was a specific and appointed day to assemble (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and Paul taught the Lord’s “commandments” (1 Cor. 14:37), the example we have and must follow is assembling on the first day of the week and having the Lord’s Supper at these assemblies (compare Acts 20:7).

In the Romans letter we are told to “learn from the Old Testament” (Rom. 15:4). In the Old Testament we find that God gave specific instructions when dealing with memorials. As shown in the following chart, God told His people when and how often observances should be. If God has not given us any instructions about when and how to observe the Lord’s Supper (and this is the claim some make), it is the only appointed feast and memorial that God has not legislated. Did God carefully legislate the feasts that

did not directly involve His Son and then “go silent” on how to observe the Lord’s Supper, an event that commemorates the precious blood of Jesus (Mt. 26:28)? NO!

Memorial (feast)	Bible text	Day to observe it	How often
Passover	Ex. 12:1-11	14 th day of the first month	Annual
Trumpets	Lev. 23:24	1 st day of the seventh month	Annual
Atonement	Lev. 23:27	10 th day of the seventh month	Annual
Tabernacles	Lev. 23:39-44	15 th day of the seventh month	Annual
Sabbath Day	Ex. 20:8-11	7 th day of the week	Weekly
Lord’s Supper	Acts 20:7	1 st day of the week	Weekly

Since every Sunday worship includes the Lord’s Supper, we should never worship with a congregation that offers the Communion on a less frequent basis (i.e. once a month, once a quarter, every three months, once a year, or “on special holy days”). Some have said having the Lord’s Supper every week “makes it common,” so it is better to have it a few times a year. If this reasoning is valid, one wonders why this same logic is not applied to prayer. Too, since God has instructed to have the Communion ever week, our personal judgment on its frequency is irrelevant.

Is the Lord’s Supper a sacrament? “A sacrament (as used in Catholicism) is an act which has efficacy in itself and in the validity of the administrator (an authorized person) and requires no faith on the part of the one on whom it is administered” (Roberts, *The Letter of James*, p. 99). Many groups designate the Lord’s Supper as a *sacrament*, but the Bible never uses this terminology. God says this Supper is a “memorial” (1 Cor. 11:24). Instead of being a mystical or ritual act, the Supper is a devotional act of worship when Christians think back and mediate upon Jesus’ death. It is a time of self-examination, proof of our sincerity, and a renewal of our faith. The Supper reminds us of the past, the present, and even the future (verse 26).

Is the Lord’s Supper the Eucharist? Like the word *sacrament* in the preceding question, *eucharist* is not found in the Bible. This term comes from a Greek word meaning “a giving of thanks.” About 90 years after the church was established, men began to speak of “sacraments” in the Catholic sense of the word, but this type of meaning is never found in the New Testament. Those who “speak as the oracles of God” (1 Pet. 4:11) use Bible terminology to describe Bible things.

What if someone is allergic to grape juice? Although this is rare, this author is aware of at least one case in which someone made this claim. If this situation were to arise it should be remembered that God has not designated how much grape juice we must drink (a sip of juice is unlikely to injure anyone who is allergic to it). If this is not an acceptable option, the juice may be diluted with water and then the smallest possible amount of weakened juice will allow someone to properly observe this aspect of the Supper. Believers find some way to fulfill God’s instructions when faced with difficult or unusual circumstances (1 Cor. 4:6; 2 Jn. 9, 11).

What about the doctrines called transubstantiation and consubstantiation? See the commentary at the end of 10:16b for information on these beliefs.

Can we worship on days other than Sunday? Yes. There will be times when Christians may engage in worship on a day other than Sunday. Something like a youth devotional may occur on a Friday night and this type of occasion may rightly be called *worship*. James said if “any is cheerful” he can “sing praise” (Jas. 5:13). Through Jesus we can “offer up a sacrifice of praise continually” (Heb. 13:15). We can also listen to Bible teaching outside of Sunday worship as well as pray and even contribute money to benevolent works. Worship is not restricted to Sunday, but neither can we somehow remove worship from Sunday. We also have no authority or right to observe the Lord’s Supper on a day other than Sunday (the first day of the week). The Lord’s Supper is a specific act, for a specific day, and it is a weekly requirement for worship in “truth” (Jn. 4:24).

11:21: *for in your eating each one taketh before (other) his own supper; and one is hungry, and another is drunken.*

One of the most serious problems at Corinth was division (compare 1:10). Here Paul said, “*each one taketh before (other) his own supper.*” Brown (2:534) suggested, “Church-members from the slave class were apt to arrive too late and could therefore no longer take part in the table-fellowship of the meal proper (1 Cor. 11:21).” Kittel (2:34) said the fellowship meals were “profaned by the separation of individuals.” The Corinthians seem to have forgotten that our treatment of fellow Christians is our treatment of Jesus (Mt. 25:40).

In the Greek text *each one* appears first. Rather than wanting to be “first in line,” the Corinthians did not want to have a line; they wanted to eat the food they brought and refused to share their provisions with others. These Christians were selfish, were greedy, and had virtually no remorse about their bad behavior.

As noted in the commentary below, *taketh before (prolambano)* is a present tense verb, so this was an on-going (habitual) problem. Paul rebuked this practice in various ways, one of which is found in verse 24 (Jesus “broke” bread to represent His body and then *shared* this with His disciples). The Communion should have reminded these Christians of the need to be unified and told them their factions and divisions were sinful. The Corinthians also erred in not separating the Lord’s Supper from the potluck food (29b). Many things kept these Christians from worshipping in a decent and orderly manner (14:40).

Although the members of this congregation had been taught the truth about the Lord’s Supper, this chapter portrays “a greedy scramble to eat the provisions before it became possible ‘to make a general distribution of them, and without sharing them with your neighbors.’ As a result the poor who could not bring much, or those who could bring nothing and who were late in arriving, would go hungry” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:418). In this culture letting the rich eat first and be satisfied while neglecting the poor was “so common that it would have seemed natural for the church to do the same. The gospel, however, demanded a radical departure from custom. This is why the New Testament warns against giving honor to the wealthy (Jas. 2:1-26)” (Holman, 7:197). In fact, the force of the Greek text in Jas. 2:1 is “stop showing favoritism” (James’ readers wrestled with some of the same problems faced by the Corinthians).

The word translated “*take*” (*prolambano*) is a present tense verb and it meant people were eating before everyone else arrived (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:158). Thayer (p. 540) defined it as “*to take before.*” “Instead of practicing patience and self-control they were selfishly operating on the principle of first come, first served!” (CBL, GED, 5:307). The result of Christians not waiting for each other is given in 21b: Some were “*hungry*” and others were “*drunken.*” The *hungry* were probably the poor (these Christians may have been slaves and missed the meals because they could not control if or when they came to worship). The *drunken* may refer to wealthy Christians. Well-to-do members were able to come to worship at a time of their choosing and thus receive the best of what was brought. After the rich had eaten, little was left for any latecomers.

Hungry (peinao) is a very strong term that is used both literally and figuratively in the New Testament. In Mt. 4:2 *hungry* describes Jesus after He had fasted for 40 days. This word is also found in places like Rom. 12:20 and Rev. 7:16. In this book it occurs only here, verse 34, and 4:11. In this present text it is a

present tense verb and it means a certain group (possibly the rich) “pitilessly took no notice of the hungry among them” (Brown, 2:267).

Drunken (methuo) often described intoxication, but there is at least one instance (see Jn. 2:10) when it describes fullness (satisfaction). There is some difficulty in determining the word’s meaning in this verse. It is a present tense verb and it may simply form a contrast (i.e. some had their hunger *satisfied* and others were *unsatisfied*). If this interpretation is correct, *drunken* is a metonymy. “The one has more than is right, the other less” (Bengel, 2:229).

It is also possible that the Corinthians had introduced alcohol to the Lord’s Supper, perhaps because of pagan influence. Brown (1:514) noted how the Corinthians were surely familiar with the Dionysus cult, a religion that stressed “religious intoxication.” If this was Paul’s point, these Christians needed to realize that “Unlike the feasts of Dionysus, the Lord’s Supper is no place for intoxication. Intoxication is the direct opposite of spiritual drink” (Kittel, Abridged Edition, p. 576). Just as we would recoil at seeing a deacon serve as a bartender at a church potluck, or a preacher say, “Let’s have a beer before we study the Bible,” so Paul may have been telling the Corinthians that alcohol and the Christian life are not partners. A proverb says, “*First the man takes a drink, then the drink takes a drink, then the drink takes the man.*” Many people have thought *they were finished with alcohol*, but they came to realize *alcohol was not finished with them*.

If alcohol was being brought to services, it was likely being brought by the rich. “The excessive drinking of intoxicants was a common vice among the ancient Jews and other early peoples. But since intoxicants were so expensive, it was particularly a practice of the rich (Amos 6:6; 4:1; 2:8)” (Baker’s Dictionary of New Testament Theology, p. 174). If alcohol was being brought and used, the Corinthians were exposing former drunkards (compare 1 Cor. 6:10-11) to something that had formerly enslaved them. Acting in this manner was another demonstration of thoughtless and unloving behavior. Since this church was plagued with severe problems and their *supper* in worship was not truly the *Lord’s Supper*, Paul took drastic steps to correct things. Before studying these corrections (which begin in verse 22), it is worthwhile to consider the following points of application which are adopted from Albert Barnes (First Corinthians, p. 213).

1. If the Corinthians were intoxicated during times of worship, their behavior cannot be excused. We can, however, remember that at least some of them had formerly been heathens, and forsaking their old ways was surely difficult. Past habits are often hard to break, so we want to form the best habits we can as early as possible in life.
2. Competent and godly Christians had taught the Corinthians, but this did not keep them from being influenced by false teachers or evil practices. Today, no matter how well we teach other Christians, there is no guarantee that converts will hold to the truth when they are exposed to false doctrine, false teachers or sin. Too, in the best congregations there will be “church problems.” Corinth shows that local congregations are never perfect places.
3. This letter tells us that Christian worship can be corrupted. When this happens a congregation must make things right or eventually be rejected by God (Rev. 2:5). Paul’s condemnation of the Corinthian worship proves that corrupted worship (whether deviations are small or great) is wrong. We stay true to God by receiving and heeding regular instruction from sound gospel teaching, personal study, and by wise and watchful elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Acts 20:17, 31). Elders “shepherd the flock” (1 Pet. 5:1-3).

Introduction to 11:22 and eating in a church building:

As noted several times in the preceding material, the Corinthians had turned the Lord’s Supper into a common meal and apparently joined it with some type of potluck meal. Instead of focusing on worship, the emphasis was on getting a full stomach, even if it meant others had to go hungry (verse 21). Things were so bad Paul said the Corinthians were “*despising*” (*kataphroneo*) the church. *Despising* meant “humiliating” or “shaming.” Fellow Christians were being humiliated by greedy brethren who refused to share their food (verse 21).

Paul not only identified the problem, he provided a solution. He used a rhetorical question (“*have ye not houses to eat and drink in?*”) to say the bad behavior had to stop. Paul knew these Christians had homes because he had been at Corinth for 18 months (Acts 18:1, 11). His question was designed to prick the Corinthians’ conscience so their worship problems would be corrected. If these Christians could not or would not separate the common food from the Lord’s Supper and wait for others (verse 33), they were to keep their potluck food at home and eat it there (verse 34). The thought is akin to a parent who says to a child, “If you can’t play nicely, you can’t play here.”

The information in this part of the chapter was given to solve a particular problem, but some well meaning Christians have applied this material in a rather unusual way (i.e. they believe it is wrong for Christians to eat in a church building). This conclusion has always perplexed this author because “church buildings” (places specifically constructed for Christians to meet) did not come into existence until approximately 125 A.D.—almost seventy years after this letter was written! Nowhere in this chapter or anywhere else in the Bible do we read that “eating in a church building is wrong.” *Despising the church* did not mean *despising the meeting house* (the church building). *Despising the church* meant *despising the people* (Christians). The sin was the abuse of the Lord’s Supper, not eating in the physical structure where these Christians met. In fact, the place where Christians meet is unimportant because God is no longer worshipped in a special place (Jn. 4:21-23; Acts 17:24).

The first Christians often met in the temple (Acts 2:46) as well as private homes (Rom. 16:5). If it is wrong to eat in the place where Christians assemble, and Christians meet in someone’s home, it would be wrong for people to eat in their home. Some have tried to counter this argument by saying this is permissible, but Christians are forbidden from eating in a building that has been constructed with “church funds” (treasury money). If this revised argument is true, what about a parsonage? Since church funds have often been used to construct a house for preachers, and congregations have sometimes met in these homes for worship, why is it not wrong to eat in a preacher’s house built with church funds? If a congregation loses its building due to a fire and begins to meet in their preacher’s home, would not consistency demand that the congregation refrain from having a “fellowship meal” in that home? In fact,

how could a preacher eat his food in such a place since the building was built with funds from the church treasury? Christians who are conscientiously bothered by eating in the place where they worship have a right to their belief (see this author's introductory comments on Rom. 14 as well as the commentary on Rom. 14:1-2), but there should be no attempt to bind this opinion on others. For those who wonder about whether or not it is right to eat in a building where Christians meet, the following five points are offered for consideration.

1. The Lord ate the Passover meal with His disciples (Lk. 22:12-20) in the same house where He introduced the Lord's Supper (i.e. a feast meal and the Lord's Supper were eaten in the same place). Since Jesus was able to "eat a meal" in the same place where He instituted the Lord's Supper, why do some teach that we must follow the example of the Supper's institution, but we are prohibited from following Jesus' example of also eating other food in this same structure?

2. Having the Passover meal and instituting the Lord's Supper in the same location (Lk. 22:12-20f) was an example good stewardship. God commands Christians to be good stewards (1 Cor. 4:2). If we build a building that costs hundreds of thousands of dollars, and we only use it three times a week for 60 minutes each time for worship and Bible study, are we being good stewards? Could not Christians choose to use a building constructed with treasury funds for fellowship (Acts 2:42) and good works (Tit. 2:14)? If so, what kinds of activities may be categorized as *fellowship* and *good works*? Are not Christians allowed to be like Paul in Acts 20:7, 11? He worshipped with Christians *and ate a meal in this same location*.

3. We are not told where the Corinthians were meeting. Some assume it was a "church building" as we now use this terminology, but there is no proof of this. They may have rented a room or building, met in a home, assembled in a member's place of business, or met in an open and public area such as a park. If these Christians were meeting in a place such as a public park, would they have been forbidden from bringing food to that place and having a picnic after the worship concluded? Is this the significance of verses 22a and 34a?

4. If it is wrong to eat and drink in a church building because it is built with "church funds," how can it be right for a mother to nurse or bottle feed her baby in this type of structure? How can a parent give his or her child a "snack" and not violate the "eating in the building rule" that some claim is taught in 1 Cor. 11? This author has been told that these kinds of things "don't count," but how can this be? Just as we would not say "a little fornication is okay," how can we say "a little eating is okay?" If something is wrong, is it not wrong in every way, form and degree? Too, "drinking" is also prohibited in 1 Cor. 11:22. Based on this fact, how can a drinking fountain be installed in a church building? If it is argued that this is a state requirement, does not obedience to this law elevate man's law above God's law (Acts 5:29)?

5. Verse 22 says Christians have "*houses*" to "*eat and drink in*" and verse 30 says those who are "*hungry*" are to "*eat at home*." If this chapter contains legislation about where Christians can eat food, and this is what some believe, people should always "eat at home." If one believes this chapter forbids eating food in a church building, logic demands that they also avoid eating at a restaurant, a public park, or anywhere else besides their *home*.

This author has known fine Christians who believe it is wrong to eat in a building and he has encouraged them to maintain that conviction lest their conscience be wounded (Rom. 14:15, 17, 21). This author also hopes that Bible believing people will carefully consider what this chapter truly teaches: Christians either had to wait for all to come together and eat as a group (verse 33) or keep their food at home (verse 34). Acting in this manner would help end the division (verse 19) and assure that all Christians were included in the fellowship meals (verse 21).

11:22: *What, have ye not houses to eat and to drink in? or despise ye the church of God, and put them to*

shame that have not? What shall I say to you? shall I praise you? In this I praise you not.

The word translated “*despise*” (*kataphroneo*) is used nine times in the New Testament. Basic definitions for this term are *despise, treat scornfully, and show contempt*. In this verse *despise* is a present tense verb and it describes “unworthy conduct at the Lord’s Supper” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 2:270). Here it seems the Corinthians were *despising* the church (fellow Christians) by not sharing their potluck food (perhaps poor Christians were being overlooked, verse 21). Rather than deal with the *right* to eat together, Paul focused on *how* Christians were eating together and *what* was being done at the fellowship meals. Since not everyone was eating at the same time, people were not sharing, some were filled and others went hungry, and the Communion was apparently not being separated from the potluck food, things were in a state of chaos. These Christians had to either correct the problems or eat at home. One way or another, the abuses had to stop.

The Beacon Bible Commentary (8:419) provided a good summary of how the love feasts were combined with the Communion: “First, they had changed a spiritual observance into a kind of holiday feast. The purpose of the Communion was to remind the believers of the death of Christ and of the redemptive results of His suffering. If the people wanted to satisfy their hunger or to have a festive meal, they should do so on another occasion.” This could have been done before or after the worship service. Second, by their selfishness the more wealthy members embarrassed and humiliated the poor among the believers. “This combination of sins led Paul to the simplest yet most complete statement of condemnation: **What shall I say to you? shall I praise you in this? I praise you not**” (ibid). The matter was so serious that Paul asked several probing questions in verse 22.

In the middle of this verse there is a reference to “*them that have not*” (this may describe the poor). The word translated *shame* (*kataischuno*) is also found in verses 4-5 (“*dishonor*”). Here *shame* is a present tense verb and it meant acting in a way that humiliates or disgraces fellow Christians (CBL, GED, 3:257); wealthy Christians apparently *shamed* the poor. When the information in 22b is compared with verses 18-19, it seems this congregation was divided into social classes. There were rich and poor Christians and the rich were not sharing their food. James said this type of behavior is an appalling sin (Jas. 2:5, 9-10, 13).

Paul’s question about having *houses to eat and to drink in* is expressed in such a way that a negative answer is expected. In other words, ““You surely do not mean that you have no houses for eating and drinking? And yet this is what your actions imply” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 460). These Christians “*had* houses where they could eat and drink their fill, but by eating and drinking their fill during the meeting of the congregation and by disregarding the poor they acted as though they had no houses” (ibid). The problem was not “eating in a church building” as some have thought. The issue was flagrant disregard for fellow Christians who were probably poor. The following verses also indicate the Communion was being mixed with table food.

The lack of courtesy and love for the poor was so bad Paul also said, “*I praise you not.*” This was equivalent to saying, “I condemn your conduct.” *I praise you not* is “a strong litotes for: ‘I blame you’” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 461). The word rendered *praise* (*epaineo*) is also used in verse 2 where it has a positive sense; here (as well as verse 17) it is negative.

The rich are often treated well (compare Jas. 2:1-4), but this is not always true with the poor and the outcasts in society. People need to know that God expects every single Christian to be treated well and that “God looks especially upon the poor. He does not put them to shame, nor will he have them put to shame by others, James 1:9, 10; 2:2-9. God is no respecter of persons” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 460). Certainly Jesus shows us the value of all people by His interaction with people His society rejected: Lepers, prostitutes, tax collectors, etc.

Warren Wiersbe (First Corinthians, p. 605) told of a time when he attended a Sunday picnic. “The person in charge of the games set up a relay that involved various people throwing eggs to each other as they backed farther and farther apart. Of course, the farther the teams went from each other, the harder the participants had to throw the eggs and the results were hilarious.” Two Sunday school children watched “the eggs with great fascination. They came from a poor family that probably rarely ate eggs because they

could not afford them. The little girl went to the lady leading the games and asked, ‘If there are any eggs left over, can my brother and I take them home?’ Wisely, the lady stopped the game before it was really over, awarded the prizes, and gave all the eggs to the two children. She knew that it was wrong for some of the saints to have a good time at the expense of others.” This was one of the lessons Paul wanted the Corinthians to learn. Another lesson was *not discerning the Lord’s body* (verse 29).

Some may think the Lord’s Supper described in the following verses has no real connection with the fellowship meals described here in verses 17-22, but this is incorrect. In describing the Lord’s Supper Paul explained how Jesus gave Himself for others. Since Jesus was willing to give His life for people, how could the Corinthians not share their food one with another? Refusing to share at the potlucks was a terrible sin. Having potlucks and properly sharing food with one another is actually a demonstration of the oneness Christians have in and through Christ.

11:23: *For I received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which he was betrayed took bread;*

This verse is very similar to 1 Cor. 15:3 (Paul “*received*” information and “*delivered*” it to the Corinthians). In this book, *received* (*paralambano*) is found only here, 1 Cor. 15:1, 3. Kittel (4:13) said in each of these passages *received* means “‘to receive in fixed form, in the chain of Christian tradition,’ the account of the institution of the Lord’s Supper and of the passion, death and resurrection of Jesus.” That is, Paul had received personal instruction from Jesus concerning the Lord’s Supper and Jesus’ death (compare Gal. 1:11-12). In the New Testament we find several examples of Jesus directly revealing Himself to Paul (see Acts 9:1-11; 18:9-10; 22:17-21; 23:11; 2 Cor. 12:7-9; Gal. 2:2).

Kittel’s definition in the preceding paragraph implies that divine revelation (the Bible) is never subject to change or alteration (for an illustration of how carefully the Bible has been preserved, see the commentary on 13:3). Paul certainly did not want to change any part of the information he had received. He sought to be a faithful steward with God’s revelation to him (1 Cor. 4:1-2) and he condemned any man or angel that would seek to alter it (Gal. 1:8-9) because he had received the “Lord’s commandments” (14:37). Since those who received this letter were failing to abide by all he taught them, here “Paul contrasts himself with the Corinthians. What they had received from him is different from what they are now practicing in Corinth” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 461). Today it is essential to ask if we also are faithful or unfaithful stewards of what has been *delivered* to us. If we do not know the New Testament very well, or we are not faithfully following it, we will not fare very well at the final judgment (Jn. 12:48).

Delivered (*paradidomi*) is used twice in this verse: In the first part of this passage we find that Paul *delivered* the facts of the gospel to the Corinthians. This means “*pass on* teaching and modes of conduct (for faithful observance, 1 Cor. 11:2, 23a; 15:3)” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 3:20). Both *received* and *delivered* indicate there is a “fixed form” for the Communion and all other matters associated with New Testament worship, just as there was a “fixed form” for Old Testament worship. Stated another way, God has a “pattern” for man to follow (2 Tim. 1:13, ASV). Since there is a God given pattern—a divine blueprint, it is wrong to do things in the way we want or think best.

Paul was not present at the institution of the Lord’s Supper, but he knew how it was instituted and how it should be observed by Christians. Here he said he had received this information directly from “*the Lord*” (this knowledge did not come from any earthly source). Paul knew Jesus took “*bread*” and gave it to the apostles at what is commonly called the “Last Supper.” Because the Supper was instituted at Passover time, and Jews removed all leaven from their houses during this period (Ex. 12:8, 15f; Mt. 26:17), it seems almost indisputable that unleavened bread was used to institute the Lord’s Supper (for more information on this topic see the commentary on Lk. 22 in section 35 of the Gospels commentary).

Paul also knew Jesus was “*betrayed*” (23b). This is the same term translated *delivered* in the first part of the verse. Since *betrayed* is an imperfect tense verb, Jesus was *being betrayed* during the Last Supper (as the Supper progressed, the betrayal progressed). This betrayal was very sad, but it certainly did not surprise Jesus (see Jn. 6:64). In fact, about a year prior to this time (Mt. 17:22), Jesus said He was being

“delivered up” (present tense). In Mt. 17 Jesus used the present tense to describe the certainty of His death. Being deity (Jn. 1:1) Jesus had divine foreknowledge and that foreknowledge allowed Him to know what the future held for Him (compare Acts 2:23 and 1 Pet. 1:19-20).

Paul specifically called attention to the “*night*” in which he was betrayed. Several commentators have offered a variety of thoughts on this part of the verse, but this author believes The Church’s Bible (p. 187) correctly understands the point. “We remember especially the last words of those who are departing in this life, and if any of their heirs dare to transgress such commands, we shame them by saying: ‘Consider that your father left behind this parting word to you, and he kept enjoining these things right up to the night he was about to pass away.’ That is what Paul does here.” *Night* and *betrayal* describe how Jesus was “determined to make this new covenant with His people and fulfill the entire will of God even in the dark shadow of betrayal and death” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 405).

11:24: *and when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, This is my body, which is for you: this do in remembrance of me.*

Paul knew many things about the institution of the Lord’s Supper (verse 23) and this knowledge included the specifics of how it was instituted. Paul knew Jesus “*took*” bread (23b) and gave “*thanks*” for it (i.e. He expressed appreciation for it). Paul also knew, although he was not actually present at this meal, that Jesus also “*brake*” (*klao*) this bread and said, “*This is my body.*” Some manuscripts (see the KJV translation) contain three simple commands : “Take, eat, do” (as noted below, *do* is a present tense verb—an on-going action).

Give thanks (*eucharisteo*) is a fairly common New Testament verb. It is the word Jesus used when expressing appreciation for seven loaves and fish (Mt. 15:36). We also find this term in the story of the ten lepers (only one came back and “gave thanks,” Lk. 17:16). This word is associated with Paul “giving thanks” for food (Acts 27:35) as well as “unthankful” people (Rom. 1:21). The Bible has much to say about thanksgiving and every Christian should be especially grateful that Jesus died and we have a weekly way to remember His sacrifice.

Brake (*klao*) means Jesus “did this for the purpose of distribution only. No parallel such as spilling or pouring occurs in the case of the wine. The breaking is incidental” (Lenski, First Corinthians, p. 465). Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 465) also noted how “Loaves could not be baked from unleavened dough. Jesus had no ‘loaf,’ he had only a thin, flat cake of bread such as are still baked and eaten in the Holy Land quite generally; pieces of these were broken off when eating.”

Those who use the KJV will see that *brake* (*klao*) is used a second time at the end of this verse (“*is broken for you*”). There is some textual evidence for this word being used again at the end of the verse and the NKJV also includes it. We know that none of Jesus’ bones were literally broken (Jn. 19:36), but because His body was so badly battered, there is a sense in which we can say His body was *figuratively* broken. Psalm 22:14 predicted Jesus’ bones would be “out of joint,” but this does not mean any bones were literally broken. Translations such as the ASV, NASB, and NIV omit “*Take, eat*” and “*broken for you.*” These versions usually render the thought something like: “*which is for you.*”

The words *for you* remind Bible students of Isa. 53:5. Jesus died for *us*; He was wounded for *our* transgressions; He died on *our* behalf. Our sins put Jesus on the cross. Because Jesus died for us, He has every right to have us observe the Communion once a week, on His day, *in remembrance of Him*. We should eagerly look forward to this activity every Sunday because it reminds us of the available forgiveness through His blood. Here Paul expressed the every Sunday practice of the Lord’s Supper with a present tense verb (“*do*”). For more information on why the Lord’s Supper is to be observed every Sunday, see the introductory comments on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a, and the commentary on 11:20b.

The word “*remembrance*” (*anamnesis*) may be understood as “*recollection*” (Thayer, p. 40). Of the four times this term occurs in the New Testament (Lk. 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:24, 25; Heb. 10:3), three of the passages refer to the Lord’s Supper. Instead of having the Supper in “*memory*” of Jesus, there is to be an actual *remembrance*. As human beings we are often forgetful and sometimes we forget important things.

Even in cases where a loved one has died, memories can fade with time. To help us remember those we love and hold in high esteem, we frequently rely upon a memorial or commemorative act. Cemeteries often serve as a memorial. Some visit a grave site to help them remember loved ones who have died. In the case of Christianity, people do not visit a grave or send flowers. Christians observe the Lord's Supper and will do this until Jesus returns (verse 26). Since this remembrance was instituted more than 2,000 years ago, Christians around the world have partaken of this act more than 100,000 times.

The following list is by no means exhaustive, but it does set forth some of the things we should *remember* each time we partake of the Communion.

- We live under a New Testament that is sealed with Jesus' blood (Lk. 22:20).
- Jesus died for the church and purchased it with His blood (Acts 20:28).
- Jesus did this willingly (Jn. 1:29) because the Godhead loves mankind (Jn. 3:16).
- We remember how our sins helped send Jesus to the cross.
- The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are *one body* (1 Cor. 10:17).
- Since a dead savior cannot save us, the Supper reminds us of the resurrection.
- The Communion reminds us that Jesus will one day return for us (verse 26b).
- *Remembrance* tells us to be awake, mentally alert, and focused.
- The Lord's Supper reminds us that we are owned by Jesus (Rom. 6:13).
- It reminds us to examine ourselves (verse 29).
- It reminds us that we are in the presence of the true and living God (Heb. 10:31).

A story is told about a prisoner who was immersed into Christ (Gal. 3:27) for the forgiveness of his sins (Acts 2:38). Unlike most people this man did not immediately exit the baptistery. He stood in the water and wept for a long time. He knew his sins were many and he was overwhelmed at God's willingness to extend forgiveness to him. We may not ever be arrested for a crime, but in a spiritual sense we are guilty of multiple horrible acts (sin). We may not be on the "most wanted" list of a law enforcement agency, but we have sinned against a holy and just God and the Lord's Supper reminds us of who we were and what God has done for us. The Lord's Supper is not a time to emphasize our guilt; it is a time to reflect on the greatness of God's grace, love and mercy to those who obey Him (Mt. 7:21). The Supper is a regular reminder to the saved of how their names are in the book of life and they have been freed from an eternal condemnation in hell.

If we understand what the Lord's Supper signifies and it is observed in the right manner, it will never become commonplace. Neither will we be guilty of partaking of it in an unworthy manner (verse 27, ASV). The freshness and importance of this act has no good earthly parallel, but I do like a story involving a soldier from the first World War. This man had not received any mail from home in several months and he was anxiously awaiting a letter. When some correspondence finally arrived, he practically ripped it open. He was so eager to get the letter he opened the package upside down and out fell a few pieces of grass. A comrade saw the grass and sneered, "It looks like someone played a joke on you and sent you some dried weeds." The soldier read his letter, put it in his pocket, and then picked up the fallen grass. He held the dead grass for a while and then also put it in his pocket. He then told his buddy his mother had died and the letter was from his sister—she had included grass from the place where his mother had been buried. His sister wanted him to have something to remember his mother, but she did not want to send something valuable into the war zone. If we can understand how a few pieces of dried grass reminded a son of his mother's love, we can understand how bread and fruit of the vine—also very simple elements—can remind us of what God has done for the world.

This verse implies several things. First, *remembering* what Jesus did suggests that those who come to worship should know what the Lord's Supper represents (it may be useful to describe this part of the worship before the bread and the fruit of the vine are distributed). Second, those participating in this part of the worship, as well as every other part, should have a proper mindset (compare verse 27). Third, this and every other aspect of worship is serious—worship is the wrong time for humor. Fourth, if we make

some comments before passing the Communion elements, we should remember that we can offer illustrations but nothing can ever be truly compared with what Jesus did.

11:25a: *In like manner also the cup, after supper, saying, This cup*

“*In like manner*” (“*After the same manner*,” KJV) tells us Jesus treated the cup just as He treated the bread (verse 24). The bread was given during the course of the meal and the fruit of the vine was given at the conclusion of the meal. This is why the KJV says, “*when he had supped*” (compare Lk. 22:20, *after supper*). Paul not only drew a distinction between the two acts associated with the Lord’s Supper, he said they were not observed back-to-back. The bread was given to the disciples *during the meal* (Mk. 14:22; Mt. 26:26; Lk. 22:20), but the cup was given “*after the supper*” (1 Cor. 11:25, ASV). There was a type of “intermission” between the two acts at the Passover meal.

Jesus may have clearly separated the bread from the fruit of the vine to help the disciples absorb the significance of that evening. Barnes (First Corinthians, p. 215) suggested this was done to “show them that it could not be, as they seemed to have supposed, an occasion of feasting. It was *after* the supper, and was therefore to be observed in a distinct manner.” MacKnight (p. 182) said: “This circumstance is mentioned, to shew that the Lord’s supper is not intended for the refreshment of the body, but, as we are told ver. 26 for perpetuating the memory of Christ’s death.” Summers (Luke, p. 276) was even more to the point: “It was Luke’s way of making clear that this eating of bread and drinking of wine was not a part of the Passover Supper which had ended. This rite of eating and drinking pointed, not back to a distant past with its sacrifice, but to the future, a future so immediate that it was the next day. It pointed to a sacrifice which would fulfill all that had been foreshadowed in all those previous Passovers and sacrifices in Israel.” Compare Mt. 26:29.

The word *cup* (*poterion*) is used both literally (Mt. 10:42) and figuratively (Mt. 20:22) in the Bible. In general terms *cup* “functions as a metaphor for an individual’s fate. In Psalm 16, the psalmist credits the Lord with assigning his ‘portion and cup’ in life. Psalm 23 equates an abundant life with an overflowing cup, a potent image in a semiarid world. The culmination of the positive image of the cup is in Psalm 116. Here the psalmist raises the cup of salvation as a thank offering to God, in effect offering the sum of his life to his lord” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 138). Here in the first part of verse 25, since *cup* is preceded by a definite article, it seems Paul was describing the one used in the Passover celebration. This *cup* “stands, by metonymy, for what it contains” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 695).

The second reference to the *cup* denotes Jesus’ blood shed on our behalf (the Lord’s death has allowed the covenant to be changed, Heb. 9:15-17 and see the comments on 25b below). Israel had a covenant inaugurated with the blood of animals (Heb. 9:18), but Jesus’ blood validated the New Testament (Heb. 12:24). In the latter part of this verse *cup* symbolizes the pain, degradation, and death Jesus experienced plus the available benefits from His sacrifice. Jesus had spoken of this *cup* prior to instituting the Lord’s Supper (Mk. 10:38) and when it was time for Him to suffer and die, He fully drank of this *cup*. He said the apostles would also suffer great hardship (Mk. 10:39). “By drinking of the cup God placed before him, Christ transforms the cup of wrath into the cup of life. This transformation is foreshadowed at the last supper” (Baker Theological Dictionary of the Bible, p. 139).

11:25b: *is the new covenant in my blood:*

Paul also knew Jesus had said the “*cup*” (see the comments on 25a) would be the “*new covenant in my blood*.” While the ASV uses the word *covenant*, the KJV uses the word *testament*. The ASV and KJV repeat this translation difference in places such as Mt. 26:28; Mk. 14:24; Lk. 22:20 (in these verses the ASV says “covenant” and the KJV says “testament”).

Whether we use the word *covenant* or *testament*, it is important to realize that God has made several *covenants* (agreements) with man. According to Hos. 6:7, God had a covenant with Adam. There was a covenant with Noah (Gen. 6:18; 9:11) as well as Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3; Acts 7:8). Most are aware of the covenant God made with the Jewish people—the covenant often referred to as the “Old Testament.” In the book of Hebrews this latter covenant is called the “first covenant” (Heb. 8:7, 13; 9:1, 15, 18; 10:9). The Old Testament with Israel was like a “national constitution,” though not every book in the Old Testament was part of God’s covenant (contract) with Israel (some sections of the Old Testament consist

of history, poetry, and prophecy). Based on verses like Deut. 4:11-13, it seems the Old Testament covenant was essentially the Ten Commandments. The old covenant with Israel may have also included the information found in Ex. 20-23.

The Old Testament was specifically designed for the Jewish people (Heb. 8:8-9) and it was a temporary arrangement (Jer. 31:31). Paul described the Old Testament as lasting “till” Jesus came (Gal. 3:19 + Gal. 3:16). Since Jesus has come, the Old Testament covenant has been removed. Paul said Jesus’ death “nailed the Old Testament to the cross” and took it out of the way (Col. 2:14). Stated another way, the entire Old Testament (and this includes the Ten Commandments) has been replaced by the *New Testament* (Rom. 7:1-4; 10:4). In the New Testament we find laws that are similar to nine of the Ten Commandments. For instance, children must “obey their parents” because this is part of the New Testament (Eph. 6:1). Murder is still wrong, as is covetousness and adultery, but these things are prohibited because of the New Testament (Rom. 13:9). All people are now under a new law because the Ten Commandments have been replaced. This new way also includes a “new day.” As noted in the introductory comments on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a, and the commentary on 11:20b, Sunday (the “first day of the week”) is now the special day of every week instead of “the Sabbath” (Saturday). For many of the differences between the Old Testament and the New Testament, see the chart located in the commentary on Heb. 3:1.

In the New Testament there is more than one word for *covenant*. One term (*suntheke*) described an agreement between equals. This word was used for agreements between states, marriages, and other relationships involving people. For examples of how this word is used see Lk. 22:5; Jn. 9:22 (“had agreed”); Acts 23:20 (“have agreed”); 24:9 (“assented,” KJV). This word describes terms and conditions that could be altered. Since God and man are not on equal terms, and God’s covenant with man cannot be altered, this word is never used to describe God’s final covenant with man (i.e. the “New Testament”).

A second word for *covenant* (*diatheke*) was often used to describe a will (something like a person’s last will and testament). It involved situations where the agreeing parties were *not equal* and the terms of the agreement *could not be altered*. A person could refuse to participate in the agreement, but the terms of the arrangement could not be altered or negotiated. Stated another way, those who were offered this type of agreement had to accept all the terms or reject the entire offer. This is the term used here in 1 Cor. 11:25. This word is also found in the Septuagint translation of Jer. 31:31. Paul also used this word in 2 Cor. 3:6 to say he and others had become ministers of a “new covenant.” We find this word being used again in 2 Cor. 3:14—there Paul again spoke of the *old* covenant (i.e. the covenant which included the Ten Commandments). Paul said the Old Testament has been replaced (it is “done away in Christ”).

The old covenant has not only been replaced with the New Testament, the New Testament is described as a *better covenant* (Heb. 7:22). In simple terms the word *covenant* “sums up our ‘debt’ and our ‘duty’ to God” (Barclay, *New Testament Words*, p. 66). “We have a ‘duty’ because we have to accept God’s conditions of love and faith and obedience, and we cannot alter them” (ibid). The Lord’s Supper is a weekly reminder that we have “signed a deal with God” and we have covenant obligations that we must fulfill (compare Heb. 5:9; 1 Jn. 3:22). We do not “work our way to heaven” (Tit. 3:5), but we must abide by the terms of God’s covenant or we will not be saved.

Jesus said this new covenant was made “*in my blood*.” Just as the Old Testament (covenant) was sealed with animal blood (Ex. 24:8), so the new covenant has been ratified by Jesus’ *blood* (compare Heb. 9:18-21). *Blood* is a key part of God’s new and final agreement with man. We are *loosed* (washed) from our sins through the Lord’s blood (Rev. 1:5) and it is by Jesus’ blood that man is *justified* from sin (Rom. 5:9). It is the Lord’s blood that brings us *nigh* to God (Eph. 2:13), gives us *peace* (Col. 1:20), and *cleanses the conscience* (Heb. 9:14). Since the New Testament is a covenant that has literally been written “in blood,” this is one more reason to have the Lord’s Supper each Sunday. Every Sunday Communion continually reminds us that we have a New Testament, this covenant was instituted by Jesus’ death on the cross, the Old Testament covenant has been removed, and our new agreement with God is a *glorious* arrangement (2 Cor. 3:8-9).

What Paul described in this verse stands in stark contrast to religious groups that partake of the Lord’s Supper but still follow some parts of the Old Testament such as tithing, having a special priesthood,

Sabbath day observance, etc. How can people partake of the Lord's Supper (an act that proclaims we live under a New Testament), but still live by one or more parts of the Old Testament, including the Ten Commandments? Observing any part of the Old Testament denies that Jesus brought a new covenant and that all men are to now serve God according to the New Testament system. We can certainly learn from the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4), but the Old Testament laws, regulations and commandments can no longer be followed if we want God's approval. For more information on the duration of the Old Testament and the lasting nature of the New Testament, see the commentaries on 2 Cor. 3 and Rom. 7.

A final point relates to covenant membership. Under the Old Testament system people became members of God's covenant the day they were born. They learned about their covenant relationship with God as they matured (Heb. 8:11). The New Testament operates in a totally opposite way. People must first be taught about God and His will and *then* they become members of the new covenant after they know the terms of the covenant and comply with those terms (Mk. 16:15-16). Under the Old Testament, it was membership first and faith later. With the New Testament, faith comes first (Heb. 11:6). In addition to requiring *faith* (belief), membership in God's new covenant requires *repentance* (Lk. 13:3; Acts 17:30) and *confessing Christ* (Rom. 10:9-10). *Baptism* (Gal. 3:27) *for the forgiveness of sins* (Acts 2:38) is also required for covenant membership. In baptism we contact the benefits of Jesus' blood (Rom. 6:1-4), the basis for the New Testament. Being "buried with Christ in baptism" (Col. 2:12) allows Jesus to add a person to His church (Acts 2:47, KJV) and thus receive all the spiritual blessings associated with the new covenant (Eph. 1:3).

11:25c: *this do, as often as ye drink (it), in remembrance of me.*

When Christians observe the Lord's Supper they are to "*remember*" (*anamnesis*) Jesus. *Remembrance* is found only here, verse 24, Lk. 22:19 and Heb. 10:3 and it may be defined as "memory." In Classical Greek *remembrance* was "used to signify past events that may have been forgotten or pushed to the back of one's mind and are now brought to the memory by a particular event" (CBL, GED, 1:234). This word tells us heaven does not want us to forget about Jesus' sacrifice or remember it on an infrequent basis.

Jesus said our *remembrance* is to occur "*as often as*" we *eat the bread and drink the cup* (26a). *As often as* implies the Lord's Supper is to be observed on a regular basis. As shown in the introductory commentary on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a and the commentary on 11:20b, first century Christians observed the Lord's Supper every Sunday. Here Paul again describes this on-going *remembrance* by using two present tense verbs: "do" ("keep doing") and "drink" ("keep drinking"). We meet every Sunday to worship and this time includes observing the Lord's Supper.

Our *remembrance* of Jesus includes many things: Who He is, what He did, how He did it, why He did it, etc. Remembering Him is right because without Him and His sacrifice, there would be no hope. If Jesus had not come into the world as a man, He would not have died and we would not have the forgiveness of sins. If He had not lived a sinless life, He would not be a perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world (Jn. 1:29). If He had not been raised from the dead, we would have no hope because we need a living and resurrected savior (Rom. 1:4). Every week the Lord's Supper reminds Christians that God loved them while they were yet sinners (Rom. 5:8) and God has made salvation available to all who will obey the terms of his covenant (Heb. 5:9).

Under the Old Testament system worshippers *remembered* their sins year after year (Heb. 10:3). With the New Testament, every Sunday Communion reminds Christians of how their sins are continually *removed* by obeying Christ (1 Jn. 1:7) and that all people now have access to the "perfect law of liberty" (Jas. 1:25), the New Testament. When we realize what the Lord's Supper is and of what it reminds people, even if we had no other information about the frequency of its observance, common sense would tell us to engage in this practice every Sunday.

11:26: *For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till he come.*

The word "*proclaim*" (*katangello*) is translated "*shew*" in the KJV. Good definitions for this word are "*proclaim*" or "*announce*." While other passages use *proclaim* to describe preaching (Acts 4:2; 13:5; 15:36; 17:3; 1 Cor. 9:14; Col. 1:28), here the *proclamation* involves Jesus "*death*." It is as if Christians announce the death of Jesus every time they partake of the Lord's Supper. Since *proclaim* is a present tense verb, the Lord's Supper is a *continual proclamation* of the fact that Jesus came and paid the full price for man's sins. Gromacki (p. 143) correctly noted how the "Lord's Supper is not a sacrificial presentation to God; rather, it is a visible proclamation of the gospel message to men." This story not only needs to be retold, it needs to be retold every single week and God allows this to be done by every single Christian: Male, female, the married, single, young, old, etc.

Because this proclamation is carried out each Sunday, at least four points of application may be made. (1) God's people should not miss Sunday assemblies unless they have a good reason for doing so. (2) We should come to worship with a sense of anticipation and joy instead of regarding worship as a "duty." (3) The Lord's Supper is a rather unique mix of sorrow and joy. Lee Strobel (The Case For Christ, p. 342) said: "If a group of people loved John F. Kennedy, they might meet regularly to remember his confrontation with Russia, his promotion of civil rights, and his charismatic personality. But they're not going to celebrate the fact that Lee Harvey Oswald murdered him." The Communion skillfully blends together joy and sadness. (4) There is a sense in which the Lord's Supper helps teach people who Jesus is and what He did on the cross.

At the beginning of this verse Paul said "*as often*" (*hosakis*). This "assures the believer that each time he partakes in the Lord's Supper, he again and anew 'shows' or 'declares' his remembrance of the death

of the Lord” (CBL, GED, 4:393). Since Jesus’ death is central to the salvation of man (compare Jn. 3:16), it is incomprehensible to this author how Bible believing people can attend worship every Sunday and claim to honor Jesus but not partake of the memorial that commemorates the heart of the Christian faith (compare 1 Cor. 15:1-4). Paul also would not have understood observing the Communion less frequently than once a week because “eat” and “drink” are both present tense verbs.

The ASV, KJV, NKJV, RSV and NASB all translate the first part of verse 26 with the words “as often.” The NIV says “whenever.” While the NIV rendering may not necessarily lead people to believe they can observe the Lord’s Supper at an interval they choose, this translation certainly seems to give more leeway in this regard and it may mislead some readers into thinking the Communion does not need to be a part of every Sunday worship.

When the Lord’s Supper is observed, Christians are to use the *bread* and the *cup*. This tells us Christians are to partake of both items (the Corinthians did not have the cup withheld from them). Today, any religious group that does not distribute both the bread and the cup, or tries to limit the Supper to certain people, does not please God. The need to partake of both the cup and the bread is also seen in verse 27. This part of the verse also tells us that God has *specified* what we are to use for the Communion elements. Some might prefer a hamburger and a milkshake instead of bread and the fruit of the vine, but we do not have God’s authorization for using other things (compare Col. 3:17).

The Lord death is to be *proclaimed* “*till he come*.” This statement tells us the Communion is associated with the future; Christians will observe this activity until Jesus finally returns. The Lord’s Supper is also associated with the present and the past. It is tied to the past because Jesus died more than 2,000 years ago. The Communion includes the present because it reminds Christians of their continual cleansing from sin (1 Jn. 1:7) and the fact that all live under the New Testament that was sealed with Jesus’ blood (verse 25).

After Jesus returns, the world is destroyed (2 Pet. 3:10-12), and the saved are in God’s presence for eternity (1 Thess. 4:17), there will be no need to “remember” Jesus (verse 25). We do not need to be “reminded” of someone if we are in his presence. Until this time comes, Christians *do* need the Lord’s Supper as a weekly reminder of what Jesus did so we must worship in a place where the Communion is offered every Sunday. If the place where we worship does not have the Lord’s Supper every Sunday, we need to find or start a congregation of the New Testament church (this subject is discussed at the end of this commentary).

The Bible has much to say about the future *coming of Jesus*. Jesus has promised to return (Mt. 24:37) and heaven’s angels are waiting for this day (Acts 1:10-11). Jesus will come at a time that cannot be predicted (Mt. 24:36) and people will not be expecting Him (1 Thess. 5:2). Although the Lord’s return will *surprise* people (1 Thess. 5:2-3), people will know what is taking place because the event will be *audible* (1 Thess. 4:16) and **all** heaven’s angels will be with Him (Mt. 25:31). All the dead will be raised (Jn. 5:28-29), the final judgment will occur (Acts 17:31), the saved and the unsaved will be eternally separated one from another (Mt. 25:46), and the physical world and universe will be destroyed (Heb. 1:10-12). At this time there will never again be a need for people to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

11:27: *Wherefore whosoever shall eat the bread or drink the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord.*

The word “*wherefore*” points back to the Lord’s Supper being a proclamation of Jesus’ death, verse 26. Because the Communion is a reminder of Jesus’ death and the institution of a new covenant (verse 25), it must be approached with seriousness and reverence (this is also true with every other part of worship). Those who do not approach the Lord’s Supper (or any other part of worship) in this manner are guilty of sin (worshipping in an “unworthy manner”). Since Paul used the word “*whosoever*” in expressing the thought, *anyone* who fails to partake of the Supper in a proper manner is guilty of sin. *Whosoever* “excludes no one. Everyone, rich or poor, high or low, must approach Communion in a reverent, humble manner” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 409).

Unworthy (*anaxios*) is an adverb and the KJV translates it “unworthily.” This word occurs only here in

the New Testament, though some manuscripts do use this word in verse 29. This fact is reflected in the KJV. *Unworthy* meant “careless” and partaking of the Supper “in an improper manner” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 58). In other words, Paul spoke of *how the Supper was being eaten*, not how the Corinthians had lived during the past week (compare verses 33-34 and the commentary on verse 29, “discern the body”). Kittel (1:380) said *unworthy* “does not denote a moral quality but an **attitude** (emphasis mine, BP) determined by the Gospel.” *Unworthy* “refers to a balancing of weights and so means ‘of unequal weight’ or ‘improperly balanced.’ The attitude of the person does not balance with the importance of the occasion” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:420).

A proper understanding of the word *unworthy* is important to us because some Christians have incorrectly concluded they must be *worthy* before they partake of the Communion. This author has known fine Christians who went to worship but refused to take the Lord’s Supper because they remembered a sin they had committed a few days prior to worship. That sin caused them to conclude they were *unworthy* of the Communion. This is **not** what Paul meant. If this were Paul’s point, no one would partake of the Communion because “*in many things we ALL stumble*” (Jas. 3:2, emphasis mine, BP). Also, no Christian is ever *worthy* of God and His blessings (compare Rom. 3:23 and Lk. 17:10).

While no one is ever *worthy* of God and what He offers, all can partake of the Supper in a *worthy manner*. When we worship in a worthy way, God is pleased. Also, if we refuse to eat the Lord’s Supper because we do not feel good about our Christian life, we violate Jesus’ command to eat the Supper “in remembrance of” Him (verse 24). Christians must realize that observing the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis is not an option; neither is the Communion something Christians partake of “when they feel they need it.” It is a command and it is a command for all Christians to observe every Sunday (for information on the frequency of the Supper see the introductory commentary on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a and the commentary on 11:20b). If Christians feel guilty about sins from an earlier time, they are to seek forgiveness before worship (1 Jn. 1:6-2:2) and then worship as the Bible directs. Every Sunday worship should include congregational singing (Eph. 5:19), praying (1 Tim. 2:8), making a financial contribution (1 Cor. 16:1-2), listening to teaching and observing the Lord’s Supper (these final two points are both found in Acts 20:7).

The verbs “eat” and “drink” are both expressed with the present tense and this again illustrates the ongoing nature (every Sunday observance) of the Lord’s Supper. The present tense also helps us understand the Corinthians’ *unworthy observance*. Instead of being a one-time or infrequent problem, the Christians *often* observed the Lord’s Supper in an unworthy manner. This is useful information because Christians today may be concerned about the times they try to worship but find themselves distracted. For instance, a parent who is trying to control unruly children may not be very focused on a worship service. A person in ill health may be distracted by physical pain, even though he wants to concentrate on worship. Christians may wonder if these circumstances make their worship *unworthy* and, therefore, deserving of condemnation. Paul addressed this topic with the present tense. This tense indicates he was thinking of “habitual offenders” (people who knew what was right and could do what is right, but they knowingly, willfully and repeatedly worshipped in an unworthy way).

Paul described the Corinthians’ unworthy worship as assemblies that were “for the worse” (verse 17), occasions of strife and division (verse 18), and times when Christians refused to wait for one another (verse 21). It also seems the members of this congregation mixed the Lord’s Supper with potluck food (verses 20-22). Since these Christians did not have their minds centered on Jesus and His sacrifice for the sins of the world, their worship (part of which was the Lord’s Supper) was unworthy and merited punishment (verses 29-30).

Today when people come for worship but regularly think about other things, give no thought to what is being done in the service, sit and criticize those who are leading the worship, or have no real interest in worshipping God, they are also *guilty* of sin. There are still people who are habitually guilty of unworthy worship and God is not pleased with these individuals. The Jews had a “preparation day” before the Sabbath (Lk. 23:54) and wise Christians should operate in a similar way. Christians should prepare themselves to come and worship God.

One family known to this author had a rule about Sunday mornings: No secular music or news from

the world before going to Sunday morning worship. This family wanted to focus their attention on God and spiritual things. Christians should strive to develop the attitude described in Ps. 42:1: “*As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God. My soul thirsts for God, for the living God. When shall I come and appear before God?*” (NKJV). It seems David had been barred from public worship and felt a deep spiritual hunger; he wanted to worship God so badly he felt like a man who must have a drink or die of thirst. We should approach worship in a similar way. If we do, it will be difficult if not impossible to be *guilty* of offering *unworthy worship*.

Guilty (*enochos*) describes “the person (or thing) against whom the sin has been committed” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 268). In this case a person’s sin (spiritual crime) is committed against the Lord’s “*body*” and “*blood*.” That is, Jesus’ sacrifice is disrespected. The very items that permit a person to be redeemed from sin are slighted and insulted. People show disrespect, contempt and disdain for the greatest sacrifice ever made and this angers God. The point is somewhat similar to Ex. 15:26: “*and he said, If thou wilt diligently hearken to the voice of Jehovah thy God, and wilt do that which is right in his eyes, and wilt give ear to his commandments, and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon thee, which I have put upon the Egyptians: for I am Jehovah that healeth thee.*” If Israel failed to “diligently hearken” to God’s law, it would face punishment—God said “diseases” would come. The Corinthians failed to follow God’s word in many areas, one of which was “discerning the Lord’s body,” so God punished them (verse 30 and compare Heb. 12:6-11).

Today, if people turn worship into something like a secular feast (verse 21), make it a social event, treat it as a performance to enjoy, or even view it as a “routine,” they make true worship “impossible” (verse 20) and they are *guilty of unworthy worship*. Christians need to realize they are “priests” (1 Pet. 2:5, 8) and worship is a time to “*come unto mount Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts of angels*” (Heb. 12:22). If Christians are not serious about worship and do not seek to offer the best worship they can (compare 1 Cor. 14:15), they risk God’s displeasure and this is an unwanted consequence. The Hebrew writer dealt with a different subject, but his warning seems so appropriate for this passage: “*of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God*” (Heb. 10:29-31).

Hodge (p. 230) noted how the “man who tramples on the flag of his country, insults his country; and he who treats with indignity the representative of a sovereign, thereby offends the sovereign himself. In like manner, he who treats the symbols of Christ’s body and blood irreverently is guilty of irreverence towards Christ.” “The magnitude of such a sin is measured by the magnitude of the gift. The penalty is decided by the same measure” (CBL, First Corinthians, p. 409). If under the Old Testament God paid attention to the details surrounding the sacrifice of a physical lamb, will He not also pay attention to those who fail to properly honor and worship **THE LAMB** (Jn. 1:36)?

Although the Lord’s Super is the specific item under consideration in the final portion of this chapter, there is no reason to limit the problem of *unworthy observance* to Communion. If people are supposed to sing praises to God (Heb. 13:15), but they are often focused on secular things, they are guilty of singing in an *unworthy manner*. People may also *give* in an unworthy manner, *pray* in an unworthy manner, or *listen to preaching* in an unworthy manner. It is even possible for preachers to speak in an unworthy manner. When preaching glorifies the speaker, or is a mixture of anecdotes and jokes, preachers offer *unworthy sermons*.

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

If the Corinthians were to avoid partaking of the Communion in an unworthy manner (verse 27), they had to “*examine*” (KJV) or “*prove*” (ASV) themselves. In Classical Greek the word *examine* (*dokimazo*) described the testing of materials (coins and metals were *examined* to see if they were genuine). New Testament writers used this term to describe “the testing process which salvages the good and discards the

useless” (CBL, GED, 2:160). Here, since *examine* (*prove*) is joined with the bread and the cup, Paul meant Christians *examine* themselves when partaking of the Lord’s Supper. Spicq (1:356) said *examine* means “people must examine their conscience in order not to partake unworthily” and “they must discern the true nature of this sacred meal, which is entirely different from an ordinary repast.” Since *prove* (*examine*) is expressed with the imperative mood in the Greek text, this activity is not a suggestion or a divine recommendation. It is a direct command from God. Those who continually violate this command (see the paragraph below) should expect to be “*judged*” so they will “*not be condemned with the world*” (verse 32).

In addition to using the imperative mood, the verb *examine* is also in the present tense. This tense tells us Christians are to *examine* themselves on a regular basis. The present tense also reinforces the fact that the Lord’s Supper is to be observed on a continuing basis (every Sunday). How can Christians repeatedly examine themselves (the force of the present tense) if the Lord’s Supper is not regularly eaten? For more information on why the Communion is to be observed every Sunday, see the introductory commentary on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a and the commentary on 11:20b. At the end of this verse we find two more present tense verbs (“eat” and “drink”) and these verbs are also in the imperative mood. This means Christians are **commanded to repeatedly observe** the Lord’s Supper. Groups that profess to be followers of Christ but do not regularly observe the Lord’s Supper not only ignore a divine command, they ignore a command that is associated with remembering Jesus’ death (verse 26).

Paul did not specify how we are to *examine* ourselves, but verse 25 implies we should consider our frame of mind. This point has already been discussed to some degree in the commentary on 11:24, but here we may add that worshippers should be focused on Jesus and His sacrifice. Christians should be mindful of the Lord’s betrayal, His tears, His prayers in the garden, and how He was mocked, beaten, and then brutally crucified “for us” (Isa. 53:4-5). Those who partake of the Communion should consider whether or not they are *walking in the light* (1 Jn. 1:9) and if they have a right relationship with fellow Christians. Finally, God’s people should be thinking of how the Lord’s Supper reminds them of being “one” with their brethren (1 Cor. 10:16b, 17).

Self-examination is not only an absolute must: “Paul’s instruction is wholesomely positive. He does not say to examine oneself and leave the Lord’s table in despair. Rather he counsels a man to search his heart and then in honest faith **let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup**” (Beacon Bible Commentary, 8:420). All Christians must examine themselves, but none should expect to find they lived a perfect life during the past week. *All* Christians “fall short” (Rom. 3:23, present tense) of God’s glory and in “many things we all stumble” (Jas. 3:2).

Paul reminded the Corinthians to examine themselves (“*himself*”), not others. There is no authority for Christians to decide who can eat the Lord’s Supper and who can participate in the other aspects of worship. This point is especially visible from the words: “*let him eat.*” The Corinthians were quick to examine and judge others and Christians today sometimes act in this same manner (compare Jas. 2:4). It is possible and sometimes necessary to make judgments about various things; God says we must “judge righteously” (Jn. 7:24). Part of judging righteously means letting God decide who is and is not allowed to worship. Unless someone has been withdrawn from (1 Cor. 5), we have no authority to determine who should be allowed to worship. There have always been cases where some were “among” Christians but not truly part “of” the group (1 Jn. 2:19). Just as there are “tares among the wheat” (Mt. 13:25) “in the world” (Mt. 13:38), so there are *tares among the wheat in the church*. Judas was a “devil” (Jn. 6:70-71), but Jesus did not try to remove him from the group of disciples. We must find the right balance between not fellowshiping those who are involved with sin (1 Cor. 5:7-11) and having the spirit of “Diotrephes” who “cast people out of the church” (3 Jn. 9-10).

Those who are overly critical of fellow Christians or try to preclude others from worshipping often have a “beam in their own eye” (Mt. 7:3) and Jesus said these people should focus on their own problems (Mt. 7:5). Our role in judging worship is limited to evaluating whether worship is in “spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:24) and we do this by using God’s word (2 Tim. 3:16-17). God is the one who makes judgments concerning the actual worship that people offer and this point is illustrated in passages such as Lk. 18. Here Jesus told a parable about a Pharisee and a tax collector. Both men were allowed to go to the temple

(a place of worship) and pray (Lk. 18:10) and God evaluated both men. Jesus said only one of the men was justified (Lk. 18:14) and this man was not the Pharisee. This statement probably shocked some of the Lord's listeners. If first century Jews had judged these two men, many would have surely justified the Pharisee and condemned the tax collector. Jesus said the reverse was true.

Another illustration of how flawed our judgments often are when it comes to judging people and their worship is found in the widow who gave "two mites" (Mk. 12:41-44). Most would think this woman gave just a little, but Jesus said she gave "*more*" than the "*rich*" who were offering "*much*." Eli the priest thought Hannah was intoxicated (1 Sam. 1:1-14) when she was by the "temple of Jehovah" (1 Sam. 1:9-10), but he was also completely wrong (1 Sam. 1:15).

Since our judgments about people and their worship can be totally incorrect, God takes responsibility for judging worshippers and He will be actively involved in this task until time ends. This is important because many think going to worship is enough or offering worship automatically means God accepts what is offered. The parable in Lk. 18 tells us these things are not true. If our worship is not in "spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:24), it is "vain" (Mt. 15:8-9). God also judges the worship of visitors. Most congregations have visitors (compare 1 Cor. 14:22-25) and some Christians have been concerned about their guests being allowed to partake of communion. If visitors specifically ask about participating in the Lord's Supper, we can use their inquiry as an opportunity to teach them. If they do not ask, the matter is between them and God.

In this verse we also see that Paul did not view acts such as baptism and the Lord's Supper as "church sacraments" that are administered by a "church official." Although some religious groups have a special person or group responsible for dispensing the elements of the Lord's Supper (bread may be placed into a worshipper's mouth by a *priest*), this type of behavior is foreign to New Testament teaching. Furthermore, instead of the "clergy-laity" system commonly found in the religious world, the Bible says all Christians are "brethren" (Mt. 23:8) and "priests" (1 Pet. 2:5, 9). There is no church hierarchy that distinguishes "parishioners" and "religious officiates." In fact, in the next letter to this congregation (2 Cor. 1:24), Paul said he did not have "Lordship" over these Christians. Paul had a different role than most first century Christians, but he was still "one of the brethren." For more information on how the modern clergy-laity system conflicts with the New Testament, see the commentary on Heb. 5:1. For additional information on the word *sacrament* as it is used by the religious world, see the *common questions about the Lord's Supper* at the end of the commentary on 11:20b.

There are some interesting parallels and contrasts between the Lord's Supper and the Jewish Passover feast. The Passover commemorated the Hebrews' deliverance from the "destroyer" that plagued Egypt (Ex. 12), but the Lord's Supper commemorates man's deliverance from sin and eternal death. The Jewish Passover was celebrated yearly, but the Lord's Supper is celebrated every week. The Passover required people to eat the lamb, unleavened bread and bitter herbs, but the Lord's Supper requires participants to eat unleavened bread (a representation of Jesus' body) and drink the fruit of the vine (a representation of His shed blood). The Passover was a feast day for the Jewish people and for a limited time, but the Lord's Supper is for the saved around the world until time ends (verse 26).

11:29: *For he that eateth and drinketh, eateth and drinketh judgment unto himself, if he discern not the body.*

The word "*discern*" (*diakrino*) occurs about 20 times in the New Testament. Jesus used this word to say people could *discern* the weather, but they did not understand the time for the Messiah had come (Mt. 16:3). Here *discern* means "the bread of the Lord's Supper should be distinguished from ordinary bread." Just as we draw a distinction between religious hymns and secular music, and we recognize that rock and roll is not suitable for the type of singing God has commanded (Eph. 5:19), so the Lord's Supper must be distinguished from things like a potluck meal. It was not wrong for the Corinthians (or us) to have a fellowship meal, but any such meal must be distinct from worship (see again the initial comments on the word "prove" in 11:28). Since Paul described this discernment with the present tense, this is to be an on-going practice. The present tense also implies the Communion is to be observed on a regular basis (every

Sunday. For more information on this point see the introductory commentary on 10:16, the commentary on 10:16a and the commentary on 11:20b).

Today it is still necessary to *discern* the Lord's Supper and all the other items associated with New Testament worship. When we come to worship God we must *discern* what is secular from what is sacred. This is not difficult, but some have apparently not learned this lesson or they do not want to obey it. Generation after generation has sought to combine secular things with sacred things. This is often done to make worship more exciting, draw a bigger crowd, increase the interest of young people, or compete with other religious groups. God wants sacred things kept separate from secular things and He illustrates this in places such as Lev. 10:1-2. According to these two verses two priests (Nadab and Abihu) knew they needed *fire*, but they did not get fire from the *sacred* and authorized source. They used fire from a *secular* (unauthorized) source and this choice led to their immediate deaths. God says we are to learn from this type of history (Rom. 15:4), but as illustrated in the next paragraph, some still think mixing spiritual things with things from the world is a good idea.

God has tasked the church with evangelism (Mk. 16:15-16), but some want the church to be a place of and for entertainment. The church is supposed to be a place of edification (1 Cor. 14:4b), but some have tried to turn it into a political organization. The church is a place to study and learn (Acts 2:42), but some want it to be a place for fun and games. Jesus intended the church to be a tool to help save lost souls, but some want it to be a soup kitchen. When people forget the sacred mission of the church (compare Lk. 19:10), secular activities and a worldly emphasis usually take precedence and worldly attitudes begin to affect and direct a congregation's worship.

The sacred nature of the church is seen throughout this chapter. In verse 23 Paul spoke of information he had received "from the Lord" and had "delivered" to the Corinthians. He said this information included facts about Jesus' death (verses 24-25) and the Lord's future return (verse 26). He knew some were not taking this information seriously, so in the final verses of this chapter he promised judgment. If the Corinthians would not separate the secular from the sacred, God would punish them (verse 30). Here in verse 29 the reason for the punishment is described as not discerning "*the body*" (the KJV says "the Lord's body").

Many believe the *body* describes Jesus' physical body that was crucified, and this is surely part of the thought (compare verses 23-24). The primary meaning of the word *body* in verse 29, however, seems to be the local *body of Christians* (i.e. the congregation). Stated another way, the Corinthians were repeatedly failing to discern that they (the church) were one body—the Lord's spiritual body (Eph. 1:22-23). For more information on this point refer back to 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13 and see the commentary on 10:16b and 10:17.

The Corinthians were demonstrating their lack of oneness by division (verses 18-19), refusing to share their food with one another (verse 21), letting some fellow Christians go hungry (verse 21), and by being rude (verse 22). Two chapters later Paul had to tell these Christians that true love "is kind" (1 Cor. 13:4) and it "does not behave rudely" (1 Cor. 13:5, NKJV). If this congregation had been functioning properly, these Christians would have been of one mind and purpose (compare 12:13) and the Lord's Supper would have regularly reminded them of this oneness. Since this was not being done and there was nothing to indicate that things would change without some type of divine discipline, "judgment" was the logical result (verse 30).

The KJV illustrates some variations in the original text. One variation is found in the words "*the Lord's body*" instead of "*the body*" (ASV). Whichever reading is accepted, the *body* (as noted in the preceding paragraphs) may refer to Jesus' crucified body, but it also most certainly includes the church (the local group of Christians). Some manuscripts also include the word "*unworthily*" in verse 29 (the KJV includes this word and the ASV excludes it). This term is discussed in the comments on verse 27.

If Christians do not *discern the body* (i.e. they are not mindful of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and they are not *one* with the congregation where they worship), partaking of the Lord's Supper (worship) may result in "*judgment*" (*krima*). This verse is probably one of the better known texts in this book, but this passage has often been misunderstood and many have been unnecessarily frightened by it. Some think the latter part of this verse means if they ever fail to fully concentrate on the Lord's Supper when it is offered,

God will strike them with tragedy and misfortune. This is not what Paul meant.

As noted in the earlier comments on this verse, “*eat*” and “*drink*” are present tense verbs. This implies that if a person is guilty of observing the Lord’s Supper in a poor way just one time, punishment is not going to come. Also, as noted in the comments on verse 27, worshippers with the best intentions can suffer from distractions. The present tense tells us Paul described habitual action (the Corinthians were doing this week after week). The division in this congregation was present every week, the poor were overlooked every week, the Lord’s Supper was being mixed with the potluck food each week, and Christians were not waiting for one another Sunday after Sunday (verse 33). Things were so out of control at this congregation that God’s patience had finally worn thin and there was no recourse but divine discipline (verse 30).

The KJV uses the word “*damnation*” (KJV) to describe the judgment (discipline), but the better translation is found in the ASV (“*judgment*”). Thayer (p. 360) defined *judgment* as “so to eat as to incur the judgment or punishment of God.” The word *damnation* in the KJV has scared so many people Vincent (3:252) called the KJV wording in verse 29 a “false and horrible rendering” that “has destroyed the peace of more sincere and earnest souls than any other misread passage in the New Testament. It has kept hundreds from the Lord’s table.” Instead of translating the original word, the KJV interprets it. If the KJV rendering is right (the Corinthians were eternally damned for not observing the Lord’s Supper in the correct way), why write this letter and encourage them to repent? Punishment was certainly justified, but Paul still viewed these Christians as brethren and this fact also shows they were not eternally condemned. Unless these Christians refused to repent, it seems their punishment was limited to this life. There is a word that means *condemnation* in the sense of eternal punishment and this term is actually used in this chapter (verse 32). The fact that Paul chose a word meaning *judgment* instead of *condemnation* is yet more proof that he was not speaking of *damnation*.

In this verse we find the words *eateth* and *drinketh* being used four times and in each case these words are expressed with the present tense. Wuest tries to capture the richness of the thought with his expanded translation: “*So that, whoever is eating the bread or drinking the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But let an individual be putting himself to the test for the purpose of approving himself and finding that he meets the prescribed specifications, let him thus be eating of the bread and drinking of the cup. For the one who eats and drinks is eating and drinking so as to bring judgment upon himself if he does not properly evaluate the body.*”

Someone has tried to summarize the Lord’s Supper with the “the 4 R’s.” There is the *revelation* of the Lord’s Supper (verse 23—Paul had “received” this information from Jesus). There is a *relationship* in the Lord’s Supper (Christians are one body, verse 29). There is also a relationship with Jesus in the Communion, Mt. 26:29). The Lord’s Supper is a *repetitive* act (*eat* and *drink* in verse 29 are present tense verbs). Finally, there is *retribution* (verse 30) for those who refuse to separate the secular from the sacred as well as those who refuse to be serious about sacred things.

11:30: *For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.*

As noted in the comments on verse 29, this congregation had several problems. It was a place of strife and division (verses 18-19), Christians refused to share their food with one another (verse 21a), some Christians were allowed to go hungry (verse 21b), and there was rude behavior (verse 22). Conditions had reached a point where it was time for punishment. Verse 29 introduces the topic of *judgment* and here Paul completed the thought: “*For this cause many among you are weak and sickly, and not a few sleep.*” Verse 30 is an example of “cause and effect.” It seems some punishment had come to the members of this congregation and more was on the way because these Christians had persisted in sin, some of which was related to worship. The NKJV translates the thought as: “*for this reason many are sick.*” The NIV says, “*That is why many among you are weak and sick.*”

Commentators agree about the severity of the problems at this congregation, but they do not agree on the interpretation of verse 30. Some think this passage is to be understood figuratively. According to this view, Paul meant “*many*” were “spiritually weak” and some were “spiritually dead” (compare Rev. 3:1

and 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 Thess. 5:19). There is no doubt that Christians or congregations can be spiritually weak or spiritually dead. In fact, in some cases a congregation may be growing numerically, doing what seems to be many good works, and may even look spiritually healthy. Members and visitors may think a congregation is strong, but a local assembly may have lost or is about to lose its “candlestick” (Rev. 2:5).

Earlier in this book Paul spoke of the Corinthians’ spiritual immaturity (3:2) and their spiritual indifference to sin (5:6). He noted how women were not observing the veil custom (11:1-16), Christians were unconcerned with congregational division (11:18), and they were neglectful of the poor (11:22). Members of the congregation were flirting with paganism (10:21-22) and some were suing one another (1 Cor. 6:7-8). In this chapter we find problems with properly observing the Lord’s Supper. Because the Corinthians were plagued by so many spiritual ills, it is possible to interpret verse 30 in a figurative way (the “weak and sickly” refer to spiritual sluggishness and the “sleeping” represent unfaithful Christians).

It is also possible to understand Paul’s words literally and this author accepts a literal interpretation of the text. Because things had gotten so out of control at Corinth, there were cases of literal sickness and premature physical death. Sometimes people (and this includes Christians) need mild correction and a “slap on the wrist” is sufficient correction. In other cases people need sustained and intensive correction.

God warned the nation of Israel that it could experience physical sickness if it did not pursue righteous living (Deut. 28:21-22). If a husband suspected his wife of adultery (Num. 5:11-15), the wife was subjected to a process that revealed her guilt or innocence (Num. 5:16-21). If a wife had committed adultery, she suffered severe physical punishment for her sin (Num. 5:22-23), part of which was infertility (Num. 5:27-28). King Nebuchadnezzar had to receive severe and divine discipline before he learned some important lessons (Dan. 4:25). When Jesus healed a man of palsy (Mk. 2), He seemed to associate this man’s illness with sin (notice how Jesus spoke of this man’s “sins” before addressing his physical problem, Mk. 2:5b). Compare, too, Jn. 5:14. While not every problem or physical sickness is a judgment from God (Jn. 9:1-3), it seems wrong to say that physical sickness is *never* a judgment from God (compare Deut. 28:27-29). Since several others have suffered physical punishment for sin and physical ailments have sometimes been an incentive to motivate people to repent, why would we think the Corinthians were exempt from these same things, especially when we realize how numerous and on-going the problems were at this congregation?

If Christians will not respond to “instructive” discipline (they do not correct things on their own by studying and applying God’s word), God may employ the type of “corrective” discipline (punishment) described in the preceding paragraph. Just as Ananias and Sapphira were ultimately killed for their sin (Acts 5 says they were given an opportunity to make things right and they refused), so some of the Corinthians may have been exposed to corrective discipline, some of which was severe. In some cases this discipline seems to have led to premature death. Sometimes people need to face worsening conditions or death itself before they will recognize their wayward state and repent (compare Lk. 15:15-18).

While God handled some situations differently in first century times than now (miracles and their duration are discussed in the commentary on chapter 13), God still practices divine discipline. Now God works providentially (within the laws of nature) to discipline individuals and congregations. If God can “*give us day by day our daily bread*” (Lk. 11:3), He can also discipline us when we need it. If God can “*feed the birds*” (Mt. 6:26), He can punish wayward Christians on an individual or congregational basis. Just as the “*Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever he will*” (Dan. 4:25), so God rules in the lives of His people and this rule includes discipline (compare Heb. 12:6-9).

Here in 1 Cor. 11:30 Paul described the Corinthians’ spiritual condition or punishment with three different words: “*weak*,” “*sickly*,” and “*asleep*.” Each of these terms suggests an increasing degree of severity and it is clear that several Christians are under consideration (“*many*”). If physical sickness and death are meant, these Christians may have wondered why there were so many sick people in their congregation. In these final verses Paul gave an answer: God allowed them to suffer physical ailments so they would be motivated to repent. Heaven did not want these Christians to be “*condemned with the world*” (verse 32). As shown in the commentary on 2:14 and 14:20, Christians can lose their salvation and the Corinthians were actively exposing themselves to this possibility. Today it is still possible to be a “back slider” and fall from grace (Gal. 5:4).

The word *weak* (*asthenes*) occurs several times in this book (1:25, 27; 4:10; 8:7, 9, 10; 9:22; 12:22). “In the Gospels and Acts it is used almost exclusively of physical sickness. Paul, however, rarely used it in this sense” (CBL, GED, 1:466). The word *sickly* (*arrhostos*) meant “powerless, sick” (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, 1:158). Here it has the sense of “Many...weak and *ill*” in the congregation” (ibid). Bengel (2:232) said, “*Weak* from slighter; *sickly* from more serious diseases.” The word *sleep* (*koimaomai*) is used 18 times in the New Testament. In four cases it describes *natural sleep* (see Mt. 28:13; Lk. 22:45; Jn. 11:12; Acts 12:6). In the other fourteen places where it occurs it describes physical death (see Mt. 27:52; Jn. 11:11; Acts 7:60; 13:36; 1 Cor. 7:39 [“dead”]; 1 Cor. 11:30; 15:6, 18, 20, 51; 1 Thess. 4:13, 14, 15; 2 Pet. 3:4). Man’s body *sleeps* in the dust of the earth, but his eternal spirit returns to God (Eccl. 12:7).

If in this passage the word *sleep* describes physical death, it does not necessarily mean these Christians died in sin and will be eternally separated from God. God may have allowed some or all these Christians to suffer the punishment of premature physical death but not condemn them in eternity. Deity is the sole judge in determining who is saved and who is lost (Jn. 5:22), and it seems God has denied people some earthly benefits due to their sin, but has not always taken away their eternal inheritance. For instance, Moses was denied entrance into the Promised Land but he will be with the saved in eternity (Mt. 17:1-3).

If at least some of the Corinthians were dying prematurely, this brings up the subject of “death bed repentance.” What if some of the Corinthians got sicker and sicker and repented just prior to their death? Could they have been saved? A basic answer to this question is found in 2 Pet. 3:9 (God wants all to repent; He does not want anyone to be lost). Today there are certainly cases where people seek to repent shortly before they die. This author personally knew of one man who became a Christian and then left the faith for about 70 years. He repented shortly before his death. The thief on the cross died under the Old Testament instead of the New Testament under which we live, but he seems to have made things right just prior to his death (Lk. 23:42-43).

While there are some instances where people are given a chance to repent shortly before death and this is surely done with God’s approval, many never get this opportunity. Death comes as a surprise to a lot of people (compare Lk. 12:20a) and the opportunity to repent is forever lost. Because we do not know when we will die or when Jesus will return (Mt. 24:36), or even if we really will repent in the future, the Bible says “today” is the “day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2). We are to respond to God’s word “today” (Heb. 3:7) and “remember God in our youth” (Eccl. 12:1).

The ASV has the word *many* at the beginning of this verse and *not a few* at the end of the passage. The KJV uses the word *many* two times. The ASV rendering helps readers realize there are two different words in the Greek text, though both words convey the idea of *many*. The term at the end of the verse is an adjective (*hikanos*) that meant “many, a considerable number” (Thayer, p. 300). Since there were “many who were asleep” (i.e. dead), and “*fallen asleep*” (*koimaomai*) is a present tense verb, it seems many of the Corinthians had or were in the process of dying. Commentators may debate whether this information is literal or figurative, but the fact that several people are being described is beyond dispute. If things were not changed, this congregation would eventually be spiritually bankrupt or numerically empty! It was important for these Christians to remember and apply the information from 1 Cor. 5:7 (“purge out the old leaven”).

Lenski (First Corinthians, p. 484) rightly noted how the elements of the Lord’s Supper “do not act as a poison which makes an unworthy communicant sick or kills him. It is the sin of communing unworthily which, like other sins, entails the penalty of judgment.” Also, Paul “does not say that the penalty of this unworthiness is invariably physical sickness or untimely death. The Lord alone decides what the penalty shall be. In Corinth the penalty is as Paul states it” (ibid).

However we choose to understand the punishment in this verse, it must be remembered, as noted in the commentary on verse 29, that Paul had in mind discipline for repeated sins (*eating, drinking, and discerning* in verse 29 are all present tense verbs). Verse 30 does not describe punishment for a “one time sin” (verse 29). While this fact is not a license to sin from time to time, it does tell us that in cases where we are not fully concentrating on worship, God is gracious enough to not immediately lash out and dispense punishment. God gives us the opportunity to confess that wrong, repent of it, and do better the

next time.

11:31-32: *But if we discerned ourselves, we should not be judged. 32 But when we are judged, we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.*

At the beginning of verse 31 Paul spoke of God's people "*judging*" (*diakrino*) themselves. This is an imperfect tense (continuous action) verb and it is translated "*discerned*" in the ASV. Paul also used this verb in verse 29. Here the word has the sense of "*judging*" (Turner, p. 118). It means Christians should continually examine whether they are thinking about things like Jesus and fellow Christians, if their actions in worship are proper, and if their commitment to God is as the New Testament describes.

At the end of verse 31 the ASV and KJV both use the word "*judged*" but this is a different (but related) word. This second term (*krino*) is also an imperfect tense verb; when *discerned* is combined with the word *judged*, the full sense of the thought is: "God would not continually judge the Corinthians if these Christians continually judged themselves." Gromacki (p. 145) described the thought as: "Self-examination will prevent the judgment of God." Paul "stated this truth in a conditional, contrary-to-face sentence. The fact of the matter is that the Corinthians were not judging themselves" (ibid).

Since the Corinthians failed to *examine* themselves (compare verse 28 in the KJV and remember that *examine* in this verse is a continuous action verb), God had to intervene with punishment (verse 30). If people will not watch over their own spiritual lives, and they refuse to let elders help them make needed corrections (Heb. 13:17), God will "*chasten*" them (verse 32a). God is "*love*" (1 Jn. 4:16), but a time comes when love causes people to take corrective action (Gen.6:3, 7). Verses 31-32 also serve as stern warning to those who often judge others but refuse to engage in self-examination and self-judgment. We must be willing to judge ourselves on a regular basis and do this voluntarily and truthfully or God may judge and discipline us.

Chastened (*paideuo*) in verse 32 was often used to describe the upbringing of a child (Heb. 12:7). It described "a means of developing and refining the mind and the will" (CBL, GED, 4:27). Thayer (p. 473) defined *chastened* as "*chasten by the infliction of evils and calamities.*" These *calamities* can involve physical afflictions or even physical death (verse 30). Since *chastened* is a present tense verb (on-going action), God's *judgment* on His people can be long-lasting. It can also grow in severity (see again the comments on *weak, sickly, and not a few sleep* in verse 30). The reason for divine discipline is found in 32b. God corrects His people so they will not be "*condemned with the world.*"

The unsaved may think it is cruel to allow a person to be afflicted to the point where death is a possibility or becomes a reality, but God does not view things in this manner. Jesus once asked what we would "*exchange*" for our eternal spirit (Mk. 8:37) and we may ask some similar questions. Is it not better to leave this earthly life a few years early rather than spend eternity in hell? If we believe Jesus' words in Mt. 5:29 ("*And if thy right eye causeth thee to stumble, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not thy whole body be cast into hell*"), would it not be *profitable* for our *physical health to be diminished* or we *experience a premature death so our whole body is not cast not into hell*? God chastens His people because He loves them and wants them to be saved. God does not chastise the world. As Bengel (2:232) said, "There is sure *condemnation* therefore for the world, since it is without *chastisement*."

The end of verse 32 is conclusive proof that Christians can not only be chastened, they can be "*condemned*" (*katakrino*). Brown (2:365) defined this as "Divine condemnation, issuing as the word implies, in damnation." Stated another way, a wayward Christian should expect to receive divine correction if such is necessary because unfaithfulness can result in a Christian being eternally condemned. If a Christian cannot lose his salvation (some believe in the "once saved, always saved" theory), why should God correct him? It is because Christians can be "*severed*" from Christ (Gal. 5:4, ASV) that God uses discipline to keep His people on the right path. For more information on Christians and the possibility of apostasy, see the commentary on 2:14 and 14:20.

God can and God does "*judge*" (a present tense verb) His people (32a). *Judged* is the same word used at the end of verse 31. God wants us to judge ourselves (verse 31), but if Christians will not do this, God

will take action and He does this for our benefit. God is like a parent with a disobedient child. Although some think it is unloving to correct bad behavior, the Bible teaches that correction is actually a demonstration of love. God judges and corrects His people so they will not be *condemned* (*katakrino*) with the unsaved. *Condemned* meant “God’s condemnation” (Gingrich and Danker, p. 412) and “God condemning one to eternal misery” (Thayer, p. 332). Divine punishment and eternal condemnation are not idle threats. We may summarize these two verses with three main points. (1) Believers should judge themselves. (2) If Christians do not judge themselves, God will *judge* and then *discipline* His people so they are motivated to return to Him (Heb. 12:6-9). (3) Christians who do not respond to God’s chastisements will one day be *condemned* with the world.

11:33-34: *Wherefore, my brethren, when ye come together to eat, wait one for another. 34 If any man is hungry, let him eat at home; that your coming together be not unto judgment. And the rest will I set in order whensoever I come.*

It was imperative for these Christians to “wait” for one another when they “came together to eat” (verse 33). In this day and time the means of telling time were not “what they are today. One could not announce that next Lord’s Day at 10 A.M. they would remember the Lord, and expect everyone to be there on time. Most believers had no means of telling the exact time. Consequently there might be a great difference in time of arrival. They were not to rush ahead before all were there, but to wait for one another” (Nieboer, *How to Get Along with Other Christians*, p. 79).

Church potlucks should have been a “group meal” and the Lord’s Supper should have been a “family meal” (compare 1 Cor. 10:17; 12:13 and the commentary on 10:16b and 10:17), but some Christians (presumably the poor and perhaps slaves) were being excluded from the fellowship meals and perhaps the Lord’s Supper. Although Paul tempered these closing comments with the word “brethren” (James did a similar thing—compare Jas. 1:2, 16, 19; 2:1, 5, 14; 3:1, 10, 12; 4:11; 5:7, 9, 10, 12, 19), there were serious problems associated with the Corinthian assemblies and these issues had to be corrected. These final two verses also remind us of how the Corinthians’ problems were related to the *manner in which they met and worshipped*, not the *place at which they met for worship*. For a further discussion of this point see the *Introduction to 11:22 and eating in a church building*. Today some congregations still have problems regarding the *manner* in which they meet and these problems need to be identified and corrected.

Commentators have differing ideas about the “eating” in verses 33-34. Some think Paul described the Lord’s Supper and others believe he had in mind a common meal. This author understands verse 33 as a general reference to Sunday worship: Christians came together on Sunday and were supposed to *wait for one another and do all things together*. It was not wrong for members (perhaps the wealthy) to bring food for a potluck, but it was wrong to eat this food before everyone else arrived. If the Lord’s Supper was being observed before everyone was present, this was also wrong. The primary point seems to involve church potlucks because of the words “eat at home” in verse 34. If Paul was only thinking of the Lord’s Supper, the command to “eat at home” would mean “worship at home.” Readers may wish to refer back to the comments on “*a unified congregation*” and “*epi to auto*” in 11:20b.

If Christians were “hungry” (verse 34) they had two choices: “wait one for another” (verse 33) or “eat at home” (verse 34). Since “hungry” and “eat” are both present tense verbs, it seems Christians repeatedly overlooked certain members of the congregation (this was an on-going issue). Rudeness on one or two occasions might have been explained as: “We were too hungry to wait for you and my family had to eat.” Or, “The food was getting cold.” Or, “We waited a while and did not think you were coming.” Paul did not describe something that happened once or twice. This was habitual rudeness so Paul gave a permanent solution: Wait for others and then share the food (the sharing is implied) or keep the food at home. When it was time to serve the Lord’s Supper, this was also to be made available when everyone was present.

“*Coming together*” in the middle of verses 33 and 34 (*sunerchomai*) is a present tense verb. This word occurs three other times in this chapter (verses 17, 18, 20) and it is defined in the commentary on verse 17. Here in verses 33 and 34 it indicates the Corinthians met on a regular (on-going) basis. These

Christians had not stopped coming to services, but their coming together was “for the worse” (verse 17).

Paul’s reference to “*any man*” being “*hungry*” (verse 34) could technically apply to anyone who was hungry; given the context, it seems he had in mind a specific class of people: Wealthy Christians who came to worship with potluck food and then ate this food before others (the poor) arrived. The Christians who did this claimed their actions were justified by their “hunger.” Since the problem was a refusal to wait for one another instead of “eating in the church building” (a belief held by some very sincere Christians—see the introductory comments on 11:22), Paul said, “*wait one for another*” (33b). Failing to wait was another basis for divine “*judgment*” (“condemnation,” KJV, verse 34b). For more information on God’s *judgment* of the Corinthians, see the comments on verses 29-30. If these Christians did not *judge* (evaluate and correct) themselves (verse 31), God would judge and discipline them (verse 32).

The need to wait for one another and function as a unified group of people was so important Paul expressed his point as an order (“wait one for another” is in the imperative mood—a command). In some passages *wait* (*ekdechomai*) “interjects the element of receiving something with open anticipation” (CBL, GED, 2:321), but this additional meaning may not be intended here. What does seem to be implied by the word *wait* is “a proper distribution of food” (Rienecker and Rogers, p. 427). The food was to be distributed to all and then everyone was to “eat together” (*ibid*). For the other places in the New Testament where *wait* occurs see Jn. 5:3; Acts 17:16; 1 Cor. 16:11 (“expect”); Heb. 10:13 (“expecting”); 11:10 (“looked for”); Jas. 5:7; 1 Pet. 3:20.

If the Corinthians did not want to *wait* for one another and eat with fellow Christians, they were to “eat at home” (this point is also expressed with the imperative mood—a command). The Corinthians knew about the need to come together and worship week after week, but they were neglecting their obligations in the areas of love and sharing (see again verses 17-18 of this chapter). The poor may have been left to worship by themselves or allowed to assemble with the congregation but not share in the potluck food. In verse 21 Paul made it clear that some went away “hungry.” This information is especially interesting when we compare it to our time. For us, Christians sometimes get upset if they are overlooked just one time. Some of the Corinthians were being overlooked *many, many times* but they still kept coming to services.

Paul closed this chapter by promising to correct other problems when he came in person (34b). “*Set in order*” is from a single word (*diatasso*) that is found three other times in this book (7:17; 9:14; 16:1). In 7:17 and 9:14 *set in order* is translated “*ordain*.” Rienecker and Rogers (p. 428) defined *set in order* as “to put in order.” We do not know what all the church problems were, but the issues were so numerous and severe Paul felt he had to come and personally correct some things. He really did regard the members of this congregation as his “beloved children” (4:14).

In the next chapter (12:1-11) Paul spoke of the variety (diversity) of supernatural gifts as well as how the gifts were related to unity (12:12-31). In 1 Cor. 13 there is information about the duration of spiritual gifts and how they were related to true love. In 1 Cor. 14 he reminded the Corinthians of how the gifts were to be used in worship. God not only gave the first century Christians spiritual gifts, He regulated their use.

It seems some and perhaps much of the worship at Corinth was chaotic. Some made false statements while claiming to be under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (compare 12:3), just as people today do. Another problem involved tongue speaking. The Corinthians elevated the gift of tongues above most or all other spiritual gifts and seemed to forget that the spiritual gifts were interconnected (compare 12:14-17). A third problem was a lack of love. The Corinthians failed to combine the gifts with love.

One of the root causes for the Corinthians’ problems was *rivalry*. Competition and jealousy helped create and sustain the splits and cliques in this congregation. Rivalry existed during the love feasts (the rich were seemingly pitted against the poor and possibly the slaves were aligned against the free) and there was rivalry over spiritual gifts—Christians became competitive about the gift they possessed. The more flamboyant the spiritual gift, the higher the Corinthians rated that special ability and the person who possessed it. Today when there is competitiveness in the church, there will also be problems. Christians need to realize that God’s people are partners, not competitors (compare 1 Cor. 3:6-7). Modern

congregations face many of the other problems faced by the Corinthians, some of which are in the area of worship. It is for this reason that the following “thoughts on worship” are offered.

Some thoughts on worship:

In virtually every culture and every age (compare Gen. 4:3), man has expressed a desire to worship someone or something. There is an innate desire for worship because God installed this desire in humanity (Eccl. 3:11a, “*he hath set eternity in their heart*”). In some cases people have resorted to worshipping “unknown gods” (Acts 17:23). Man not only has a natural desire to worship, he is the only creature on the earth who has the privilege of worship.

Many have worshipped the one true God, but they have not always worshipped Him in the same way. Before the Mosaic covenant was instituted, people such as Adam and Eve, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob worshipped under a patriarchal system (compare Heb. 1:1). In Hos. 6:7 we learn that God had a “covenant” with Adam. Although we do not have much information about this covenant, it seems the agreement with Adam and any of God’s other early agreements with man included information about worship (compare Gen. 4:3-4). When the Hebrew people were freed from Egyptian bondage, a new system of worship was given. Those who worshipped under this new way included Moses, Joshua, Samuel, Saul, David, Solomon, the Hebrew nation, a long list of prophets, Jesus, and for a time, the apostles.

Jeremiah promised that a time would come when God would offer a “new covenant” (Jer. 31:31); part of this new agreement would be a new way of worship. Jesus said His “blood” would be used to inaugurate this new agreement (Mt. 26:28) and He was right. Paul explained this point in slightly different terms. In Col. 2:14 he said Jesus’ death “nailed the Old Testament to the cross.” Paul also said “the law” (the Old Testament system) was to exist “till the seed came” (Gal. 3:19). He then identified this *seed* as Christ (Gal. 3:16). Since Jesus (the promised seed) has come, “the law” (and this includes all the Old Testament regulations about worship) has been removed. Paul illustrated this point in Rom. 7:1-4 by appealing to a married woman: Just as it would be wrong for a woman to be married to two men at the same time, so people cannot be joined to both the Old Testament and the New Testament at the same time. We can be only under one divine covenant at a time. Since the Old Testament has been removed, we must solely follow the New Testament. We may “learn” from the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4)—the Old Testament teaches us about the need to be obedient, how God rewards faithfulness and unfaithfulness, etc.—but our worship and way of life is strictly based on New Testament teaching. As Paul said in Rom 10:4, “*For Christ is the end of the law unto righteousness to every one that believeth.*”

God has **always regulated** man’s worship. When Moses delivered the Old Testament to the nation of Israel, God ensured the people had everything they needed to properly love and serve Him. God also gave His people special gifts to help them worship (Ex. 31:1-11; 35:25, 30-35; 1 Kgs. 7:13-14; 1 Chron. 28:11-21). In the first century, when the New Testament was instituted, God again provided His people with special gifts (Rom. 12:6-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-14:40). Supernatural abilities allowed Christians to demonstrate that Christianity is now the right way to serve God (Mk. 16:20; Heb. 2:4). These gifts also allowed various Christians to help construct the New Testament Scriptures. God’s special help for people from now until the end of time is the Bible, especially the New Testament. The New Testament Scriptures are “complete in every way” (2 Pet. 1:3; 2 Tim. 3:17) and are “God’s power to salvation” (Rom. 1:16). Paul also called them the Holy Spirit’s “sword” (Eph. 6:17) that is very “sharp” (Heb. 4:12).

The Bible offers several simple facts about worship, some of which are these: (a) Worship must be submitted to deity alone (Mt. 4:10); neither angels (Rev. 19:10) nor ordinary men (Acts 10:25-26) are worthy of worship. Because God is a ‘spirit’ being (Jn. 4:24), humans are not permitted to worship him by the use of material objects, e.g., images (Dt. 4:12; 15-18). The fact that Christ was worshipped, and that he accepted such adoration, is an unanswerable argument for his deity (Mt. 8:2; 9:18; 14:33). (b) Worship to God must be rendered with utmost sincerity (Josh. 24:14; Jn. 4:24), not hypocritically (Mt. 15:7-9), for the purpose of show (Mt. 6:1ff), or arrogantly (Lk. 18:10ff). (c) Worship must follow a prescribed procedure, that of ‘truth’ (Jn. 4:24), which means in accordance with God’s word (Jn. 17:17).

Ignorant worship will not be accepted (Acts 17:23)” (Bible Words and Theological Terms Made Easy, p. 195).

The preceding information reminds us worship is not about us; it is about honoring God (compare Ps. 100:3). Selfish and ignorant people often make worship about themselves. In some places worship seems to be “How Great We Are” instead of “How Great Thou Art.” Proper and acceptable worship means we come before God in the way the New Testament describes and acknowledge who He is. In Ps. 95:6-7 we read: “*Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before Jehovah our maker: For he is our God, and we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. Today, oh that ye would hear his voice!*”

Another passage in the Old Testament that provides us with a proper view of worship is Deut. 16:16: “*Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before Jehovah thy God in the place which he shall choose: in the feast of unleavened bread, and in the feast of weeks, and in the feast of tabernacles; and they shall not appear before Jehovah empty*” (readers may also wish to compare Mt. 5:23—offer *thy gift*). God expects people to worship and worship is a time to *give*. Today many who come to worship expect to *receive*. Worship is more about giving than taking (compare Heb. 13:15). Even the wise-men who came to visit Jesus came to *give* instead of *get* (Mt. 2:1-2). We may not have the gold, incense and myrrh these men had (and the Bible does not say there were three wise-men), but we can offer our heart, will, worship and life to God.

Implied in the preceding paragraph is the fact that true worship requires intent (compare Ps. 95:2). Contrary to the idea that everything in life is worship (this is a false view that has sometimes been taught), worship requires intent. Christians can certainly “glorify God with good works” (Mt. 5:16), but good works are not synonymous with worship. In many places the Bible affirms that worship is a specific act and an act that requires intent. This point is seen in the life of Abraham (Gen. 22:5), Joshua (Josh. 5:14), Gideon (Judg. 7:15), Elkanah (1 Sam. 1:1-3, 19), Jeroboam and the ten northern tribes (1 Kgs. 12:30), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego and others in Babylon (Dan. 3:1-7), the wise men who came to see Jesus (Mt. 2:2), an unnamed eunuch (Acts 8:27), Jesus and Satan (Mt. 4:9), and the apostle John (Rev. 19:10). These illustrations not only prove that everything in life is *not* worship, they prove that Christians cannot wander into an assembly of Christians, passively sit through the worship service, and be counted as a true worshipper. Worship requires purpose and action.

Because worship requires purpose and action, it must never be regarded as a “spectator sport” or a performance. Too many people have come to regard worship as entertainment; in many large congregations or in situations where people watch a worship service from their home, many see worship as something *done for them* and this is wrong. Some not only watch instead of worship, they “rate” the service. People may score how well the song leader did as he led the congregation in song. They may evaluate who led the best prayer or judge the preacher’s sermon instead of considering the content of the message. When people concentrate on the minister instead of the message, they have a wrong focus. Those who concentrate on who dressed the best (or worst) instead of thinking of Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross came for the wrong reason. It has been said that Americans “worship their work, work at their play, and play at their worship.” Sadly, this is often a true saying. Many have turned “Sunday” into “Funday” and leave a religious assembly saying things like, “It was sure a good show today.”

When worship takes the form of entertainment or a performance, it is not worship. True worship is a reverent activity—a time when worshippers come before God and honor Him in humility, truth, obedience and love. Just as we must *discern the body* in the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:29), so we need to be discerning in every aspect of worship. If we do not do this, our actions will be classified as approaching God in an *unworthy manner* and we will be “judged” by Him (11:31b-32).

Although God requires us to worship Him in the way He has directed, and this includes intent and activity, people have often deviated from what God has specified. Some do not worship as the New Testament teaches because they do not believe God is serious about worshipping “in truth” (Jn. 4:24). People with this view worship in a way *they* think is best, but God says this is a very bad choice (Lev. 10:1-2). Others think worship should be based on what people want. People have also tried this in the past, but we are to “learn” from the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4) that this approach to worship is also a serious mistake (compare 1 Sam. 15, especially 1 Sam. 15:21). Some have said deviations from New

Testament worship are necessary for numerical growth; if we just “widen the gate” (Mt. 7:13), worship will bring in more people. Jesus bought the church with His blood (Acts 20:28), so that makes Him the gatekeeper of (Acts 2:47) and rule maker for it (Mt. 16:18—“my church”). We are only permitted to do the things He has authorized (Col. 3:17). Some have said people “expect” certain things at worship and we must “give them what they want.” This is also an old argument and God says we must not pay any attention to it (compare Gal. 1:10). Still others want to do “what every other religious group is doing,” but Jesus said the majority of people (including a lot of religious people) will be eternally condemned (Mt. 7:13, 22). Finally, there are the “intellectuals” who believe they can improve on God’s plan for worship. Intellectual claims about “new ways to worship” are not new to God; they are part of the world’s *foolishness* (compare 1 Cor. 1:19; 3:18-19). Also, God says our ways (no matter how intelligent they seem) are not better than His ways (compare Isa. 55:8-9).

Many of the preceding points are related to a fundamental difference between the covenant given by Moses and the New Testament given by Jesus and the apostles. The Old Testament was largely based on an earthly (physical) type of worship. The New Testament, on the other hand, emphasizes a non-earthly type of worship.

Had we lived under the system given by Moses, we would have seen, heard, and sometimes touched the things associated with worship (worship often had a direct impact on the physical senses). When an animal was prepared for sacrifice, it was a physical object that could be seen, smelled, heard and touched. In some cases sacrificial animals may have been raised by a Hebrew family. Children may have named some of the creatures eventually used for sacrifice. Certainly passages such as 2 Chron. 7:3 describe how Old Testament worship was sometimes a very visual experience. Readers may also wish to compare Ex. 33:10 and Lev. 4:32-34.

Rather than stress what can be seen, felt and smelled, the New Testament emphasizes what is “not of this world” (Jn. 18:36). Under the New Testament system of worship, there is no high priest to see and no special place to attend for worship. There are no animals to sacrifice and no incense. Christians offer up *spiritual* sacrifices (1 Pet. 2:5), one of which is the “fruit of their lips” (Heb. 13:15). There is far less pomp and ceremony with New Testament worship and this is often not what people expect or want.

God says the New Testament system is *better* (this term is used repeatedly in the book of Hebrews), but many think the Old Testament style of worship is better because it appealed to the physical senses. As noted in the preceding paragraph, many long for some type of special ceremony, or things that can be touched, smelled and seen. Many expect to see a preacher wear distinctive clothing, though God says under the New Testament system “all are brethren” (Mt. 23:8). As shown in the next paragraph, New Testament worship is a very simple process. If we truly love God (Jn. 14:15; 15:14), we will accept the simplicity, beauty and spiritual nature of New Testament worship because this is right and because this allows people to see what New Testament Christianity is really like.

New Testament worship consists of five distinct and simple acts of worship, one of which is *giving* (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Unlike the Old Testament system which specified an exact amount to give, the New Testament tells worshippers to “give as they have been prospered” (1 Cor. 16:2). New Testament worship also includes *prayer* (1 Tim. 2:8). While our giving is largely horizontal (it mainly affects others—compare 1 Cor. 16:3), our prayers are *vertical* (they are directed to God). A third aspect of worship is the *Lord’s Supper* (Acts 20:7), an act that helps us “remember” Jesus (1 Cor. 11:25) and “proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor. 11:26). Instead of being horizontal or upward, the Lord’s Supper stresses what is *inward* (1 Cor. 11:28).

Preaching is another part of worship (Acts 20:7); this element of worship allows us to better internalize and apply God’s word. Preaching is to be based on the “word of God” instead of jokes and good stories (2 Tim. 4:2). Gospel preaching involves “reproving, rebuking and exhorting” (2 Tim. 4:2). Although there are those who do not want to hear the truth preached (2 Tim. 4:4), faithful preachers “admonish and teach” (Col. 1:28) “in season and out of season” (2 Tim. 4:2). Since preaching glorifies God and helps people with their spiritual lives (Acts 20:32), it is both horizontal and vertical. Christians should have confidence in their preacher, but they should also verify what he says (Acts 17:11).

The final item associated with New Testament worship is music. Under the Old Testament system

given through Moses, God specifically called for instrumental music (2 Chron. 29:25; Ps. 150, etc.). For New Testament worship Christians are commanded to “sing” (Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). While this point is discussed more fully in the commentary on 14:14-15, here it may be said that singing is to be a *congregational activity* (*one another*, Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16). New Testament Christianity knows nothing of having a “choir in worship.” Since everyone is to be involved in singing, and this singing is also done *unto God* (see again Eph. 5:19 and Col. 3:16), this final aspect of worship is both horizontal and vertical. There are five acts of New Testament worship. Proper worship requires these specific *acts*, the right *object* (God), the right *attitude* (spirit), and the right way—God’s divine *pattern* (the truth)—and doing them all on the right *day* (the Lord’s Day, Sunday). These acts of worship also remind us that worship is not a passive experience—worship is something we must do. When we leave an assembly we should come away with the attitude “I worshipped” instead of “I watched.”

In addition to telling us about “true worship,” the New Testament specifically warns us about worship that God will not accept. We are warned against offering *vain* worship (Mt. 15:8-9). Vain worship occurs when people substitute the “doctrines and commandments of men” instead of following the New Testament pattern for worship. We are also warned about *ignorant* worship. Some “very religious” people may offer worship on a regular basis, but if the worship is not directed to the true God or not based on God’s divine pattern (Acts 17:22-23), it is rejected. A final type of improper worship is *will-worship* (Col. 2:23). This is a “‘self-made’ or ‘would-be’ religion” (CBL, GED, 2:230). Paul regarded this worship “as freely chosen but wrong!” (CBL, GED, 2:231). Vine (p. 233) defined *will worship* as “voluntarily adopted worship, whether unbidden or forbidden.” Many avoid what is explicitly forbidden in worship (they will not worship angels—Rev. 22:8-9), but they are not concerned with unbidden worship (i.e. things on which the Bible is silent). This author once spoke with a woman who “played the spoons” at the place where she worshipped. She “had this talent” and insisted on “using it for God.” Sadly, she refused to consider that God might not want her *unbidden* worship. People often offer unbidden worship because they like it or they believe God will accept it, even though He has not asked for it. Those who claim to love God will never offer unbidden worship for such a choice is hypocritical. If we profess to love God and His word, but we worship contrary to what the Bible says, we say one thing but do another.

Some can worship in the *right* way but have the *wrong spirit* (Mt. 15:3-9). Others may have the *right spirit* but worship in the *wrong way* (Acts 18:24-28). Still others have a *form of godliness* (2 Tim. 3:5), but this is also not enough. People must worship in the *right way* (Jn. 4:24) and have the *right spirit* (Mt. 5:24).

Since worship is a very important part of the Christian life, it should begin in the home. Children need to be taught about prayer, giving, God’s word, singing, and even the Lord’s Supper by their parents. Some families do this through home devotionals. Participation and familiarity with spiritual things in the home will help children be familiar with and participate in spiritual things in the church. Parents help shape their children’s attitude towards God and spiritual things and they have a limited amount of time for this task.

Parents should regularly ask their children if they have read their Bible and prayed, just as they inquire about other things such as homework. It is also important for parents to offer a good Christian example in their home, especially when facing the problems of life. When health or job problems arise, children should see their parents respond to problems in a Christian manner. If parents continually set forth a good Christian example for their children, this will help their offspring be prepared to live as faithful Christians in their adult years. If worship does not begin in the Christian home, and parents do not further reinforce the Christian way of life by a good example (and this includes parents faithfully attending worship), parents should not be optimistic about having children who are devoted to God in their adult years.

There are some things families can do to enhance their worship and teach their children about the importance of spiritual things. One easy thing is “worship preparation.” Some Sunday worship services are spoiled by Saturday night activities—people stay out late on Saturday evening and then miss the service or the Bible class held on Sunday morning. Or, they come but are too tired to properly worship. The Hebrew people had a “preparation day” before the Sabbath (Mk. 15:42) and Christians can engage in some *worship preparation* by being careful about their Saturday evening activities. In addition to

attending on a regular basis, Christians should try to be present before the worship or a Bible class starts. Also, the whole family should come together. It is usually beneficial to sit in a place where we will be relatively free from distractions. We can take notes on the sermon, actively participate in the singing, and stay after the service and visit with fellow worshippers. We can further train our children by using things such as “teachable moments” within our family. Some have taken their children outside at night, looked at the stars, and read Ps. 19:1. One family designed one night a week as “Ask anything you want about the Bible night” to help their children know God’s word (compare Acts 17:11). Homes are strengthened by regular private and corporate worship as well as instruction in the home and at the congregation where we worship. God warns us to start teaching our children as early as possible (2 Tim. 1:5; 3:15).

A final point about worship involves attendance. While this subject is discussed more fully in the commentary on Heb. 10:25, here we may make some simple observations based on Lk. 17:11-18. Jesus healed ten lepers but only “one turned back and glorified God” (Lk. 17:15). This caused Jesus to ask if “ten had not been cleansed” and “where the other nine were” (Lk. 17:17). When the church assembles for worship, one wonders if heaven is not asking *where are the nine*? If people have been washed in the blood of the lamb and forgiven of the debt created by sin—a debt they could never repay—why are they not always present at worship? If a congregation meets twice on Sunday (the morning and the evening), why do some not attend on Sunday night? If a congregation has a mid-week Bible class, why do some miss these special periods of study? In Mt. 10:37 Jesus said, “*He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.*” Based on this passage, what may be said of Christians who could but do not attend the appointed times of worship and other activities at their local congregation? Are these Christians truly “seeking first the kingdom of God” (Mt. 6:33)? There is more to the Christian life than attendance and worship, but it is hard to understand how a person can truly be a Christian without regular worship and faithful attendance.