

## 20260503 1 Corinthians 11 Part One – God’s Order of Authority & Order in the Church

\*\*\*All scripture is NKJV unless otherwise noted.

1 Corinthians 11 contains two main sections of instructions from the apostle Paul: one on head coverings and headship during worship (verses 2–16), and the other on the proper observance of the Lord's Supper (verses 17–34). While some details (like head coverings) are tied to first-century Corinthian culture, this chapter presents great lessons for all of us about worship, God's established authority, relationships with one another, our unity, and reverence for Jesus. And overlying theme is that God is not a God of chaos but a God of order. He has an order for us to follow in our marriages, and an order for us to follow in worship.

**11** *Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.<sup>2</sup> Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.<sup>3</sup> But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.<sup>4</sup> Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head.<sup>5</sup> But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved.<sup>6</sup> For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.<sup>7</sup> For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man.<sup>8</sup> For man is not from woman, but woman from man.<sup>9</sup> Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man.<sup>10</sup> For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.<sup>11</sup> Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.<sup>12</sup> For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God.<sup>13</sup> Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered?<sup>14</sup> Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him?<sup>15</sup> But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering.<sup>16</sup> But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God. (1 Corinthians 11:1-16).*



Remember that this is a problem-solving letter. We don't get to hear both sides of the conversation. We are all familiar with groups of the body of Christ that require women to wear head wear. So, we need to look at this and figure out why they were doing this. Is this a requirement for Christian women today? Do women need to have their heads covered?

I first saw head coverings on women when I attended an orthodox Episcopalian school. We had a chapel service every morning and all of the girls in the school were required to wear a chapel cap. No one ever explained why they were wearing chapel caps, and it became so rote that it was just done. So, how do we interpret what we read in this passage, and what does it mean to us today?

- 1 In Paul's day all respectable women wore head coverings in public. When a woman wasn't respectable (prostitute), she didn't wear any covering on her head. In that culture, if a woman didn't cover her head, it was disgraceful. So naturally, he is

urging women to not come to church looking like women of the world. (At that time, rebellious women would also cut off all their hair.) I think this could be applied to *us* reminding *us* not to come to church looking like the world either.

- 2 So, what was the real message that a prostitute was giving by not covering her head or by cutting their hair off? A look at verse 10 sheds some light on that. ***“<sup>10</sup> For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head”***. This means that the prostitutes of that day were refusing to wear a head covering as a rejection of any authority over them. They were rejecting the symbols of authority that had been established in their lives. This phrase “a symbol of authority” is a key phrase that explains why women are no longer required to wear a head covering. They were rejecting the idea that anyone was to have authority over them.

Today, when a woman does not cover her hair, it does not convey any sense that a woman is somehow rebellious or is living outside of some authority; it doesn't mean anything in our culture. Hence, those sects in which women wear such things on their heads are doing something that does not convey any message in the culture in which we live. It might convey a message within their own societies, but there is no general message to society. So, those groups that insist on this are following a tradition that no longer makes a cultural statement. In other words, it just doesn't mean anything.

So, if a woman wants to wear something to remind herself of her commitment to Christ, that's okay. But, for the rest of women in Christendom, it just doesn't mean anything. So, the question becomes, “what does this mean to us?” It is relevant because there is a meaning behind the covering. What Paul is getting at, is that GOD DESIGNED AN ORDER IN MARRIAGE. In Paul's day, the head covering was a symbol of respect for that order that God had established. If a woman wears a head covering today, it is not a symbol of respect for the authority that God instituted in marriage.

So, what is the order of marriage?

Verse 3 - *But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.* Why do women need to show respect for that order? God has ordained an order of leadership in a marriage. Whenever there is an authority, there must be some who are subordinate to that authority. That's just the way it is in any orderly society.

When we see a badge on a sheriff's deputy, we realize that we need to be submissive and subordinate to that authority. If you don't have this, you have chaos and anarchy. In the U.S., we are constantly challenging authority, but proper recognition of good established authority is what makes the United States so different from many other cultures. We have been known for our rule of law and equality under the law. This has made us different and somewhat unique.

In marriage, it's the same way. God established a structure of authority between a man and a woman. Look at Genesis Chapter 2. ***“<sup>18</sup> Then the LORD God said, “It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper fit for him.” (Genesis 2:18, ESV)***. God created women from the beginning to be one who “comes alongside” helping the man. In Hebrew, it says she is a “suitable helper” to her husband. She is a complement to him. They are equal complements to each other, but each has a separate role.

She comes along as one who supports and assists the man. It's God's order of things. She is subordinate. Note that this is not an instruction for women to be this way with all other men. This is something that is God's instruction for marriage. It is talking about a Christian wife's relationship to her husband and to him alone. The role model for this is Jesus, who being equal with the Father, voluntarily submitted Himself to the Father. Let's take a look for a moment at Philippians Chapter 2:

*<sup>5</sup> Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus; <sup>6</sup> who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, <sup>7</sup> but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. <sup>8</sup> And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (Philippians 2:5-8, ESV).*

Jesus put aside the privileges He had of being God. This is written to all of us, not just women, because it's important that we see the dynamics of the role that women have in marriage. Paul used some interesting wording when he stated "though He was in the form of God." That's Paul's way of saying that Jesus was equal to God, but He didn't grasp that and hold onto it. Jesus didn't even demand the rights and privileges of being God.

In the same kind of way, a woman is totally and utterly equal to her husband. Subordination does not imply inferiority. It doesn't mean that in business or the military. It is just an order of things that ensure functionality (it makes things work). **This subordination that a woman gives is in fact her gift to her husband.**

Men and women can both refuse to do what God calls us to do in a marriage. **But if we do, we will experience the pain, the difficulty, and the challenges that come with getting outside of God's order of things.** Men are called to love their wives even when they are unlovable. This means loving even when we don't feel like it. Women also have the challenge of submitting to their husbands even when their husband might be inept. What we have is an obedience problem. Likewise women are called to respect their husbands, even when they aren't respectable. Both of these are difficult charges. Paul's telling us how things are when they work best.

There is an order that God made and when we ignore it, we run the risk of messing things up and having huge marital issues. There are roles that God established in the marital relationship. What needs to happen in problem marriages is for the couple to stick to those God established roles. Until we become obedient and follow God's order of things we are guaranteed problems. It really is that simple.

Paul is warning the Corinthian women to not have an attitude of rebellion. In that culture, it was expressed through head coverings. It was an outside symbol of what was going on in her heart. You can wear a head covering all you want, but if a woman has a rebellious heart, she can be ignoring the established structure that God ordained for marriage. A husband can bring flowers, write cards, and open doors, and still not have a sacrificially loving heart for his bride.

I think it's good for us to all to stop, take a breath and perhaps pray for God to reveal to us whether we are living in obedience with regard to marriage. Paul's are echoed in the Book of Ephesians.

*<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands. (Ephesians 5:22-24, ESV).*

God is telling us that there is an order of things.

*<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish... <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband. (Ephesians 5:25-27, 32-33 ESV).*

God tells men to love their wives, and He tells wives to respect their husbands. Men are occupational. When these two disciplines are exercised, a special bond is created between them.

Paul is telling us that when we disrespect what God ordained for the marriage, we're doing something disgraceful. A wife must respect her husband *and* his calling. Marriages today are a mess because we're not accepting the privilege that God has given us. Men, we are to be willing to lay down our lives for our wives. Women, respect and honor your husbands for the position in which God has placed them.

God's order for women is not to be a lap dog bowing to every whim which a husband has. You are in it together. You are not enemies. You are not at cross purposes. Get in the trenches. Men start loving your wives sacrificially. Marriage is made up of two people who understand how to forgive. If you have a problem apologizing or saying you're sorry, you have a deep pride problem and it will inject poison into your marriage and your home. Be cautious to live your own life before God in obedience to His word, and do your part. If your partner falls down on his or her part, it's a matter between them and the Lord. Pray for them.

## **Conduct at the Lord's Supper**

*<sup>17</sup> Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. <sup>18</sup> For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are **divisions** among you, and in part I believe it. <sup>19</sup> For there must also be **factious** among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. <sup>20</sup> Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. <sup>21</sup> For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. <sup>22</sup> What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or **do you despise the church of God** and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. (1 Corinthians 11:17-22).*

The early church had something like a covered dish supper every week where they'd observe the Lord's Supper towards the end of dinner. It was all wrapped up together. Instead of

sharing their food with one another, some of the people would just start eating in their own little group while there was an awkward situation where some would sit and eat and others just watched. Remember that these churches included people from totally different social classes. Poor slaves were eating alongside people that had abundance. They were dividing themselves into cliques. There is nothing wrong with spending more time with people of your own interests. That is just natural. Some have kids and some don't. Some like to do certain activities and others don't. Some are of a similar age. Paul is saying that we shouldn't do that to the point where we don't have contact with others in the body. We shouldn't focus on those things that are of interest to us over the exclusion of others. This is why it is so important that we welcome people who are new in the fellowship. No person should ever come into the Grove and not be welcomed. Neither should *they* come and not greet anyone. We need to be an open-armed group of people. Meeting new people is difficult for many of us, but it is the way God wants us to behave. Here Paul is basically saying, "don't confuse the covered dish supper with Communion." The message of Communion is that we're to commune.

## Institution of the Lord's Supper

*<sup>23</sup> For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed [Gk: while/in the night He was being betrayed] took bread; <sup>24</sup> and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; **do this in remembrance** of Me." <sup>25</sup> In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in **remembrance** of Me." <sup>26</sup> For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, **you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.** (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, author's notes in brackets).*

### Jeremiah 31:31-34 (ESV)

"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD.

COVENANT OF GRACE IN HIS BLOOD. We get into trouble when we try to mix the Old Covenant with the New Covenant (Sabbath keeping, tithing, etc.). God says, "It is not like the covenant I made with their fathers."

After Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus, most likely Jesus appeared to him and gave him instructions. When we take Communion we are proclaiming the sufficiency of His death for each of us. It should never just be a ritual we do as habit. It should never be empty for us. It is the NEW

## Examine Yourself

*<sup>27</sup> Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an **unworthy manner** will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. <sup>28</sup> But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. <sup>29</sup> For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. <sup>30</sup> For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. <sup>31</sup> For if we would judge ourselves [taking inventory of our hearts], we would not be judged. <sup>32</sup> But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. <sup>33</sup> Therefore, my brethren, when you come together*

*to eat, wait for one another. <sup>34</sup> But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come. (1 Corinthians 11:27-34, author's notes in brackets).*

What does an “unworthy manner” mean? This does not mean that you and I need to be “worthy” to take Communion because you NEVER will be worthy enough to take Communion. Salvation is through the mercy of God. (We don’t get what we deserve.) We are saved by the blessing of grace. He isn’t saying, “get clean enough to take Communion.” We clothe ourselves with HIS “Robe of Righteousness.” Paul is saying, “don’t receive Communion if you are not covered in the worthiness of Christ.” If you want to participate in Communion, take inventory of what’s in your heart and confess it and get right before God. He isn’t expecting you to clean up your life, but He is saying that you should examine yourself and let the Holy Spirit expose those areas where you need to be cleaned up. He is asking you to recognize where your life needs to be cleaned, and confess it and move forward. David said, <sup>23</sup> *Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: <sup>24</sup> And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting. (Psalm 139:23-24, KJV) .*

Let us do likewise when we come to partake in the symbols of the body and blood of Jesus in Communion. They are not the reality. They are the symbol of the reality of what has saved us. Our lives including our marriages should reflect the order that God prescribes for us. Likewise our worship should be orderly and holy. That’s the message today.

Let us pray.

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868. Tel: 936-825-1227 (Edited and proofed by Amanda Neese- Webster, Texas.) All financial gifts to this ministry are tax-deductible as a 501 (c) (3) Corporation.