

1 Corinthians 11:1–34

Christlike Example, God’s Order, and the Sacred Meaning of the Lord’s Supper

Introduction: Imitating Christ in Everyday Worship

Paul opens this chapter by calling believers to a life shaped by example:

“Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ.”

Christian maturity is not merely learned—it is modeled. Paul invites the church to observe his life, not because he is perfect, but because his aim is clear: he does not seek his own advantage, but the spiritual good of others. This Christlike pattern of self-giving love sets the tone for everything that follows in this chapter.

Remembering Apostolic Teaching and God’s Order (1 Corinthians 11:2–12)

Paul begins with commendation:

“I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you.”

He then explains a principle of God-given order:

“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.”

The word *head* speaks of authority and responsibility, not superiority. Scripture never teaches that men are more valuable than women. Both are created in God’s image and equally redeemed by Christ. What Paul describes is order, not inequality—an order meant to reflect harmony, not domination.

Marriage, as God designed it, is not tyranny or servitude. A husband’s authority is meaningful only as he lives under the authority of Christ. When that link is broken, God never intends a woman to be subject to ungodliness or abuse. Leadership in Scripture is always accountable, loving, and sacrificial.

Cultural Expression and Timeless Principles (1 Corinthians 11:3–16)

Paul addresses head coverings within the cultural context of Corinth. In that society, a woman’s veil represented modesty, protection, and marital faithfulness. To appear unveiled communicated availability and was associated with temple prostitution—particularly significant in a city dominated by pagan worship.

Paul’s concern is not fashion, but witness and order. Christian liberty must never confuse or compromise testimony in the surrounding culture.

At the same time, Paul balances his teaching carefully:

“Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.”

Men and women are mutually dependent and equally necessary in God's design. All authority, identity, and purpose ultimately come from God.

Paul closes this section by making clear that the practice was not a universal mandate for all churches:

"If anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God."

The principle remains timeless; the cultural expression may change.

Disorder at the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 11:17–22)

Paul now turns from commendation to rebuke:

"When you come together, it is not for the better but for the worse."

The Corinthian believers were dividing along social and economic lines during their communal meals. The wealthy ate excessively, even becoming drunk, while the poor were left hungry and humiliated.

Paul confronts this sharply:

"Do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing?"

The Lord's Supper is meant to proclaim unity purchased by Christ's blood—not to magnify selfishness.

The Meaning of the Bread and the Cup (1 Corinthians 11:23–26)

Paul returns to what he originally taught them:

"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you."

This is the proper pattern of ministry—receiving from God before giving to others.

Paul recounts the institution of the Lord's Supper:

"The Lord Jesus, on the same night in which He was betrayed, took bread; 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.'"

The bread represents Christ's body given for us. It is not transformed into His physical body, but it powerfully symbolizes His suffering on our behalf.

Likewise, the cup:

"This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."

Every time believers partake, they proclaim the Lord's death—and they do so **until He comes**. The cross and the resurrection stand at the center of Christian worship.

Partaking in a Worthy Manner (1 Corinthians 11:27–30)

Paul issues a serious warning:

“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.”

This does not mean believers must be morally perfect before partaking. No one is worthy by merit. Our worthiness rests entirely on faith in Jesus Christ and the grace purchased by His blood.

Paul is addressing the manner, not the moral résumé. Treating the Lord’s Supper casually, selfishly, or irreverently dishonors Christ.

“For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.”

Failure to discern the Lord’s body—both His sacrificial suffering and His unified people—brought real consequences.

Self-Examination and Loving Discipline (1 Corinthians 11:31–34)

Paul urges believers:

“Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”

Self-examination leads to repentance, humility, and worship—not fear. God’s discipline is corrective, not condemning:

“When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.”

Paul closes with practical instruction:

“When you come together to eat, wait for one another.”

Love, patience, and reverence must govern Christian fellowship.

Practical Application for Believers

- Imitate Christ by seeking the good of others above personal preference.
- Honor God’s order without abusing authority or diminishing dignity.
- Approach the Lord’s Supper with reverence, gratitude, and self-examination.
- Remember that unity in the body reflects the price Christ paid on the cross.

A Challenge to the Church

The church must guard against casual worship and self-centered Christianity. The table of the Lord proclaims both the seriousness of sin and the greatness of grace. Our gatherings should reflect humility, love, and awe before the risen Christ.

An Invitation to Non-Believers

Jesus Christ shed His blood on the cross for your sins. His body was given, His life poured out, so you could be forgiven and made new. He rose from the dead, declaring that He is God, Savior, and Lord.

If you have never trusted Him, today you can. Turn from sin. Believe in His finished work. Receive His grace. He will forgive you, restore you, and welcome you into His family.

Come to Jesus Christ—the One whose broken body and shed blood bring life, healing, and eternal hope.