

Wheelersburg Baptist Church 11/30/11 Wednesday Evening
1 Corinthians 11:17-34

Discuss: Why do church members have differences?

There are many reasons, depending on how we approach that question. In 1 Corinthians 11 the apostle Paul addresses this very issue as we'll see in this study.

Review: Last time we explored the first part of 1 Corinthians 11...

Some things to keep in mind:

1. *Paul was not anti-women.*
2. *The immorality in Corinth was a constant threat to the church.*
3. *The problem being addressed in 1 Corinthians 11 is disorder.*

****Main Idea:** In 1 Corinthians 11-14 Paul deals with the problem of disorder in the church at Corinth, particularly as it surfaced during worship services.

To enable the church to deal with this problem Paul addresses two critical issues in 11:1-16. We must come to grips with these two issues ourselves if we're going to honor God in dealing with church controversies, no matter what the problem.

I. We must settle the issue of authority (1-2).

- A. God has given us the example of the apostles (1).**
- B. God has given us the teachings of the apostles (2).**

II. We must settle the issue of order (3-16).

A. Paul explains the principle headship (3-10).

1. *Here is where headship exists (3).*
 - Christ is the head of the man.
 - Man is the head of the woman.
 - God is the head of Christ.
2. *Here's how headship applies to public worship services (4-6).*
 - A man should not cover his head when praying or prophesying.
E.g. At a sporting event, the announcer often says, "Would all men and boys please remove their caps and stand for the playing of the national anthem." If a man refused to do so, what would his hat on his head signify? Is the hat sinful? No. God looks at the heart. But the hat on the head says something about the heart, right? I can say I respect my country in my heart but if I am in public meeting and refuse to remove my cap I am sending a clear message to all around me... I think this gets at what Paul has in mind in this chapter.
 - A woman should cover her head when praying or prophesying.
3. *Here's the basis for headship (7-10).*
 - It has to do with the glory of God (7).
 - It goes back to creation (8-9).
 - It affects the angels (10).

New Material: We left off at this point last time...

Let's probe further by considering two other explanations pertaining to order.

B. Paul explains the principle of interdependence (11-12).

Men and women may be different, but they need each other. They are not competing enemies but complements in the Body of Christ.

1. *Woman came from man.*
2. *Man is born of woman.*
3. *Both man and woman come from God.*

C. Paul explains how to put it into practice (13-16).

Paul commands the Corinthians in v 13, "Judge for yourselves." We need to think through the implications of this and live accordingly. Here are three lessons.

1. *What we do (even how we wear our hair) sends a message (13).*

Sometimes a person says, "It's the heart that matters." That's true. But actions matter, too. A pure heart can be misrepresented by an indiscriminant act.

E.g. I can love my country but if I refuse to take off my cap during the national anthem I've sent a very clear (though unintended) message to other people.

Discuss: We can do the same in church worship services. How so?

2. *Men and women are the same in worth but not in function (14-15).*

- God has given the woman a special role.

- God has given the man a special role.

Q: What do the words "very nature of" (KJV "even nature itself") indicate in v 14?

3. *We must avoid causing contention in the church (16).*

To sum it up, a helpful commentary by Warren Wiersbe: "Paul gave several reasons why women must keep their proper place in the church: (1) it shows honor to their husbands; (2) it honors Christ, the Head of the church; (3) it agrees with the plan of creation itself, for God created woman for man; (4) the angels watch our worship and know what we do, v. 10; (5) nature itself gives the woman long hair and the man short hair, thus teaching subordination; (6) this is the practice in all the churches, v. 16. How does this matter of "wearing hats" and "wearing short hair" apply to us today? While we do not have all of the same circumstances that Paul had to deal with in Corinth, we must admit that a woman or a man out of place is always a hindrance to the work of God. There ought to be modesty in the local church, both in dress and action. We dare not conform to the world, lest we lose our testimony."¹

Beginning in verse 17 Paul moves to a new, yet related subject affecting the Corinthian church. The general topic remains the same—he's talking about how to deal with *disorder* in the church worship services. The specific issue addressed in verses 17-34 concerns the *Lord's Supper*.

I. Paul exposed problems in observance of the Lord's Supper (17-22).

¹Warren W. Wiersbe, *Wiersbe's Expository Outlines on the New Testament*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Victor Books) 1992.

Read v 17.

Q: How would you describe Paul's tone in v 17?

Paul was not one given to flattery. When he could give legitimate praise, he did so (remember how he began this letter in 1:4-7?). But when praise wasn't warranted, as in this particular area, he didn't hide the fact. In fact he took steps to expose the twofold problem.

A. There were divisions (17-19).

Q: What was happening in the Corinthian church when the believers assembled?

There were divisions [Greek term *skismata*]. Paul already addressed one aspect of this division in chapters 1-4 (the cliques). Here he has something else in mind, how the divisions affected the observance of the Lord's Supper.

Paul makes a rather surprising statement in v 19. He says, "There *have* to be differences [KJV "heresies"] among you." That's interesting. The Greek verb states, "It is *necessary* [Greek *dei*]." Granted, church divisions are not desirable but they do accomplish something positive.

The term "differences" is the Greek term *hairesis* from the root verb meaning "to choose." Strong's offers this as one definition, "dissensions arising from diversity of opinions and aims."² Another lexicon offers this definition, "a division of people into different and opposing sets."³

Q: What positive contribution does Paul say "differences" yield in v 19b?

Some other translations of verse 19...

The *New Living Translation*, "But, of course, there must be divisions among you so that those of you who are right will be recognized!"

The *New Century Version*, "It is necessary to have differences among you so that it may be clear which of you really have God's approval."

NKJV, "For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you."

Here are two implications...

1. *Differences are to be expected.*

It's inevitable that differences will arise in churches. People are different. They are at different levels of maturity. They have different interests and backgrounds, etc. That's what Paul has been explaining in chapters 8-10.

Our tendency is to get scared when we see differences surface in the church. We may even feel like running from the church. That's not the answer. Paul says differences are to be expected. However...

2. *Divisions are not.*

²*Enhanced Strong's Lexicon*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1995.

³Louw, Johannes P. and Nida, Eugene A., *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament based on Semantic Domains*, (New York: United Bible Societies) 1988, 1989.

We must not accept divisions. We must deal with them and eliminate them. Where do divisions begin? With a heart attitude, namely selfishness...

B. There was selfishness (20-22).

Read verses 20-22.

When the Corinthians assembled for worship they would eat the Lord's Supper as part of their worship, just as the Lord commanded. But Paul makes a shocking statement in v 20, "When you come together it is *not* the Lord's Supper you eat." Oh, they were eating the bread and drinking the cup. The problem wasn't with the elements....

Q: Where did the problem lie? In the motivation of their hearts.

Q: According to v 21, what was happening when the Corinthians observed communion? We must understand the background. Paul says some were not "waiting" for the others.

Communion was part of a meal. The church would eat the meal first and then partake of the elements of the Lord's Supper. Here was the problem. The rich arrived early and scarfed down the best food before the poor got off work and arrived.

Discuss: How would that affect the spirit of the church during communion?

To sum up the problem at hand...

1. *In the Lord's Supper, we are supposed to remember the Lord.*
2. *The Corinthians were thinking of themselves.*

To eat the Lord's Supper with self-centered thoughts is to nullify the Lord's Supper. What's worse, it brings judgment upon oneself. Next time we'll see how Paul addressed these problems.

Discuss: What is one practical lesson have you learned tonight?

Next Week...

II. Paul reviewed the purpose of the Lord's Supper (23-26).

A. We remember our selfless Savior (22-25).

1. *He didn't think of Himself.*
2. *He gave Himself for us.*

B. We proclaim His death (26).

III. Paul discussed the practice of the Lord's Supper (27-34).

A. Here are some warnings to consider (27-32).

1. *Don't participate in an unworthy manner (27).*
2. *Examine yourself before you participate (28).*
3. *If we fail to examine ourselves, we will bring judgment on ourselves (29-30).*
4. *If we judged ourselves, the Lord would not have to judge us (31-32).*

B. Here are some steps of preparation (33-34).

1. *Wait for one another (33).*
2. *If you are hungry, eat before you come to church (34).*