

Discovering God's Wisdom

STUDIES IN FIRST CORINTHIANS

Lesson 13

1 Corinthians 11

Searching the Scriptures

for hidden treasure

"I rejoice at Your word as one who finds great treasure." Psalm 119:162

Paul now moves on to another topic in his letter to the Corinthians. In chapter 11 he begins to deal with the Corinthians' behavior during public worship, beginning with the question of head coverings. He will also address their behavior during the Lord's Supper and, in chapters 12-14, the use of spiritual gifts. Remember, as you study these chapters, that the motivation of Paul is to see to it that they are respecting one another and the Lord during worship.

First Day: Read 1 Corinthians 11:1-16

As was stated in our last lesson, verse 1 most likely belongs as a final thought with the message of chapter 10. But, if we look at verse 1 as belonging in chapter 11, we again see Paul encouraging them to imitate him (verse 1) and then praising them for following the teachings he has given them (verse 2). Paul uses the method of first handing them the bouquet, before dropping the bomb. The bomb begins to drop in verse 3 with the words, *"But I want you to understand..."*

1. What does Paul want them to understand? v. 3

The word for head here is *kephale* which means the head, top, or that which is uppermost in relation to something. It speaks, in regard to people, of the chief or one in authority. Although we can look at this verse as speaking of one being in authority and another in subordination, Paul only mentions the one who is the head, never designating the position of the other. From the rest of Paul's thoughts on the subject, it may be that Paul's emphasis is on *the honor due to the one who is the head.*

- a. How important do you think this piece of information is, not only for the Corinthians, but for us as Christians today?
2. From our passage today, what is Paul's specific word to the man on:
 - o *The covering of his head?*
 - o *His hair length?*
 - a. Who would the man disgrace if he didn't follow Paul's instructions in this area? v. 4
 - b. Who exactly is this? v. 3

3. From our passage today, what is Paul’s specific word to the woman on:
 - *The covering of her head?*
 - *Her hair length?*
 - a. Who would the woman disgrace if she didn’t follow Paul’s instructions in this area? v. 5
 - b. Who exactly is this? v.3

Making It Personal...

4. If you are married, what do you think the significance is to you that your husband is your head?
 - a. How might you show your husband honor—especially in the context of the public worship (church) experience?
5. If you are not married, who do you think your head would be?
 - a. Is there a way in which you can show your head more honor—especially in the context of public worship?

Digging Deeper

In this passage, Paul gives the picture both of subordination and equality when speaking of the *man* and the *woman*, (which can also be translated *husband* and *wife*).

- ❖ How do verses 8-9 show the reason for the subordination of the woman to the man?
- ❖ How do verses 11-12 show the reason for the equality of men and women.
- ❖ See if you can take both of these truths and come to a conclusion about the position of men and women in relation to one another.
- ❖ Do your best to summarize today’s passage in a couple of sentences.

Pearl of Great Price

“Be subject to one another in the fear of Christ.” Ephesians 5:21 (NASB) This is your memory verse—begin memorizing it today!

Second Day: Read 1 Corinthians 11:17-26

Paul began this chapter by praising the Corinthians (verse 2). At this turn in the letter, though, he says, “*In giving this instruction, I do not praise you...*” Here he begins his teaching on the behavior of the church during the Lord’s Supper, behavior which was completely unfitting for the worship service in general, but even more for the ceremony remembering and honoring the Lord’s sacrifice.

Paul has *heard* that there were divisions among the Corinthians in regard to their celebration of the Lord’s Supper. The divisions he speaks of here are not the same divisions he spoke of in the beginning of this letter, but divisions within the body between those who were rich and those who were poor.

To help with our understanding of the situation, we need to know that in the early days of the church there would be a love feast held prior to the celebration of the Lord’s Supper. It was here that the problem began.

1. From verses 20-22, see if you can get an understanding of the specifics of the problem. Share what you understand.
 - a. Can you see how this would cause divisions between those *with* and those *without*?
2. See if you can apply the teachings of James 2:1-6a to Paul’s concern here.
 - a. What is the law we are to live by? James 2:8 Whose law is this? (See Matthew 22:37-39.)
 - b. What would Jesus have thought about this situation? (Especially in regard to the very thing they were celebrating—His *sacrifice* for them.)
3. In verses 23-26, Paul gives the Corinthians a reminder of what he had received as to the original expression of the Lord’s Supper. Answer these questions for an understanding of the significance of this event.

verse 23

 - ✓ *When* did the original Lord’s Supper take place?
 - ✓ *What* was the first element to be taken?

verse 24

 - ✓ What did Jesus do with this element?
 - ✓ What did this signify?

verse 25

 - ✓ What was the second element to be taken?
 - ✓ What did Jesus say was the significance of this element?

verse 26

- ✓ What was the partaking of these elements to signify for the body of Christ?
 - a. Share from these thoughts (actually *facts*) why Paul would be so distraught over the behavior of the Corinthians in celebrating this important Christian rite.

Making It Personal...

4. What is your heart during the Communion service? Do you realize the significance of what is taking place? Do you really *remember* Jesus at this time, considering what He has done for you, or do you find your thoughts wandering, thinking of what you need to do later? Determine in your heart that the next time you partake in this holy observance, you will do so with a heart and mind that is captivated by the truth of what it represents: *Jesus hung on **your** cross.*

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Compare these passages on the Lord's Supper with our passage today and see if you find anything that adds to your understanding of this most precious moment: Matthew 26:26-29; Luke 22:14-20

- ❖ Do your best to summarize today's passage in a couple of sentences.

Third Day: Read 1 Corinthians 11:27-34

After sharing the deep meaning of the Communion service, Paul now shares the consequences of partaking in an *unworthy manner*.

1. Name some ways a person might partake of Communion in an unworthy manner.
 - a. What is the one who partakes unworthily guilty of, according to verse 27?

This is a difficult concept. The Life Application Bible Commentary on 1 and 2 Corinthians explains it this way: *"To treat the symbols of Christ's ultimate sacrifice irreverently is to be guilty of irreverence toward His body and blood shed on sinners' behalf. Instead of honoring Christ's sacrifice, those who ate unworthily were sharing in the guilt of those who crucified Him."*

2. What is Paul's suggestion prior to the taking of the Communion? v. 28

We most often apply this verse to the fact that an *unbeliever* is not to partake of this “family” observance, as he would obviously be profaning the precious blood that he doesn’t even believe in! This is an accurate application. We also apply this to the fact that each individual believer should look within and consider if they are coming to the Communion table with known sin in their lives. Of course, repentance is the step that must be taken in order to be prepared to partake. This is also an important aspect. But, thinking in terms of the context of this passage so far and what Paul is trying to communicate to them here, we must also consider the aspect of loving our neighbor and caring for the welfare of those who are not as well off as ourselves.

- a. Does Paul say of the one who examines himself that he should *not* partake? What is Paul’s hope in this matter? v. 28
3. What happens to the one who partakes unworthily? v. 29
 - a. What was the result of this very sin right there in the midst of the Corinthian church? v. 30
 4. What is Paul’s simple answer according to verse 31?
 - a. If we don’t judge ourselves, what will be the result? v. 32
 - b. What is God’s purpose in this discipline? (see v. 30 with v. 32 and share what you believe this is saying.)
 - c. What is Paul’s final analysis of this subject?
verse 33

verse 34

Making It Personal...

5. Share any new appreciation you have for the sacrifice Jesus made on your behalf, any new appreciation you have for the ritual we share in the Lord’s Supper, or any new appreciation you have about your personal responsibility in partaking of it.

Digging Deeper

- ❖ Tie this week’s memory verse (Ephesians 5:21) with the heart of what Paul is saying in this chapter as a whole.

Fourth Day:

Deeper Discoveries

This portion of the lesson will take a closer look at some of the words in the chapter. You will need to have your tools—or resources at hand: more than one Bible translation, a dictionary or Bible dictionary, concordance, atlas, and encyclopedia. (If you don't have all of these, simply use what you do have to enrich your learning.)

Using the tools you have at hand, do some digging into the following terms. Start with your dictionary (or Bible dictionary), and then look up the references to add to your understanding. If you have additional resources, you may want to keep digging (making notes in the margins). After you've completed the investigative process, write a definition in your own words. Your investigation in today's lesson will lay the groundwork for tomorrow's study, so be as thorough as you can in your research.

Remembrance (11:24) *"...Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible say we are to remember? Isaiah 53:5-6; Romans 5:8; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; 1 Peter 2:24 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

(New) Covenant (11:25) *"...This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me."*

Dictionary definition: _____

What does the Bible have to say? Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Hebrews 9:12-15; 13:20 _____

❖ Write your own definition: _____

Fifth Day:

Heartsearch

Are you walking worthy of your high calling? Are you applying the wisdom of God to your daily life? Get ready for some self-discovery! This portion of the lesson will give you the opportunity to examine your heart, express your mind, and experience your lesson, by applying what you are learning to everyday circumstances.

Put Me in Remembrance

The ordinance of Communion has been described in various ways: *the breaking of bread; the Lord's Supper; the Eucharist, or giving of thanks.* Whatever title you give it, Communion, as often as it is celebrated, is meant to be a perpetual reminder of what Jesus Christ did for us. When He took the *cup* and the loaf of *bread* and blessed them, He transformed everyday common ingredients into something of great significance for the Christian. Symbolically, these elements represent Christ's body, broken for us, and His blood shed for our sins. In return for all that He did on our behalf, He asks one important thing: "*Remember Me.*" The act of remembering means *to call to mind again.* The original connotation of the word means to do it with *affection*, or to *put your heart into it.*

1 John 3:5 and 8 tell us that *He appeared to take away our sins; and, He appeared to destroy the works of the devil.* We know that Satan is always lurking around our door, seeking to put as much distance between us and the Lord as he possibly can. If he can't get us to slow down in our daily lives, then he'll try to get us to speed up because he knows it is when we are busiest, that the cares of this world will begin to choke out the Word of God. When push comes to shove and we have to eliminate something, how many times do we allow it to be our time alone with God? The ordinance of Communion was instituted to prompt us to remember and celebrate what Jesus Christ did on our behalf. Could it be that He understands all too well how prone we are to forget Him?

Jesus Himself referred to the *cup* as the *new covenant in His blood.* Today let's take a Scriptural overview of how this covenant originated and what it means to us individually.

- Who is the author of the new covenant? Ephesians 2:4-6
- What heart motive was the factor that stirred Him to act? John 3:16
- Who is the mediator of this new covenant? 1 Timothy 2:5
- Through whom did God seal this covenant? 2 Corinthians 1:21-22
- When did He originate this covenant? Romans 8:29-30
- When did He first institute His plan? Genesis 3:15
- When did mankind fully realize what He ordained? Ephesians 2:13
- When will this covenant be fully consummated? Ephesians 2:7

“Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for they shall all know Me, from the least to the greatest of them, says the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” Jeremiah 31:31-34

- As you read over the verses above from Jeremiah 31, according to what you know of the Old Testament from your study this year, what would you say God wanted His people to remember about Him?
- What do the above verses say about the people’s response to Him?
- Write down the details you see that pertain to the new covenant.
- What promise is there in the new covenant for every believer?
- Have you claimed this promise for yourself?
- Will you *put your heart into it* and write down in your own words your commitment today to remember all that He has done for you?

“I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake; and I will not remember your sins. Put Me in remembrance...” Isaiah 43:25-26a

Heartsearch: Briefly look back over your *entire lesson* before filling in the following.

❖ *Examine your heart*

What has God put His finger on through your study and brought to light in a new way? (What did you learn about yourself?)

❖ *Express your mind*

What change has this week’s study brought about in your thought process? What difference will this make in how you view your current circumstances?

❖ *Experience your lesson*

What nugget of wisdom from your lesson do you plan to apply to your life?

Sixth Day:

Laying Up Treasure

*“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.
For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” Matthew 6:19-21*

The highest calling of the believer, and the most important way to lay up treasure in heaven, is through intercessory prayer. You will want to give thoughtful consideration to what you record on this page, as it will be the basis for your prayer during group time. The format for this day of your lesson is based upon the ACTS method of prayer: Adoration, Confession, Thanksgiving, and Supplication. In addition to these four, there is space provided for you to keep track of answered prayers, people and things you want to pray for in the coming week, and also a place to write out this week’s Scripture verse from memory.

Using the lesson as your focal point, write out your prayer for each of the following:

I praise God for (an aspect of His marvelous character) _____

I confess to God that I _____

I thank God for _____

I am asking God _____

Praise for answered prayer: _____

People/things I want to pray for this coming week: _____

Pearl of Great Price: _____

Notes