

WORSHIP THAT CENTERS IN THE LORD

GOD'S GRACE FOR AN IMPERFECT CHURCH: A STUDY OF 1 CORINTHIANS · 1 CORINTHIANS 11:1-34 · JULY 7, 2024 · PASTOR MATT ERICKSON

"For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you..." (1 Corinthians 11:23)

Basics of Interpreting the Bible

Exegesis — what did the biblical text mean 'then and there'?

- Three areas to explore: history, literary genre, and biblical context/canon

Hermeneutics — what does the biblical text mean 'here and now'?

Paul, Creation, Culture, the Gospel, and Worship (11:2-16)

Head coverings in worship and prevailing cultural customs

The complex range of the Greek word "head" (Greek: *kephalē* / κεφαλή)

Paul affirms both gender difference and gender equality

Paul praises the Corinthian church for empowering women to lead along with men in the public gatherings but exhorts them to do so in a way that does not dishonor God or one another

Paul, Inequality, the Church, and the Lord's Supper (11:17-34)

The Corinthian context of gathering and the Roman villa

The heart of the Lord's Supper: remember, encounter, anticipate

Paul modifies his earlier praise with a critique of how the Corinthian church causes divisions in the way they celebrate the Lord's supper when they gather

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. What does 'worship' mean to you?
2. This week we continue our preaching series, "God's Grace for an Imperfect Church" by looking at 1 Corinthians 11:2-34. Whether on your own or with others, begin your study in prayer, asking God to speak to you through this study and then read that text aloud.
3. *Background: This chapter raises a lot of questions about the interrelationship of created order, culture or social custom, and the power of the gospel. All of this continues themes Paul has already expressed about the selfless love of God revealed in Jesus the crucified Messiah shaping the way we relate to one another. While cultural customs are different across different places and times, there is still something for us here about honoring God*

and one another in public gatherings for prayer and worship.

4. In 1 Corinthians 11:2-16, the Greek word *kephalā* appears many times. This word is usually translated 'head' in English translations but has the range of meaning including the literal head as distinct from the body, as well as symbolic meanings like 'source' or 'foremost.' This section is about the public gathering for prayer and worship for the church. In verses 2-3, the context what do you think Paul is trying to say about men in relation to God, the church community, and how that relates to prayer?
5. In verses 5-6, what do you think Paul is trying to say about women in relation to God, the church community, and how that relates to prayer?
6. If we step back from the specifics of head coverings and long hair, with verses 7-16 Paul emphasizes both gender difference and gender equality among men and women in the church. In a church that thought their Christian freedom liberated them to do whatever they wanted, why might this be important?
7. What stands out to you from these verses for us today?
8. The next section turns toward the shared meal and the Lord's Supper, or communion, when the church gathers. According to verses 17-22, what seems to be the problem in the Corinthian church?
9. After Paul reads the words of institution (verses 23-26), he offers guidance to the church in verses 27-34 about how the meal should be celebrated. What stands out to you from these verses?
10. What is one thing God speaking to you personally through this study? If you are with a small group, discuss that with one another and then pray about what you shared. If you are on your own, write it down, pray about it, and share this with someone this week.

DIG DEEPER

This week dig deeper in one or more of the following ways:

- This past Sunday we celebrated communion at Eastbrook. What does the communion meal mean to you? Why is this meal important in the life of a local church community? Write your thoughts and share it with a spouse, friend, or small group member.
- Explore these additional resources:
 - Gordon D. Fee and Douglas Stuart, *How to Read the Bible For All Its Worth*
 - Bible Project, "Why Is the Lord's Supper Significant in the Bible?": bibleproject.com/articles/lords-supper-in-the-bible/
 - Robert E. Webber, *Ancient-Future Worship*