



Study Guide: 1 Corinthians – Chapter 11

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This study guide provides an educational overview of 1 Corinthians Chapter 11 using a verse-by-verse structure, theological context, and application-oriented insights grounded in Scripture.

Introduction

1 Corinthians Chapter 11 is a pivotal section in Paul’s letter, addressing issues of worship, order, and community conduct within the Corinthian church. This chapter contributes to the overall flow of the epistle by tackling practical and theological concerns that impact unity and reverence in the assembly. Readers should watch for Paul’s instructions on head coverings, which reflect deeper principles of authority and honor, as well as his teaching on the Lord’s Supper, which challenges the Corinthians to examine their hearts and actions in communal worship.

Context

The immediate literary context of 1 Corinthians 11 follows Paul’s earlier discussions on divisions and spiritual gifts in the church. The Corinthian congregation was struggling with issues of propriety and respect during worship gatherings. Historically, Corinth was a cosmopolitan city with diverse cultural influences, which often led to misunderstandings about Christian conduct. Paul writes as an apostle addressing a community that is still learning to live out the new covenant in Christ. The key speaker is Paul himself, who draws on apostolic authority to correct abuses and misunderstandings. The setting is a letter intended to guide the church toward holiness and unity in their public worship and fellowship.

Outline

The chapter can be divided into two main sections. The first part focuses on the issue of head coverings and the principles of authority and honor in worship, emphasizing the relationship between men, women, and God. The second part addresses the conduct of the Lord’s Supper, highlighting the significance of this sacred meal and correcting the Corinthians’ misuse of it. Each section moves from theological foundation to practical application, underscoring the importance of reverence and self-examination in the life of



the church.

Verse-by-Verse Study

Verses 1–3: Paul begins by encouraging the Corinthians to imitate him as he imitates Christ, establishing a model of discipleship. He then outlines the principle of headship, stating that Christ is the head of every man, man is the head of woman, and God is the head of Christ. This sets the theological basis for the following instructions.

Verses 4–6: Paul addresses the practice of head coverings during prayer or prophecy. Men should not cover their heads, as this dishonors their head, Christ, while women should cover their heads as a sign of authority and respect. The cultural practice reflects deeper spiritual truths about honor and submission in worship.

Verses 7–10: The argument is expanded with theological reasoning. Man is the image and glory of God, while woman is the glory of man. The head covering for women is seen as a symbol of authority on her head, reflecting the order established by God. The mention of angels suggests that worship is conducted in the presence of spiritual beings, emphasizing the seriousness of proper conduct.

Verses 11–12: Paul balances his earlier statements by affirming the mutual dependence of men and women in the Lord. While there is an order of headship, men and women are interdependent, highlighting the unity and equality found in Christ.

Verses 13–16: Paul appeals to the Corinthians' own sense of propriety and nature, asking them to judge what is appropriate. He concludes that the practice of head coverings is a matter of honor and propriety, and that the churches of God maintain this tradition, urging the Corinthians to do the same.

Verses 17–22: Transitioning to the Lord's Supper, Paul criticizes the Corinthians for divisions and selfishness during their communal meals. Some go hungry while others get drunk, showing a lack of respect for the body of Christ and the unity the meal represents.

Verses 23–26: Paul recounts the institution of the Lord's Supper, emphasizing that Jesus gave this ordinance to remember His body broken and His blood shed for the forgiveness of sins. The Lord's Supper is a proclamation of the Lord's death until He comes, underscoring its significance as a sacred and communal act.

Verses 27–32: Paul warns against partaking in the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner, explaining that judgment may come upon those who do so. He calls for self-examination to



avoid being disciplined by the Lord, highlighting the spiritual seriousness of the meal.

Verse 33–34: Paul concludes by instructing the Corinthians to wait for one another when they come together to eat, promoting unity and mutual care. He also offers guidance for those who are hungry to eat at home, ensuring that the communal meal is conducted with respect and order.

Key Themes

One key theme is the principle of authority and honor within the Christian community, especially as it relates to worship practices and gender roles. This theme is not about hierarchy for its own sake but reflects God’s created order and the importance of honoring one another appropriately. Another theme is the sanctity and unity of the Lord’s Supper, which serves as a profound reminder of Christ’s sacrifice and the call to communal holiness. The chapter also emphasizes self-examination and reverence, warning against casual or divisive behavior in worship gatherings.

Cross-References

Paul’s teaching on headship and authority connects with Ephesians 5, where similar principles about the relationship between husbands and wives are developed in the context of Christ and the church. The instructions on the Lord’s Supper echo Jesus’ own words in the Synoptic Gospels, particularly Luke 22, where the institution of the meal is recorded. Additionally, Paul’s call for self-examination resonates with passages like 2 Corinthians 13:5, which encourages believers to test themselves in faith. These cross-references help clarify the theological and practical weight of Paul’s instructions in 1 Corinthians 11.

Application

Modern disciples can apply this chapter by reflecting on how worship practices honor God and promote unity within the church. While cultural expressions like head coverings may vary, the underlying principles of respect, authority, and mutual care remain vital. The call to self-examination before participating in the Lord’s Supper challenges believers to approach communion with reverence and a heart aligned with Christ’s sacrifice. Churches today can also learn from Paul’s emphasis on orderly and loving fellowship, ensuring that communal gatherings build up the body rather than cause division or neglect.



Summary

1 Corinthians 11 addresses critical issues of worship order and communal conduct, grounding its instructions in theological truths about authority, honor, and the body of Christ. Paul's teaching on head coverings reveals a deeper principle of respecting God's created order, while his correction of the Lord's Supper abuses calls the church to unity, reverence, and self-examination. Together, these teachings guide believers toward worship that glorifies God and strengthens the community in faith and love.